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Gains from pains: Paradox of post-traumatic growth in Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*

Valentine Chimenem Owhorodu
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Email: vcowhorodu@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5928-9556

Abstract
The conventional argument of many literary critics, sociologists and psychologists is that traumatic events leave their victims in a continuing state of inaction, hopelessness, fragility, melancholia and despondency. However, following the arguments of postcolonial trauma critics, this study demonstrates that while trauma can exert its weakening effects on individuals and communities, it can also lead to some transformational benefits. This study is carried out within the ambit of Niger Delta literature, since the literary tradition expresses a high level of crude oil-induced trauma. Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* is purposely adopted and analysed in line with Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun's notion of posttraumatic growth. The study shows that despite the crippling effects of oil-induced trauma on Amaibi, he later exhibits positive and beneficial corollaries of trauma such as an increase in wisdom, stronger relationship with his wife, spiritual awakening, an improved sense of morality and psychic resilience.

Keywords: Chimeka Garricks, Niger Delta literature, oil-induced trauma, postcolonial trauma, post-traumatic growth

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Introduction

Trauma studies emerged in the early 1990s as an attempt to construct an ethical response to various forms of human suffering together with their cultural and artistic representations (Andermahr, 2015). It is an interdisciplinary study that bestrides literature, psychoanalysis, sociology, philosophy, and history in the study of the aesthetic representation of trauma. Craps (2010) avows that "the relationship between literature, trauma, and ethics is among the hottest research topics in the field today" (p. 52). Trauma theory provides a critical platform for the comprehension of the world and ethical ways of changing its traumatic trajectory for good.

Many extant studies on trauma presuppose that there are no positive aftermaths of trauma. For instance, Herman (1992) outlines hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction as the three main categories of symptoms of post-traumatic stress. In her explication of "disconnection", Herman avers that traumatic events breach basic human relationships: the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. Moreover, she asserts that such events also violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis.

Most of the arguments and descriptions offered in the Caruthian model of trauma – descriptions of the negative aftermaths of traumatisation and re-traumatisation – only reflect an "emphatic tendency to focus on the destructive repetition of the trauma that governs a person's life" (Caruth, 1996, p. 63). This means that the thrust of the Caruthian trauma model is to account for the ruinous and crippling corollaries of trauma. One of the objectives of postcolonial trauma theorists, therefore, is to oppose such universalism of the nuances of trauma. As the present study shows, contrary to Caruth's descriptions, the aftermaths of trauma vary and are not restricted to negative outcomes.

Again, in many critical works on Niger Delta literature, we often encounter the same underlying claim that victimisation, melancholia, submissiveness, inaction, fragility, stasis, etc., are the only possible defining features and aftermaths of the traumas of the minority groups in the region. Such critical analyses also posit that the aforementioned features eventually culminate in weakening and decimating both individual and communal spirit and identity. Some of these studies include Bodunde (2002), Udo (2004), Shantz (2007), Shija (2008), Luga, (2010), Nwagbara (2010 & 2012), Tsaaior (2011), Alu and Suwa (2012), Sadek (2013), among others. But leaning on some ideas in trauma studies, we aim to demonstrate that barring its deep-seated effects, trauma also engenders other positive aftermaths.

What many postcolonial critics bring to the fore is that postcolonial narratives often demonstrate resilience, closure, and growth as possible aftermaths of trauma, in contradistinction to the Caruthian emphasis on weakness, fragility and melancholia as the aftereffects of traumatic wounding. This, however, is not a denial of the negative effects of trauma. While trauma can exert its weakening effects on individuals and communities, it can also lead to a stronger sense of identity and renewed social cohesion. Hence, our focus is to examine Garricks' text based on its depiction of the possibilities of positive change arising from adversarial circumstances.

Chimeka Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*, a fictional depiction of the oil-politics in the Niger Delta, captures Odigie's (2012) position that environmental degradation threatens the wellbeing of future generations and should call for intergenerational equity, especially in terms of how benefits and burdens should be distributed. The story is set in the early part of the twenty-first century, at the peak of kidnapping, oil bunkering, vandalisation of oil installations, militancy, and other oil-related vices in the Niger Delta. Doughboy (a professed militant), Kaniye (a lawyer), Amaibi (a university don), and Tubo (a corrupt oil worker) are

at the epicentre of these conflicts. The story is set against the background of environmental degradation, unethical oil exploration, corruption, military brutality and unprofessionalism, injustice, and cronyism. The author adopts the multiple narrative techniques to give voice to each of these major characters who chronicle the adverse cultural, spiritual, economic, and social effects of oil exploration and exploitation on the Niger Delta.

About the Author

Chimeka Garricks is a Nigerian novelist. He was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1975, but raised in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. He obtained an LLB from the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, in 1999. Thereafter, he proceeded to Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland, where he obtained an LLM in International Commercial Law in 2013. Garricks has a wife, Biyai, and three children. He works as a commercial lawyer, representing corporations. *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* (2010) is his debut novel, and it has received numerous encomiums for the author's ability to strike a meaningful balance between the politics of the oil-rich Niger Delta and fidelity to literary art. Moreover, his creative/literary mind has been influenced by his in-depth knowledge of the nuances of the legal profession. The depiction of scenes and characters that deal with litigation, underscores his mastery of not only the art of storytelling but also the deployment of legal knowledge and proceedings into literature. Rasak-Oyadiran (2018) considers the courtroom scenes as outstanding features of *Tomorrow Died Yesterday*. He gives the author huge credit for his attention to details in the rendition of the legal outcomes of the actions in the story and the employment of articulate legal jargon and technicalities, all of which manifest in the overall atmosphere of the courthouse. *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* was inspired by the period of protracted militancy, pipeline vandalism, ecological degradation, kidnapping for ransom, and other vices that greeted the agitation for resource control and environmental sustenance in the Niger Delta. Garricks has carried out book readings in major cities in Nigeria, including Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt.

Synopsis of the Novel

Tomorrow Died Yesterday was written against the background of the crises caused by tensions between foreign oil companies and the exploited Niger Delta's ethnic minority groups, who grapple with the negative aftermaths of crude oil exploration in their communities. The conflicts in the text are triggered after a fateful oil spill on Asiama River – an event which directly affects and changes the trajectory of the lives of four major characters, namely, Doye, Kaniye, Tubo, and Amaibi. Furthermore, it is not only a fictional portrayal of how traditional leaders sell their land, people and culture for pecuniary gains, but also a caustic script on the Nigerian military as puppets to a callous and corrupt government. As stated by Nwahunanya (2011), literature is one of the tools that have been used to douse the flames of conflict and proffer remedies to the crises in the Niger Delta. Garricks attempts to do this with his story by first depicting how the exploration of natural resources has made socio-economic progress difficult, widening the gap between the rich and the poor, and how sustainability in the exploration of resources can be achieved. The narrative captures how oil bunkering, oil militancy, and corrupt dealings among politicians and employees of oil companies impact the lives of people living in the Niger-Delta regions.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the ideas of postcolonial trauma critics and Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun's notion of posttraumatic growth to demonstrate evidence of some transformational benefits accompanying traumatic encounters. The suitability of their ideas as the framework

for our study follows the question: Can trauma victims ever bounce back after an experience that shatters their assumptive worlds? Visser (2011 & 2015), Andermahr (2015), Martinez-Falquina (2015), Craps (2010) are some of the scholars in the field of postcolonial trauma studies who have demonstrated that many postcolonial literary works demonstrate growth and healing as characteristic outcomes of trauma.

Postcolonial trauma theorists explore the complex relationship between postcolonial criticism and trauma studies, to account for the sufferings of minority groups and non-Western groups. Thus, this framework undermines and disregards the description of trauma as a singular event, and advocates for the acknowledgement of differences and specificities of prolonged, repeated, cumulative, and vicarious traumas experienced by minorities and liminal groups. According to Balaev (2014), "[a] single conceptualization of trauma will likely never fit the multiple and often contradictory depictions of trauma in literature because texts cultivate a wide variety of values that reveal individual and cultural understandings of the self, memory, and society" (p. 8). Therefore, postcolonial trauma theory is appropriate for the present research because of its alternative and pluralistic models that acknowledge the peculiarities of the sufferings and processes of survival and closure amongst individuals and groups in varying social and cultural contexts. Postcolonial trauma theory does not favour any precise descriptions of the exactitude of trauma and its outcomes. Rather, as this study shall demonstrate, it relies on texts and other forms of literature that (re)presents the diverse forms of traumatic aftermaths.

The term "posttraumatic growth" was first coined in 1995 by Tedeschi and Calhoun in *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*, and later in an article published in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress* (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004a) define posttraumatic growth as "the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises" (p. 1). According to them, this growth is manifested in the forms of an increased appreciation for life, more meaningful interpersonal relationships, increased sense of personal strength, changed priorities, and a richer existential and spiritual life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). In other words, posttraumatic growth describes the experience of individuals whose development, at least in some areas, transcends what was present before the traumatic event happened. Hence, the trauma victim does not merely survive but undergoes transformations that are considered more profound and beneficial than his previous situation.

The militarisation of the Niger Delta and oil-induced trauma

The major and remote causes of the traumas experienced in the novel are the discovery of oil in Asiama community and the coming of Imperial Oil to the region. The company's inability to explore crude oil using internationally approved standards renders the host-communities uninhabitable. After a period of these oil activities, the natives notice the fast-depletion of the flora and fauna such that "the squawking of gulls and egrets on the swampy mangrove banks…" are fast becoming extinct (p. 4). Oil spillage, the release of by-products of oil activities such as chemicals or waste sometimes caused by equipment failure, operation mishaps, human error or deliberate destruction of facilities arising from criminal activity (Takon, 2014), is a major aftermath of this anomaly. For instance, the Asiama River is polluted by a spill from one of Imperial Oil's pipelines. Unfortunately, the company is reluctant to compensate victims (fishermen and other residents) of the spill. Hence, the inhabitants of the oil-producing communities are traumatised because the spill results in their cultural displacement, the extermination of their sources of livelihood and the endangerment of their living homes. Doye narrates his traumatic experience:

> We woke up this morning to see oil, thick and black, floating on top of the brown water of the river. The river became sluggish in its flow, as the oil gradually choked its life away. After school, I sat on the banks and watched dead fish, turned on their sides, slowly drift by. The river stank (p. 83).

Garricks employs the theme of displacement to illustrate the perpetrators' attempt to keep their victims estranged from their culture and homeland which ought to have been a place of succour. In an attempt to explain their present predicament of homelessness to Amaibi, Soboye laments that the Amayanabo and his council of chiefs sold Ofirima Island to Imperial Oil to use as their base camp. The complainant and others are given an impromptu ordered to vacate Ofirima Island. Ironically, Tubo explains that Ofirima Island is the people's treasure base: "the best fish, and Asiama people are particular about their fish, came from the fishermen on this small island, then called Ofirima or Shark Island" (p. 54). Moreover, the negative implications of gas flaring on Asiama are enormous. It is a significant contributor to trauma in the oil-producing community, as it occasions not only the loss of livelihood but death. The health implications of gas flaring have been documented in many works. Piller, Sanders, and Dixon (2007) state that gas flares and their soot contain toxic by-products such as benzene, mercury, and chromium, which lower people's immunity, rendering them susceptible to diseases. The description of the flare stacks in Asiama gives us a picture of its overwhelming effect on the inhabitants:

> A roaring fire, about ten feet high, marked the tiny uninhabited island where Soboye and twelve other people had gone to steal, or rather, bunker oil. The fire, bright and brilliant, gave enough light for us to see their deep-roasted corpses. Which littered the shore (p. 85)

Oluwadare and Oyebode (2013) observe that with the emissions of methane and CO2 from gas flaring in Nigeria, the country's oilfields contribute more to global warming than the rest of the world put together. Osuoka and Roderick (2005) have also noted that gas flaring is a major cause of ill health and environmental destruction, as an estimated 2.5 billion cubic feet of gas is burnt in the Niger Delta daily. Consequently, the atmosphere of the Niger Delta region is highly polluted. Moreover, because these flare stacks are sited close to living homes, respiratory and other diseases such as cancer, bronchial, chest, rheumatic and eye problems are on the increase among the inhabitants.

Our examination of many prose texts on the Niger Delta reveals that the literary tradition is preoccupied with the tragic exploitation and loss of the wealth of the region. Apart from the loss of the region's fertility in terms of her natural resources, the stories of Dise and other female characters that are sexually molested by military officers, buttresses the argument that *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* is an allegory of gender and politics. In other words, the political and economic exploitation and despoliation of the region's resources go hand in hand with that of the females in the region. Amaibi's wife, Dise, is raped by soldiers in the presence of her husband. Besides, one of the soldiers drives a rifle into her vagina. The traumatic effect of this incident becomes unbearable that it results in the separation of the couple and the decline of Amaibi's sexual virility. This also makes him lose faith in God. Again, the religious space of Asiama is also desecrated because the rape of Dise takes place in a church vestry. Garricks uses Asiama as a microcosm of the Niger Delta to depict its total exploitation and desecration – spiritually, physically, economically and culturally.

Furthermore, the unprofessionalism of the military as a significant contributor to

trauma does not escape the butt of Garricks. Francis, LaPin, and Rossiasco (2011) observe that the Nigerian government's responses to the oil crises in the Niger Delta have usually tended to include heavy-handed repression by the military. Thus, the invasion of Asiama community by the military results in "…the tragic destruction of families, the murder of dreams, and the irreparable damage of the collective psyche of a people" (p. 257). The soldiers brutalise the inhabitants and shoot sporadically. Robbery, rape, arson, and looting are the hallmark of their presence in the community. For instance, an unnamed character in the story is coerced by a soldier to eat his faeces. This reveals the inability of the military to explore non-coercive and legitimised authority to address the oil violence in the Niger Delta.

The military invasion of Asiama inflicts psychological distress on the people, challenging and shattering their assumptive worlds – their assumptions about the world, that guide their actions, that help them to understand the whys and wherefores of incidents, and that can provide them with a general sense of meaning and purpose (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004b). Many of the trauma victims begin to reevaluate their beliefs and principles. Doye, who becomes bitter toward the oil company and the government, resorts to kidnapping and killing oil workers. Moreover, Amaibi loses his faith in God and stops condemning the violence perpetrated by Doye. Besides, for more than six years, Amaibi remains impotent. He suffers many posttraumatic stress disorders because of his experience of the sexual humiliation of Dise. His marital home crumbles, as he, owing to his lack of erection, isn't able to perform his sexual roles as a husband.

Herman (1992) submits that the capricious granting of small indulgences undermines the psychological resistance of trauma victims. Imperial Oil offers, though reluctantly, meagre compensations and little improvements in the conditions of the traumatised people of Asiama. Despite the high levels of oil spill and flares, the company finds it difficult to enshrine environmental ethics and justice in its oil exploration methodology. Instead, it prefers to pay tokens of compensation for the atrocities and the ecological disasters that it causes. After the despoliation of Asiama River, the company promises to clean up the river immediately with the compensation of ten thousand naira to the fishermen. In the end, each of the fishermen gets a paltry sum (one hundred naira) from the Amayanabo (chief). Oil multinationals cannot succeed in unleashing trauma on the natives without the aid of local collaborators like the military and civilians like Tubo and Chief Ikaki. Tubo betrays his people by accepting bribes from the perpetrators of trauma. As a local collaborator and unethical oil worker, he schemes to earn pecuniary gains from the suffering of his people and the losses of Imperial Oil. Amaibi is alarmed by the zeal with which Tubo makes concerted efforts for the release of the kidnapped Manning:

> Tubo, your concern for the life of one oyibo is touching. What about the people who died in 1997? What about the lives of the Asiama people who are dying prematurely because of Imperial's flaring? What about them Tubo? Aren't you concerned about them? (p. 17)

Chief Ikaki, for example, masterminds the vandalisation of oil installations and later benefits from the reconciliatory moves between the vandals and the oil company. Besides, many benefits (contracts, scholarships, etc.) meant for Asiama pass through him and are shared among his loyalists. Imperial Oil is not ignorant of the unscrupulous deeds of their local collaborators, but the oil company continues to give them monetary incentives as a way of fettering their sense of integrity, autonomy, and self-control. This way, all acts of effective activism and resistance by the locals are waded off.

The shattering of assumptive worlds and post-traumatic growth in amaibi

Many critical works often suggest that the conflicts and oil-induced traumas in creative works on the Niger Delta engender only negative aftermaths. These aftermaths include inaction, hopelessness, fragility, melancholia, despondency, and others. An authorial commentary in *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* reveals the loss of faith in the present and the future of the Niger Delta and its people: There is no future for the children of the Niger Delta. There tomorrow is already dead. It died yesterday (p. 162). What follows, from the aforementioned critical lens, is an atmosphere of despondency and mourning. However, our reading of the text deviates from this position. The following character analysis demonstrates that the aftermath of Amaibi's trauma is not limited to such narrow consciousness of imbalance, inaction, mourning, weakness, loss, victimization, stasis, melancholia, and other numbing effects. Rather, we notice his exhibition of other positive and beneficial corollaries of trauma such as an increase in wisdom, stronger relationship with his wife, spiritual awakening, and psychic resilience.

Many ancient and contemporary literature and philosophies convey the idea that stressful and traumatic events can provoke positive psychological changes. The general understanding that suffering and distress can be possible sources of positive change is not new. Such ideas are espoused in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism (Joseph, 2009; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). According to Joseph (2009),

> The events for which growth outcomes have been reported include transportation accidents (shipping disasters, plane crashes, car accidents), natural disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes), interpersonal experiences (combat, rape, sexual assault, child abuse), medical problems (cancer, heart attack, brain injury, spinal cord injury, HIV/AIDS, leukemia, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, illness) and other life experiences (relationship breakdown, parental divorce, bereavement, immigration) (p. 338)

Joseph (2009) identifies three broad dimensions of posttraumatic growth. First, trauma victims may report that their relationships are enhanced in some way, for instance, that they now value their friends and family more, and feel increased compassion and altruism toward others. Second, survivors may develop better perceptions of themselves, that is, they may report having a greater sense of personal resiliency and strength. Third, survivors may report positive transformations in life philosophy, such as finding a fresh appreciation for each new day or renegotiating their priorities in life. However, as stated by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004a), the assumption that traumas often result in disorder should not be replaced with expectations that growth is an inevitable result, as people grow in meaningful ways without experiencing adversity or trauma. Instead, we aim to demonstrate that personal distress and growth often coexist, not as a direct result of trauma but of the survivor's struggle with his/her new reality.

Since the adversarial context in which posttraumatic growth occurs is disturbing and undesirable, our focus on the coexisting growth, therefore, does not becloud empathy for the pains of the victims. One of the relevance of this study, therefore, lies in the fact that indigenous therapists/government officials who are involved in rehabilitating trauma victims in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria would be aware of the potential for positive change in their patients. This knowledge is also relevant to the patients themselves since, according to Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004a), "personal growth after trauma should be viewed as originating not from the event, but from within the person themselves through the process

of their struggle with the event and its aftermath" (p. 341).

Trauma can negatively affect one's spirituality, as it has often been associated with loss of faith, diminished participation in religious or spiritual activities, the decline of moral strength, changes in belief, feelings of being abandoned or punished by God, and loss of meaning and purpose for living. Despite the deleterious effects of trauma on one's spirituality, the phenomenon can become a catalyst for a journey towards spiritual awakening, enlightenment, maturity, wisdom and moral growth. The foregoing explications on posttraumatic growth can be illustrated with Amaibi. At first, Amaibi's assumptive world – his general perspectives or paradigms – is challenged and shattered by his traumatic encounter in 1997. His psychological crisis results in the reconfiguration of his beliefs about spiritual and civic issues. He loses his faith and belief in God. Moreover, his moral strength diminished, for he refuses to condemn Doye's kidnapping and murderous activities. However, while in the Port Harcourt Prison, he reignites his relationship with God, and this marked a watershed in his experience of posttraumatic growth: "…One morning, I was engaged in my usual pre-dawn routine of reciting Bible verses in my mind as I waited for daylight; the next moment, I noticed I had an erection. …my second erection since 1997." (p. 35). Though a traumatic environment, Amaibi's prison experience instils in him the need for greater closeness to God through scriptural recitation – a path which he pursues.

Amaibi's experience illustrates a paradoxical case: that we can derive gains out of pains. We notice that he becomes wiser and his worldview changes. Moreover, he confesses that "prison has reminded me of one thing: that life is too short and precious to hold grudges" (p. 148). In line with the three broad categories of posttraumatic growth identified by Joseph (2009), Amaibi demonstrates that his trauma makes him develop an enhanced interpersonal relationship. Again, his life philosophy undergoes some changes, expressed in his resolve to forgive his enemies, offenders or detractors: "I'm tired. Since 1997 when my anger and hate started, they haven't done me any good. In fact, they landed me in this mess. I'm tired of hating and being angry" (p. 280).

Although his trauma, at the initial stage, affects his sexuality, among other components of his life, he later experiences the reinvigoration of his sexual organ which went comatose as a result of the traumatic encounter between Dise and some military officers. After the traumatic encounter of 1997, he could not have an erection anymore. However, he gets an erection while in prison and expresses the paradox of the situation thus: "after more than six nightmarish years, who would have thought that I'd get an erection again, in Port Harcourt Prison of all places: and they say there was no rehabilitation in a Nigerian prison" (p. 35). Amaibi's body serves as a good symbolism that further demonstrates the coexistence of personal adversity and growth: "anyway, as I lay there that day, watching my decaying leg and the slight but vicarious bulge in my trousers, I was struck by the symbolisms on my body. The first was a mark of death and defeat. The other was a symbol of life and defiance" (p. 36).

The shattering of the Amaibi's assumptive world can be traced to his inabilities to build a relational home. Amaibi's matrimonial home crumbles because of Dise's rape encounter with a soldier. In her explication of disconnection, Herman (1992) avers that traumatic events breach basic human relationships: the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. Moreover, she asserts that such events also violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis. So, Amaibi confesses that "instead of helping each other, we both retreated into our separate worlds of suffering. I guess we were wrecks; both of us were dead at the time. … I couldn't touch her, I couldn't even talk to her, I wasn't there for her" (p. 267). According to Epstein (2013), "trauma becomes sufferable when

there's a relational home to hold it in. Without this, it is simply too much to bear" (p. 267). Similarly, Erickson (1995) states that "trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can" (186). A relational home is a free space created by the traumatised to articulate the inarticulate and admit the inadmissible.

Whereas Amiabi initially loses his faith in God and his matrimonial home, in the end, he regains his losses after creating a relational home with Dise and God: "'Even if I don't leave this place, I'm a man again. I've mended the two most important things in my life: God and Dise. My redemption is complete'" (p. 268). Hence, in consonance with Tedeschi and Calhoun's notion of posttraumatic growth, Amaibi experiences a richer spiritual life with God and a more meaningful relationship with Dise. He has not merely survived but has undergone some beneficial transformations, especially concerning his view of life after the military invasion of Asiama in 1997. When asked by some journalists about his feelings towards the witness who lied against him, Amaibi's comment reflects his transformation: "Since 1997 when my anger and hate started, they hadn't done me any good. In fact, they landed me in this mess. I'm tired of hating and being angry. …This time, I choose to forgive. I pray God shows me how" (p. 280). In all, we see that he copes with his trauma to experience closeness to God, more meaningful interpersonal relationships, an increased sense of personal strength, and an improved sense of morality.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how the dependence on literature in understanding the complex and varying manifestations of trauma can engender newer perspectives. In doing this, we have suggested other ways of rethinking models for trauma analysis that will, especially, suit the Niger Delta context of sustained environmental pollution, ecological imperialism, destruction of traditional means of livelihood, constant insecurity, desecration of the cultural and spiritual essence of communities, military brutality, political marginalisation, sexual assault, and so on. Our focus has been to use Garricks' *Tomorrow Died Yesterday* as a launch to paint a rounded picture of the complex dynamics of trauma – one which is not only characterised with adversity and pains but also optimism and positive/transformative changes. In our textual analysis, we have posited that Amaibi, a traumatised character, undergoes beneficial transformations. He builds a relational home and meaningful relationship with his wife, becomes more spiritually attuned, experiences an increased sense of personal strength, and exhibits an improved sense of morality. Overall, as the Nigerian government continues to fund the amnesty and other rehabilitation programmes in the Niger Delta and elsewhere, the facilitators need to incorporate these findings in their approaches to trauma. Our study reveals that if trauma victims could get through their challenges with some grace and dignity, they would learn some beneficial lessons about their latent capacities.

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