



## A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF STYLISTIC VARIATION AND MULTIPLE SOCIAL IDENTITIES IN AMMA DARKO'S FACELESS (2003)

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims at analysing stylistic variation and multiple social identities in Amma Darko's *Faceless* (2003). Drawing its theoretical constructs of style, gender identity and register from sociolinguistics combined with qualitative approach, it seeks to examine the speech styles or ways of speaking of the narrator and some of the speaking characters in Darko's novel, i.e. their use of language in various contexts and show how they use language not only to reflect varying spoken styles, but also to discursively construct and carve out vrying social identities. The findings establish that a contextual approach to style or styling- the contextualisation of social styles- truely proves relevant to the reading, interpretation and understanding of every/any pattern of stylistic or/and (gender) identity variation in discourse.

**Keywords:** Gender, multiple social identities, register, style, stylistic variation.

### RESUME

Cet article analyse la variation stylistique et les multiples identités sociales dans l'ouvrage intitulé *Faceless* (2003) écrit par Amma Darko. Tirant ses concepts théoriques de style, de genre et de registre de la sociolinguistique combinés à l'approche qualitative, il vise à examiner les styles parlés ou les différentes manières d'expression du narrateur et de quelques personnages dans le roman, c-à-d leur usage de la langue dans différents contextes et démontrer comment ils emploient la langue non seulement pour refléter les styles parlés variés, mais aussi construire discursivement les identités sociales variées. Les résultats établissent qu'une approche contextuelle au style ou au stylant- la contextualisation des styles sociaux- est vraiment indispensable pour la lecture, l'interprétation et la compréhension de chaque/tout trait de variation stylistique ou/et de variation d'identité dans le discours.

**Mots clés :** Genre, multiples identités sociales, registre, style, variation stylistique.

### INTRODUCTION

Every act of speaking is, *de facto*, an act that activates a peculiar or an idiosyncratic spoken style. Speaking is, according to Coupland (2007, pp. 8-9), "the basic modality of language, where linguistic meaning potential is realised and where social meanings of different sorts are creatively implemented." Two inferences can be made from the foregoing quote. First, when people speak, they use language to realise different sorts of social meanings, these social meanings can or may be related to the ways they perceive or/and represent social reality, themselves or others in discourse, for example. Language, in this sense, can be said to encode or/and sustain social

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reality (Eggins, 2004, p.10; Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 242). It can also be said to be the prism by which we understand social reality (Blommaert, 2005). The second inference deriving from the foregoing quote is that (the ways of) speaking and the notion of 'creativity' are closely interrelated; both seem to work hand-in-hand to infuse a stylistic dimension in discourse. This is to say, when people speak, the lexicogrammatical choices they draw from the language system not only help them realise different kinds of social meanings, but these choices also help enact their speech style (Allagbé and Allagbé, 2017) or/and map out their idiolect, i.e. their individualised or stylised dialect (Koutchadé, Allagbé, and Toulassi, 2019).

The fundamental assumption made here is that speech styles or the ways of speaking serve or can serve as an avenue for the observation and the appraisal of stylistic or/and gender variation. The American sociolinguist William Labov (Labov, 1972b cited in Coupland, 2007, p. 7) uses the term "stylistic variation" to refer to "intra-individual' speech variation- variation 'within the speech of single individuals". For Aitchison (2010, p. 139), the term denotes the variation which exists in the speech of any one person. Rickford and Eckert (2001, pp. 1-2) and Schilling-Estes (2002, p. 375) (quoted in Moore, 2004, pp. 375-376) note that *intra-speaker variation* is one of the two component parts in which sociolinguistic research has divided analyses, namely: the study of *stylistic constraints* or intra-speaker variation and the study of *social constraints* or inter-speaker variation. Moore (2004, p. 376) further submits that the study of *stylistic constraints* or intra-speaker variation is the analysis that studies shifts in a speaker's or a group's language use which transcend prototypical social usage (and, in doing so, seeks to describe the distribution of language in terms of range of use within a given sociolinguistic community). Aitchison (Ibid) clearly spells out the underlying tenet of the study of *stylistic constraints* or *intra-speaker variation* in the following terms: "Every native speaker is (assumed to be) normally in command of several different language styles, sometimes called **registers**, which are varied according to the topic under discussion, the formality of the occasion, and the medium used (speech, writing or sign)".

While Labov and his followers overtly admit (as evidenced by the increasing body of literature on variationist research) that style is variably enacted in a single speaker's speech or ways of speaking, they have provided very little insights into how social contexts shape the choice of a particular variant the speaker makes in a given context or, to put this in another way, they have paid little (not to say no) attention to what Coupland terms 'styling' - 'the activation of stylistic meaning' (Coupland, 2007, p. 2) or "the contextualisation of social styles" (Coupland, 2007, p. 5) in their research. In other words, "variationist sociolinguistics has worked with a limited idea of social context" (Coupland, Ibid). Perhaps, there is a plausible reason for this. The reason is, as Romaine (2003, p. 100) notes, that variationist research has often concerned itself with social class differentiation which is often assumed to be fundamental and other

patterns of variation, such as stylistic and gender variation, are regarded as derivative of it. Unlike variationist scholars, in this study, we argue that language use is context-dependent (Eggins, 2004) or context-sensitive (Blommaert, 2005), and that it is not enough to describe language use/style without explaining its social meaning (Moore, 2004). The ongoing study, *so to speak*, seeks to bridge the gap between language use/style and social meaning. It aims at analysing stylistic variation and multiple social identities in Amma Darko's *Faceless* (2003). It specifically seeks to examine the speech styles or ways of speaking of the narrator and some of the speaking characters in Darko's novel, i.e. their use of language in various contexts and show how they use language not only to reflect varying spoken styles, but also to discursively construct and carve out varying social identities. The study draws its theoretical constructs from sociolinguistics.

### 1. Theoretical Framework

As said earlier, this paper draws its theoretical constructs of style, gender identity (Butler, 1988, 1990/1999, 2004; Romaine, 2003; Moore 2004; Blommaert, 2005; Coupland, 2007; Edwards, 2009) and register (Halliday, 1971; Halliday and Hasan, 1985/1989; Eggins, 2004) from sociolinguistics. In his seminal book entitled *Style: Language Variation and Identity*, Coupland (2007) provides a very insightful contribution to our understanding of the concept 'style'. His contribution actually lies in his approach to this term; an approach which differs from that of variationist sociolinguistics, for instance. Coupland's approach to the study of style emphasises the role of social contexts in the reading and interpretation of dialects or social styles in discourse. In this sense, this approach obviously seems not to perceive and conceive style as a formalist, simplistic and unidimensional concept or as a pre-conceived sociolinguistic variable detachable from its social meaning as variationist sociolinguistics generally does. For example, while Labov's variationist sociolinguistics proposes explaining stylistic shifts through speakers' internal perceptual processes, psycholinguistically, Coupland's approach goes beyond this to accommodate Michael A. K. Halliday's *register theory*, Allan Bell's *audience design theory*, Howard Giles's *accommodation theory*, etc. Indeed, this approach allows for a reading and interpretation of style as a multidimensional entity, i.e. it suggests explaining variation in speech styles not only from a psycholinguistic perspective but also from textual, relational and interactional perspectives. However, it should be noted that Coupland's approach shares in common such things as terminology, methods, etc., with variationist sociolinguistics.

Again, Coupland's approach to the study of style differs from that of general stylistics. While general stylistics aims at the study of literary style, Coupland's approach to the study of style deals with the study of speech styles or the various ways of speaking. It follows from this distinction to note that speech styles or ways of

speaking are the major area of investigation in this brand of sociolinguistic approach to stylistic analysis. The underlying assumption here is that speakers speak differently in different social situations. Other names for 'social situation' are 'register', 'context of situation' or 'language according to use' in Halliday's terms (Halliday, 1971, Halliday and Hasan, 1985/1989; Eggins, 2004). Halliday (in Halliday and Hasan, 1985/1989, p. 44) uses the term 'register' to denote "specific lexical and grammatical choices as made by speakers depending on the situation of context, the participants of a conversation and the function of the language in discourse." Eggins (2004, p. 9) uses it to refer to the impact of dimensions of the immediate context of situation of a language event on the way language is used. Drawing on these definitions, Coupland (2007, p. 12) contends that every social situation subsumes a plane of semantic organisation which can be specified through the concepts of field (the organisation of ideational and experiential meanings), mode (the organisation of textual and sequential meanings) and tenor (the organisation of interpersonal meanings). The point made so far here is that every register or way of speaking often includes a set of lexicogrammatical choices which typify it. And in every social situation, there are often many competing choices or what variationist scholars generally term many 'competing variants' at stake. The choice of one variant in a given social situation automatically activates a given spoken style. This is where the notion of stylistic or/and gender variation actually becomes very obvious and operationalised.

In this perspective, scholars like Romaine (2003), Moore (2004), Blommaert (2005), Coupland (2007) and Edwards (2009) posit that speakers not only use language to reflect stylistic variation but they use it to construct social identities in local contexts. This is to say, while speaking, speakers use language to represent or carve out who or what they are; i.e. their personal or/and social identities. It is obvious in the foregoing that gender identity is a performed act (Butler, 1988, 1990/1999, 2004), i.e. it is an act that has to be enacted or performed discursively in social practice for it to be deemed socially relevant (Allagbé and Allagbé, 2015). However, it often happens in social life that one is grouped against or irrespective of one's will by others into this or that group identity. This is what (socio-)linguists generally call *othering*. In each case, *performance* or *othering*, as it is believed, language is strongly at work. Language is, *as it were*, a means by which identity is constituted. But language is not the only unique means which marks identity. Other means which mark identity are dressing code, life-style, skin colour, accent, voice, etc. All these means including language belong to the semiotic system (Eggins, 2004; Blommaert, 2005). Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) (quoted in Blommaert, 2005, pp. 203-204) submit that "identity is a semiotic through and through, and every act of semiosis is an act of identity in which we 'give off' information about ourselves". In the same token, Blommaert, (2005, p. 204) posits that identity is a semiotic potential which involves a

“semiotic process of representation: symbols, narratives, textual genres [...]”. This sounds very complex, indeed. Drawing on this, Meyerhoff (2006, p. 201) reminds us that “the interplay between language and different social and personal identities is a complex one, and that in order to really understand the social meaning of any instance of language variation we need to start from the particular while simultaneously keeping an eye on the broader context of that variation.” This is what this study really intends to focus on.

## **2. Methodology and Analysis of Stylistic Variation and Multiple Social Identities in *Faceless* (2003)**

As mentioned above, this paper draws its theoretical constructs of style, gender identity (Butler, 1988, 1990/1999, 2004; Romaine, 2003; Moore 2004; Blommaert, 2005; Coupland, 2007; Edwards, 2009) and register (Halliday, 1971; Halliday and Hasan, 1985/1989; Eggins, 2004) from sociolinguistics. It combines these theoretical constructs with qualitative approach, which is often defined as a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data, while focusing on meaning-making (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). This study is also text-centred, given that “[...] the only ultimate valid unit for textual analysis is the [...] text” (Halliday, 1970, p. 58). In this perspective, four texts are selected at random from Amma Darko’s *Faceless* (2003). These texts represent the data described in consonance with the aforementioned theoretical constructs. For the sake of clarity, we put the texts under scrutiny here in the appendix. And we set out to first of all describe the register variables in the texts to pinpoint how they vary style-wise (see Table 1). After this, we describe the various social identities that the language of the texts enacts socially or/and discursively (see Table 2). Next, the identified linguistic features are qualitatively explained.

### *2.1. Register Analysis of the Texts*

The description of the three register variables is provided in the table below.

**Table 1:** Register description of the texts.

**REGISTER DESCRIPTION OF THE TEXTS**

Register Variable	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4
<b>Field</b>	Describing/representing the situation of street children, what they experience on the streets, how they behave and what they do to survive and carry on with life.	Describing/representing two young people (Fofu and Odarley) living on the streets and their behaviour.	Describing/representing an exchange of greetings/an interaction between Maa Tsuru and Odarley and between Naa Yomo and Odarley.	Describing/representing Fofu's experience of floating out of herself and the reaction of her listeners (Maa Tsuru, Kabria and Sylv Po) to this.
<b>Mode</b>	Written mode; high interpersonal distance and experiential distance.	Blend of spoken and written mode; moderate interpersonal and experiential distance.	Spoken face-to-face; Interactive mode interspersed with the narrator's descriptions.	Blend of spoken and written mode; Interactive mode interspersed with the narrator's descriptions.
<b>Tenor</b>	Relatively high formal; unequal power between the narrator and the reader maximised to construct an authoritarian, narrative distance.	Mid formal and mid informal; unequal power between the narrator and the reader but equal power between Fofu and Odarley.	More informal than formal; unequal power between Maa Tsuru and Odarley, Naa Yomo and Odarley and the narrator and the reader.	Relatively informal; equal power between familiar participants (Fofu and Kabria mainly) exploited to enable alternation of roles: a speaker becomes a respondent, a listener becomes a speaker; unequal power between the narrator and the reader minimised to construct a nonauthoritarian solidarity.

As the table above indicates, the language of the four texts under study here subsumes the three register variables which functionally serve to enact the context of situation therein. It is the 'context of situation' or 'language according to use', as said earlier on, which serves to contextualise dialects or social styles in discourse. It is at this level that we actually notice shifts in speakers' styles. As the table points out, there exists a great number of remarkable shifts in the language/speech/idiolect of the speakers in/from the texts. These shifts actually span the three register variables: field, mode and tenor. Field analysis reveals, for example, that in Text 1 the narrator describes or represents in a relatively high formal style the situation of street children, what they experience on the streets, how they behave and what they do to survive and carry on with life.

A cursory look at the linguistic properties of this text unveils some traits of a written mode. This text comprises full word forms, some of which exist as phrases/groups with a surprisingly gradual length and foregrounded variation ('the night on the old cardboard' and 'the Agbogbloshie market place' in (1), 'with Sunday being a churchgoing day' in (2), 'the risk of losing her newly acquired job of washing carrots at the vegetables wholesale market' in (3), 'the Sunday night into Monday dawn with her friends across the road at the squatters' enclave of Sodom and Gomorrah' in (4), 'waking up Monday morning beside one of her age group friends, both of them naked, hazy and disconcerted and oblivious to what exactly they had done with their nakedness' in (5). It should be noted that all the identified phrases/groups here are indexical of a given culture and thus culture-specific in nature. The character name 'Fofu' in (4) is culture-specific too. Again, vocabulary items like 'Agbogbloshie' in (1) and 'akpeteshie' (4) points to the narrator's shift from the English dialect to one of the local dialects spoken in her country, Ghana or her mixture of both codes. This denotes a cultural and linguistic hybridity or/and multicultural setting. All the words in this text are actually combined to form sentences with varying syntactic structures. Consider (1) and (5), for instance. While the words in (1) are packaged following the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order, those in (5) combine to form the Adjunct-Subject-Verb-Complement (ASVC) word order, figuring out clearly that Text 1 contains some syntactically foregrounded features. Another striking feature in this text is that it contains all in all six full-length sentences, each containing at least two processes (or verbs); i.e. the sentences in this text involve more than two clauses. This denotes a blend of spoken and written modes in the text. All the clauses/sentences in this text, as noted, vary both in type and length. The last but not the least remarkable feature in Text 1 is its tenor dimension. Here it is the narrator who plays all the role therein. She describes/represents its field. This positions her in an unequal power relation with the reader, given that she is acting as someone who knows what she is narrating here better than the reader.

Unlike Text 1, field analysis of Text 2 exudes that it does not include only one speaker/participant. In addition to the narrator, it consists of Fofu and Odarley. The narrator describes/represents Fofu and Odarley living on the streets and their behaviour. A close observation of the mode of this text reveals that it is a blend of spoken and written language. Linguistic features which figure out a written mode are mostly marked in the narrator's language/speech/idiolect. The identified statements (4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 16; 17; 18; 19; 21; 29 and 31) prove this. A striking feature noted at this stage is that all the identified statements but one (11) follow the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order. Again, while some of the statements encode a single process (or verb) (4; 6; 7; 8; 11; 12; 29 and 31), others contain more than one process (5; 9; 10; 13; 14; 16; 17; 18; 19 and 21). This points to a blend of spoken and written modes in the text. As the analysis also displays, in these statements, the narrator seems to use less intricate phrase and clause types compared to Text 1. However, she maintains her use of indexical and culture-specific vocabulary terms and phrases/groups as in Text 1. Here are some of them: 'Odarley' and 'from the cardboard' in (5), 'A car horn' in (6), 'Fofu' in (16), 'here at Sodom and Gomorrah' in (25), etc.

Linguistic features that indicate a spoken mode in Text 2 are found in Fofu's idiolect (3; 15 and 20) and Odarley's speech (1; 2; 23; 22; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28 and 30). For example, in (3), Fofu uses the paralinguistic token "Shshshshshsh . . ." to ask her friend to keep quiet. Fofu also uses a minor clause (20) to state or restate a fact; a fact about the issue she has had with the streetlord, Poison, earlier in the day. The latter has actually attempted to rape her. Unlike Fofu, the only command (30) Odarley uses is not astonishingly meant to usher her addressee into doing something; it is rather meant to make a suggestion. Both speakers employ the generic pronoun "you" in (1; 2 and 15) to address each other too. They also use questions (1; 2; 15; 23; 24 and 25). But Odarley stands out here in that she uses five of the identified questions (1; 2; 23; 24 and 25). Her friend, Fofu, employs only one question (15). Again, Odarley uses the vocative adjunct "Fofu" in (1) to address her listener. All these features corroborate the presence of a spoken mode in Text 2. They also reveal that power is equal between Fofu and Odarley. But power is unequal between the narrator and the reader. Given the combination of the features of spoken and written modes found in this text, it can be said to be mid formal and mid informal.

Field analysis of Text 3 shows that it is about the description/representation of an exchange of greetings, an interaction between Maa Tsuru and Odarley, on the one hand, and between Naa Yomo and Odarley, on the other. Unlike in the first two texts, the narrator's intervention in this text is relatively limited or backgrounded, leaving thus enough room for a spoken face-to-face interaction between the speakers/participants. In fact, there are 30 sentences in the text. And these sentences are distributed across the participants as follows: Maa Tsuru (4), Narrator (2; 8; 9; 10;

11 and 12), Naa Yomo (6; 7; 14; 16; 20; 21; 22; 27; 28; 29 and 30) and Odarley (1; 3; 5; 13; 15; 17; 18; 19; 23; 24; 25 and 26). The very few sentences produced by the narrator do point to the presence of a written mode in the text. Surprisingly enough, all these sentences are full sentences with an elaborate syntactic structure. In fact, five (2; 8; 10; 11 and 12) of these sentences contain more than one process (or verb). This is to say, they subsume more than one clause. This observation shows a blend of spoken and written modes in the text. Another surprising linguistic feature here is that in (10), a dependent clause is foregrounded. The placement of the dependent clause in Thematic position makes the text under study:

appear more spoken, as the frequent use of dependent clauses in Thematic position contributes to neutralizing the distinction between spoken and written language. Since clause complexes are more common in spoken language, while single clause sentences are frequent in written language, the presence of clause complexes suggests a spoken mode. However, by positioning the dependent clause first, the writer [or narrator] gives the text a degree of Thematic planning not common in spoken language (Eggins, 2004, p. 339).

The only utterance that includes a single process in this text is sentence (9). In addition, these sentences are made up of words, some of which are repeated character names: "Odarley" in (8 and 11), "Naa Yomo" in (9 and 12). These words are also knitted together to form two relatively intricate phrases/groups packaged in the same sentence: "Fofu's mother" and "a glazed look on the face of her daughter's friend" in (2). These phrases obviously look indexical and culture-specific in nature. The spoken mode in this text is exuded by the number of participants therein. Apart from the narrator, this text counts three other characters, namely: Maa Tsuru, Naa Yomo and Odarley. The spoken mode in the text is also marked by the spoken face-to-face interaction between Maa Tsuru and Odarley, on the one hand, and Naa Yomo and Odarley, on the other. It should be noted that the interaction between Maa Tsuru and Odarley is brief because they are interrupted by Naa Yomo. Their dialogue comprises in total four utterances (1; 3; 4 and 5). In (1), Odarley calls her addressee 'Maa Tsuru' by her name. This denotes impoliteness, given that in African culture, a child is not allowed to call his/her elders by their names. In (3), she informs Maa Tsuru about her coming to see her with Fofu but the latter stops by. Surprised by her daughter's act, Maa Tsuru produces her only utterance (4), an elliptical WH-interrogative. To respond to Maa Tsuru's query, Odarley employs (5). Consider the spaced dots in this utterance, they denote a transient hesitation in the speaker's speech.

Unlike Maa Tsuru-Odarley's brief dialogue, Naa Yomo and Odarley converse longer, each proving to be highly engaged in the interactional transaction. In fact, they produce a total number of 23 utterances: Naa Yomo (6; 7; 14; 16; 20; 21; 22; 27; 28; 29 and 30) and Odarley (13; 15; 17; 18; 19; 23; 24; 25 and 26). In (6 and 7), Naa Yomo queries Odarley about her manners, about greeting. In (13), Odarley answers Naa Yomo's greeting. In (14), a full polar interrogative, Naa Yoo inquires about Odarley's

friend. In (15), Odarley responds, saying she is fine. Naa Yoo raises another question (16), a full polar interrogative, to find out if Odarley's friend has not come to see her mother. In (17), Odarley responds to Naa Yomo's question and goes on in (18 and 19) to state a fact, the fact is that her friend is coming and that she has taken the lead, and promises to go and call her to hurry up. In (20 and 21), Naa Yomo clearly shows her appreciation of the young girl's (Odarley's) attitude. In (22), Naa Yomo uses an imperative followed by a tag to make a request from her addressee. The request is that Odarley should tell her friend, Fofu, to greet Naa Yomo when she comes. In (23), Odarley promises to deliver her friend Naa Yomo's message and goes on to apologise for not greeting Naa Yomo earlier. And she sets out to state the reason in (25 and 26) when she is interrupted by Naa Yomo; she acknowledges Odarley's apology in (27; 28 and 29) before urging her to go in (30), an imperative sentence. Considering all these linguistic features, one can say, without any shadow of doubt, that there is unequal power between Maa Tsuru and Odarley and between Naa Yomo and Odarley. Likewise, one can say that there is unequal power between the narrator and the reader. Considering also the the dominance of the linguistic features of a spoken mode over those of a written mode, one can say simply that this text is more informal than formal.

Field analysis of Text 4 shows that the text describes/represents Fofu's floating-out-of-her-body experience and the reaction of her listeners (Maa Tsuru, Kabria and Sylv Po) to this. Unlike in Text 3, the narrator in this text shares almost the same rate of utterances with the female protagonist, Fofu. In fact, the narrator has produced eight sentences (1; 2; 3; 9; 10; 15; 16 and 17), whereas Fofu has uttered ten sentences (4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 11; 12; 13; 14 and 19). The persona 'Kabria' has uttered only one sentence (18). As mode analysis unveils, this text encodes a blend of spoken and written modes. The written mode seems to be more articulated in the narrator's speech/idiolect, given that it subsumes only full or elongated sentences with an elaborate syntactic structure. While four of these sentences prove to contain a single process (2; 9; 10 and 15), others; we mean the remainder (1; 3; 16 and 17) include more than one process. The presence of clause simplexes points to a written mode but that of clause complexes denotes a spoken mode here. Again, the narrator's use of a full polar interrogative in (17) shows a spoken mode. Here the narrator's question is meant to minimise the unequal power relation between her and her reader to construct a nonauthoritarian solidarity in the text. Another surprising linguistic feature is that all the identified sentences in the narrator's idiolect follow the conventional Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order. This denotes once again the written mode suspected in the text.

In addition, the narrator employs such indexical and culture-specific terms as "Fofu" in (1 and 10), "Maa Tsuru" in (15), "Sylv Po and Kabria" in (16). These indexical and culture-specific terms are actually character names. Their presence exudes that Text 4

includes more than one participant. In fact, this is an attribute of a literary text. Fofó's speech/idiolect reveals a selection of two polar interrogatives (4 and 14) and eight statements (5; 6; 7; 8; 11; 12; 13 and 19), all of which seem to share similar structural intricacies with the narrator's utterances. It must be noted that the first polar interrogative is obviously a statement phonologically high-pitched into a question, it is meant to draw the attention of Fofó's addressees (Maa Tsuru, Sylv Po and Kabria) to her floating-out-of-her-body experience. Fofó uses the second polar interrogative to seek a positive confirmation (a back-channel response) from her audience. Fofó also employs the first seven statements to describe, narrate and state facts related to her floating-out-of-her-body experience and to Odarley's uncertainty. In (11), Fofó foregrounds a dependent clause; i.e. she places a dependent clause in Thematic position. And by so doing, she contributes to neutralising in her idiolect the distinction between spoken and written language. To represent her floating-out-of-her-body experience, Fofó uses material, mental, verbal and relational processes. With these processes, she actually encodes her perceptions, attitudes, biases, judgements and ideological position (Allagbé, 2016) or/and speaker position (Blommaert, 2005). In other words, with these processes, she represents her mind-style (Allagbé and Allagbé, 2017) in her talk. In addition, Fofó's representation clearly indicates her command of discourse patterning and orders of discourse (Allagbé and Amoussou, 2020b). The type of process she mostly uses is material process. This indicates that her speech is mostly concerned with action, doing, movement, etc. The most repeated process in this text is 'float'. It is used three times in (5; 13 and 18) by Fofó and once in (18) by Kabria.

Kabria actually uses sentence (18) to find out if Fofó's floating-out-of-her-body experience still continues at present. And Fofó answers by 'Not ...' in (19), specifying that the experience has stopped since she has moved into Aunty Dina's home. This clearly proves that her paranormal experience has to do more with her bodily suffering on the streets than with her psyche or personality. The bodily suffering she has endured and experienced on the streets has inflicted so much damage on her. The point suggested in the foregoing is that life on the streets is very hellish, and that this embodies so many uncalculated, unimaginable corporeal, mental and spiritual experiences and scars that can easily tip the individual, and by extension, the whole society off the balance if care is not taken! Hence, this depiction serves as an indirect invitation; an indirect invitation for (political, administrative and religious) leaders and decision-makers to act now and do something pressingly about the social issue of streetchildren in contemporary or modern Ghanaian society. Anate (2014, p. 36) cogently agrees with this implied meaning. After enumerating the dire consequences of the issue of streetchildren in social life, he suggests that "in order not to play the firemen all the time, in the sense that the state should provide a minimal level of support to those who can't take care of themselves, the government should anticipate

by regulating the homes in the country'' (Ibid). From the tenor analysis of Text 4, one can infer that it is relatively informal, and that the equal power between familiar participants (Fofu and Kabria mainly) is exploited to enable in the text an alternation of roles: a speaker becomes a respondent, a listener becomes a speaker. Also, the unequal power between the narrator and the reader is deliberately minimised to construct a nonauthoritarian solidarity in the text.

The entire analysis of the three register variables of field, mode and tenor has clearly shown that there are shifts in the various speakers' language/speech/idiolect. In other words, this analysis has revealed very insightful patterns of stylistic variation in the language of the speakers in/from the four texts under study. It should be recalled here that the notion of variation is not limited to style alone. It is also associated with (gender) identity. Hence, we can talk of personal and social identities as variable as they are perceived to be discursively enacted in social practice.

## 2.2. Analysis of Multiple Social Identities in the Texts

The description of the language of the speakers in/from the four texts under study has yielded the following multiple social identities tabulated below.

**Table 2:** Description of multiple social identities in the texts.

### DESCRIPTION OF MULTIPLE SOCIAL IDENTITIES IN THE TEXTS

Text No Speaker	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4
Narrator	<b>Fofu</b> (a street child; a girl; a hustler/worker; a fourteen-year-old child who behaves like adults and does what they do).	<b>Fofu and Odarley</b> (street children, close friends).	<b>Maa Tsuru</b> (Fofu's mother; an inquirer/a curious person; a weak/a person with a hollow and inert voice), <b>Odarley</b> (a hesitant; an insult trader; a polite/good mannered girl; Fofu's friend; Fofu's lead/precursor; a grandchild), <b>Naa Yomo</b> (the oldest member of the household, and mother and grandmother to someone and everyone; an educator; an inquirer; a careful observer).	<b>Maa Tsuru, Sylv Po and Kabria</b> (active listeners), <b>Sylv Po and Kabria</b> (fascinated people), <b>Kabria</b> (an inquirer), <b>Maa Tsuru</b> (a gruntler), <b>Fofu</b> (a passionate hater of her situation).
				<b>Fofu</b> (an informer; a body floater/an

<b>Fofo</b>				out-of-the-body-experiencer; a storyteller), <b>Odarley</b> (someone who is unsure which of the stories Fofo tells her are real or imagined), <b>Dina</b> (Fofo's host).
<b>Odarley</b>		<b>Fofo</b> (a hustler/worker; a pickpocket).	<b>Fofo</b> (a fantasiser).	

As Table 2 clearly shows, each speaker's idiolect in the four texts under scrutiny serves to construct at least one social identity, mainly for others; i.e. they draw on the social categorisation process of *othering*. A very striking feature in the text is that the narrator's language has constructed the greatest number of social identities for others. In fact, the character with the highest number of social identities, as the table reveals, is Odarley in Text 3. The narrator's speech represents her as embodying alone seven social identities (*a hesitant; an insult trader; a polite/good mannered girl; Fofo's friend; Fofo's lead/precursor and a grandchild*). She is followed by Fofo in Text 1 with six social identities (*a street child; a girl; a hustler/worker and a fourteen-year-old child who behaves like adults and does what they do*). Naa Yomo in Text 3 ranks third with four social identities (*the oldest member of the household, and mother and grandmother to someone and everyone; an educator; an inquirer and a careful observer*). Maa Tsuru in Text 3 comes fourth with three social identities (*Fofo's mother; an inquirer/a curious person and a weak/a person with a hollow and inert voice*).

However, the same narrator's idiolect represents the same characters as bearing, in other contexts or elsewhere or so, a relatively low number of social identities. For example, the narrator's speech depicts Fofo and Odarley as carriers of two social identities (*street children and close friends*) in Text 2. The same narrator's language groups, in Text 4, Fofo as '*a passionate hater of her situation*', Maa Tsuru as '*a gruntler*', Maa Tsuru, Sylv Po and Kabria as '*active listeners*', Sylv Po and Kabria as '*fascinated people*' and Kabria as '*an inquirer*'. Just like the narrator's language described above, Odarley's idiolect carves out a limited number of social identities for her friend, Fofo (*a hustler/worker and a pickpocket*) in Text 2 and (*a fantasiser*) in Text 3. In the same token, Fofo's speech in Text 4 depicts Odarley as "*someone who is unsure which of the stories Fofo tells her are real or imagined*" and Auntie Dina as '*her host*'. Apart from the social categorisation process of *othering*, a speaker's (Fofo's) language has drawn on the process of *performance*. In Text 4, Fofo represents herself as bearing or her language enacts three social identities (*an informer; a body floater/an out-of-the-body-experiencer and a storyteller*).

## Conclusion

This paper has analysed stylistic variation and multiple social identities in Amma Darko's *Faceless* (2003). It has drawn its theoretical constructs of style, gender identity and register from sociolinguistics. Combining these theoretical constructs with qualitative approach, it has examined the speech styles or ways of speaking of the narrator and some of the speaking characters in Darko's novel; i.e. their use of language in various contexts and shown how they use language not only to reflect varying spoken styles, but also to discursively construct and carve out varying social identities. The qualitative analysis has yielded very important findings.

The analysis of the three register variables of field, mode and tenor has, for example, exuded that all the speakers' language/speech/idiolect subsumes linguistic features which pertain either to a spoken mode or a written mode or to the two in varying gradients, ranging from relatively high formal to relatively (low) (in-)formal. In other words, considering the identified linguistic features from the analysis the the speakers' language/speech/idiolect from the four texts, one can simply infer that Text 1 is relatively high formal, Text 2 is mid formal and mid informal, Text 3 is more informal than formal and Text 4 is relatively informal. All these linguistic features identified in the register analysis, *as it were*, serve as patterns of stylistic variation or evidence of shifts in the speakers' language/speech/idiolect or social styles. They also serve as patterns of (gender) identity variation or evidence of their multiplicity in the speakers' language/speech/idiolect. As the analysis has revealed, all the speakers have drawn mainly on the process of *othering* to construct others' social identities or ascribe social identities to others, the number of which ranges from one to seven. Again, one of these speakers (Fofo) has used the process of *performance* to enact three distinct social identities. It follows from this analysis to establish that a contextual approach to style or styling- the contextualisation of social styles- truly proves relevant to the reading, interpretation and understanding of every/any pattern of stylistic or/and (gender) identity variation in discourse.

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## Appendix

### Text 1 (Darko, 2003, p. 1)

1. She chose to spend the night on the old cardboard laid out in front of the provision store at the Agboghloshie market place because it was a Sunday. 2. It had nothing to do with Sunday being a churchgoing day. 3. The reason was simply that if she hadn't, she would have stood the risk of losing her newly acquired job of washing carrots at the vegetables wholesale market. 4. Fofu would have spent the Sunday night into Monday dawn with her friends across the road at the squatters' enclave of Sodom and Gomorrah watching adult films her fourteen years required her to stay away from, drinking directly from bottles of *akpeteshie*, or at best, some slightly milder locally produced gin. 5. Ultimately, she would have found herself waking up Monday morning beside one of her age group friends, both of them naked, hazy and disconcerted and oblivious to what exactly they had done with their nakedness. 6. Sucked into life on the streets and reaching out to each new day with an ever-increasing hopelessness, such were the ways they employed to escape their pain.

### Text 2 (Darko, 2003, pp. 5-6)

1. "Fofu, is that you? 2. What are you. . .?" 3. "Shshshshshsh . . ." 4. Fofu placed a finger to her own lips. 5. Odarley shot up from the cardboard and rubbed her eyes. 6. A car horn sounded afar like a clarion call to duty. 7. She rose. 8. Fofu trod her way carefully out of the shack. 9. Odarley followed, pausing briefly by the door to fish out her *Charlie wotee* from a bunch. 10. She slipped in her feet and stepped out with Fofu. 11. On second thoughts, she got back inside the shack. 12. A big plastic water bottle stood by the pile of slippers. 13. She picked up an old plastic cup beside it and filled it with some of the water. 14. She walked out to the crudely dug gutter in front of the shack, washed her face and rinsed her mouth. 15. "Have you?" she asked Fofu. 16. Fofu shook her head. 17. Odarley handed her the half-cup of water and went back into the shack. 18. By the time Fofu returned the cup, Odarley had fished out some chewing sticks. 19. She placed one between her teeth; gave the other to Fofu; chewed briefly on hers; removed it, spat into the gutter and whispered, "Trouble?" 20. "Big one." 21. Odarley's mind went ablaze with what Fofu's big trouble most likely was. 22. Maybe the vegetables woman who employed her found out Fofu sometimes picked pockets. 23. Or had Fofu tried a fast one on somebody and failed? 24. "What big trouble?" she asked. 25. "And what trouble here at Sodom and Gomorrah isn't big? 26. I tell you, how we boozed yesterday! 27. That one was big trouble. 28. Nature is even calling." 29. She held her stomach. 30. "Let's go to the dump." 31. And she went ahead.

### Text 3 (Darko, 2003, pp. 18-19)

1. "Maa Tsuru," Odarley called softly when she neared the door. 2. Fofu's mother turned her head and rested a glazed look on the face of her daughter's friend. 3. "I was coming with Fofu but she stopped on the way," Odarley divulged. 4. "Why?" Maa Tsuru asked in a voice that was hollow and

inert. 5. "Because . . . she was uncertain . . . she wanted to come and see you about . . ." 6. "Hey!" an old voice croaked from the direction of the room almost opposite Maa Tsuru's, to the left, "girl, are your manners gone on holidays? 7. Have you heard of something called 'greeting'?" 8. Odarley turned her head sharply to trade an insult, but mellowed immediately at the sight of the utterer. 9. Naa Yomo, at eighty-seven, was the oldest member of the household, and mother and grandmother to someone and everyone. 10. If the washing woman did not appreciate her courtesy for whatever reason, Naa Yomo obviously expected it, for whatever reason. 11. Odarley went over and greeted her politely. 12. Naa Yomo responded and asked how she was doing. 13. "Fine, Naa Yomo." 14. "And your friend?" 15. "She is also fine, Naa Yomo." 16. "Didn't she come with you to see her mother?" 17. "She did, Naa Yomo. 18. She is coming on the way. 19. I took the lead but I'll go and call her to hurry up." 20. "Good. 21. Good. 22. And grandchild, tell her to greet me when she comes, will you?" 23. "I will, Naa Yomo. 24. I am sorry I didn't greet you earlier. 25. It was because I didn't know what was happening. 26. When I greeted the woman . . ." 27. "I know. 28. I saw it all. 29. It's all right. 30. Go."

**Text 4** (Darko, 2003, p. 160)

1. Fofu disentangled herself from Kabria's hold, picked an old cloth of her mother's from the bed, blew her nose generously into it, wiped her face and then, smiled unexpectedly at Kabria. 2. It was a smile through pain. 3. It offered hope that the pain could be overcome. 4. "You know something?" Fofu addressed Kabria, "Sometimes I imagine myself to be outside of myself. 5. I will float out of myself and watch with pity the miserable life led by this young girl called Fofu. 6. Later, when I reunite with myself, the weight of it all hits me once again. 7. Then I'll shake with misery. 8. And when I happen to be alone, cry." 9. No one spoke. 10. Fofu went on. 11. "Odarley was always saying that I fantasise too much. 12. Sometimes she wasn't sure which of the stories I told her were real or imagined. 13. When I float out of myself, I watch this poor girl who is I, and I feel great pity for both mother and me. 14. Isn't that funny?" 15. Maa Tsuru grunted sourly. 16. Sylv Po and Kabria exchanged looks, both fascinated by the unexpected journey into the mind of Fofu who, without doubt, hated her situation with passion. 17. Was this how many of the girls out there on the streets dealt with the harsh reality of their situation: floating out of themselves? 18. "Do you still float out of yourself sometimes?" Kabria asked Fofu after a brief while. 19. Fofu smiled broadly and replied, "Not since I moved into Auntie Dina's home."