

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The issues of the violation of child rights in Africa have attracted much attention in recent literature. The violation can be found in movies, novels, newspapers and magazines. Julius Obayome and Okoruwa Williams observe that the “Violation of child’s rights is a persistent problem found throughout most of the developing world, and to a lesser extent, in developed countries”(281). Though restrictions on violation of child’s rights exist in many countries, many children are still being abused in many ways like child labour, child sex abuse, lack of education, poor health facilities and many more. These vulnerable states make them prone to high level of exploitation. This abuse stems from the fact that many countries of the world have either not domesticated the child’s rights act or have refused to implement it. For instance, *The Sun Newspaper* editorial of 27th May, 2018 reported that Nigeria is a signatory to the treaty, and it is sad that only 24 out of the 36 states have domesticated the Child’s Rights Act. The paper also noted, though sadly, that not all the 24 states that have domesticated the act were committed to its enforcement.

The International Labour Organization in *New Global Estimate on Child Labour*, defines a child as “an individual under the age of eighteen” (5). In Nigeria, the Children and Young Person’s Law provides a vivid definition of who a child is. According to the law, as quoted by Ikenga Metuh in *International Journal of Research in Education*, “A child is a person who is dependent upon other individuals (parents, relatives, or government officials) for his or her lively-hood” (2). Section 49 of Article 28, chapter 3 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

recognizes a person of eighteen years and above as having attained full age or adulthood. In other words, persons below eighteen years of age are to be regarded as children. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention Paper No. 138 of 1998 specifies fifteen years as the age above which, in normal circumstances, a person may be in economic activity. However, the Child's Rights Protection of 2015 recognizes a child to mean "any person who is below eighteen years". For the purpose of this study, the age adopted by the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria and Child's Rights Protection Act of 2015 shall be adopted, that is, regarding individuals below the age of 18 years as children.

In accordance with Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the study defines all persons under the age of 18 as children. However, not all problems affect children of all age groups equally, and for this reason the study highlights the age characteristics of certain problems. In this respect, it should be noted that the first five years of life show children as most vulnerable and their mortality rates are highest. At this time, care, and stimulation are also crucially important for the child's long term development. From the age of six, children enter a new phase of life, when they are physically less vulnerable, mentally more mature and ready to begin formal education. Issues of access to and quality of education are especially important to assess from this age onwards. From their early teens, children enter into adolescence, a period of transition to adulthood which presents a new set of challenges, including indulging in sexual activities, with its risks of exposure to HIV/AIDS. There are no hard and fast dividing lines between age groups. Many problems invade age groups, although often with greater intensity or impact in some than in others. Thus, exploitative or hazardous child labour could be a problem concentrated among adolescents, but some younger children remain the most seriously affected, precisely because of their tender age.

The Child's Rights Act is a national law that makes provisions for the protection of the rights of children without discrimination, irrespective of the child's parents, legal guardians, sex, tribe, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability or other statuses. The Federal Government of Nigeria enacted the Child's Rights Act into law in 2003. This was followed up with her signing of the resolutions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (UNVOC). Then came the subsequent adoption of these resolutions by the Organization of African Unity, (OAU), and now African Union Chapter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The Conventions on the Rights of the Child, (CRC) Article 24.3 set out the rights of children: the right to survive, the right to develop to their fullest, the right to protection from harmful practices, abuse and exploitation and the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) of 2007, the Child's Rights Act provides children with 30 rights subsumed into four broad principles of survival, development, participation and protection. It is meant to ensure that the child survives, develops, participates in nation building, and that he or she is protected from abuse or neglect. The 2015 Child Rights Act includes: legal assistance and access to justice, right to parental care, right to education, right to leisure and play, protection from harmful customary practices, right to health, protection from narcotic drugs, alcohol and tobacco products, right to safe accommodation and alternative care and prohibition of the abduction, sales and trafficking in children. Any departure from these acts is a violation of child's rights. In signing the Convention into an Act, government is also committed to taking all effective and appropriate measures to abolish traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children, which include: (among other practices) female genital mutilation and child marriage. By becoming parties to

these conventions, governments agree to hold themselves accountable for any violation. There are many violations to children's rights that Africans need to address, such as violence, child labour, and sexual exploitation.

Around the world, far too many children are subjected to child abuse. Some are forced to work under harmful conditions, as street children. Others experience violence or abuse in their homes, schools, communities or care institutions. In some places, children are targets for illegal recruitment by armed groups and armed forces, as child soldiers. Others are forced to flee their homes due to conflict or natural disaster. Many children, especially girls, are subjected to sexual violence and abuses as well as harmful traditional practices.

All violations of children's rights may be legitimately described as harmful practices. The common characteristics of the violations are based on tradition, culture, religion or superstition. These are often perpetrated and actively condoned by the child's parents or well-meaning adults within the child's family and community. Harmful practices based on tradition, culture, religion or superstitions are often perpetrated against very young children or even infants who clearly lack the capacity to consent or dissent. Assumptions of parental powers or rights over their children allow the perpetration of a wide range of these practices, many by parents directly, some by other individuals with parents' assumed consent. Yet, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by almost every state in Nigeria, favours the replacement of the concept of parental "rights" over children with parental "responsibilities", ensuring that the child's best interests are parents' "basic concern" (Article 18).

Violation of Child's Rights involves gross and unlawful discrimination against groups of children, including gender discrimination and discrimination against children with disabilities.

Some are based on tradition and superstition, some on religious belief, others on false information or beliefs about child development and health. Many involve extreme physical violence and pain leading, in some cases intentionally, to death or serious injury. Others involve mental and emotional violence. All constitute an assault on the child's human dignity, and violate universally agreed international human rights standards. The international NGO Council on Violence against Children believes that the continued legality, social and cultural acceptance of a very wide range of these practices in many states, illustrate devastating failure of international and regional human rights properties to provoke the necessary challenge, prohibition and elimination. Comprehensive children's rights-based analysis and action are needed. Above all, there must be an assertion of every state's immediate obligation to guarantee all children their rights to full respect, human dignity and physical integrity. The United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais, believes that "the continuing legal and social acceptance of these violations slow progress in identifying and effectively addressing the symptoms of children's slow status" (23). The Secretary General also believes that "all violence against children are preventable" (25).

Robb Nour observes that "Forty-two percent of African girls are married before the age of eighteen" (80), and Churchill Melenika corroborates this by stating that 'child marriage is a human rights violation that prevents girls from obtaining education, enjoying optimal health, maturing, and giving birth to healthy babies'(420). Socially, early marriage forces girls to drop out of school at a young age, permanently disadvantaging their educational careers and earning potential. Few may never ever face career choices, and many child brides' lives are cut short by diseases. Churchill Meleninka is of the opinion that married girls are more likely than unmarried girls to become infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDS), in particular HIV and the

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). A study carried out by Nour in Kenya demonstrates that married girls have a 50 percent higher likelihood than unmarried girls of becoming infected with HIV. This risk is even higher (59 percent) in Zambia. HPV infection has become endemic to Sub-Saharan Africa. Forcing young girls to marry far older men who have already had multiple sex partners, coupled with their low socio-economic status, and their poor access to health care, is now seen as the highest form of child's rights violation in the world. Rapes, by alleged protectors, reveal gaps in international mechanisms designed to shield war time populations from violence. There were several cases of sexual violence by peace keepers with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). These included the rape of a twelve year old girl and gang rape of a woman by two Ukrainian soldiers. Reginald Antonazzo observes that peace keepers with the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and (UNAMSIL) sexually exploited girls and solicited child prostitutes during their peace-keeping missions. Despite the potentials of various international conventions and conferences, and the full body of human rights law, the lives of many African girls remain embroiled in one reason. Also, UN treaties and conventions have not been locally interpreted in a way that is responsive to African girls' experiences of injustice.

Among the most harmful traditional practices affecting African girls in Nigeria today, are child marriage and female genital mutilation. The practice of female circumcision, which is now widely known as female genital mutilation (FGM), is one of the most serious forms of violence against girls. It has been defined by World Health Organization (WHO), as "all procedures which involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia/or injury to the female genital organs, whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reasons". Not only does FGM have dangerous health implications, including the risk of infection or even death, because of

insanitary conditions in which it is generally practised, but it symbolizes the subjugation of the girl-child and the control of female sexuality. In the vast majority of cases, it is carried out at a very young age when there is no possibility of the individual's consent. In this sense, it is a fundamental violation of human rights. The platform of action, adopted by the Beijing Conference in 1995, called for the total eradication of FGM through the enactment and enforcement of legislation against its perpetrators.

FGM is practised in about 28 countries of Africa, as well as in few scattered communities in other parts of the world as compiled by the United Nations' *Global Study on Poverty and Disparity* in 2004. It is heavily concentrated on East Africa, Egypt and parts of the West Africa where it has long been a part of the traditional cultural practices of various ethnic groups. The highest prevalent rates are found in Somalia and D Jibouti. Child marriage is also justified by parents on the ground that it forestalls promiscuity which is assumed to be a risk immediately after puberty. In addition, there may be a hidden economic motive (the enticement of bride price) or the desire to establish or cement alliances with powerful families. Child marriage reflects the low appreciation of girls' education and may be seen by some parents as an alternative to meeting the continued cost of education. This practice is a violation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminatio Against Women (CEDAW) which, in Article 16, states that both partners have "the same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent". The same article states that "the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect" (488).

Another category of protection problem which has driven poor children into types of labour is exploitation. This is hazardous and prejudicial to children's welfare and development. Poverty, along with certain cultural traits, has also resulted in begging. Furthermore, middle men have

exploited the desperation and ignorance of parents, particularly in the rural areas, to procure children for commercial trafficking. There is growing trade in girl-child, for the purpose of prostitution, by international traffickers, who transport African girls as far as Europe, as debt bound sex workers. Child labour occurs when children are exposed to long hours of work in a dangerous or unhealthy environment with too much responsibility for their age at the expense of their schooling. The CRC focuses on child labour in Article 32 which recognizes “the rights of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s physical or health, mental, spiritual, moral or social development”. State parties to the convention are required to take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of this right. This includes provision for minimum age for admission to employment, regulation of hours of work and conditions of employment and penalties and other sanctions to ensure effective enforcement.

Among the worst acts of violence in Africa children are being forced to become soldiers. More disturbing than the wars these children are engaged in or the atrocities they commit is destroying their youth. Five to eighteen year-olds are used in combat today. The appearance of the child soldier has brought new horror and drastically changed the continent. The senseless killing by child soldiers is one of the newest tragic elements which are not part of the past. Children in the military are found in war-torn African countries. According to the 2005 statistics of UN, they were found in Burundi in 2004, Central African Republic in 2001 and in 2003, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire in 2002, Democratic Republic of Congo in 2002-2003, Sierra-Leone in 1991-2001, Somalia in 1991, Sudan in 2004, and Uganda, Zimbabwe and Mozambique in 1977. Children in these countries were conscripted to fight in the war. African rebels are far from being the first

people, even in modern history, to use children in war time, but this newest wave of child soldiers really started in the 1980s. Katunga Joseph Minga, in *Journal of African Studies*, observes that “at a time a lot was going on in the world, Africa was nearing the end of its decolonization, as Europe empires finally pulled out and let their former colonies become independent nations”(87). Katunga insists that the problem was that these nations were based on colonial borders, bringing rival ethnic groups within the same states and ignoring traditional tribal boundaries. Independence in many parts of Africa turned quickly into civil wars, tribal violence and at times ethnic genocide. Both the USA and USSR funded various militants throughout this period and also tried to establish capitalist or communist control of newly independent Africa.

According to studies carried out by Katunga Joseph Minga (184), the war in Africa was based on long-standing ethnic rivalries and war lords fighting for power and the war was extraordinarily violent. “At some point, rebel groups realized that young children were less prone to questioning orders than adults. They were easily manipulated, and could be trained to lose any sense of empathy for their enemies” (185). Considering the number of orphans in this bloody war, they are also a potential source of recruitment. Minga concludes that they were perfect soldiers and soon were at the centre of a civil war that killed millions in both combat and support roles. As the cold war came to an end in the late 1980s, the USA and USSR stopped financing rebel armies. Those same armies took up the Mozambican practice of abducting children in order to maintain recruitment. These child soldiers’ rights were never protected at all.

Street children constitute a significant component that is exploited and unprotected in the continent. In line with the general concern for the rights and welfare of children in especially difficult circumstances is the growing international problem of the rising numbers of street

children in mostly developing world. Street children lack the primary socialization and modeling frameworks of the family that are thought to foster healthy growth and development, and as such, they are seen to be developmentally at risk. A street child, according to World Health Organization (WHO) in *Street Children A Global Concern* (158) is conceptualized in four categories: it may be a child “of the street” having no home but the streets. The family may have abandoned them or they may have no family members and so are left alone. Such children have to struggle for survival and might move from friend to friend, or live in shelters such as abandoned buildings. A street child may also be a child “on the street”, visiting his or her family regularly. The child might even return every night to sleep at home, but spends most days and some nights on the street because of poverty, overcrowding, sexual or physical abuse at home. A street child may be “a part of a street family”. Some children live on the sidewalks or city squares with the rest of their families, families displaced due to poverty, natural disasters, or wars which forced them to live on the streets. “Street families” work on the streets with other members of their families. A street child can also be “in institutionalized care, having come from a situation of homelessness and at risk of returning to a homeless existence.

The phenomenon of street children is multifaceted. They are among the most vulnerable groups in the world. Both girls and boys are found living on the streets. The combination of familial, economic, social and political factors splays an important role in their situation. Due to conflicts in their families, these children do not want to or cannot return home. They are abused mentally, sexually, psychologically and morally on a daily basis. Most of them live on the streets and later become hoodlums. Others are sent out for prostitution even at an early age. The UN studies carried out by WHO shows that children who live and sleep on the streets have been on the increase in most major urban areas. The increasing magnitude of the problem can be gauged

from the findings that, whereas in 1982 children who lived and slept on the streets were on the increase in Lagos, in 1999, there were hundreds of locations where children were found to be living on the in Lagos and other major cities in African countries.

Many children in Africa are being abandoned by their parents and guardians due to the current dire economic situation. The same economic situation makes girls to be married off before they turn eighteen. However, the Child's Rights Act (CRA) which was passed in 2003 sets the age of marriage above eighteen years. Carolyn Miles, in "Save the Children Bill", spent a year collecting reports that list 144 countries based on maternal deaths. Miles explains that, "The biggest and most striking indicator is child marriage starts a cycle of disadvantage that denies girls the opportunity to learn, develop and bear children"²⁰. Forcing girls to marry too early often means "they cannot attend schools" and "are more likely to face domestic violence, abuse and rape"(Miles,²⁵). Adio, Ayodele, in support of this in his work "I stand with the Girl Child", warns:

We cannot afford to keep playing Russian roulette with the lives of our daughters, they deserve a sound guidance and above all only they should have the right to make marital decision at the right age. While we look up to Fadumo Dayib, Hilary Clinton, Angela Merkel, Aung San Kyi, Joyce Banda, and Theresa May, let us be aware that right there in our house is a young girl capable of changing the world; if only we could believe in her well enough to create a spring board rather than pit hole to launch her towards prominence. Street children are confronted many problems. In fact, growing up in an environment generally regarded as dangerous, they incur considerable risks. As a consequence, some of their rights are very often compromised. (34)

In the light of the above, the researcher proposes to discuss the topic “Violation of Child’s Rights in Africa”, focusing on Amma Darko’s *Faceless*, Noviolet Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names*, Uzodinma Iweala’s *Beasts of No Nation* and Ishmael Beah’s *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. These works highlight children of the streets and combatant children of war otherwise called child soldiers. The writers’ narrative techniques, themes and characterization are analysed to emphasize that protection rights are central to child well-being as the right to health, education or food and to advocate for greater attention to these neglected rights.

Statement of the Problem

There have been many studies on violence on humans in Africa, especially the girl child, but my surveys found no comprehensive studies on the violation of child rights in these four novels. The violation of children’s rights in Africa has become a pervasive problem that affects children in all spheres of life. This is despite the fact that there is, in existence, an International Legal Document under the United Nations that protects children from such abuses. The most disturbing aspects of the abuses include using children as combatants in war, and leaving children on the streets. Amma Darko’s *Faceless*, Noviolet Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names*, Uzodinma Iweala’s *Beasts of No Nation* and Ishmael Beah’s *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* examine various aspects of child’s rights violation in different parts of the African continent.

Continuous violations of children’s rights spell doom for the continent of Africa. If children are the leaders of tomorrow, it then follows that the African continent does not have bright future as long as children are frequently abused. Based on this framework, the researcher seeks to create awareness to the public about the dangers of violating the rights of children. The attitudes of the governments of various African countries in their treatment of children as shown in these novels

are disheartening. It is hoped that the issues raised from all these problems and the recommendations made at the end of the research will fill the gaps left in the discussion of child's rights violation, and also help in contributing to knowledge. This research is envisioned as a clarion call on governments at all levels to help in the elimination of child's rights violation, and adequately support ways of protecting children of the streets and combatant children of war. The work also advocates increased legal assistance and access to justice for the children that may be victims.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the child rights violation in selected African novels of Amma Darko's *Faceless*, Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* and Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

- To examine the representations of children of the streets and children who are engaged in wars
- To analyze the nature of the environment where these children operate.
- To interrogate the various ways the rights of the children have been abused.
- To analyze the consequences of the experiences of the children on their psyche.
- To highlight and interpret the stylistic features employed by the writers.

This research is intended to provide empirical and analytical foundation for the identification of the problems to be given attention as a deeper analysis of the situation of children in Africa. The study is rights-based in the sense that it assesses the situation of children against a set of legally defined rights. Specifically, the reference framework for the assessment of child's rights is the

set of rights enshrined in the CRC which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989. This is complemented or reinforced by the rights in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, adopted by the Organization of African Unity in 1990, and a certain specialized international human rights conventions, such as the ILO conventions relating to child labour. These rights form aspect of the international law, as a result of the ratification of conventions such as the CRC by the requisite number of states. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child has not yet been ratified by many African countries. Rights, by their very nature, are universal and invisible, applicable to all people and in the case of CRC, all children in all societies at all times. Rights-based approach means that needs are assessed against a set of defined rights in exposing the breaches of children's rights on the charter.

Significance of the Study

Apart from examining the four novels about street children and child soldiers, this study sheds light on some problems surrounding the lives of the characters. By so doing, the study demystifies the problem of street children and child soldiers, and refutes several stereotypes of them. For instance, child soldiers are still, in the eyes of many perceived as 'rebels' 'killers', 'monsters' and so on, - a perception which relates to the old myths about Africans as barbaric, savage or great-monkeys. Such stereotypes still force African children into dark ages of history. While grotesque can be used in a work of art to amuse, the stereotype cannot. It is the misrepresentation of who people really are that makes the stereotype dangerous. The study is useful to students of Literature, scholars, sociology and anthropology, as well as prospective writers since some literary and stylistic elements in the novels are discussed

The research is significant to the general public and Non-Governmental Organizations, (NGOs) in their humanitarian studies. They would help give children a voice for social justice, rights and opportunities. The children's beliefs, feelings and modes of thoughts as examined in this study are bound to generate a new consciousness, self-realization and identity, all of which reflect the dynamic transformations that they experience in their respective societies. The study is relevant to government especially, in evolving and enforcing laws related to child's rights violation. It also reveals that not only lawyers and jurists are those who recognize and pursue children's rights; that some literary writers as shown in this research, are interested in exposing violations of children's rights. The work is indicative of a synergy between Literature and Law.

Scope of the Study

Child's rights violation is a global problem. Bearing this in mind, the research restricts the study to African novels of Amma Darko's *Faceless*, Noviolet Bulawayo's, *We Need New Names*, Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* and Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. The first two writers are females, while the last two writers are males, giving the study a balanced and unbiased investigation. This research also examines the narrative techniques, themes and characterization of the novels to describe complete experiences of the children.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative research approach which entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for the study. The qualitative research approach is suitable because it provides opportunity for the researcher to describe complete experiences that cannot be obtained in quantitative techniques. Such intangible factors as social norms, socioeconomic status and

gender roles are important variables to this study. Information was gathered using secondary data which included documents search such as media reports, journals, newspapers, periodicals and unpublished works. The findings from these secondary data were analyzed through content analysis by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages. Analysis of United Nations document and her agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO and ILO were highly utilized. Child's Rights Acts were systematically reviewed to guide the researcher on the protection rights of vulnerable African children. With the qualitative analysis, knowledge gaps emerged from different bodies of literature reviewed, that children's rights have been violated.

Biography of the Authors

Amma Darko

Amma Darko was born in 1956 in Ghana. She studied at the University of Kumasi. Darko is one of the most significant contemporary Ghanaian literary writers. She is the author of four novels: *Beyond the Horizon*, *The House Maid*, *Not Without Flowers* and *Faceless*. Her first novel *Beyond the Horizon* introduces the theme of society and family's complicity in pushing the vulnerable individual woman or girl into various forms of exploitation and abuse. The second novel *The Housemaid* portrays an innocent child's constant yearning for the warmth of parental care. *Not Without Flowers* gives an insight into the Ghanaian culture, and raises interesting discussions about polygamy, the treatment of mental health and HIV, and the difficulties faced by families trying to raise enough money for a decent funeral.

Noviolet Bulawayo

Noviolet Bulawayo was born in 1981 in Tsholotsho, a year after Zimbabwe's independence from British colonial rule. She is a Ndebele woman. The Ndebele women's names begin with No-. When she was eighteen, she moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan in 2011. She won the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2009. She was shortlisted for the South Africa PEN Students Award judged by J.M Coetzee. Her work has appeared in magazines and in anthologies in Zimbabwe, South Africa and the U.K. She earned her MFA at Cornell University where she was also awarded a Truman Capote Fellowship, and she is currently a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University in California. In 2011 Bulawayo won the Caine Prize for African writing for short story, "Hitting Budapest" which is about a gang of street children in Zimbabwe. Bulawayo completed her college education in the U.S and obtained both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English. Her novel entitled *We Need New Names* was published in 2013, and was named on the Man Booker Prize 2013 Long list. Bulawayo has passion for writing about humanity, womanism and homeland.

Uzodinma Iweala

Uzodinma Iweala was born on November 5, 1982. He is an American author of Nigerian origin. In 2007, Iweala was named one of the Granta Magazine's 20 best young American novelists. His mother is Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the former Finance Minister and Foreign Minister of Nigeria. His debut novel *Beasts of No Nation* won the 2005 John Liewellyn Rhys Prize for best work of literature by a young writer. He was inspired to write about the issue of child soldiers after reading an article about the conflict Soldier in Sierra-Leone while in high school and then, a few years later while he was President of African Students' Society at Harvard, meeting a former

Ugandan child soldier whom he had invited to speak with them. After reading autobiographies of other child soldiers, studying Amnesty International and UN reports and interviewing people who had been through the Nigerian civil war of the 60s, he wrote the story that becomes *Beasts of No Nation*.

Ishmael Beah

Ishmael was born on November 23, 1980. He is a Sierra Leonean author and human rights activist who rose to fame with his acclaimed memoir, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. His most recent novel, *Radiance of Tomorrow*, was published in 2014. In 1991, Sierra Leone civil war started. Rebels invaded Beah's home town, Mogbwemo, located in the Southern Province of Sierra Leone, and he was forced to flee. Separated from his family, he spent months wandering south with a group of other boys. At the age of 12, he was forced to become a child soldier. He fought for almost three years before being rescued by UNICEF. He fought for the government army against the rebels.

In 1997, he fled Freetown by the help of the UNICEF due to the increasing violence and found his way to New York City, where he lived with Laura Simms, his foster mother. In New York, he attended United Nations International School. After high school, he enrolled at Oberlin College and graduated in 2004 with a degree in Political Science. Beah says he doesn't remember how many people he killed during his time in the Sierra Leonean government army. He and other soldiers smoked marijuana and sniffed amphetamines and "brown-brown", a mixture of cocaine and gunpowder. He blames his addictions and brainwashing for his violence and cites them as well as the pressures of the army as reasons for his inability to escape on his own: "If you left, it was as good as being dead", "If I choose to feel guilty for what I have done, I

will want to be dead myself” (188). Rescued in 1996 by a coalition of UNICEF and NGOs, he found the transition difficult. “I live knowing that I have been given a second life, and I first try to have fun, and be happy and live it” (191).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP

This chapter seeks to identify, locate and evaluate the works of different scholars concerning the topic under study. This helped to avoid duplicating previous studies and to expose the gap that is existing after previous studies which this study aimed at filling. At the end of it, this helped to contribute much to the advancement of knowledge. The review was carried out under the following sub-headings: Conceptual frame work, Theoretical framework, and Summary of the Review

Conceptual Framework

The term ‘conceptual framework, according to A.S. Hornby in *Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, 8th edition, is “a set of mental conception, concepts, reasoning, rules or beliefs on which a given idea is explored and discussed” (298). It is also an analytical tool used to make conceptual distinctions and organize ideas. It is useful as an organizing device in empirical studies. It presents convictions that help people understand the writer’s concepts. The concepts or ideas are employed to identify the problem of the research in order to tactically explore and present ideas. The concepts of child, rights act, violation and other related concepts to the title of this study are explained

Child

From the Child Rights Act, 2015, “a child is any person who is below 18 years” (8). It further describes a child to be a young person below the age of puberty who has not reached adult hood or one below the age of “majority”. The 2007 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the

Child defines the child as “a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, “majority” is attained earlier” (53). The convention further states that childhood comes in three stages – early childhood, middle childhood and early adolescent. Children are at these stages defenseless, helpless, and powerless. They therefore, need to be protected by the society because childhood is a precarious time during which a child should live free from fear, safe from violence, and protected from abuse. This study therefore adopts a person below eighteen years of age to be a child. A child could be a biological child, step-child, adopted child or a foster child.

Act

An Act as in Child Rights Protection Document of 2015 is “to declare the rights of children and provide for their protection, promotion, enforcement and implementation as required under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Acts of Parliament, also called legislation, are statutes passed by a parliament (legislature). All acts are laws but all laws are not acts. An act is a subset of law. It is the foundation on which the law is erected. “An Act according to *Chambers Dictionary* “is a competent legislature outlining the broad aspects of the activity intended to be regulated” (68). It provides for the making of rules, regulations and procedures. Law is a broad term which includes Acts, notifications, and government order and so on. An Act is a specific term used for a collected set of rules and regulations passed by the parliament. An Act is used for this research because it is specific to our study while law is a generic term.

Apart from the constitution, there are other laws which protect children. The Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA), which originated in colonial times, remains in force as state law.

It applies to the juvenile criminal justice system and so its scope is narrow and its application limited. Under the criminal law, several provisions protect children from harm and sexual exploitation. The provisions are contained in the criminal code of Southern Nigeria and the Penal Code of Northern Nigeria. According to UNICEF in 2001 *Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria: A Wake-Up Call*, there are examples of prohibited acts under the criminal code as indecent treatment of boys under 14 years, indecent treatment of girls under 16 years, abduction of girls under 18 years with intent to have carnal knowledge and many others. The biggest lacuna in the protection of children's rights is the absence of a comprehensive law applicable to every country, until the United Nations set up a committee to examine the progress made by countries in meeting the obligations under the Child Rights Act (CRA).

Rights

“Rights” from *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* 8th Edition “are legal entitlements to have or do something” (1273). By implication, they are legal, social or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement. Mongana Squink, in his *Fundamental of Human Rights*, notes that “rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people, according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory”. Squink further states that, “rights are often considered fundamental to civilization, for they are regarded as established pillars of society and culture”. (462) According to *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “rights structure the form of governments, the content of laws, and the shape of morality as it is currently perceived” (640). To accept a set of rights is to approve a distribution of freedom and authority, and so to endorse a certain view of what may, must, and must not be done.

Child's rights are the human rights of children with particular attention to the rights of special protection and care accorded to minors. Child Rights Act applies to every person in the Marshall Island, irrespective of the person's nationality or citizenship. It binds the state, including every government department and statutory authority and every person in the employment of the government. Its objectives are to protect children from discrimination and any other physical, emotional or moral harm or hazard, to provide care and protection to children who are in need of care and protection, and generally, to promote the protection, development and welfare of children.

Rights imply responsibilities, to uphold and respect the rights of others. These responsibilities start from the individual within the family and community, and extend through a hierarchy of social institutions, up to the highest levels of Government. States parties to the CRC have the responsibility to complement the efforts of parents and other care -givers on behalf of children, notably by providing certain services that can most effectively and equitably be delivered by the public sector. In addition, Governments are obliged, under the CRC, to assist parents and other care -givers that are unable to provide adequate care and support to their children, and intervene, in the best interests of the child, where he or she is a victim of abuse or exploitation. The rights-based approach provides a legal and moral imperative for action, by placing in situations at all levels, from the family to the states, before their responsibilities.

Survival rights are in a sense the most fundamental since life is a prerequisite for the realization of any other human rights. Development rights, in the CRC focus on the rights of children to develop to their full potential. This requires adequate care, nutrition and stimulation in early childhood, access to education and training and a well navigated transition through adolescence to early adulthood. Protection rights involve protection from abuse, negligence, violence and

exploitation. Finally participation rights in the CRC revolve around the rights of freedom of expression, thought, conscience and religion and the right of children to express their views, especially matters directly affecting their welfare, while taking into account the child's age and maturity.

Violation

To violate is “to break the rules or conventions” (Cambridge Dictionary). Violation means contravention, breach, infringement, breaking or transgression. A violation of law, according to Francis Jack, is “any act or (less commonly), failure to act that fails to abide by existing law” (85) He stresses that, “Violations may include both crimes and civil wrongs”. It then means that some acts such as fraud, can violate both civil and criminal laws. And for Jack, “infringement is a violation”. “Breach of contract is a type of civil wrong”. A wrong involves the violation of a right because wrong and right are complementary terms.

Violation of child's rights is an infringement on the child's rights. Apart from being human rights violations, child rights violations are barriers to child survival and development. Children subjected to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect are at risk of shortened lives, poor physical and mental health, educational problems (including dropping out of school), poor parenting skills later in life, homelessness and displacement. Conversely, successful protection actions increase a child's chances to be physically and mentally healthy, confident and self-respecting, and less likely to abuse or exploit others, including his or her own children. Violation of child's rights could be in the form of exploitation in many ways. *The Conventions on the Rights of a Child* affirms the rights of children to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including child prostitution, child pornography and internet, and other unlawful sexual

practices. According to Eclon Olokon, child prostitution is defined as “the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration”. (7) The Optional Protocol to the *Conventions on the Rights of a Child* defines child pornography as “any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primary purpose of carnal knowledge” (213). The working definition adopted by the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) is similar and states “it is the visual depiction of the sexual exploitation of a child, focusing on the child’s sexual behavior or genitals” (184). Child pornography is harmful to children in two ways: It encourages the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Every photo or video tape of child pornography is evidence of that child’s abuse. The depiction repeats the victimization over and over again, long after the original material was created. The digital age has facilitated the production and dissemination of child pornography.

Advances in computer technology have made the creation and distribution of child pornography easier. The internet is used by pedophiles to exchange information and contact potential victims through chat rooms. It is virtually impossible to ensure the physical destruction of child pornography once it has been posted on the internet. The U.N. Special Rappateur supports made this material illegal because it encourages pedophiles to view their desires as normal and to engage in the exploitation of real children.

Violation of child’s rights could be in the form of violence and neglect. Violence is found in the family, in schools, in institutions such as orphanages and other places of residential care, on the streets, in the work place and in prisons. Violence against children is one of the most serious problems affecting children today. Violence, according to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, “is behavior or treatment in which physical force is exerted for the purpose of causing damage or

injury”(814). Children may not feel able to report acts of violence for fear of retribution from their abuser. Many children experience physical violence at some point during childhood. Victims of physical abuse during childhood run an increased risk of becoming violent offenders themselves. Violence is one of the main reasons children leave home. The abandonment of children is an extreme form of neglect. On it, Innocent Jones states:

The decision to abandon a child may sometimes be a response to lack of support mechanisms or the weight of cultural traditions. In some countries, children are abandoned because the parents or parent feel unable to provide them with the means of subsistence, or believe that abandoning the child to families or institutions with more resources is the only way to offer their child a chance for a better future. And in some cultures, the stigma attached to conception outside marriage causes most children conceived out of wedlock to be abandoned at birth (258).

Neglect could be weak supervision, inconsistent discipline and failure to reinforce positive social behaviour, contribute to the risk of children being abused by the society. Neglect, which is a broad concept, includes also failure to meet the material and emotional needs of children and failure to provide physical and intellectual stimulation and adequate supervision and guidance. Inadequate supervision is a leading cause of death and injury due to accidents in the home, and contributes to the involvement of children in dangerous activities such as drug abuse and premature and unprotected sexual activity.

Violence, whether sexual, physical or inadequate care constitutes a violation of child's rights. Children continue to be the main victims of conflicts, especially armed conflict as in the case of

child soldiers. They are killed, made orphans, maimed, abducted, deprived of education and health care, and left with deep emotional scars and trauma. Forced to flee their homes, refugees and internally displaced children are especially vulnerable to violence, recruitment and exploitation.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework provides an overview of literature on theory(theories) that examines factors that shape how a text is written and how we are able to read it, or a tool or set of tools which enables us to examine how that happens. It consists of concepts, definitions, approaches or theories that are employed for different studies. It outlines the key insights from different bodies of literature that address child's rights violation issues in different ways. It then helps the reader to analyze the processes and factors whereby violence contributes to child's rights violation. Two different theories are considered effective in guiding this study. Mary Klages quoting Aristotle in her book *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed* wrote:

In the world we perceive through our senses, things exist according to ordered principles which can discover Aristotle's 'truth', what his philosophy seeks to understand and teach, resides in discovering the rules and principles that govern how things work and take on meaning in our material world (15).

These theories are chosen because they are relevant to the principles leading to the understanding of the texts under study. For example, trauma which resides in psychoanalytic theory, is concerned with ways in which traumatic events are represented in language. It is particularly concerned with the difficulty or impossibility of such representations, particularly in the context of a sense of the unspeakable or untellable or deferred action, whereby the trauma may properly

be said to be experienced after it is reinterpreted. The characters in these texts are faced with traumatic experiences that their psyches have been exposed to in one way or the other. Post-colonial theory is part of cultural studies. The worst elements of the old are retained and some of the worst of the new elements are added onto the texts under study. It offers a new perspective on how post-colonial children are both victims and agents of violence. These post-colonial children are those that see themselves as inferior beings; the members of the inferior culture as viewed by the colonialists who see themselves as having the dominant culture. Indeed, they sometimes refer to African culture as the “demonic other” while theirs is the “exotic other”.

Psychoanalytic theory

The development of psychoanalytic theory from the work of Sigmund Freud has an influence on literary criticism. It helps in exploring the relationship between the writer and the text. Freud built much of psychoanalysis on his reinterpretation of his patients’ trauma. Trauma is thus relevant in exploring the experiences of the characters in the texts. Trauma “is any serious injury to the body, often resulting from violence or accident” (35), (*Chambers English Dictionary*). “It is an emotional wound leading to psychological injury” (36). To understand trauma and traumatic experiences, we look at Homer’s description of images of horror in Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle’s; *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*.

Homer’s poem is the equivalent not of the sanitized violence of a Hollywood war movies, nor even of the discretely edited images from ‘war torn’ countries that are beamed into your sitting room by CNN or the BBC, but of Guya’s shocking images of the Spanish War of Independence in *Disaster of War* (181), dismembered, disemboweled (274).

Homer's words, like Goya's pictures, are grotesque in their realism, appealing in their unflinching, even zealous recording of human suffering, in their representation of people violently objectified as "violated", "hacked" and "pierced bodies". The association of trauma and trauma theories has become important dimensions of the texts under study. Bearing witnesses in itself inherently related to the act of facing horror.

Sigmund Freud, in his work; *Freud in Modules*, gives a detailed background of the theory of psychoanalysis. The father of psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud, was born in the evening of May 6, 1856 in what is known today as Czech Republic. He graduated at the University of Vienna at the age of twenty-five having studied Medicine for eight years. He became a practicing neurologist. Freud had heard of a "magic drug" with anesthetic powers, tried it and enjoyed the uplifting effects it had on his mood and work. Thinking he was on the verge of medical breakthrough, Freud prescribed the drug to a friend who became hopelessly addicted and died of an over dose. The drug was cocaine. Having lost a friend, a patient, and a measure of respect in the medical community, Freud abandoned the drug and pursued other interests.

In 1885, Freud, moved to Paris to study with Jean Charcot who was studying "hysteria"-a "conversion disorder" in which the patient experiences symptoms such as paralysis of the limbs, blindness, deafness, convulsions and the like- without organic basis. What is fascinating about hysteria is that the patient is not faking, yet there is nothing physically wrong. Charcot found out hysterical disorders often started with a traumatic event in the patient's childhood and that he could make the symptoms vanish by putting the patient under hypnosis. Demonstrations such as this situation filled Freud with a profound regard for the power of the unconscious forces.

Freud's clinical experiences laid a foundation for the theory he later developed. He was convinced that the traumas and conflicts of early childhood can have lasting effects that are ruled by unconscious forces. He was also convinced that what was unconscious can be brought out through free association, that we resist painful insights and that we often transfer our feelings for one object onto another. Slowly but surely, the pieces were falling into place. In 1896, Freud used the term psychoanalysis for the first time. Then, in 1900, he published *The Interpretation of Dreams: Critical Aspects of the Unconscious are the Dreams*. With reference to Ann B. Dobbie's *Theory and practice: An introductory to Literary Criticism*, Freud states that "our dreams are the languages of the unconscious full of unfilled desires that the conscious mind has buried there" (55). Continuing, he explain that, "As a window into the unconscious, dreams become valuable tools for psychoanalysts in determining unresolved conflicts in the psyche, conflicts that a person may suspect only because of physical ailments" (56).

Sussan Nolen- Hoeksema in her book *Abnormal Psychology* asserts that the heart of the psychoanalytic theory is the assumption that "personality is shaped largely by forces that act within a person's unconscious" (523). "Within the unconscious, one has both pleasurable and unpleasurable experiences which shape one's life" (527). "Extreme cases of unpleasurable experiences result in traumas and victims suffer the effects sometimes for a life time" (528). *The World Book Encyclopedia* describes trauma as "an unpleasant emotional experience of such intensity that it leaves a lasting impression on the mind". (405) Psychologists believe that childhood traumatic experiences sometimes lead to later emotional symptoms. The study of such traumas plays an important part in the psychotherapeutic treatment given to the emotionally ill. Traumas occur during adulthood which may have effects that require psychiatric treatment. From *The World Book Encyclopedia*, we discovered that such traumas may be physical, such as a

serious injury or illness, or psychological. In some cases, and unusually, several traumas may result in a type of mental disorder called a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, in her *Abnormal Psychology*, further gives three categories of PTSD, as “re-experiencing of the traumatic event, emotional numbing and detachment, and hyper vigilance and chronic arousal abuse” (355). Nolen-Hoeksema further gives many kinds of abuse such as physical abuse, sexual abuse as in rape, incest and child prostitution, and emotional abuse as when parents continually ridicule their children. Each of these kinds of abuse can contribute to long-term PTSD.

E.D Foa and D.S Riggs, in their research work “Post Traumatic Disorder Following Assault; Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Findings”, opine that 95% rape survivors experience post-traumatic stress symptoms severe enough to qualify for a diagnosis of the disorder in the first two weeks following rape. About 50% still qualify for the diagnosis three months after rape. As many as 25% still suffer from PTSD four to five years after the rape B.E Saunders et.al., in a community survey observes that in the United States alone, “more than 200,000 cases of verified child sexual abuse and more than 380,000 cases of children who have been sexually abused and /or physically assaulted” (148), show that they remain at an increased risk of PTSD as well as other anxiety disorders, depression, substance abuse, sexual dysfunction well into adulthood. A.E Dbner and R.W Motta, in their studies, notes that over 60% of childhood rape survivors develop PTSD at some time in their lives.

Much of what we know about post-traumatic stress disorder comes from studies of children, men and women who fought wars and were taken as prisoners of war. Kashim Kuch and Bathro, J.Cot, in their studies, highlight that there are well documented cases of “combat fatigue

Syndrome”, “war zone stress” and “shell shock” among soldiers and former prisoners of the two World Wars, and The Korean War follow-up studies of some of these people show chronic and post-traumatic stress syndrome symptoms decades after the war.

The term “trauma theory” first appeared in Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative, and History*. The theory stems from the insightful interpretation and elaboration of Freud’s deliberations on traumatic experiences in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Moses and Monotheism*, what Freud called “traumatic neurosis”, the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 officially acknowledged and termed as “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” (PTSD), a concept central to trauma theory. Bennett and Royle in their arguments believe that the reason for our unhappiness, according to Freud, is that “civilization” demands that we forgo our “natural aggressive instinct, the hostility of each against all and of all against each. “The price we pay for our advance in civilization “is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt” (148). “In so-called “civilized” society, our instinctual aggression is turned inward; it becomes that kind of “psychic violence of the “conscience” experienced as feeling of “guilt” (151).

The central claim of contemporary trauma theory asserts that “trauma creates a speechless fright that divides or destroys identity” (75). Identity is formed by the intergenerational transmission of trauma. A discursive dependence upon a single psychological theory of trauma produces a homogenous interpretation of the diverse representations in the trauma novel and the interplay that occurs in language, experience memory and place. The multiple models of trauma and memory presented in the trauma novel draw attention to the role of place, which functions to portray trauma’s effects through metaphoric and material means. The trauma novel demonstrates how a traumatic event disrupts attachments between self and others by challenging fundamental

assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are connected to specific environment.

African children suffered the traumas of violence as they saw how their parents were abused by the colonial regime. The psychological consequence for children which focuses on parents' humiliation viewed through the eyes of a child is in itself traumatic. A person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's senses of self and the standard by which one evaluates a given society is also traumatic. A defining feature of the trauma novel is the transformation of the self-ignited by an external, often terrifying experience which illuminates the process of coming to terms with the dynamics of memory that inform the new perceptions of the self and world.

The remembrance of trauma is always an approximate account of the past, since traumatic experiences include knowledge and representation. Cathy Caruth, interpreting Hurt Kali Tal's works, considers the responses to traumatic experience as an inherent characteristic of traumatic experience and memory. The idea that traumatic experience pathologically divides identity is employed by the literary scholar as a metaphor to describe the degree of damage done to the individual's coherent sense of self and the change of consciousness caused by the experience. The psychological trauma becomes a type of damage to the mind that occurs as a result of a severely distressing experience or event. A traumatic event involves one's experiences, or repeating events of being overwhelmed that can be precipitated in weeks, years, or even decades as the person struggles to cope with the immediate circumstances, eventually leading to serious, long-term negative consequences.

Bisi Daniels, quoting Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder expert, Rockharm Thamos et al, asserts that “PTSD is a mental health condition that is triggered by a terrifying event-either experiencing it or witnessing it” (14). Contributing to this, Daniels,, says that PTSD is not only disorder risk for soldiers, for fighting in war, or for those in military service; it can develop from any event that feels overwhelming, threatening or scary to the person involved. Bisi, quoting the medical experts, posits that:

The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder has symptoms on the person and the symptoms keep returning and manifesting in domestic violence, rape, child abuse and neglect, terrorist attacks, natural disaster, car accident. These are just a few of the traumas that can lead to PTSD. It can come from events that appear for less dramatic such as ongoing bullying, a playground accident or a medical procedure during childhood. It is important to recognize the myth that only obviously life threatening events carry the risk of PTSD. PTSD is the result of the actions/or perceptions of the person traumatized (16).

The person’s present awareness of this disorder, the experts maintain that no words can describe the debilitating impact of severe trauma on survivors. In effect, there is an urgent need to attend to the psychological needs of the PTSD victims, especially children in the society. Psychological trauma is a type of damage to the psyche that occurs as a result of a severely distressing event. It “refers to a person’s emotional response to overwhelming events that disrupt previous ideas of an individual’s sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society” (Baleaev 149). Trauma results from one’s inability to cope with the emotions coming from the unhealthy experience.

It is hard to understand what African children go through during hard experiences like abandonment or during wartime. We cannot help ourselves to bury such memories if we are to avoid this in the future. Reading such memories is equally found to be essential to make the perpetrators see the impact of their inhuman acts on children who live traumatized and without a sense of self-worth despite their attempts to forget. Through the authors' treatment of traumatic experiences of children, they make statements of universal application which lays a new foundation. The works open new grounds by the way they shock both the readers and the cultures in which they are produced as bringing a new form of writing to Africa.

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory examines at the effects of colonization on a country's people, social and political institutions, and literature. Its criticism explores attitudes towards the colonization of the colonizing country and in the literature of the colonized. It focuses at what happens when countries are no longer colonized, when they are postcolonial in an effort to explore the lingering effects of exploitation, racism, and the confused identity of a previously colonized and marginalized people in a postcolonial contest. In the works under study, the researcher studies at the attitudes of the colonizers and those colonized towards one another as well as their assumptions.

Colonialism, post colonialism and neocolonialism depend upon the figure of the colony. Colonialism, according to *Chambers Dictionary*, "is the policy or practice of obtaining or maintaining hold over colonies, especially with the purpose of exploiting them" (223).

Post colonialism "is concerned with what occurs or exists after the end of colonial rule" (510). Neocolonialism "is concerned with the continuing effects of colonialism after the end of

the colonial rule and thus, with the questioning of the “break” implied by the “post” of postcolonial” (310). Postcolonial should be seen as covering all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. It continues to haunt the colony, and denotes the time after the official colonial rule. Chike Okoye writes:

Postcolonial literature is basically the literature written by writers of countries that have gained political independence from a colonial power. Naturally, such literature is made up of and portrays the sentiments, culture and cultural behavior, perceptions etc, as a result of the colonial power’s characteristics, culture, norms, worldview and the subsequent tensions, mixes, outcrops, etc. that manifest as a result of the colonial encounter (1).

For Bennett and Royle, colonialism has to do with four related ideas: point-of-view, writing, law and justice. For them, every colony is a penal colony. It entails the imposition of codes of law, justice and punishment from back home and from a foreign country. That is why Ann Dobbie believes that “colonialism is the subjection of one culture by another. It involves political, economic and cultural dominion”(216). She holds the same view with Bennett and Royle that colonialism is concerned with what happens to a culture from the beginning of colonization to the present. Mary Kleges, explains that postcolonial theory is centrally concerned with examining the mechanisms through which the colonizing powers persuaded the colonized people to accept a foreign culture as better than their own indigenous method of government and social organization. The construction of race and the racial binary opposition of “white” and “other”, be that “other” black, yellow, brown, red or whatever “other” colour became the signifier for the otherness of the colonized people. The African child soldiers have become the signifier here, not only of war and lawlessness, but also of marginally alienated children who are victims of the

exploitation of systems of modernity. Edward Mongia avers in his *Orientalism in Postcolonial Africa*:

Strategic location which is the first step in identifying the Orient (the “other”) by the position the writer takes vis-à-vis the other in our context, the child soldiers are perceived as an outcast due to the intense danger they pose to the public they belong to or from a “minority” group, often disregarded in the community and are in this way assimilated to the “other”. Children we know have always been marginalized and regarded as the “other”. The fact that child soldiers are treated as being different from other children makes their “otherness” more dominant than their “otherness” simply as children (86).

This view is explained by Randall McGowen who observes that “The violent act sets the perpetrator outside of society, not just morally but beyond our rational comprehension as well” (78). Street children belong to a “minority” group often disregarded in the community and are as well assimilated to the “other” in line with postcolonial culture. The children are increasingly used as markers of discontent with the modern world. Under this, the African children cannot be seen as enjoying their childhood. Such images of child exploitation evoke a decadent society- a view corroborated by Edward Mongia who also argues that “these mutilated and persecuted children are suggestive of a dying society” (621), and, that “all the children are exploited and stripped of their rights”(622).

Empirical Studies

Review on the Children's Rights

The Freeman's framework of children's rights proposes four categories of rights for children, namely: "rights to welfare, rights to protection, rights to be treated as adults and rights against parents" (66). This is strengthened by the fact that the framework regards children, broadly speaking, to have the following two types of rights: the right to equal opportunity and the right to liberal paternalism. The theoretical contribution to the children's rights debate demonstrates the extremely diverse nature of the rights which children may claim. Rights to welfare, Freeman's first category, originated in the general notion of human rights, more so from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. The second category of the framework is more overtly concerned with protection from negative behaviour and activities such as inadequate care, abuse or neglect by parents, exploitation by environmental dangers. On it O'Neill asserts, "Whereas welfare rights are based on the assumption that society owes children the best it has to offer, protective rights aim to ensure that minimally acceptable standards of treatment are observed"(448).

The third category on the right to be treated like adults is based on social justice and egalitarianism. According to Freeman, the right and liberties afforded to adults should also be extended to children as fellow human beings, unless there is a good reason for differentiating between adults and children. However, the framework argues that children should be treated as adults with skepticism. In the light of this, the theory propagates that the society should provide "a childhood for every child" and not "an adulthood for every child"(260). The fourth category of the framework is concerned with the rights against parents, the main concern being with self-determination to train their children.

On the Eekelaar's framework of children's rights, his major proposition is social perception, that an individual or class of individuals has certain interests. The interests in question must also be capable of isolation from the interests of others. However, the theory points out that those children often lack the information or ability to decide what is in their interest. The framework identifies three separate kinds of interests which might form the foundation of these retrospective claims, namely basic interests, development interests, and autonomy interests. Basic interests relate to what might be described as the essentials of healthy living, including physical, emotional and intellectual care. Eekelaar maintains that developmental interests entail that, subject to the socio-economic constraints in a particular society, all children should have an equal opportunity to maximize the resources available to them during their childhood (including their own interest abilities) so as to minimize the degree to which they enter adult life affected by avoidable prejudices incurred during childhood. Autonomy interests, on the other hand, refer to the freedom to choose their own lifestyle, and to enter social relations according to their own inclinations.

Hafen's approach to children's rights is viewed against the background of the following two themes: tradition of the individual, which is at the heart of culture, and secondly, family tradition, which is regarded by Hafen as an essential pre-condition for the individual tradition. To Hafen, the maintenance of the family tradition is pre-requisite for the existence of a rational and productive individual tradition. Children are excluded from the individual tradition mainly because of their lack of capacity for rational decision-making, an important requirement for individual freedom. However, children are part of the family tradition, where it is the duty of the parents to develop the minimal capacities of their children with the intention of preparing them for the individual tradition. It is within the framework that Hafen groups children's rights into

two groups, namely rights of protection and rights of choice. Rights of protection include the right not to be imprisoned without due process, rights to property and the right to physical protection. Rights of choice include the right to make affirmative choices of binding consequence, such as voting, marrying, exercising religious preferences, and choosing whether to pursue education. These rights are based on the assumption that the capacity for making rational decision exists.

Review on Street Children and Child Soldiers

From Eclan U. Olokon's study, factors which push children out of their homes vary from "physical maltreatment (27%), and emotional problems 5%, to being sent out of the home because of misdemeanors 8% or family financial problems 24%" (213). The family backgrounds of the children are quite varied. According to the same study, about 14% of fathers were unemployed, while another 18% were self-employed in the informal sector. Surprisingly, 21% of street children had fathers who worked in the lower cadres of the civil service while 11% had fathers who were nurses, teachers and policemen. Most of the mothers were traders, about 87%. With regard to school attendance, "86% of street children had attended school, but most had dropped out at early stages as confirmed in the study by Olokon" (214). According to the study, the overwhelming majority of street children are girls, although there are a few cases of boys living on streets.

Asis, Seymour-Jones, in her own study of street children in Uganda, notes that "40% of them were living under the bridges, 22.5% in markets, 10% in the motor-parks, 10% in cul-de-sacs-dilapidated or abandoned buildings and 15% in school buildings and other places"(58), whereas younger street children tended to sleep in structures hidden away from public view, the older

ones tended to be more visible. Consequently, the public is less aware of the existence of the younger children living on streets. Seymour-Jones observes that children, as young as five years of age, are forced to work under the worst conditions that hamper their development. She further stresses that “those children are often made to work as domestic servants, industrial and farm labourers, street hawkers or, worse still, in commercial sex industry” (59). Some of them work at restaurants, while some are used as terrorists to unleash carnage through suicide bombing.

Street children face physical violence from peers, from older street youths, from the police and from organized criminals who demand protection money and extort money from them and respond violently if they cannot or refuse to pay. Contiani and Hulme explain that in Ethiopia, the police regularly round up children who are trading informally. Street children were 20% more likely to be beaten by the police in such incidents.

Kenneth Lalor examines in some details the victimization experienced by street boys in Ethiopia. He highlights widespread abuse: being beaten was a weekly occurrence for approximately one-third of the sample. More than half reported being “regularly” physically attacked on the streets, “frequently” severely attacked. Injuries from stabbing, slashes from razor blade, fractured skulls and broken bones were quite common, even among this small sample. Injuries were most commonly inflicted during fights with other street boys that arose over ‘rights’ to work in a particular area or perceived insults.

Lalor, reviewing studies of reasons why children end up living on streets, identifies that poverty or financial reasons are usually the most common, but violence or abuse at home is often a significant factor. Contiani and Hulme argue that poverty is less significant than physical violence at home as a factor pushing children onto the streets. They found out that a total of 16%

of street children were from non-poor households and 28% from borderline poor households (ie 56% were poor) whereas only 2 of the 80 children they studied had experienced no violence at home before their move to street, with boys experiencing more physical violence and girls experiencing more sexual violence, although both forms of violence were disturbingly common. He asserts further that in regions affected by war and political violence, issues such as displacement, separation and orphaning may be more important than poverty or abusive homes in driving children onto the streets.

Despite significant international efforts to outlaw the use of child soldiers, recruitment and deployment of children in armed forces continue. Small Armed Survey (SAS) reveals that children, whether actively involved in fighting or in support roles, face numerous violations of their rights; they may be abducted and forced to join other armed forces; they may be forced to kill, to work around camps, to spy on or inform about family or friend, often under threat at gunpoint and being killed or beaten if they do not comply. Girls are often subjected to rape, as well as expected to cook, clean and provide other domestic services around the camp. Reuben Brett, in his studies, pointed out that in institutions of conflict where rape, abduction and physical violence are rife, some girls volunteer to join armed forces as they feel safe with gun. Crush Hogg contends that sometimes, financial incentive to both children and their families are used to convince children to become soldiers and wages are paid directly to children's families.

The Secretary General of UN's report on children being used in armed forces shows that children are uniquely vulnerable to military recruitment and manipulation into violence because they are innocent and impressionable. They are forced or enticed to join armed group. Regardless of how they are recruited, child soldiers are victims whose participation in conflict bears serious implication for their physical and emotional well-being. They are commonly subjected to abuse

and most of them witness death, killing and sexual violence. Many participate in killings and most suffer serious long-term psychological consequences.

Review on Other Novels on Combatant Children

There are unique features of legends or epics which establish some links with the novels under study about child soldiers. Ocaya-Lakidi observes that:

Both during and before Shaka's time, children were not warriors. The standing army was made up of young bachelors in their warrior age grade. It was young men in their twenties who saw action. Adolescent boys lived a barracks life in military Kraals, serving as aids and herd boys until their age set was organized ceremonially as "ibutho" and they were elevated to the status of warriors (121).

Most studies on this issue claim to have never used children as warriors. Studies do show that African society was structured in age-grades and age-sets which have some connections with war. Although these institutions (age-grade and age-set) are closely connected with war and the formation of armies, age sets were primarily created for socio-cultural matters such as marriage.

On the other hand, the writers' novels about child soldiers use their grotesque imagery to offer a new representation of children's marginalization as a result of war. The study takes into account not only the tragic, ugly or grotesques deviance and inversion through which child soldiers are portrayed but also the meaningful patterns that lie hidden in these features and make the issue of child soldiery understandable. From her own study of Nigerian war literature, Ezeigbo argues:

...the degree of human suffering and the extent of the incidence of violence both during the crisis and the war itself are the major sources of the horror of war which form the most prominent theme in the literature of the civil war. Most of

the artists, particularly the novelists, have recreated the various ways in which human beings were brutalized and dehumanized during the war. How well they have done it depends on the artistic competence of the individual writer (94-95).

In Emmanuel Dongala's novel *Johnny Mad Dog*, set in Dongala's native Republic of Congo during the civil war when the former military ruler, Dennis Sassou Nguesso, seized power from Paschal Lissouba in October 1997, a distinguishing feature of the book is its two teenage narrators: the eponymous 16-year-old Johnny and a girl of the same age, Laokele, a war victim. Johnny is a ruthless killer and heroic only in the loosest sense of the word. The bloody incidents of the opening pages already introduce the reader to the images of pain, wounds, fear, blood and death as well as the concept of the grotesque. The wound trope is exemplified by Laokele's legless mother but common to most victims of conflict and indicative of trauma.

In *Otago Bulletin* by the University of Otago de Carle, Gregory McKerracher reports that when asked about his research methods for his novel, Dongala replied:

I was in the thick of that war and I have seen those kids with AK47s bigger than they are. I have seen the suffering and people running away. I did that myself. I ran through the forests. That is enough research to write the novel (7).

Dongala offers vivid descriptions of their way of life, their brutality, immorality and grotesque language. He shows their madness, wickedness and senseless adoration of guns. People lose their belongings, others are killed or maimed, children get lost and schools become dysfunctional.

Kourouma Ahamadous' novel, *Allah is not Obligated* depicts Birahima, the ten year old protagonist, who lives on the street, sleeps and eats anywhere because he has lost his mother. He

is entrusted into the care of a false Muslim who encourages the boy and agrees to accompany him to Liberia in search of his aunt. Birahima joins the army in Liberia at age ten in 2000.

From 1989 to 1996, and 1999 to 2003, Liberia was swept by two civil wars while the civil war on Sierra-Leone lasted from 1991 until 2000. The violence escalated as the war-lords began using children as combatants. *Allah is not Obligated* is a war novel chronicling events as they happened in those wars in which child soldiers were used by the war-lords to commit all kinds of atrocities. The novel has many characters, majority of whom are introduced to us throughout the book as war-lords and heads of state such as Charles Taylor and Samuel Doe of Liberia, former army Corporal Foday Sankoh, and President Joseph Momoh of Sierra-Leone. As Birahima narrates his story forward and backward in time, he relives real events in West Africa through his account. He recalls, for example, the life of the former Liberia President, Samuel Doe, as he chronicles his reign of violence during which he killed people arbitrarily before Taylor rose against him and was captured and murdered by Prince Johnson and his soldiers.

Without being forced into military service, Birahima willingly offers to become a small soldier in order to survive. He is given an AK-47 by the rebel ruler of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, (NPFL) military faction. He has his first experience of battle alongside many other boys, sees death, torture, amputation and madness, but somehow manages to survive. A girl soldier, Sarah is heavily involved in drugs which make her mad. She is a girl friend to Tete Brulee to whom she is sexually attracted and at one stage in their journey wants to have sex with him in public.

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie presents the ordeal of a child soldier in the character of Ugwu. She chronicles the activities of Ugwu, a thirteen-year old boy

who is conscripted into the Nigeria/Biafra War of 1967 to 1970. Many children and nursing mothers die of kwashiorkor. Young teenagers are conscripted into the Biafran army, including Ugwu. Ugwu's head is shaved with a piece of broken glass. There he meets other young boys who live all kinds of indecent life of the jungle: drinking local gin, and spying on the enemy. Ugwu commences his new life of brutality. He gets trained in the camp and becomes an expert in the use of "Ogbunigwe", the Biafra land mine. Ugwu grows valiant and becomes a "Target Destroyer". One of the painful and disgusting images is the rape scene where Ugwu and the thirteen-year old "High Tech" are actors. After hijacking a beetle car from a family, they take it to a bar, smoke "wee wee", drink hard gin and indulge in a mess of rape of the young bar girl.

From the discussion of these texts, it is clear that the writers' use of the child soldiers has shed some light on this figure. These novels contribute to the understanding of this character. The writers acknowledge that this child is a reflection of today's society. The basic question that guides the analysis is whether the children who constitute the subject of the study are to be classed as "rebels", "killers", "monsters" or "victims", together with the question of whether the society has to be regarded as "rebel" of the colonial legacies. We can assume that their representations of child soldiers, more as victims, is far from the writers writing about the child soldier issue as required by art to distort the child soldier (figure) to fit into the society and also creating a perception that calls for our empathy for him or it.

Summary of the Review of Relevant Scholarship

Child rights violation is a matter of concern in every country of the world. At any given time, more than 300,000 children are being exploited in different forms in major streets of African countries and many more girls are being sexually abused even in armed conflict. Many young

girls whose parents are facing serious hardships are being married off at tender age. According to Save the Children International CEO, Hellen Thorning-Schmidt,

One girl under the age of 15 is married seven seconds every day. Girls as young as ten are forced to marry much older men in many countries. Early marriage can trigger a cycle of disadvantages across every part of a girl's life. Conflict, poverty and humanitarian crises are seen as major factors that leave girls exposed to child marriage. It starts the cycle of disadvantage that denies girls the most basic rights to learn, develop and be children (45).

Child's rights abuse came with colonial administration. It is non-existent in our indigenous judicial system, which recognizes that even a slave is the child of another person. The legacies of colonial system have brought about child's right violations in different forms and they form an integral part of this study. It is in that sense that the researcher decides to study *Faceless, We Need New Names, Beasts of No Nations*, and *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* using the post-colonial theory. It is also because of the psychological pains that these neglected children go through that the researcher employs psycho analytic theory in carrying out this research. Having carried out reviews on this research, the researcher feels she wants to delve into the study of violation of child's rights by carrying out a study on the selected texts. It is expected that the study will contribute to knowledge. In view of this, she requests that she be authorized to carry out a detailed research on the topic under review.

CHAPTER THREE

Children of the Streets and Combantant Children: Thematic Focus

This chapter discusses the violation of child's rights on children of the streets as reflected in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. It also examines the independent nature of the children of the streets found in the above novels. It looks at street children's love for family members denied them by their parents which constitutes a major form of deprivation. From investigating the stylistic features employed by the authors, some of the contributing factors to this form of deprivation like poverty, absentee parents, ignorance, cultural beliefs and misplaced priorities on the part of government shall be discussed to determine how these situations form the character of the street children. The chapter also discusses the environment in which the children of the streets operate and the consequences of the environment on their lives, and then suggest strategies for protecting their rights.

Faceless is a satire written to bring to limelight Ghana's socio-political, environmental and moral decadence. The story is very similar to the reality of Ghanaian society. It is a story of Fofu, a fourteen-year old girl who sleeps on an old cardboard at the Agbogbloshie market. In her sleep, she dreams of living in a home with a roof and a toilet, a dream shared by other street children like her. She is woken up by Poison, a street lord who attempts to rape her. Fofu resists him and runs to Oderley, her best friend who lives in a rented wooden shack.

In Ghana, there is a place called Agbogbloshie. It is a former wetland of Accra, Ghana, known as a destination for locally generated used electronics from the city of Accra. It has been alleged to be at the centre of a legal and illegal exportation network for the environmental dumping of electronic waste from industrialized nation. In the 1960s, the slum area of Agbogbloshie was a

wetland. According to Ralph Uwechue in *Africa Today*, as the city of Accra urbanized, a ghetto grew, referred to as Old Fadama or Ayaalolo. During the 1980s, the ghetto was a place of shelter for refugees from Konkomba-Nanumba war. In the late 1990s, electricity from the Akosomba Dam led to a demand for electric and electronic appliance consumption.

The local economy of Agbogbloshie is based on an onion market serving immigrants to Accra from the greater Tamara Region in the North. Unemployed immigrants turned to scrap metal collection, including auto scrap, to supplement incomes. The workers, children and adults alike, sell scrap metal to earn a living. Their dwellings are wooden shacks that lack water and sanitation. The area is also a home to armed robbers, prostitutes, drug dealers and others involved in underground markets. Crime and disease are rampant throughout Agbogbloshie, creating an almost uninhabitable environment of humans. Outsiders nickname the area “Sodom and Gomorrah”, two condemned Biblical cities, due to the harsh living conditions in Agbogbloshie. It is against this background that Amma Darko set her novel, *Faceless*.

According to *Africa Today*, about 50,000 low income inhabitants have settled into “Sodom and Gomorrah” from across Ghana. Many of the villagers find themselves trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty, where the old and young toil side by side. Women and children cook circuit boards to salvage the computer chips. Some of these children travel to Accra themselves hoping to earn money to help their families in the village. Many of them are orphans or have been abandoned. Many untold events happen in “Sodom and Gomorrah”. According to one of the girls of the place as compiled by Alfred Ogbamey:

Sex is nothing here, rape is normal. Few things surprise few people, sleeping outside in the night is an invitation for a predator to strike. Most of us sleep with tight protective under wears especially, tight worn out jeans on because you could wake up in the middle of the night to find somebody crawling on you to do his own thing (28).

According to research findings in Accra Ghana by Fauziatu, Adams, sixty-one thousand four hundred and ninety-two children are on the streets of Accra struggling to make ends meet. A large number of street children can be found in central Accra, the Kwame Nkurumah Circle, Kumasi, Tamale, and other major centres. Fauziatu Adams, a researcher in Department of Social Welfare in Accra, says that Ghana has 33,000 street children, 75% of all street children live in Accra and Kumasi, with 71% of them being illiterates. Sometimes children find themselves on the streets because their parents are too poor to provide for them. These children are supposed to go to school but instead they sell all kinds of wares such as dog chains, toffees, toys, etc. Some of them beg or run errands for survival. Most of them have travelled from far away villages in search of jobs. But when they move to the cities, they don't get the jobs and have nowhere to go so they end up sleeping in front of stores and kiosks.

The girls, according to Wendy Jones working in a Social Welfare Department in Ghana have to adopt extra-survival strategies; once the age of puberty has been reached, many of them will have boy minders who will demand sexual favours as payment for protection. Many small girls will use sex for survival in terms of supplementing their income. It is too easy to call them prostitutes. A prostitute "is a professional sex worker". "A fourteen-year old, for example, who offers sex for food and a few shillings to buy a length of cloth is a prostitute"(67). In 2003,

Wendy Jones asked street children in Accra some simple questions and recorded what they said thus:

Wendy: If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?

Peter (15): My home town.

Wendy: What makes you cry?

Sandra (14): When I am hungry.

Wendy: What do you think about last thing at night?

Godfrey (17): I think about the next day. Because I think that evening has passed so, I
Have to think about the next day. As for the night I have no place to go
and I just sleep.

Wendy: What would you like to do in the future?

Larni, (18): If I am rich, I will care for street children- children with broken legs who
can't work.

Wendy: What do you regret?

Betty: I will say I regret being a street girl and I regret picking a boyfriend. And I
regret having bad friends.

From this interview, the majority of these street children lack almost all basic needs: shelter, education, health care, adequate nutrition, economic independence and personal safety. They are

ignored by authorities and the public and they are often the target for exploitation, threats and violence. This inspired Amma Darko to publish their plights in a fictional form called *Faceless*.

We Need New Names written by a Zimbabwean, Noviolet Bulawayo provides vivid images of life in postcolonial Africa, filled with disillusionment and Diaspora disenchantment. The protagonist is Darling, a ten-year old who navigates through a fragile and violent world with her friends in Zimbabwe. They are six friends: three boys and three girls. Bastard, a boy, is eleven; Chipso, a girl, is eleven also; Godknows is a boy of ten years; Sbho is a girl of nine; Stina, a boy, has no birth certificate; and Darling is a ten-year-old girl. These children wander from one town to another in search of guava to steal. They are not being fed. Their mothers are busy with hair and idle talks. They just glance at these children as they file past and look away. Their fathers do not care. They go for dangerous jobs at nearby country, probably South Africa.

Zimbabwe, which is formerly Southern Rhodesia, is a land-locked country. According to Ralph Uwechue in *Africa Today*, three to four percent of the land is unsuitable for agriculture. Bulawayo is one of the modern neighborhoods in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a republic in Southern Africa. It achieved independence in April 1980 following a long period of colonial rule and a 15-year period of white-dominated minority rule instituted after the minority regime so called Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. Robert Mugabe's autocratic rules were evidenced in February 2000 by the defeat of a referendum for a new constitution. Land seizure accelerated in mid-2002 as Mugabe was re-elected albeit in controversial elections. Laws were enacted that made it easier to seize land.

Mugabe's land reform policies and his 1998 intervention in the civil war in Congo (Kinshasa), purportedly to protect his personal investments, provoked international outrage and the

suspension of some economic aid for Zimbabwe. *Zimbabwe* has its high rates of unemployment and of inflation which also created problems. In addition to severe political and economic turmoil, the spread of AIDS in Zimbabwe reached epidemic proportions. By the beginning of 21st century, one in four adult Zimbabweans was infected. Life expectancy had fallen to below 40 years, and hundreds of thousands of children had been left orphans. This increased the number of street children in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe has also had a troubled political history. The largest black ethnic group, the Shona (the Mashona) and the second largest group, Ndebele (Matabele) have had violent uprising called Chimurenga (War of Liberation or violent uprising) which took place in 1896-1897. The second Chimurenga resulted in the subsequent removal of the white dominated Rhodesian government in 1980 and Zimbabwe attained political independence. The third Chimurenga which took place in 2002 allowed the repression and redistribution of large tracks of land from the minority whites community into the hands of black populace who had long been over-populated in the infertile and somewhat drought of the country. It is against all these troubles that Noviolet Bulawayo sets her novel, *We Need New Names*. It reflects the hardship, hunger, AIDS, unemployment and autocratic government in Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe which affect children the more.

Fofu's mother in *Faceless*, Maa Tsuru, informs her that her elder sister, Baby T is dead and that Poison threatens her into silence over Baby T's death and urges Fofu to leave for her safety. Kabria, a mother of three children who lives in the neighborhood in Accra, and works with MUTE, a non-governmental agency runs into Fofu at the Agbogbloshie market while shopping for vegetables. Kabria stands with other spectators at the spot where Baby T's body is found when Fofu tries to steal her purse. She rescues Fofu from the angry mob. Fofu reveals her identity and tells Kabria that Baby T is her sister.

MUTE gets interested in Baby T's matter and grants Fofu protection by taking her into temporal custody while conducting investigations regarding Baby T's death. Baby T is the third child of Maa Tsuru and is born after a brutal beating. Her father disappears leaving her mother to fend for herself and the children. Her mother finds a new lover, Kpakpo, who sexually abuses Baby T. She reports the rape incident to an uncle known as Onko who lives in the same compound with them, and he rapes her also. Baby T is later sold to a prostitution ring consisting of Madam Abidjan, Maami Brooni and Poison, the street lord and ring leader. She is made to work as a child prostitute in Maami Brooni's brothel with earnings sent to Maa Tsuru (her mother) who simply turns a blind eye.

Onko visits a native doctor and tells him that Baby T is the reason for his problem. He goes in search of Baby T and Kpakpo helps him connect with her once again. Poison eventually leads Kpakpo to Maami Brooni's brothel where Baby T works as a prostitute. Baby T remembers what Onko does to her in the past and refuses to sleep with him. Poison slaps and tries to beat her into submission. Baby T is found dead on the concrete floor with her head split open. She is alone with Onko in the room at the time of her death. Onko commits suicide thereafter.

Chipo, in *We Need New Names* who is eleven years old, is impregnated by her grand-father. Darling and her friends try to get the baby out of the young Chipo's belly. They notice that Chipo's breasts have developed because she is still a small girl. They invent new names to get rid of Chipo's pregnancy as they wander from place to place for guava to steal. They see memories of homes destroyed by paramilitary policemen before the school closed. They drop out of school. These groups of destitute but fearless children in a ravaged never-named country usually play games in shanty town called Paradise. They have lived in real houses and have

attended schools but police and AIDS have destroyed all of them. Now, they roam rich neighborhoods stealing guavas and hiding in trees while gangs raid white homes.

Darling has an opportunity to move to Michigan with her aunt, Fostelina. She faces a different challenge. In America, Darling sees it as an ugly place and absorbs the worst of its culture—internet porn, obscene consumerism, the depreciation of education and prostitution. *We Need New Names* is a coming-of-age novel which follows a ten-year old Darling as she and her displaced family and friends adapt to and cope with a harsh, violent world when they are in Zimbabwe. Darling later migrated to America with her aunt, Fostelina.

This chapter investigates the child's rights violations on combatant children in Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* and Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. It ascertains how writers have portrayed the children as combatants of war. The study also examines the stylistic features employed by the writers and the consequences of war on the lives of the children. The impact of war, the subconscious being of the children constitutes the internal world which arises from the experiences of war like deprivation, lack of decent shelter, hunger, physical and emotional abuse which are some of the things discussed in this chapter

Children are uniquely vulnerable to military recruitment and manipulation into violence because they are innocent and impressionable. They are forced or enticed to join armed groups. Regardless of how they are recruited, child soldiers, whether combatant children or kid-at-arms, are victims whose participation in conflict bears serious implications for their physical and emotional well-being. They are commonly subjected to abuse and most of them witness death, killing and sexual violence. Many participate in killing and most suffer long-term psychological consequences. In 2007, it was estimated by the United Nations that “approximately 35,000

children were being used for military purposes in Africa's most intense conflicts in North Sudan/Darfur, South Sudan, Central African Republic and Nigeria"(54). In 2016, according to the United Nations, "children were being used by armed groups in seven African countries: Central Africa Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan" (324). Some leaders recruit them because they have claimed that children, despite their underdevelopment, bring their own quality as combatants to a fighting unit, being often remarkably fearless, agile and hardy. African countries, after colonization, were led into poverty, disease, war, and kidnapping, which in turn led to forced child labour. The researcher's aim is not to question the practice but to spotlight the parallels to show how child soldier have been forced by hardship into manhood.

Thematic Focus

Poverty and Parental Irresponsibility

Poverty, which is a situation whereby one does not have money to cater for one's basic needs is depicted in Darko's *Faceless*. Most people in "Sodom and Gomorrah" are stricken with poverty. This is as a result of post-independence realities. People live in shacks and filths in "Sodom and Gomorrah". The poverty in the land compels Maa Tsuru to drive away her children onto the streets to fend for themselves. Fofo, Maa Tsuru's fourteen-year-old child, complains about her mother:

I cannot help thinking that maybe she never has a smile for me because the man she made me with, that is my father, probably also never had a smile for her. One day she said to me, "Go, You do not belong here!" If I don't belong to where she is, where do I belong....? She worries about the food that she has. It is never enough.... She hates to see my face (*Faceless 2*).

Amma Darko uses this to proclaim to her readers how poverty, along with negligence and the irresponsibility of parents, ruins the lives of children. Men who find themselves incapable of sustaining a family run away from home, leaving the wives to take care of the children alone. When the burden becomes too much for the women, they relieve themselves by pushing the children onto the streets to suffer. This is the case of Kwei, Maa Tsuru's husband by whom she has four children, two sons and two daughters. In defiance of Kwei's mother, he goes ahead to marry Maa Tsuru. His mother has opposed the marriage on the grounds that Maa Tsuru is a curse bearer. He twice abandons Maa Tsuru but returns to woo her back. He finally walks out on her when she is already expecting their fourth child. Maa Tsuru later has another lover, Kpakpo. She has two sons for him. Kpakpo deceives Maa Tsuru by sending her daughter, Baby T into prostitution. Unknown to her, he manipulates Baby T into co-habitation with them. Kpakpo sexually manipulates Baby T. Kpakpo is dubious, lazy, irresponsible and wicked. In Kpakpo, we see the example of child abuse which the U.N is making effort to eradicate. In Kwei, Kpakpo and Maa Tsuru, we encounter parental irresponsibility.

In *We Need New Names*, parental irresponsibility and neglect are apparent. Darling's father abandons his children and migrates to South Africa and returns many years after contracting HIV. Her mother finds another lover with whom she sleeps at night under the same roof with her children. Delinquent parent are depicted in *Faceless* and in *We Need New Names*. Quoting J.S. Mbiti, Onoriose, in his paper titled "Delinquent Parents and Suffering Children in Okpewho's *The Victims*", clearly enunciates the rights and duties of different members of the family thus:

In the family, individuals are closely bound to each other, both because of blood or marriage and the family must, therefore, be complete in order to regulate and maintain its welfare. In all African families, there is a hierarchy based on age and

degree of kinship. The oldest members have a higher status than the youngest. Within that hierarchy, there are duties, obligations, rights and privileges dictated by the moral sense of the society. For example, parents have a duty to look after their children, protect them, educate them, and bring them up to be well behaved. These are the duties of parents towards their children; the community may punish them through pouring shame on them... (178).

The duties of the parents towards their children are paramount, especially the father who is the head of the family. Continuing, Onoriose, from the sociological praxis, quoting Otite and Ogionwu, explains that:

The father has the overall authority in most societies. He directs the affairs of the unit but takes vital decisions after consulting with the wife and children if they are adults. He administers and protects the family and contributes to the physical well-being of the members of the family. This well-being includes providing food, clothes and shelter. He is not but only a bread winner. He is also expected to lead in the training of the children (178).

Fofo and Baby T in *Faceless* and Darling and her friends in *We Need New Names* end up in the streets because they are products of homes where either of the parents, often the father, is quite irresponsible. In *Faceless*, for example, Kwei abandons his responsibilities towards his children. The same thing applies to Odarly's father. Kpakpo is also irresponsible towards his sons. Maa Tsuru's father has also acted irresponsibly by disowning Maa Tsuru's pregnancy. Women are not spared in this issue. Odarly's mother claims that her daughter steals her things therefore, she sacks her from home, leaving her to street demons instead of correcting her and putting her on the right track. It is Maa Tsuru who demonstrates the greatest parental irresponsibility. She

reverses her role with the children. Her two sons, in their teens, are already earning their own living even supporting the rest of the family, while her two daughters, Fofu and Baby T are street veterans. The boys feed their mother as child labourers. She also collects proceeds from Baby T and abuses her with indifference. She collects money from Onko as a price for the sexual abuse of her daughter. When her two sons leave the house, she does not bother about their whereabouts. She also neither raises an issue nor challenges anybody over Baby T's death.

Ignorance and Superstition

Ignorance and superstition contribute to the emergence of street life in *Faceless*. Superstition *World Book Encyclopedia* is “a belief not based on reason or fact which suggests that future event may be influenced by a person's behavior or some supernatural force” (876). This relates to Maa Tsuru's mother who is said to have cursed the young man who is responsible for Maa Tsuru's pregnancy. The curse is said to have been evoked at the time the woman is in labour. Maa Tsuru has since become a curse bearer. It is believed that the curse is responsible for her misfortunes. As a result of this, the mother of Kwei, Maa Tsuru's lover, is opposed to her son marrying her because of the supposed curse which will attract misfortunes to her son. The result of these is single parenthood which leads to the woman pushing her children to the streets because she cannot take care of them alone.

Single Parenthood

In the instance of the single-parenthood portrayed in *Faceless*, women are the ones abandoned to face the challenge of raising the children alone. We see that in Maa Tsuru and Odarly's mother. Such families with one parent end up raising children who become misfits and criminals in the society. Poison lacks the care and love of a biological father. Odarly lacks same. The same goes for Fofu and Baby T. All of them turn out to be bad except Fofu who is saved by MUTE (an

NGO) intervention. Such a condition contributes to the rise in the incidence of street life for, otherwise, innocent children. In *We Need New Names*, the children are left in the hands of either the grandmother or the grandfather. Darling is left in the hands of her grandmother called Mother of Bones because her mother is always at the border begging for money. Chipo is left in the care of her grandfather who later impregnates his eleven-year-old grandchild. The children in Paradise devise new ways of surviving by playing country games called 'Find Bin Ladin' to ward off all dull moments in their lives. Chipo delays them in their games. They take up new names to get rid of Chipo's pregnancy. They imitate people in the hospital, Sbho is Dr. Bullet; Darling is given Dr. Roz; Dr. Cutter is Stina; and Chipo is a patient. They want to use crude means to remove Chipo's pregnancy. They are stopped by a woman called Mother Love. These children would like to be doctors and health workers which would be their new names but they are made to be of the streets as a result of their old President's rigging of the election. The people of their country suffer. Darling then leaves for America.

The picture of hunger is painted in the meaning of Zimbabwe by Americans when they see Darling as she migrates to America:

That part of Africa where vultures wait for famished children to die, where the life expectancy is thirty-five years, where dissidents shove AK-47 between women's legs, where old president rigged the election, and people were tortured and killed while a whole bunch of them is put in prison. We wept for our blessed country ... we wept like widows, we wept like orphans (237-238).

The effects of the phenomenon of street children are largely adverse on the children and the society at large, even the parents are not spared. The children experience exploitation and abuse in different ways: sexual, economic, social and physical. They also go through emotional and

psychological turmoil. Many have irreversible experiences like death as in the case of Baby T; the society also becomes a victim because young talents are wasted as in the case of Darling and her friends who want new names as doctors or nurses. Some of the parents and guardians of such children experience emotional torture in terms of guilt feelings. This is also seen in Maami Broni and even in Onko in *Faceless*.

Recruitment and Conscription

Uzodinma Iweala's Beasts of No Nation is derived from the title of Fela Anikulapo Kuti's music album whose philosophy centres on challenging the beast in African humankind, explores the modern day by reality of child soldiering in a genocidal war. Narrated by Agu, one of the child-victims and the central character in the work, the novel gives a first-hand account of the present-day practice of using children in armed conflicts. The African setting of this novel is unnamed, thus deliberately representing the widespread situation of boys fighting men's wars, a practice that is going on in many parts of Africa and elsewhere today.

The novel begins with Strika, a boy-soldier of about ten years of age, as well as another boy, Agu (aged twelve) who hides because he thinks he will be safe after being separated from his mother and only sister, and also having witnessed the killing of his father by enemy soldiers. Strika drags his father before the Commandant, a ruthless leader controlling a troop of soldiers. Agu is given the choice of joining the army or being killed. As part of his initiation and to prove that he is not a spy, Agu is given a machete and ordered to hack a man (an enemy soldier) to death. The commandant assures Agu, "It's just like killing a goat. Just bring this hand up and knock him well" (21). With this last order, the Commandant closes his hand over Agu's as the boy holds the machete, and brings it down on the enemy's head. Agu, in his conscience, justifies his action saying:

I am not a bad boy. How can I be bad boy? Somebody who is having life like I am having and fearing God the whole time I am soldier and soldier is not bad if he is killing, so if I am killing them, I am only doing what is right (23-24).

In recruiting the children as soldiers, they are forbidden to use their birth names, traditional names or any other names related to their past experiences with their families. They are, instead, given war names that identify them with their roles in the war. In *Beasts of No Nation*, some of the boys are given such names as Rambo, Strika, Preacher, Griot, etc. This is intended to sever their links with their people, eliminate the desire to escape and rejoin their families and communities and accept their new world and roles. They are indoctrinated into believing that the so-called enemies killed their parents and took away their loved ones and therefore must die. Thus, anybody the boys come across, man or woman is an enemy. To make them stronger, braver and forget their families, they are shown war movies and they are given hard drugs. These take away their humanities.

Ishmael Beah, in his *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of A Boy Soldier* explains the strategies of manipulation used to obtain and brainwash children, turning them into killing machines which ultimately make it difficult for them to leave and reintegrate into society. Ishmael Beah and his brother, Junior, together with his friends, Mohammed and Talloi, are stripped of their homes and families with fear and uncertainty as they search for parts of their country that have not been affected by war in order to seek refuge.

In 1991, a small band of men who called themselves 'Revolutionary United Front' (RUF), under the leadership of a farmer, Corporal Friday Sankoh, began to attack villages in Eastern Sierra Leone on the Liberian border. The initial group was made up of Charles Taylor's rebels and a few mercenaries from Burkina Faso. Their goal was to rid the country of the corrupt All People's

Congress (APC) government. In 1992, a group of young military officers, led by Captain Valentine Stresser, launched a military coup that sent Momo into exile. They established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) as the ruling authority in Sierra Leone. Stresser was ousted and replaced by Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio. Ahmed Tejan Kabba, later won the presidential election. He was overthrown. In 1998, the military junta was ousted by Nigeria-led ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). There has been unsteady leadership in Sierra Leone till a peace treaty was signed in 2006. Ishmael Beah started fighting from ten years old. “His teen years are killing field.” He attests that “my squad is my family, my gun is my provider and protector and my rule is to kill or be killed”(126).

Agu, the protagonist in Uzodinma Iweala’s *Beasts of No Nation*, is brainwashed by the Commandant into joining the army. As the civil war rages in the unnamed West African Nation, Agu, the school-aged protagonist, is recruited into a unit of guerilla fighters. He is enticed by Commandant’s uniform and shiny sword, holding the gun as the Commandant is shouting “left right”. The conductor tells Agu that being a soldier is like “falling in love” (15). Agu believes him so much that he joins the military. Haunted by his father’s own death in the hands of militants, from whom he flees just before witnessing commander, he is vulnerable to the dangerous, yet paternal nature of his new life.

While the war progresses, Agu becomes increasingly divorced from the life he knew before the conflict started—a life of school friends, church services, and time with his family. As he recalls these sunnier times, his daily reality continues to spin further downward into inexplicable brutality, primal fear, and loss of selfhood. By joining the army, his rights to parental care, education and safe accommodation are denied. Children who are recruited into fighting wars are turned into killers through a brutal initiation process in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy*

Soldier. New recruits are often forced to kill escapees or even members of their family to prove they are worthy of recruitment. If they refuse or try to decline, they will also be killed. They force recruits to eat or drink the blood of their freshly killed victim with the explanation that the initial RUF are caved wherever it pleases the rebels, with a hot bayonet. This not only means that you are scared for life but that you cannot escape from them. Then the training begins. The new recruits need strength. “The guns were a little heavy for Sheku and Josiah, who kept dropping them and picking them up (203). They need gumption. The first battle is the most shocking. Beah witnesses “Blood poured out of the bullet holes in him like water rushing through newly opened tributaries (222)”. His eyes are wide open but he still holds his gun. Josiah first kills his mother.

The boys are now soldiers, handling AK47 (Automatic Kalashnikov 1947). The children are as dangerous as adult soldiers. This is the worst act of violence. The bizarre murderous acts of these children who kill even their own parents make them appear grotesque and alien. They create the impression that they are murderers, criminals, monsters, dangerous, cruel, problems and a lost generation. This research advocates children’s rights and an end to the use of children to combat wars in Africa. The positive image of childhood, which the postcolonial theory needs today, must represent African children mostly as they will be, not as they are. The focus here is on the “ugly”, “dirty” or “grotesque” nature of these children.

However, this study opposes viewing child soldiers only from negative perspectives – as rebels, terrorists, mad, killers, perspective monsters, and so on; such a view implies that they are unlawful children. It entails having connections with post-colonial culture. The discourse of violence still represents a sight of discursive struggle in which the colonial ideologies of oppression continue through post-colonial ideologies of war. Agu, in *Beasts of No Nation* and

Ishmael and other boy soldiers like Talloi, Gibrilla, Kaloko and Khaliono, in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, are normal children in a difficult situation. This perception fosters a stance against their prosecution for war crimes and instead favours their treatment as victims entitled to rehabilitation and restorative justice through Child Rights Act. In this way, they are not only seen as children fighting in war; it is important to move beyond the binary opposites of good-bad. Instead of arguing that Agu, in *Beasts of No Nation*, for instance is one thing (a perpetrator) or the other (a victim), it is important to clarify what and who a child soldier is.

Ishmael Beah, in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, is a child soldier during the civil war in Sierra Leone in the 1990s. He runs away from his village at the age of 12 after it is attacked by rebels and he becomes forever separated from his immediate family. He wanders the war-filled country and is forced to join an army unit that brainwashes him into using guns and drugs. By the time he attains 13 years of age, he has already perpetuated and witnessed a great deal of violence. Agu, in *Beasts of No Nation*, considers himself not a bad boy, but a soldier forced to join the army at a tender age. He is skinny, precocious and naive of the kind of job he is going to do because he thinks soldiers will be “taking care of him and fighting the enemy that is taking his father” (68). These child soldiers are characterized by ambiguity. There are meanings associated with his violence, madness, grotesqueness, culpability and those associated with his peacefulness, innocence or victimization. If we regard children as perpetrators, we are probably assigning them responsibility for war for which they should forfeit their status as children. In this respect, they are as bad as any criminals, murderers, rebels or warlords. However, if we take the opposite stance and say they are not perpetrators, we may be surprised to find that they admit to these actions in these works.

The English words 'child soldiers' or French words 'enfant soldats' are directly linked to violence. The Western concept of "child soldier" combines two irreconcilable terms: "child", on the one hand, and "soldier", on the other. The fact that Africans refer to child soldiers simply as children rather than children and combatants or children and soldiers has to do with the fact that Africans see child soldiers as any other children. The soldier is, in the mind of most people, a terrifying image; the gun he carries symbolizes death although it also brings to mind the idea of protection to others. The child soldier is conflated with the stereotypical image: he is aligned analogically with killers; as such, he has become a figure of absolute "otherness".

This concept of "child soldiers" applied to children at war is a foreign category; it is western in nature and has a stigma attached to it. They are, therefore, perceived as outcasts due to the intense danger they pose to the public. They belong to the minority group often disregarded in the society and in this way assimilated to the other. The fact that they are treated as being different from other children makes their "otherness" even more dominant than their "otherness" simply as children. This view is explained by Randall McGowen who observes that: "The violence act sets the perpetrator outside of society, not just moral but beyond our rational comprehension as well" (67). He further argues that "The violent act comes to define a character as different from us, as criminal" (48). In this manner, violence has, according to McGowen, become the domain of the "other". These children cannot be seen as enjoying their childhood; such images of exploitation evoke a decadent society, a view corroborated by Beatrice Rangira Gallmore who argues that these persecuted children are "suggestive of a dying society. They are forced by hardship into manhood" (234).

Child Abandonment and Neglect

Combatant children have been displaced and orphaned at very tender ages, leading to hazardous wandering, hunger, sickness, malnutrition, starvation and so on. They also suffer physical injuries, especially given their young age and inexperience. Josiah, in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* who, because of his very tender age (seven years), was given a stool to stand on was killed the very first day of fighting. Strika, in *Beasts of No Nation* becomes a mule after witnessing the killing of his parents, while Agu is unable to lie down the first time the Commandant sexually assaults him. All these experiences impede the educational, vocational and intellectual developments and potentialities of the children.

When he was a little boy, Agu's mother had already taught him how to read and write before his father formally enrolled him in school where Agu would train to be a doctor or engineer. In addition to formal education the boys had received at school, the community also offered some training that would help develop them as responsible adults such as age grade dance. All these came are truncated with the outbreak of the war and consequent conscription into the army. They are then taught the ways of brutality, including ripping out the unborn babies from their mother's wombs.

It is not only educational and intellectual potentialities of the children that are abandoned. The boys also lose their once peaceful and serene environment and are plunged, instead, into a life of chaos, violence and confusion. Before the war, nature is kind to the people. They enjoy their simple village life. But all these come to an end with the outbreak of the war as confusion, chaos and violence replace them. Thus, the children are abandoned to their own fate. When Ishmael, in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, remembers the first time he slits a man's throat

and the day they bury alive all the prisoners of a particular village they attack because the lieutenant says, “It will be a waste of bullets to shoot them” (63); this causes him sleeplessness. Also, each time Ishmael goes to fetch water, he sees blood, and if he stands near a tree, he remembers how they used to tie people to trees, kill them and allow them to rot there.

Such experiences lead to emotional disturbances in the boys. Quoting Sigmund Freud, O’Hang observed that “major personality traits are established in early childhood and that any subsequent traits are a mere elaboration of the earlier ones” (19). He reiterated that children are emotionally disturbed as a result of neglect in their early years. Thus, excessive neglect in infancy can lead to dysfunctional behaviour later in life. If a child’s needs are very frustrated a particular aspect of the child’s personality can become stunted.

Children, in *Beasts of No Nation* and in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, shall not have been exposed to carrying guns and killing even their relatives if they are protected. The children who are the protagonists in these novels are neglected children. They are abandoned by the warring society. Leaving the children to fight wars means assigning to them responsibilities they cannot handle as children. This is clearly an act of abandonment which is not without adverse consequences. They are deprived of parental care and education, and are exposed to danger. Child abandonment is a form of neglect or abuse.

The protagonists in these two books resign to their fate because they are incapacitated. They are in the situation of not knowing what to do next but are aware that they are not real soldiers. That is the reason the narrator, in *Beasts of No Nation* asks; “If army is made of soldiers, and we are not army, then how can we be real soldiers?” (37). The would be assailant is Strika-a traumatized boy who has been mute since after seeing his parents killed. He is then conscripted into the

wretched army, in utter degradation in the hands of other soldiers. He is half-starved and drug-crazed like Agu. They are sexually abused by the Commandant. Commandant is one of those soldiers who exploit children in times of conflict. The boys hope for a peaceful future thinking, “One day there will be no more war and we can be living together in a house and eating all the food we are wanting to eat”. (72)

In *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, Ishmael thinks about his parents. His mother and father are not married anymore, but he still sees both of them. He thinks about what they are doing during the attacks; how they may be worried looking for each other and his little brother. The next day, the three boys: Ishmael, Junior and Talloi, head towards Mogbwem. They see people screaming the names of their family members and little children crying out for their parents. In Ishmael’s grandmother’s village, the homes are all deserted. The boys see a man who’s been wounded driving a van. Inside is his entire family. They have all been killed. At the end of the day, Ishmael sees a woman walking with a baby strapped to her back. The baby has been shot and is bleeding, but the bullet has not gone all the way through, so the woman is still alive. Ishmael watches the woman take the baby off her back and cradle her in her arms. It is then that the boys start reasoning that going back to Mogbwem will be a huge mistake. There is nothing for them there. Their families cannot, possibly, be waiting for them. The boys are not quick enough and are once again overpowered by the men of a village. “This time they are a long way to Mattru Jong-A Long Way Gone” (65). These words of despair give rise to the title of Ishmael Beah’s *Memoirs*. The country gained independence in 1961, but by 1968, the All People’s Congress (APC) had taken over and declared Sierra Leone a one-party State. The people said it was a rebellion against the corrupt government. These rebels shoot innocent babies abandoned in the course of the conflict, conscripting other children to combat war.

Sexual Exploitation

The soldiers turn the children into sex machines. Narrating his experience with the Commandant in one of their homosexual encounters, Agu describes what happens after the Commandant has told him to remove his clothes saying:

So I was removing them. And then, after making me be touching his soldier and all of that thing with my hand and with my tongue and lip, he was telling me to kneel and then he was entering inside of me the way the man goat is sometimes mistaking other man goat for woman goat and going inside of them. (85)

Through sexual exploitation and general act of brutality associated with the war, the boys lose their faith and innocence. Whenever Agu thinks of the evil he has done, or entertains fears of not realizing his dream of not becoming an engineer or doctor, he becomes very sad. He laments this after one of his homosexual encounters with the Commandant: “it is making me to be angry and it is making me to be sad” (84). His rape of a woman keeps haunting him and he continually wrestles with the thought of whether or not he is a devil. Ishmael, in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, also discloses that at the Rehabilitation Centre, memories of the people he has raped and killed cause him migraine, sleeplessness and sadness.

After taking drugs, the protagonists and other child soldiers indulge in sexual exploitation. Agu, in *Beasts of No Nation*, admits, “I am growing hard between my legs”. He is aroused by acts of violence and sex. He rapes a mother and her daughter who screams and begs. Agu and Strika kill the girl and the mother after abusing them sexually. Agu uses knife to cut the little girl. In *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, one of the main aims of rebels when they take over a town is to force women and children to stay with them. Seeing the civilians, the rebels’ fire

rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), machine guns, AK-47s, G3s, all the weapons they have into the clearing air. Young boys are immediately recruited, and the initials RUF are carved wherever it pleases the rebels, with a hot bayonet. This not only means that you are scared for life but that you can never escape from them, because escaping with the carving of the rebels' initials is asking for death as soldiers will kill you without any questions and militant civilians will do the same. Then the women and girls are sexually exploited. The boys so recruited rape women and children. Some even rape their mothers and sisters because they are acting under the influence of drugs and alcohol. They have become animals.

Combatant Children and Drugs

Combatant children are children involved in a war or battle. These children are used for military purposes and so they are vulnerable to all kinds of abuse, including being forced to take drugs. Military Commanders, oftentimes, force children to take drugs like amphetamines, crack cocaine, palm wine, brown and brown (cocaine mixed with gun powder), marijuana and tranquilizers in order to disengage the child's actions from reality. Those who try to refuse are beaten or killed. According to Ishmael in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, "taking the drugs made it easier for them to kill because it numbed them of any emotion" (95). Once the children are addicted to drugs, they will do just about anything that is ordered. They now evolve from boys into soldiers. This creates a loss of identity for both the rebels and the boys as they are handed over AK-47 and then drugs become part of their world. Beah recounts walking through villages killing everyone in sight and killing the wounded that have been left behind. He is now quite different from the boy who loved hip-hop and danced around to the music. His original self has been taken from him as a result of drugs. He has no place to call a home. The war has taken

many parts of his spirit. He does not know fear because he is filled with drugs which bring a false sense of power.

Agu, in *Beasts of No Nation*, confesses, “gun juice” (drug) makes one stronger and braver to kill. It makes one’s head to hurt and it tastes like bullet and sugar cane. “Everybody is always wanting gun juice because it is drug and it makes life easy...it is tasting like licking sweet” (55). The drug makes the boys not feel hungry when they are fighting. “Everybody is looking like one kind of animal and smelling like chicken or goat, or cow” (58). Agu and his friend, Strika, are drug crazy; high on “gun juice”, they start “liking to kill” as everyone looks like animal to hunt. These combatant children of war would not have been exposed to such a life if they were protected. They are abandoned by the society which is at war. They are assigned to responsibilities they cannot handle as children. They are taught to use drug and they shoot. They are denied their childhood pleasures and are rather given a violent and gruesome role to play in brutal conflict. Ishmael Beah recounts how he stops his daily activities like playing soccer in the village and instead smokes and takes more of white capsules. These give him a lot of energy. On his first time of taking these drugs, he begins to perspire so much that he takes off his clothes. He loses his hearing for several minutes, walks around the village aimlessly and, after several doses of the drugs, he feels numbness in everything and can sleep for weeks. The result of taking drugs by these children triggers off other problems that border on violating their rights.

Ishmael and other children watch war movies. They watch *Rambo: First Blood*, *Rambo II*, *Commando* and so on with the aid of generator or sometimes a car battery. They implement the techniques of Rambo because they want to be like him. When they run out of food, drugs, ammunition, and gasoline to watch war films, they raid rebel camps, towns, villages and forests. They kill some rebels and take their supplies. They round up the civilians and make them carry

the loot back to their base. But in the last week of January 1996, everything begins to change for Ishmael. He is fifteen. UNICEF arrives to take the boys. They are rescued by the UNICEF and placed in a rehabilitation camp in Freetown. It is there that he goes through yet another traumatizing experience of withdrawal from drugs and violence.

CHAPTER FOUR

Children of the Streets and Combantant Children: Stylistic Devices

The Technique of Contrast

The artist, writes I.A Richard in Mary Klege's *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*, "is the beautiful ordering of what in most minds is disordered" (18), and Alexander Pope once defined the subject of art as "what oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed" (285). These definitions suggest that the artist's distinction lies in how well he or she can artistically utilize available human experience to offer a vision to society. Amma Darko and Noviolet Bulawayo have identical themes and intentions in their novels. They are synoptic when the theme of their novels is concerned with children of the streets. Their novels probe the causes of reckless abandonment of children on the streets of major African cities. They adopt the stylistic feature of contrast to compare the ideal family who cares for their children with the other family who abandons their children to the streets. Also they try to compare the ideal country that has good amenities set apart with another country that abandons its citizens and is still filled with postcolonial disillusionment. Contrast, themes and other novel elements shall be discussed to find out the reasons why children's rights are being violated in these two novels. The novels, as bildungsromans, shall also be discussed.

Contrast is the device used by Darko and Bulawayo to strike a difference between compared situations in *Faceless* and *We Need New Names*. Amma Darko employs the technique of contrast in *Faceless* with respect to the representation of the two families in the story: the families of Maa Tsuru and of Kabria. Kabria's family, as a unit, is presented as almost perfect. She is a mother of three and married to Adade. She is resourceful, diligent, and combines her role as a wife, a mother and a working class woman. Her family is intact and cohesive. The

children in her family are well-cared for, educated and happy. The family of Maa Tsuru is the direct opposite of Kabria's. Her family is scattered, and broken with no hope of redemption. Her children lack basic needs, drop out of school, and seek solace in the streets. For the family of Maa Tsuru, we find child abuse, child labour, neglect and abandonment of children, rape and sexual abuse, child prostitutions and other forms of exploitations. All these are violation of child's rights as enshrined in 2015 Child Rights Act. However, MUTE, an NGO in the novel, while collaborating with Harvest F.M, helps in saving Fofu from the jaws of street life.

Bulawayo in *We Need New Names* employs also the technique of contrast to show a policy of discrimination or a policy of separate development by the whites in Zimbabwe. By this policy, the whites live in Budapest and the blacks live in Paradise. Paradise here is ironic. It is supposed to be a heaven on earth, or a place of elated bliss which is a very pleasant place to live in but the reverse is the case here. The white people in Budapest live in the heart of the city with all the amenities of modern life. It is just the same thing that happened during the apartheid regime in South Africa that we see in Budapest and Paradise in *We Need New Names*. The Zimbabwe shanty town, called Paradise, is where life is a daily struggle for sustenance as the regime destroys homes and closes school. Darling, the protagonist and her friends roam the streets turning their quest for food into games and making observations of their country's social ills. There are so many problems in Paradise like bewitchment, courses, whoring spouses, childlessness, poverty, joblessness, AIDS, madness, and numerous other problems. Darling and her friends wander from the Paradise black settlement in Zimbabwe to Budapest in search of guava in a white neighborhood in Zimbabwe. Life in Budapest is better. Darling and her friends eat plenty of guavas there. Prior to the emergence of the new president, Mugabe in Paradise, the wretched reserve was the Paradise. The white people in Budapest were controlling Paradise

before her independence, despite the overwhelming black population. The government is entirely in the hands of the white minority. They subject the blacks to some of the worst forms of dehumanization. There is violent uprising and revolt from Paradise.

The discriminatory attitudes of the white population have been so fierce and rigid on the blacks. The blacks begin to revolt against the whites which leads to their having independence but not without bruises. It results in the removal of the white-dominated government and Zimbabwe attains political independence. They begin to repossess and redistribute large tracks of land from the minority whites' community into the infertile land that leads to many of them dying of hunger. This is called Chimurenga. It is depicted fully in the novel in Paradise before the people begin to fight to liberate the country. The people of Paradise also revolt against themselves.

They say:

...No, those were evil people who came to steal our own land and make us paupers in our own country. What? Aren't you a pauper now? Aren't these black people evil for building your home and leaving you with nothing now? Better a white thief do that to you than your own black brother. Better a wretched white thief (75). There are four homes inside Mother of Bones: Home before the white people came to steal the country, and there was war, home when black people got our stolen country back after independence and then home now (192).

The above shows that there has been a turbulent uprising in Paradise even after they have there is a black president. All these compound the troubles in Paradise and lead to hunger, diseases, poverty, wretchedness and abandonment of children to wander from one place to another in search of food to eat and guava to steal. Since their land is not fertile, there are no guavas to steal. They have stopped going to school because the teachers have left for South Africa to teach

in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia where there is better pay. Paradise is a terrible place of hunger when you compare it with Budapest.

Postcolonial disillusionment and feeling of disappointment arise from the realization that not what is expected from African leaders make people desert their homes in the villages to urban areas for means of livelihood. “Sodom and Gomorrah”, a section of Accra, Ghana, is still being populated by criminals even after Ghana’s independence. There is still the Agbogbloshie market, a Sodom and Gomorrah neighborhood where atrocities are committed by adults against children. Sodom and Gomorrah is a biblical allusion used to draw reference to the kind of crimes committed there. The biblical Sodom and Gomorrah exists in Ghana. In *Faceless*, Fofo, the protagonist, watches adult films her fourteen years requires her to stay away from. She drinks local gin and she is nearly raped by a street lord called Poison. By implication, in Agbogbloshie, Ghana, there is no shelter; hoodlums and criminals live there to commit all sorts of crimes. It is there that Baby T, Fofo’s sister, is killed and Fofo herself steals to survive.

The postcolonial disillusionment in *We Need New Names* begins with Paradise voting in their new President to have “a real change” in the country. Their President, Robert Mugabe, has once explained on BBC news how their country has been a black man’s home and never a colony. People are happy that they are voting in a new president. They are disappointed to have a new President who is old just like in other African countries. “You have to be like a grandfather first before becoming a president”(61). Stina observes:

I saw a picture of a president in a magazine. He was also with the president of Zambia and Malawi and South Africa and other presidents. They were all old you have to be like a grandfather first (61).

After “the real change”, the black brothers bulldoze all the shacks in Paradise. People lose so many things. Many people have no place to live again. Many people die of hunger because of change like the death of Bonfree who was born in 1983 and he died in 2008. This is a terrible period in Zimbabwe under their sit-tight leader, Mugabe. “If you are working against the president and clamour for change, you will be killed” (135). Many people die young because of AIDS, bad leadership and chaos. People flee Paradise in droves. Those with “ambition”, “hopes”, and “loss” cross borders. The writer describes their movement to other places as “moving”, “running”, “emigrating”, “going”, “deserting”, “walking”, “quitting”, “flying”, and “fleeing” (142). These reveal the extent of the disaster in Paradise.

The only people remaining in Paradise are very old people like Darling’s grand-mother. Mother of Bones, Chipo’s grandfather and women and children. The name ‘Mother, of Bones’ is symbolic. It shows that nothing is remaining in her body except bones as a result of old age and hardship. The name ‘Darling’ is also symbolic. Somebody’s child who is very dear to him or her is left behind to wander on the streets. The people of Paradise desert their own land with “bleeding wounds” on their bodies and “shock” on their faces and “blood” in their hearts and “hunger” in their stomachs and footsteps (138). They are traumatized. They leave everything that makes them who and what they are. They leave because it is no longer possible to stay. Darling and her friends, Chipo who is eleven; Bastard who is eleven also; Sbho who is nine; Stina who has no birth certificate; and Godknows, who is ten; wander from one neighborhood to another looking for what to eat because they are hungry. They eat guava. It is the only way to kill hunger. Guava quenches hunger and hormonal imbalance. As a result of mass emigration of people of Paradise to other countries, and infertile land of Paradise, there is terrible hunger in the land. People live in deep poverty.

The Novels as Bildungsromans

Amma Darko and Noviolet Bulawayo's novels are bildungsromans. Bildungsromans enable the major characters to run away from what they are. Leaving behind who and what they are, they cannot be the same again. Bildungsroman is a combination of two German words: bildung, meaning education, and Romans, meaning novels. With this, we look at the influence of education on Darling and Fofo. Darling migrates to the United States to seek fortune and experiences. Fofo gets her answers through her training by the NGO. By this bildungsroman, the ordeals of street children are exposed; the writers depict and criticize those vices of the society which cause Fofo and Darling to suffer. They are affected by the loss they suffer and the loss, ultimately, changes the course of their lives. We can identify ourselves with the coming of age characters and feel emotionally attached and interested as we see them pass different stages of their lives until they change for good.

Children of the street, children on the street and children in institutionalized care are part of exploitative groups that lack protection in the continent. In discussing *Faceless* and *We Need New Names*, we have been able to analyze the novels by the writers' use of contrast, themes, characters, and the role of the NGOs and the novels as bildungsroman. We have seen the effect of colonization on Zimbabwe's shanty town called Paradise and Ghana's city called Agbogbloshie. The people in these fictional towns live in abject poverty in shanties, and are afflicted by various diseases. This is as a result of the failure of the government in its duties to protect and providing for its citizens. From the point of view of post-colonial theory, we see the effect of colonization on street children. We also see the lingering effects of exploitation and racism right from colonial era. For example, Budapest, in *We Need New Names* which is a white settlement, has big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs and neat graveled yards or trimmed

lawns and tall fences. The trees there are heavy with fruits. Darling wishes that “if I lived in Budapest, I would wash my body every day, comb my hair to show I was a real person living in a real place” (4). In contrast is Paradise which is filled with all kinds of diseases and infertile land. The street children wander through the white neighbourhood stealing guava. They are what Dobie calls “the demonic order” and the Budapest people, “the exotic order”. They are exploited in many ways and as such their rights are violated.

The trauma left in these children is enough to cause Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is a mental disorder that is triggered by a terrifying event. Maa Tsuru suffers trauma when she is overburdened by the stress of taking care of her children. Onko suffers trauma which leads him to hang himself. The children in these novels suffer trauma by the kind of suffering they meet on the street. The trauma makes children leave Paradise in *We Need New Names*. Bastard runs to South Africa; Godknows goes to Dubai; Sbho joins a theatre group; Darling runs to U.S; and Chipu is nursing her daughter while Stina stays back to continue to suffer in Paradise. With the preventive measures against the violation of children’s rights, they are going to help reduce the number of children on the streets of the African continent.

Grotesquery

Anything grotesque, according to *Cambridge English Dictionary*, is “strange and unpleasant, especially in a silly or frightening way” (579). It focuses on the human body and all the ways that it can be distorted. However, as a stylistic form, it presents many difficulties. It intersects with many other stylistic variations such as comedy, parody, caricature, horror, the bizarre, tragedy, and the absurd. First impressions of child soldiers’ human behavior are often confusing, making it difficult to speak of these actions without wishing to classify them as grotesque. The concept of the grotesque is often applied to in determinant nouns such as monsters, object or

thing. According to Harpham Galt in his work *The Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature*, the word designates “a condition of being just out of focus, just beyond the reach of language. It accommodates the things left over when the categories of language are exhausted. It is a defense against silence when other words have failed” (3-4).

In art, some objects or things are presented to us as grotesque or monstrous, but as Harpham explains, “hideous dragons” and “terrible beasts” are not necessarily grotesque. Those creatures, simultaneously, invoke and repudiate our conventional, language-based categories. The grotesque is understood by most critics as a mingling of human with animal features or mechanical elements, the monstrous, the mishaps which Sachs Fred, in Gysin’s *The Grotesque in American Negro Fiction*, simply refers to as “the inverse of the ideal” (31). It is evil or blamelessness, or abnormality portrayed in incongruously compounded human and non-human images that are in various degrees both disturbing and abstract. In her study of *Child Soldiers in Africa*, Alcinda Honwana describes child soldiers as “those who find themselves in an ambiguous position that defies dichotomies between civilians and combatants, victims and perpetrators, initiated and initiators, protected and protectors and, as others argue, even human and the non-human” (7). The characters in *Beasts of No Nation* and in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* are just like beasts, the equivalent of animals. They are a combination of humans and beasts. They lack a socially defined place. They occupy a world of their own, having nobody to supervise them. They create a world that remains incomprehensible because, while childhood or the child is usually associated with innocence, weakness and dependence upon adult guidance and care, that child is supposed to have basic needs of life; the concept of soldier which forms part of this neologism is, by contrast, associated with strength, aggression,

and the responsible maturity of adulthood. His childhood is striped of him. “Children should be protected and defended; a soldier’s duty is to protect and defend” (Honwana 2006: 5).

The paradoxical combination of child and soldier becomes unsettling because children at war find themselves in an unsanctioned position between childhood and adulthood. They are still children physically and physiologically immature. “Before the war we are children but now we are not” (*Beasts*. 46). Child soldiers are simultaneously producers and products of violence on the one hand; they are initiators and responsible for actions of violence while on the other hand as subject beings; that is, they submit to the authority as subjected beings. That is, they submit to the authority or a leader. They respond positively to the needs of those they are loyal to (their captors). In the role of soldiers, they are put in a position of domination, while, as children, they are unambiguous victims of abduction:

Then I am remembering how one boy is refusing to fight and Commandant is just telling us to jump on his chest, so we are jumping on his chest until it is only blood that is coming out of his mouth. (63)

If child soldiers seem grotesque, it is not necessarily because of their odd appearance but because, as individuals, they represent a corruption or alienation of familiar forms. The figure represents a child and an individual in military uniform carrying a gun. Taken as symbols of life and death, the child and the gun are two elements that fuse two opposites into one, although the gun the boy holds up (as soldiers do in time of war) is for self-protection and, therefore, life-saving. Agu, in *Beasts of No Nation* and Ishmael Beah and his friends are threatened by their identities on one hand, and those imposed on them by dominant elements of society which refer to them as outlaws, outcasts or public dangers on the other hand. It is the prevailing grotesque

images of these child soldiers as seen through the distorting lens of the society that is part of the appeal of this research aimed at protecting the rights of the children fighting wars. The study was intended to prevent them doing what adults do.

War and the child soldiering constitute a realm of conflict. The investment in *Beasts of No Nation* and *A Long Way Gone*, is significant since they invite the readers to discover the grotesque through very simple techniques such as direct comment and characters' reactions. Realistic descriptions in plain language are contrasted with description and processes such as distortion animation and alienation constitute the poles of linguistic figuration. As Ishmael and his friends are fighting, he gets a chance to strike with his bayonet. The group punches him in the face. Ishmael falls down with his nose bleeding. Ishmael and his group are dangerous and brainwashed to kill. He throws the grenade around the rebels and there is explosion. Ishmael does not care.

The transformation of the child soldier into a cruel being may or may not be descriptively convincing. His body is a reflection of a decadent postcolonial world. By aligning tropes (which is a deviation from literal convention or proper language use, swerves in location sanctioned neither by custom nor logic) like madness, obscene, violence, and so on, and with these grotesque analyses like distortion, animation, and so on, it shows that the tropes are devices provided by language which we can use to identify problematic areas of Ishmael Beah and Agu's cognitive experiences. Hence, "the power of words is injected into language from outside, that is, from the institutions which delegate authority to the speaker" (Thompson John, 69). It is then senseless to see the child soldiers' grotesque language and action as having an independent force of conviction or destruction beyond the power conferred on them by the institution of war. Uzodinma Iweala and Ishmael Beah use their grotesque imagery to offer a new representation of

children's marginalization as a result of war. The study thus, takes into account, not only the tragic, ugly or grotesque deviance and inversion through which child soldiers are portrayed, but also the meaningful patterns that lie hidden in these features and make the issue of child soldiers understandable. Their harrowing experiences of pain in war should not be praised; instead, we make a spotlight to show how a child soldier has been forced into manhood by hardship.

The Journey Motif

This journey motif of most children toward child soldiering starts with their abandonment. It represents how warlords exploit children. The warlords give the children guns to kill. They empower these children with guns at the expense of their schooling. The war which is unleashed by a certain group of people has taken the lives of many parents exposing children to violence. Ishmael recounts how the country, Sierra Leone, came into being.

In 1462, the written history of Sierra Leone began when Portuguese explorers landed, naming the mountain surroundings what is now Freetown Sierra Lyoa (Lion Mountains) due to their Leonine shape. By 1500 to early 1700s, European traders stopped regularly on the Sierra Leone Peninsula, exchanging cloth and metal goods for Ivory, timber, and a small number of slaves. The first slaves in North America were brought from Sierra Leone to the Sea Islands off to the coast of the South United States in 1652. In 1791, groups of freed slaves joined the "Province of Freedom" settlement, and it soon became known as Freetown; the name of the current capital of Sierra Leone. In 1792, Freetown became one of Britain's first colonies in West Africa. It later became a British crown colony where British government used Freetown as its naval base for anti-slavery patrols. Fourah Bay College was established and it rapidly became a magnet for English-speaking Africans on the West Coast in 1827. It became the only European-style

University in Western sub-Saharan Africa. In April 27, 1961, Sierra Leone became independent with Sir Milton Margai as its first Prime Minister.

The country opted for a parliamentary system within the Commonwealth of Nations. The following year, Margan won election under universal adult franchise. He died in 1964 and his half-brother, Sir Albert Margai, succeeded him. In May 1967, under APC, he won a plurality of the parliamentary seats. Siaka Stevens, an APC leader and Mayor of Freetown was declared the winner. Albert Margai was placed under house arrest. Soon, another group staged another coup. Since then, Sierra Leone has never known peace until Nigeria through ECOMOG helped in restoring peace in Sierra Leone. The children there become the victims of the war.

The journey motifs of Agu and Stika in *Beasts of No nation* and Ishmael and his friends in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, illustrate the mental and physical challenges and tribulations they must experience. These challenges are integral to their development. They also represent something lacking within their lives, so they leave their status as children to child soldiers, then to adulthood when they have realized themselves after their rehabilitation by Non-Governmental Organizations. These protagonists begin with their joining rebels who are expected to be a group that attempts a violent and organized overthrow of the established authority. The rebels, in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, represent Charles Taylor's rebels and a few mercenaries from Burkina Faso. They force young children to rid the country of the corrupt government. The warlords who exercise civil power by force abduct child soldiers and use them to seize power and wealth. The child soldiers are aggressive because poverty breeds criminals, rebels and child soldiers. They are now exploited to become these. They now get used to violence and death:

On a typical raid, Ishmael and the boys surround a rebel camp and wait for the Lieutenant's command, Ishmael gets angrier and angrier as he comes to believe that these look just like the rebels who killed his family and played cards in the ruins of the village. So he shoots as many as he can even though it doesn't make him feel any better (122).

The journey that Agu takes in *Beasts of No Nation* seems as if time is not passing at all. "Time is passing. Time is not passing at all by remembering days of innocence in his village before the war" (29). Iweala paints a picture of peaceful times, with the slow build-up of menace as war creeps up on the villagers' lives. The boy's mother and sister are evacuated by United Nations while he stays behind with the men. He witnesses the death of his father, after bullets make the latter perform the dance. Commandant takes the boy under wing. The horror of deaths is piled on so thick and fast that it is almost deadening. Machete slashing into flesh comes with "KPWUDA KPWUDA" sounds; the incursion of war and its arsenal into Agu's village will occasion a dreaded "GWEWEM GWEM" sound, and laughter would naturally be a maniacal "kehi kehi kehi" cackle. *Beasts of No Nation* is a convincing portrait of the psychology of a child soldier. In the natural order of life in his village, Agu would have become a man. Instead, he is caught in a twilight existence where he is neither a man nor a real soldier; he represents a grotesque perversion of childhood. Turned into a merciless killing machine, he develops the instincts of an animal, the keenest of which is the instinct of survival.

Memoir

Sophie O Ogwude, in her "Politics and Human Rights in Non-Fiction Prison Literature", describes non-fiction in art as "a wish to be able to reach the common man through creative

works” (73). Non-Fiction, alternatively called the “new journalism”, provides freedom from the limitations of fiction “for there are limitations for what a writer can create and to what he can meaningfully communicate through fiction”. This aspect of the work examines Ishmael Beah’s Memoir and Uzodinma Iweala’s first-person-point-of-view narrative technique. The technique is used in his novel to communicate with ordinary people. The purpose is to bring to focus what African children who are used to combat wars are going through. Iweala adopts simple language of a child who has not gone to school to tell his story while Ishmael Beah adopts to record his personal experiences as a former boy soldier.

The story of *Beasts of No Nation* chronicles events in an unnamed country of Africa during the civil wars. The writer presents Agu who undergoes transformation from the boy working and playing with his family to the unstoppable rapist, looter and killer that he becomes. Although Uzodinma Iweala ensures factual accuracy in his work, he still dramatizes and expands the war scenes into fictional spheres. His characters and locals are imaginary. He writes to contemporary readers who, accustomed to war fiction, will find not only entertainment but also information on history and politics with regard to the struggle of people in Africa. The work of fiction is written with greater emphasis on serious attention towards the use of language and the characters’ inner motives.

From the narrative technique of *Beasts of No Nation*, Iweala employs the first-person-point-of-view narration to tell his story. This makes the narration autobiographical. By extensive use of the pronoun ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘we’ and ‘us’, it makes the narrative come alive. “My fear begins”. “I want to tell him I cannot fight anymore”, etc. (*Beasts of No Nation*, 89). Agu, after being ripped away from his town and home, he is forced to fight. The event is a great tragedy that happens across so many African countries like Uganda, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Agu becomes a monster. He is

uneducated because war ravages schools in the imaginary African town. Agu is haunted by his father's death. He is involved in raping girls after killing their parents. He is later saved by white people in the end but the horrendous images, sounds and smell of dead bodies he kills continue to haunt him. Although he wants to be a rich doctor and engineer in future, his physical, sexual and emotional violence he witnesses at the hands of commandant would continue to shatter his world and destroy his trust in adults who violate his rights to education. He attests his experiences as a soldier. He is aroused by acts of violence:

We are just like wild animals. Just making a person bleed everywhere. We have no place to be going. I saw terrible things and I did terrible things. I am beast and devil. I have mother, father, brother and sister once. They loved me. Matchet is part of my body. I am fearing because I am seeing that the only way not to be fighting is to die (94).

Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone* is a memoir of a former boy soldier. Ishmael begins:

My High school friends have begun to suspect I haven't told the full story of my life. "Why did you leave Sierra Leone?" "Because there is war did you witness some of the fighting? Everyone in the country, did you mean you saw people running around with guns and shooting each other? Yes, all the time you should tell us about it. (8)

"A memoir is a historical account or biography written from personal knowledge" (AED). It is a collection of memories that an individual has of moments or events, both public and private, that took place in the person's life. The assertions made in the work are understood to be factual. A memoir is a subcategory of biography or autobiography. A biography or autobiography tells the story "of a life," while a memoir often tells the story "from a life" such as events or turning

points from the author's life. From the life of Ishmael Beah, he now comes to terms with his friends and with the world.

Through the journey motif, this memoir of Ishmael Beah will take one through suffering and survival; an endless struggle against the seemingly impossible; a miraculous delivery. Beah is captured at the age of 13, recruited by the Sierra Leonean government army and forced into combat against the rebels –the Revolutionary United Front that begins the unsuccessful eleven-year war in 1991. During a period of almost three years, Beah is forced to smoke marijuana and take “brown-brown”, a mixture of cocaine and gun powder. Through this, the Government Army desensitizes its stolen youth, brainwashing them and turning them into master killers.

Ishmael Beah loses his entire immediate family members who are slain in the war; he witnesses the killing of some of his closest friends, and at the age of thirteen, he loses his innocence. Horror, fear and danger follow him to both unconscious thought, leaving him in a world where day and night are the same. He witnesses the destruction of not only his village, but the traditions and values within Sierra Leone village community. Adults or elders-the most respected in African society-begin to fear their own children, killing and mutilating adults, and setting villages on fire.

Eventually, Beah is rescued by UNICEF and he is placed in a rehabilitation camp in Freetown, where he goes through yet another traumatizing experience of withdrawal from drug and violence. After sometime, he gradually goes back into civilian life. He flees Sierra Leone to New York, where he meets his future foster mother, Laura Simms, and finishes his last two years of high school at the UN International School. It is here that he faces a new challenge, being

tormented by his peers and shadows by society's fear, as well as their curiosity to know more about his violent past.

Ishmael Beah's Memoirs reflect on the meaning of various happenings in his life as a boy soldier. These various happenings provide insight into a particular time in Sierra Leone and the people he is closely associated with. Something compels him to write his Memoir which he tells in an interesting and dramatic way. He hopes to provide to his people, places, times and events that influence them.

Like in Liberia, the natural resources of Sierra Leone have become the symbol of the armed conflict as different factors fight for control over the diamond and gold regions. In *Socio-Economic Injustice and Cronyism: Warlordism and Taylorism in the Sierra Leone Civil War*, Ogunmola provides us with an irony encapsulated in the fable on Sierra Leone. At the time of creation, it is said, God created a tiny country, rich in mineral wealth, with diamonds, gold, bauxite, iron ore, chromites and platinum; an abundance of offshore fish; relatively fertile land and plenty of rainfall. People from the neighboring territories became furious and demanded equal treatment. God, however, cautioned them with the caveat that they should wait and see the kind of government that would rule over Sierra Leone. Commenting on African countries in his article, "The Abuse and Insult on the Black Race: Who is to Blame?", Sam Aweda notes:

Foday Sankoh was a critic of a corrupt government. He however, became greedy for the control of diamond. A satanic-minded Foday Sankoh turned Sierra Leone to a war zone. He forced underage boys who would be in school into drug addicts popularly known as "kid soldiers". They burnt tens of houses in a row, raped women, forced parents to murder or rape their children and vice-versa. Foday

Sankoh's kid soldiers reduced citizens whom he wanted to govern, to habitable bodies by maiming them. Citizens were asked to choose what they preferred; long-sleeve or short sleeve. Long-sleeve meant amputating at the waist while short sleeve meant cutting the limb at the elbow (19).

Despite its natural resources, the Sierra Leone described above suffers from so-called paradox of the plenty; what Auty Richard, refers to as a "resource curse" is defined as "the phenomenon where countries with an abundance of natural resources tend to, nonetheless, be characterized by lower levels of economic development". It is as if these countries rich in natural resources attract war while remaining the poorest in the world. Two thirds of RUF youth fighters used in this war were either primary school dropouts or peasants working on farm lands in the rural areas and most of them were illiterates. A number of the child soldiers were children and who could hardly carry an AK47 rifle. The war in Sierra Leone is taken to the climax by rebel leaders such as Foday Sankoh. The actions of people like Samuel Doe, Charles Taylor, Johnson Sir Leaf and so on, are far more violent, grotesque and terrifying.

Ishmael Beah's description of his involvement in Sierra Leone war is based on himself in part, as a perpetrator and partly as a victim. The concept of killing as a trope is a reference point for his engagement in war while death is closely associated with what he is exposed to in that war. The fact that he tries to justify himself by giving reasons for his becoming a child soldier is what Ogunmola calls "push" as opposed to "pull" factors. By "push", it means that there are factors which give children no choice but to get involved in violence while "pull" refers to those which slowly attract children and encourage them into violence (315). Explaining further, traumatization, brutalization, deprivation and other socio-cultural related issues are among those "push" factors which drive children into violence like killing children who resist being used in

conflicts; children from economically and socially deprived families or marginalized groups are those who most likely become child soldiers. The variables that “pull” children towards violence are parallel to the above “push” factors. Because of their age, immaturity, curiosity, and love for adventure, children are susceptible to temptation of becoming combatants. Agu, in *Beasts of No Nation*, is tempted by the soldiers’ green camouflage and training but he knows that “soldiers kill; that is how you live and that is how you die” (28). These children in combat can lose their faith in the future because their rights have been violated.

Ishmael Beah, in his Memoir, is a writer as well as a narrator and character. It is his autobiography or his book describing his personal experiences. Oriaku, quoting Brigitte Scheer Schazler in “The Limits of Autobiography: Silence, Ironies and Contradictions in Three Ogoni Narratives”, observed that “autobiography is the referred form of writing among oppressed groups because the experiences it portrays are filtered through the consciousness of the subject who is, invariably, a representative of his community” (236). Even the title of Iweala’s *Beasts of No Nation* evokes the image in a record by Afro beat music legend, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, who lampooned countries comprising the United Nations as “beasts”. It is ironic how powerless the “world body” often is at preventing wars. The autobiographers here take a look at man’s world filled with chaos, war and even survival; as the protagonists are rehabilitated at the end. Ishmael Beah does not allow his grief and anger overtake him. His first step is writing this book to give others a little window into the terrible realities of war. It is non-video game version of war, which is personal to him.

Protection Strategies for Children of the Streets and Combantant Children

Darko’s *Faceless* is portrayed as a story of children abandoned to the streets of “Sodom and Gomorrah”. The whole country is abandoned to their fate by a self-satisfied and discriminatory

machinery of state. At the beginning of Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, there is emotional loss for the children. The emotional loss makes Darling and her friends embark on the journey of wandering from one street to another. Bulawayo tells the story of a traumatized nation. The main conflicting elements between these children and the society are neglect and abandonment by their parents. These abandoned children have the right to education which is denied them as enshrined in Part Two of Child's Rights Act, "Every child has the right to education which would develop his/her cultural knowledge, intellect, abilities, moral and social responsibility" (Article 1009). Contrary to the stipulations in Article 1016, these children's rights to safe accommodation and alternative care are violated.

The abandonment of children is an extreme form of neglect. Neglect includes weak supervision; inconsistent discipline and failure to reinforce positive social behavior. These contribute to children coming into conflict with the law. Children have rights to parental guidance. Article 5, under the Conventions on the Rights of the Child, encourages parents to deal with rights issues "in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child"(16). The convention does not take responsibility for children away from their parents and gives more authority to government. It does place on government the responsibility to protect and assist families in fulfilling their essential roles as nurturing children. This is why Darling cries when her father abandons her for South Africa lamenting:

Father comes home many years of forgetting us, of not sending us money, of not loving us, not visiting us... and unable to take properly ...vomiting and vomiting ... on mother's bed. So thin, like he eats pins and wires, so thin at first I don't even see him in the blankets. He is tough-skinned. He has crocodile teeth and egg-white eyes ...my boy!" he keeps on saying, "but I don't tell him I'm girl" (89-90).

Darling hates her father for not providing her with basic amenities: food, shelter and clothing. She hates him for making her stop playing with her friends because she has to look after her sick father. Baby T and Ordarly in *Faceless* lack basic needs of life: food, shelter and clothing. They lack the warmth and love of their parents. They need a home and the care of their parents. Their rights to safe accommodation and alternative care are violated. Children are sexually abused in Darko's *Faceless* and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*.

The trauma faced by Chipo lingers throughout her life. She is raped by her grandfather. She complains to her friends that her grandfather gets on her, pins her down and clamps a hand over her mouth. The result is pregnancy. She cannot play well again like a child. She is stripped of her childhood. Her grandfather commits incest. Incest is sexual relationship between close relatives. They are too closely related to be legally married. It is considered a taboo and a crime in many communities. The incest committed by chipo's grandfather has started the cycle that denies Chipo the most basic rights to learn, develop and be a child.

The Child's Rights Act (CRA) recognizes that a child who became victim of sexual abuse is: a child in prostitution and a child victim of sex tourism. Sexual abuse involves subjecting a vulnerable person to sexual exploitation. It begins with an attempted rape of Fofu by Poison, and the rape of Baby T by Onko in *Faceless* as a strategy for silencing and intimidating her mother. Kpakpo sleeps with Baby T and Fofu when Maa Tsuru is away for delivery. He comes and summons them to bed. If they do not follow him, he will lock them out. He threatens them and finally they succumb. Sexual violence is a human rights abuse; a violation of children to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases:

You see ... there is a lot of pain and hopelessness out there on the streets which many seek to deal with through drugs, sex and alcohol All the girls we talked

out there were already very sexually active ... for many of them; rape was their first sexual experience. And I am talking about girls as young as seven. Many were child prostitutes ...sex to them was just a convenient means of survival, many were roaming about, oblivious of whether or not they were HIV positive (32).

Sex abuse exposes children to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. In a study carried out in Zimbabwe, Birdthistle et al highlighted that 15-30% of penetrative sexual abuse was associated with sexually transmitted diseases. They also reveal a higher rate of HIV prevalence among girls attending a clinic for treatment following sexual abuse compared with the population as a whole. Sexually abused children are at heightened risk of contracting HIV because of immaturity of their sexual organs and the greater risk of tearing. Childhood sexual abuse is also associated with emotional problems such as depression and anxiety that can carry on into later life and affect social relationships and economic productivity as in the case of Maa Tsuru in Darko's *Faceless* and Chipu in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*.

Studies from gender-based violence in schools indicate that fear of sexual violence is often an important factor that discourages adolescent girls from continuing their education. Frankling Jones et al maintain that even where children are determined to continue in school, sexual abuse can lead to difficulties in concentrating and poor academic performance. It increases their risk of future poverty. Government should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse as stipulated in Article 34 of the rights under the Convention of the Rights of the Child. This provision is augmented by the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The Communiqué from the Southern Governors' Wives Forum of October, 2014 of *Daily Sun* as compiled by Noel Okorochoa appealed to the federal and state

governments to stop child marriage and stressed the need for parents to pay more attention to their children, particularly the girl child, to avoid teenage pregnancies and other vices.

Rape is the most predominant form of violence against the girl child as in the case of Chipo and the attempted rape of Fofo. Rape is rooted in non-sexual motivation in the psychology of the offender. It is tied to hostility and anger and the need to exert power and control. According to Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Articles 1 and 5 stipulate that “rape violates human rights since all human beings should be treated equally with respect”(9). Chipo’s grandfather commits incest which is a taboo, and rape which is a sexual abuse that is carried out against Chipo without her permission. Taboo is an emotional aversion and should not be mentioned because it is sacred. It is a sacrilege or violation of something that is regarded as sacred. The perpetrator of this form of violence often inflicts a physiological and psychological pain on the child. Children should be protected from any activity that takes advantage of them or could harm their welfare and development as enshrined in Article 36.

Fofo watches adult films that she should not at her age of fourteen. She also drinks alcohol called “akpeteshie”, the Ghanaian local gin. In the same manner, Darling, migrates to United States to live with her aunt, Fostelina, who also abandons her to do odd jobs in America, watches adult films. Darling watches films because there is nobody around in the afternoons. When she comes back from school, she flings her bag by the door and makes straight for the computer downstairs; she will watch with other children X Tube and Red Tube where “a man is inside the woman” and all sorts of sex films.

Child pornography and the internet are advances in computer technology; they have made the creation and distribution of child pornography easier. Digital technology has also led to a new phenomenon. Sometimes, it is called “pseudo child pornography” which consists of creating or

manipulating images to produce depiction of sexual activity involving children, without the participation of a real child in any sexual activity. Several countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States of America,, have amended their legislation to prohibit this type of pornography. The U.N Special Rapporteur supports making this material illegal because it encourages pedophiles to view their desires as normal and to engage in the exploitation of real children.

Government should use all means to protect children from the use of harmful drugs and from being used in the drug trade. Section 1014 of the Child Rights Act stipulates that “Children shall be protected from the use of narcotic drugs, alcohol and tobacco products” (17). Any person contravening this section shall be guilty of an offence and upon “conviction shall be liable to a fine of \$5,000 or imprisonment of not more than one year, or both” (18). This is very serious as the use of drugs has ruined many children. Some are mad and some have died because of injury caused by the use of narcotic drugs.

A child should also be protected from harmful customary practices. Superstition ruins Kwei’s marriage in Darko’s *Faceless*. Maa Tsuru is cursed at birth by her mother. The curse follows her. At sixteen, Kwei impregnates her and his mother objects to his marrying her because she is a curse bearer. Kwei deserts Maa Tsuru during her third pregnancy that later results to the birth of Baby Tsuru, which evolves to Baby T. The husband later resurfaces which results to another pregnancy. This time, Kwei disappears finally because a cursed woman, and also baby number 5, is dangerous. He may impregnate her for the fifth time. They are two superstitious swords that cross paths. A child should be protected from harmful customary practices. A superstitious belief ruins Kwei’s marriage. Article 1012 of CRA stipulates that “a child shall be protected against

any social, cultural, ritual or traditional practice that is harmful to his or her safety, health, development or well-being”.

The Non-Governmental Organizations are very important in rehabilitating, helping, and giving socour to children of the streets. They are bodies that will help alleviate the pains of the vulnerable children. In *Faceless*, there are significant activities and initiatives by bodies like the National Commission on Children, the Commission on Human Rights and Developmental Justice, FIDA, the National Council on Women and Development and Attorney General and Ministry of Justice to save the street children. The Child Rights Act recognizes the role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Article 1021 of 2015. It requires the NGOs to investigate the circumstances, behaviour and conditions of the upbringing of children, and assess, without delay, the needs of those who are believed to be living in unacceptable conditions, to be mistreated or to have serious social problem.

The role of the NGOs can be seen in the activities of MUTE, the Non-Governmental Organization in *Faceless*. They help to adopt and sponsor street children before handing them over to reputable organizations like Children-in-Need or Street-Girls-Aid. MUTE also take charge of mentally ill pregnant women. Kabria works with the MUTE. She is a mother of three lovely children: Obea, Essien and Ottu. She lives in a decent neighbourhood in Accra. She is instrumental in saving Fofu from the jaws of street life. She runs into Fofu at the spot where Baby T’s body is found, when Fofu disguises as a boy to steal her purse. Kabria rescues her from the angry mob. Fofu reveals her female identity and tells Kabria that Baby T is her sister. MUTE gets interested in Baby T’s matter. They grant Fofu protection by taking her into custody temporarily. Fofu forms alliance with MUTE and Harvest F.M.

Poison, the antagonist, finds collaborators in characters like Mama Abidjan. Maami Broni, Kpakpo, Onko and the Kayoyo leader. Sylv Po is a radio broadcaster with Harvest F.M in a talk show programme, 'Good Morning Ghana' (GMG) in a discussion with MUTE'S boss, Dina decides to use the case of Baby T to discuss the phenomenon of the street children on his show. His show provides enlightenment and sensitization opportunity for people on children of the streets. Harvest F.M is a socially responsible corporate body that helps in protecting children "who grew up never ever really experiencing what is meant to be simply a child" (112)

The NGOs bring food and clothing to Paradise to feed street children in *We Need New Names*. They help to rehabilitate some of the children. Some of the organizations take fun in taking pictures of African children whose clothes are worn out, torn and the children are nearly naked. "Like paparazzi, the cameraman pounces on Godknow's black buttocks". Godknows, on noticing this, turns round to cover the holes on the shorts with his hands but he cannot completely hide his nakedness. The children in Paradise have to remind the NGOs that they need to eat, live in comfortable houses and go to school without taking pictures of them.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) dates back to 1948 following the Second World War and derived from the wider concept of natural rights, which every civilized society accepts as fundamental to each person as a human being. As described by Sophire O. Ogwude, "these rights are thus guaranteed by the fundamental laws of such countries through their constitutions"(44). Ogwude further notes that the substantive and basic rights include the right to "life", "liberty", "health" and "expression". Other rights include, "freedom from torture, human and degrading treatment as well as the right to a safe environment" (47). Significantly, these procedural human rights include the basic principles of the legal system, which ensures that the

enforcement and the protection of these substantive rights are missing in human being forced to fight wars.

Human rights abuse came with colonial administration. It is not in existence in our indigenous judicial system which recognizes that even a slave is the child of another person. Recruiting children for military purposes is harmful for a number of reasons: children's development, health and well-being are disrupted when they are drawn into military organizations for, Child's Rights Act of 2015 makes it clear that children have survival, development, protection and promotion rights. Recruited children, in *Beasts of No Nation* and in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, run a high risk of being killed or maimed; they suffer serious psychological and social problems afterwards. They also face a high risk of being sexually abused by adults or they themselves can abuse others. Such traumatic events can disrupt children's development.

Like most postcolonial texts, these works about combatant children of war like Agu and his friends in *Beasts of No Nation*, Ishmael and his friends in *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, are given expressions through the use of gun shots. These metaphors of gun shots remind us of their pains, sadness and deaths which some of them survived while others do not. While we acknowledge the destructive power of their violence, we also recognize the troubling possibility that the violence might be the only form of expression available until The Child Rights Protection Act of 2015 gives legal backing for children who are used to fight wars. This gives these children access to justice. Children who are recruited to fight wars in African countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Republic of Congo and other areas in sub-Saharan Africa have their rights to parental care, education, leisure and play violated. These violations are as a result of the struggle for power, acquisition of power, and retention of power; and the exercise of power is at the backdrop of child's rights violation. The authoritative allocation of

scarce resources in the continent degenerates into civil war that forces these people in authority to recruit small children at the expense of their rights.

It is expected that strong families and community structures should help protect children from violence. This is because the strength of social support is harder to quantify than factors such as education completion rates. There is particularly strong evidence of the role of family and community relationship in protecting children from engagement in violence, and against sexual exploitation. Non-Governmental Organizations are given legal backing to help save violated children in Child's Rights Protection Act of 2015. They should help apply those child protection measures provided in this Act which are most applicable at any time, and which are deemed the most suitable to safeguard their interest and welfare. Ishmael Beah and his group in *A Long Way Gone* are captured by UNICEF, four men that dress in clean blue jeans and white T-shirts that are written UNICEF on them in big blue letters. One of them is a white man and another is also a light-skinned, Lebanese, and others are nationals. They are ordered to remove their magazines and to lay down their weapons. They are then ordered to move into a truck and they are carried away to Freetown. At Freetown, they move in a fenced compound that has several rows of houses. There are many boys of Ishmael's age, fifteen and above. They are shown beds and lockers that contain soap; toothpaste, toothbrush, towels, clean shirts, blankets and many personal effects. They are later taken to Benin Home, an approved school for juvenile. Nurse Esther continues to use music to lure Ishmael into therapy. As a soldier, he survives because of his army family at Rehabilitation Centre. He flees Sierra Leone to New York City where he meets his future foster mother, Laura Simms. Ishmael has revealed to Esther as he slowly begins to come to terms with his loss: "I feel as if there is nothing left for me to be alive for. I have no family, it is just me, no one will be able to tell me stories about my childhood" (167). It is just

the same thing with Agu, in *Beasts of No Nation*; he is rescued by Reverend Father Festus, together with Amy, a white woman from America. Amy continues to ask Agu what he would like to be. Agu continues to tell her, “I am seeing myself becoming a Doctor or an Engineer and making too much money and never to fight war ever again” (175). These children fighting wars have their rights to education violated-education which would have developed their intellect, abilities, views and social responsibilities. The impact of war on children in Africa should be taken seriously. War blights the effects of government and efforts of government and distorts the project of governance and children become the target. Their rights should be protected at all cost because they are said to be leaders of tomorrow.

These works about combatant children of war have characters whose rights have been violated in so many ways as we have discussed; like most post-colonial texts about children who are used to fight wars, speak for those without a voice. This study has tested the relevance of these views and the researcher thinks it would make a major contribution to knowledge. The writers give children a voice in the stories. Their voice as narrators, although given expression through the gunshots, is a metaphor of the deconstruction of society and its claim for social justice, equal rights and opportunities. Their beliefs, feelings and modes of thoughts articulate a new consciousness, self-realization and identity, all of which reflect the dynamic transformation they go through in today’s society. These children remind us of their pain, sadness and death which some of them survived while others didn’t. Ishmael Beah and Agu restarted their lives elsewhere but many like them died.

Grotesque is a useful technique used in these novels to show a decadent post-colonial society. It is a symbol of a culture which has failed, on one hand, to control the passions of the younger

ones and, on the other hand, to improve the conditions of children and address the concerns of children that drive them into violence.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

This research, advocates abused children's speedy legal assistance and access to justice. The research has looked at African children from the position of marginality, and how the politics of exclusion brought by colonialism, ethnicity and tribalism has culminated, over the years, in child soldiery. The research has advocated for children's rights and protection, putting an end to the use of children to commit all sorts of crime including being used as soldiers. The researcher also found out that the killings by child soldiers and parental irresponsibility towards their children are some of the newest tragic elements which are not part of the past. It came with colonialism and continues after colonialism. It means Africa leaders have failed in their duties to provide people with social needs. Many parents have also failed to help their children to achieve their dreams of having basic needs of life.

Parents, no doubt, have greater influence on what becomes of their children. Every parent wants his/her child to become successful and responsible; somebody they can be proud of. Unfortunately, not all parents do what is required of them to bring this about like Fofo and Darling's mothers in *Faceless* and in *We Need New Names* respectively. In *Faceless*, Maa Tsuru's children certainly do not turn out the way any parent would have wished, not even their own mother. The reason for this may be one or many but the mother contributes greatly. The mother, in fact, contributes in more ways than one. She encourages her children, at a very tender age, to beg for food and money. She also encourages them to do child labour. At the age ten, her first two sons are already running errands at the fish markets for money or for fish reward at the expense of their schooling. Obviously, this is not the right orientation for the children of this age.

They have dropped out of school and are not being given any specific training. They are invariably being prepared for abuse or crime.

Although the mother of Fofo and the mother of Darling and her friends may appear not fully culpable because their husbands who are supposed to take a larger share of the responsibility to bring up the children have become absent. It is totally wrong of the mothers to let the children work for money, let alone live off the earning of such young children. Maa Tsuru in *Faceles* seven feeds her new lover, Kpakpo, on the boys' earnings also. This is a total reversal of roles. The matter becomes worse when she brings in Kpakpo to live in the same room with her four children. Sleeping in the same room and witnessing the 'Stranger' make love to their mother is totally revolting to the boys. Therefore, they leave the house in protest without saying a word to their mother. As a mother, one would have expected her to find out their whereabouts and think out a better way of managing the situation. The boys obviously have only the streets as alternative home.

We have also seen from the discussions that some mothers are the architects of their children's misfortunes. Maa Tsuru's foolish affair with Kpakpo and Darling's mother's foolish affair with her lover; and subsequent co-habitation with men in the same one-room apartment where they live with their children, mark the beginning of their daughters' tragic experiences. Although Maa Tsuru's girls are already used to unhealthy lifestyle in form of begging for food before Kpakpo joins them, his entry into their life worsens their condition and introduces further unhealthy experiences. With the economic support from the boys gone with their leaving the home, the challenge of getting regular food increases and the girls have to intensify their begging efforts to survive. This condition makes the girls more vulnerable.

The acceptance of Kpakpo into the family also marks the beginning of sexual abuse of Baby T. Kpakpo once tries to rape the girl. After using his fingers to explore the girl's private parts, he stops short of full sexual intercourse with the girl, apparently because she is still a virgin; the news of the incident gets to Onko, a relative and neighbor of Maa Tsuru, through Fofu. Onko later takes advantage of this knowledge by raping Baby T who believes is already being abused by his stepfather. Maa Tsuru's handling of these two ugly developments also contributes to the tragic end of Baby T. When she hears the rumour about Kpakpo's sexual abuse of her daughter, she acts indifferently. She does not even challenge him secretly. When she manages to confront Onko over his rape of the girl, she takes bribe offered by Onko to bury the issue. When Onko tries to seduce the girl later on, she decides to send the girl into child labour. Unknown to her, Kpakpo has colluded with Mama Abidjan, the woman to whom the girl is handed over to sell her into prostitution. It is almost certain that if Maa Tsuru has challenged Kpakpo of his abuse of her daughter, the man shall not have had the courage to collude with others in turning the girl into a prostitute. If she has not collected bribe from Onko and kept silent on the rape of the girl, his attempt to seduce the girl shall not have arisen and there shall have been no need to send the girl away from home. However, some of her actions and inactions do not exclude her from being the architect of her children's misfortunes. This is invariably, the case of Chipo, in *We Need New Names*, who is left in the care of her grandfather that later gets her pregnant. The traumatic experiences of the children of the streets linger through their adult life. The traumas and conflicts of early childhood have lasting effects that are ruled by unconscious forces which shape their personality to behave the way we see them. As we have discussed in the study of psychoanalysis, these street children who have been abused sexually and physically assaulted, remain at increased risk of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) because childhood rape survivors

develop PTSD sometime in their lives. We have seen that several traumas may result in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Many of the street children and child soldiers have extreme cases of bitter experiences which lead to trauma. Childhood emotional experiences sometimes lead to later emotional symptoms.

One of the most quoted lines in English poetry is William Wordsworth's assertion that "The child is father of the man" (667). Every adult has the child in him. It is to the child that the adult owes creativity, curiosity, the desire to explore and learn, and the urge to touch and feel the experience. Every child has the right to live and express himself. In thinking about children, we are compelled to think about their future by protecting their rights adequately. Since any human work can never claim to be perfect, the researcher is convinced that this work can open a wider discussion, and hope that other researchers will engage in further research in this area. The researcher wants legal assistance and access to justice of vulnerable African children. The researcher wants speedy legal assistance and access to justice of African children who are victims of postcolonial abnormalities. African leaders should sign the Child Rights and Responsibility Act into law. It would then be an enforced law with strong assurance that the children's rights and interests are protected. The study has established that violations of children's rights, especially rights of children who are used to fight wars, and street children, are on the increase after colonial rule.

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