

**Sexism and Girl-Child Exploitations  
in Akachi Adimora-Ezigbo's  
*Trafficked* and Sefi Atta's *Swallow***

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**Abstract**

This research entitled “Sexism and Girl-Child Exploitations in Akachi Adimora-Ezigbo's *Trafficked* and Sefi Atta's *Swallow*” explores sexual harassment and exploitation as portrayed by the two novelists in their novels. The researchers noted the considerable skill used by the authors in portraying the plight of young girls in a merciless world dominated by greedy, irresponsible and often cruel men and careless parents in their lives. In Akachi Adimora – Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*: the young, innocent and naïve girls are taken advantage of, and sold out for prostitution and other money – making ventures by those they trusted. At the end of the day, humiliation, dehumanization and even demented lives become their fate contrary to their expectations. Sefi Attah's *Swallow* discusses abuse, domestic violence and intimidation that stare the helpless young maidens in the face as they cannot change their sad situations individually. The authors talk about the issue of sexual harassment which stands out amongst the already existing ones as she did that while addressing other social issues like drug trafficking, tyranny, bad governance and parental irresponsibility. The study discovered the gravity of sexism and exploitation on young girls in our society. The theoretical approach adopted by the researcher in this work is feminism. The data for this study is from primary sources like the selected texts and secondary sources like journals and interviews. The study concludes that it is highly plausible that there will be positive and visible representations and construction of gender and gender issues which will

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create avenues for new challenges and clarification of women's understanding of the past and present, as well as their visions for the future.

**Keywords:** Girl-Child Exploitation, Rape, Feminism, Sex, Prostitution  
**Introduction**

Literature has become part and parcel of the rich heritage of any viable and worthwhile society. It is now widely regarded by many scholars and authors as artists explore the society from time immemorial and in different climes around the globe. Literature has continued to fulfill its own unique function in national development. As Ngugi Wa Thiong's rightly says in *Homecoming*

Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum. It is given impetus, shape, direction, and even area of concern by the social, political and economic forces - particular and economic forces in a particular society. That the relationship between literature and these other forces cannot be ignored especially in Africa where modern literature has grown against the gay background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations (16).

No society can significantly exist without its literature. To Romanus Egudu in *Modern Africa Poetry and Africa Predication*, "literature is a mode of expression. It is not just a subject that expressed something, but rather it is the way, manner or method in which something is said or written" (8).

Literature as a creative art, has been subjected to varying degrees of functions and usage. The writer becomes a satirist who could never avoid the temptation of chronicling the various incidents happening in his society at large. The general acceptable notion is that literature mirrors the society. In other words, literature revolves round man and his environment as it understands and interprets human beings and aims at correcting the ills in the society by first identifying their ills and

providing solutions. Obi Maduakor says; “Literature has become an important means of understanding and interpreting human beings and aspects of society such as politics, religions, economic, social conflicts, class struggle and human conditions through the medium of language (16)”.

Literature ridicules for the purpose of correcting. Literature is known for rewarding virtues and punishing vices. These virtues are the morals we learn as we often times think about our own lives and how best to make amends before it's too late. This shows that literature is the study of man in the society and also the vicissitudes of life.

Literature cannot escape the power structure that shapes our everyday life. A writer has no choice whether or not he is aware of it, his work reflects one or more aspects of the intense, economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he chooses is one or the other side in the battle field. The side of his people or the side of those social forces or class that try to keep his people down (8).

In other words, a writer's theme is influenced by the experiences of his age, his work reflects either the economic, political, cultural or ideological struggles in his society.

Sexual harassment is intimidation, bullying or coercion of a sexual nature. It may also be defined as the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favors. The legal and social definition of what constitutes sexual harassment differ widely by culture. Sexual harassment includes a wide range of behaviors from seemingly mild transgressions to serious forms of abuse. Some forms of sexual harassment overlap with sexual assault.

In the African society, women were consistently bruised and brutalised by oppression. This was mostly imposed on them by their male counterparts. Women were regarded as the weaker vessels and also as sex objects and political pawns in the games played by men. Two

evidences are seen in the beginning of creation as recorded in the Bible, in the sense that God created the first man (Adam) before he created the first woman (Eve). The implication of this is that man is seen as the lord and hero to the woman.

According to Ebere Ezenweke in her book *A Hindrance to Women Potentials'* "women have suffered tremendous marginalisation and show of superiority complex in the past. A traditional orientation of many cultures of the world testifies to this assertion" (2). In this regard, she indicates that women's problems varies in the impact of negative cultural practices. In the same vein, Nworgu Patrick in regard to Ebere Ezenweke's claim, emphasises that:

Educationally, women are discriminated against. Parents prefer to send male children to school to the exclusion of the girls ... In the traditional society, women are not allowed to control their hard-earned income. It is considered normal for wives to hand over the hard earned money to their husbands for proper control, disbursement or safekeeping. If the woman dares raise an objection to such unholy practice, she is maligned, cajoled and criticised as a social misfit. Such a woman may stand the risk of being sent packing (74).

From this view, women are helpless in the society because they are rightless and voiceless due to the cultural practices of the past which still constitute serious conflicts and tragedy in our contemporary society. In fact, this is a societal tragedy whereby a child is beaten and at the same time prevented not to cry. All through history, the oppression of women is invariably constant, a part of global dilemma, ageless, systematic and deep rooted. Truly embodied within the economic, cultural, political, social and ideological global attention and becomes the subject of numerous investigations. However, Nimah Paul in his book *Women's Right in Igbo Land* states:

Igbo women, like the majority of Africa's population, are

subject to inequalities in the political, social, economic and cultural fields. Women's attitude to their traditional roles have varied from acceptance, that has tended to condition the non-utilisation of formal guarantees of equality (4).

In this regard, Igbo women's rights in the society are disadvantaged in the field of human rights and protection, obstacles are posed by the slow pace at which men's traditional conception of women changes, and confusion of women are to be understood by equality of the sexes. Women's potentials has unfortunately been limited and has not fully been tapped because of socio-cultural prejudices and practices.

Women are seen in our various societies as people whose daily lives begin and end on household chores. In order to assert the view that women are meant for only domestic work, men apply this slogan—women's education ends in the kitchen. There is no doubt that some women are very hardworking and that makes them discharge and accept the secondary roles imposed on them by men. Women are breaking the jinx, such that what a man can do, a woman can do it too and perfectly.

Sexual harassment and violation of women is a devastating social problem in the world today. For a long time now, the issue has lingered in many forms including literature, sociology and arts. Several cases of rape, abuse and violence against women have been on the front burner in many parts of the world. Historical records of sexual assault are filled with pathetic stories of violation, harassment, rape, abuse, loss of identity, self pity and even death of the victims which are mostly women.

Generally, record has it that over fifty percent of women in population have been sexually harassed or abused at one point or the other. In recent times, dark aspects of the Nigerian society have risen to the surface of national and global consciousness.

According to *Daily Sun* Editorial of Wednesday, September 23, 2020;

There is no doubt that sexual harassment, assault and rape, especially against women and the girl-child, have recently assumed worrisome dimensions in the country; such that the Nigeria Police Force recorded 717 cases of such atrocities from January to May this year (ii).

There was also the brutal rape and murder of a 22 year old girl in a church in Benin City and then the recent march in major cities in Nigeria due to the increasing number of rape cases during the Covid - 19 Lock down. Rape is a deeply ugly experience for any female. The physical and psychological impact on the victim is always deeply agonizing. The emotional trauma of the" victim can take a very long time to heal and may also affect the way the victim, relates with the opposite sex.

J.C Campbell in “Forced Sex and Intimate Partner Violence” defined sexual harassment as “an act in which a person intentionally sexually touches another person without that person's consent, or coerces or physically forces a person to engage in asexual act against their will. (24) It is a form of sexual violence, which includes rape (forced vaginal, anal or oral penetration or drug facilitated sexual assault), groping, child sexual abuse or the torture of the person in a sexual manner. Campbell further listed a wide range of sexually violent acts that can take place in different circumstances and settings. These include:

- rape within marriage or dating relationships
- rape by strangers
- systematic rape during armed conflict
- unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favour
- sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people
- sexual abuse of children

- forced marriage or cohabitation, including the marriage of children'
- denial of the right to use contraception or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases
- forced abortion
- violent acts against the sexual integrity of women, including female genital mutilation and obligatory inspections for virginity
- forced prostitution and trafficking of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation.
- Thus, sexual assault and Female oppression is a problem that still exists in present day society. The fact that we live in a modern world with monumental technological advancement has not changed the grim reality that women are discriminated against and suppressed because of the patriarchal molded structures. The cultural beliefs, traditions and religions of most societies give more attention to patriarchy thereby ensuring the continuation of the domination and repression of women. Many literary artists in our society therefore, try to expose the violence, humiliation and abuse of womanhood by the men and make efforts to redeem these deplorable conditions of women in their literary works. They also try to give answers to many questions raised on women's emancipation and the level of success recorded so far.

The position of women in society has been a frequent focus of Nigerian female writers such as Buchi Emecheta, Chimamanda Ngozi- Adichie, Flora Nwapa, Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, and Catherine Acholonu and a few modern ones like Cika Unigwe, Sefi Atta, Kaine Agary, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, Ada Agbasimalo to mention but few who have engaged in literary polemics, using their arts to defend the positions of women in society. These

writers present women as victims of gender discrimination, societal oppression and spousal abuse. Their works have shown them as advocates and defenders of the rights of women.

Emeka Nwabueze in his article "Woman Being in the African Society," traces the trajectory of female domination to the traditional African societies where heroic duties such as warring, hunting, and cultivating were reserved and performed by men while women were limited to cooking, hewing wood and fetching water. This was because men were considered to be more muscular and brawny than women, who are still regarded as weak and feeble.

This paper is, therefore, a critical exploration of the vulnerability of women in a patriarchal African society. The African society that discriminates against women and the girl-child and makes them perpetual tragic victims of its cultural traditions forms the fulcrum of this discourse. African women contribute significantly to the development of society both in the traditional and modern era. They are described as the foundation and the feeders of the nation. Such contributions, therefore, confer on African women prestigious roles in society. It is against this background that this study is undertaken to examine the tragic consequences of sexual harassment and exploitation as depicted in Sefi Atta's *Swallow* and Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*.

The theoretical framework for this study is feminist criticism or feminism. The ideas of feminism have catered effectively to the movement of women for social, political and educational emancipation of women and their equality with men. Such and similar movements have been rightly termed as feminist criticism. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines feminism as: "the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes. It is an organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests" (456).

According to the World Book Encyclopedia, "Feminism is the belief that women should have economic, political and social equality with men" (71). It is an organized activity on behalf of women's rights and



interests. Cynthia Cockburn in her *In The Way of Women* says that the story of modern feminism began with the American Revolution in 1784 which embodies the aspiration for equality, liberty and fraternity, shaking the old feudal and monarchical order. She further stated that the first feminist document was Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women in 1792* in which she opposed men.

This phenomenon of girl – child humiliation has become one of the most widely discussed social tragedies of our time. We are witnesses to a deluge of talks about the plight of these children, from newspaper articles, to radio talk – shows, television documentaries and elegant academic discussions. Many well – funded, well – attended workshops and conferences have been convened on the subject, Even government claims to be doing its very best to tackle the problem, yet in spite of all these well – publicized efforts; the problem not only persists but seems to be getting more and more intractable.

The ideas of feminism have catered effectively to the movement of women for the achieving of social, political and educational emancipation of women and their equality with men. Since then there have been various movements differing in creed, in their traditional roles and in their different societies. Some have been quite active and powerful in achieving recognition in their fight towards the emancipation of women while others have remained gagged-and chained. According to the *World Book Encyclopedia*, "feminism is the belief that women should have economic, political and social equality with men" (71). Cynthia Cockburn in her work *In the Way of Women* says that the story of modern feminism began with the American Revolution in 1784 which embodies the aspirations for equality, liberty and fraternity, shaking the old feudal and monarchical order. She further state that the first feminist document was Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women in 1792* in which she opposed men.

In African society, women are not given the same rights as the men. This brought about problems arising and caused this movement and revolt against the men. The African female writers now use their works to air

their views. Feminism believes in the social, political and economic equality of all sexes. As a dominant theme in the African society, female are often thought of as lower and nearly as important. As a result of this, African female writers revolt against such dehumanizing order. Their aim is to free the African woman from the bondage of patriarchy.

### **Sexual Harassment and Girl-child Exploitations in Sefi Atta's *Swallow* and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked***

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* aims at x-raying deceit, human trafficking, exploitation, dehumanisation, oppression, sexual harassment, poverty, corruption and inhumanity, all of which pervades the entire society and the world at large. In fact, the girls—Nneoma, Efe, Fola, Alice, etc.—were deceived on the idea of a better life, only for them to get abroad to be turned into sex workers. The two women, Madam Gold and Madam Dollar, employed clever tricks or strategies which lured the girls into travelling with them. These tricks worked through the use of adverts, pictures of the schools which they were made to believe that they would work in, and also by issuing employment letters to them. As the novelist says, Nneoma narrated the story of her travel abroad to Efe thus:

For personal reasons, I fled from home one Friday morning without telling my family. A friend and classmate had told me some weeks before that some people had helped her secure a teaching appointment in the United Kingdom and she would introduce me to them and I could come with her (126).

Based on the assurance to a better job and the urge to help alleviate the poor state of her family, Nneoma innocently and ignorantly took the bait. She continues:

So I head for her hometown, which is near mine, to find out if the invitation is still open. It is, and we travelled to Lagos together to meet her sponsors. In no time, they got passports and flight tickets for us, and keep them. They

showed us pictures of the schools where we'll be teaching and give us appointment letters signed by people with English names (127).

Such deceit readily influenced the naive girls whose mindset were to secure gainful employment to help themselves and their families, not knowing that humiliation and exploitation await them abroad. Surprisingly to Nneoma, they were made to swear an oath with "a Bible and an image of an arusi" (128) This, she says, was so that they will not go contrary to the agreement reached. As she tells Efe:

We are six young women between the ages of seventeen and twenty. They tell us we will have plenty of time to pay back our debts to the agency when we start earning money. While in Lagos, we relate with just two people. Eddie and Maria. Everything seems normal. They joke with us as if we were their younger sisters. I am so happy and thank my *chi*. . . The only thing that worries me is that we have to take an oath and they tell us the consequences will be severe if we disregard the terms of the agreement, disobey them or cut links without settling our debts . . . (127).

Nneoma's sad experiences are similar to that of Efe. When they were at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Eddie and Maria withdrew as they were handed over to others who explained that Eddie and Maria are their Nigerian contacts, and that "they will get to Italy before travelling to Britain" (128). As Nneoma laments:

In Italy I discover I am trafficked. I have no say in the matter. There's a woman called Madam Dollar—nothing comes between her and money. She owns us and the man, whom we learnt to call Captain is her bodyguard. She keeps us prisoner in her flat. Life is hell in Rome—we are always walking at night, selling sex to Italian men and foreigners ... As soon as we arrive, she

sells my friend. I have not set eyes on her since (128).

Nneoma feels dehumanised and devastated by the life she was forced to live while abroad as it was contrary to her expectations. As she tells Efe in the novel: I am completely devastated by the life I'm forced to live: hit the night street, waiting for customers, winter, spring, summer and autumn. I come back at dawn, wash, eat and sleep till it all begins again at nightfall (129).

In fact, the novel started from the middle, when the trafficked girls were deported back to Nigeria. The author employed a flashback technique to give us an insight of the protagonist's childhood experiences; we were also introduced to her father Ojukwe Ekwe, who was a clerk in the Internal Revenue Department in the Ministry of Finance before he retired and the mother Adaeze, a petty trader in it-village market. Nneoma happens to be her father's favourite. Her father's difference to her stems in his belief that Nneoma was his mother's incarnate. So he pampered her a lot. The over pampering of Nneoma made her never to allow any other of her siblings to sit on their father's leg whenever he is home. As the narrator says:

On one occasion, the youngest child, four-year old Mma, sallied forth and demanded to sit on her father's knee. "Nneoma come down and let me sit now. You've been sitting there since Papa came home."

"No, I will not come down. Go away," Nneoma replied. "I want to sit on Papa's knee. Papa, tell her to come down and let me sit a little."

"I will not come down" (11).

Such scenes are common in large families, especially when the children crave the love and attention of their parents. As the narrator says:

A scuffle followed with Mma trying to push Nneoma down. Nneoma slapped her with some force and pushed

her to the ground The victorious warrior glared at the vanquished weakling who lay on the ground kicking the air with thin legs in a fierce tantrum that frightened Adaeze. The worried mother picked up the wailing Mma and whacked Nneoma buttocks. "You shouldn't treat your sister like that," Adaeze scolded (1).

The narrator says that there were two lusty voices screaming themselves hoarse in the house. Adaeze comforted Mma while Ogukwe calmed Nneoma (11):

"It's all right, my little mother," Ogukwe cooed to Nneoma.

"Hmn, you can go on spoiling her if you wish," Adaeze warned.

"You are the one that will regret it later. Do not say I did not warn you" (11). -

Nneoma was so beautiful and intelligent that she was betrothed to Ofomata, the first son of the rich Ozo Nkwu of Ihite-Agu village, and Ofomata would be the next Ozo Nkwu of Diite-Agu at the death of his father. Nneoma decided to run away from home irrespective of the task ahead of her as the wife of the next Ozo Nkwu, and joined a number of girls to Lagos where they were selected as qualified teachers on the trip to abroad. She left home without a word of her whereabouts to her family and this put her family in a sad mood, making them have sleepless nights and troublesome days with the hope of her return.

She arrived Italy only to be surprised with a different job proposal and this earned her much beating and bruises as she refuses sex to Madam Dollar's customers. As she tells her story to Efe, "sometimes, while we are standing in the red light area where other prostitutes line up, youths come shouting, '*Putu Putu!*' At such moments, I am completely overwhelmed by shame" (130).

She served in Madam Dollar's hotel as a prostitute for three years before she was bought and transferred by Baron to the United Kingdom (UK). She was denied access to her documents and passport. She always received severe beat! from Baron any time she refuses sex with him. She was not allowed to walk on the street of UK alone'. She only goes out with Baron or those who paid Baron for her sex services who later brought her home afterward.

According to Nneoma as she recounts her sad story:

Baron sends the other girls to brothels and keeps me in his flat. Instead of putting me on the street, he brings men to the flat. Baron is a sadist. He rapes and beats me. I refuse when customers want oral or anal sex and insist they use condoms and I'm sometimes assaulted for this. Baron locks me up in the flat, and does not allow me to go out except when he takes me with him (132).

Nneoma ran away from the car of Baron on one of their trips out and she left with some money with her and started roaming the streets of UK and was led by the immigration officers who discovered that she has no residential with her and she pleaded with them not to kill her. She was arrested together with other girls and after some time in the UK, they were deported back to Nigeria. Nneoma recounts how she escaped from Baron, how she met Dr Chindo Okehi, the university lecturer, how she was caught and eventually deported to Nigeria and brought to the Oasis, thus:

. . . many months later when he takes me out for shopping, I'm alert all the time with my money hidden in my clothes, ready to escape if an opportunity presents itself. On this occasion, he stops for a second to buy a newspaper and as soon as he turns his back I open the door gently and get out. I do not look back until I have disappeared round the corner of the next street. I run and run and run until I'm out of breath. I have no idea where I

am but I keep going in the direction opposite the place I left Baron (133).

Nneoma's escape was dramatic and even had divine connection as Baron and his cohorts could not locate her until she was deported. As she says in the novel,

I roam the city for two days until a Nigerian woman I meet. Chindo Okehi, takes me home. She is a university teacher. Later she introduces me to a Nigerian man, in whose house I live until the police raid. Within days, I am deported and brought to Oasis (134).

There was a bus awaiting the Trafficked at the airport which later conveyed them all to the Oasis Youth Centre for Skill Development (OYCSD) premises where they were given accommodation. This centre was owned by four women. though they got support from both government and private sectors. The girls were allowed to pick any trade of their choice and Nneoma picked tailoring while Efe took to hair dressing and they become close friends, hence they started discussing and sharing their problems.

Meanwhile, back in the village, Ogukwe Eke has been denied his pension and gratuity by the government and he has been in a conflict with his brother over the house they built together in the village. He and his family were subjected to living in a hut near the main house. Meanwhile, Lebechi, Ogukwe's brother's wife, is always at his neck causing one problem or the other to the Ogukwe's family and this results in his taking consolation in alcohol.

Hannah, the eldest sister to Nneoma, left the home for the house of Prophet Elias. She was involved in the destruction of the village shrine. Nneoma's father would only disgrace the family whenever he gets drunk. Ogukwe lives a miserable life and his wife does bear the responsibility of the family's upkeep. Mma was on her own part assisting their mother in the home since Nneoma was nowhere to be found and Hannah on her own part is on the street with her boyfriend

pastor who messed around the village of Ihite-Agu.

While all these were going on, Ofomata was busy with his studies at the Lagos State University of Science and Technology, studying Geography and Estate Management and facing a lot of academic stress with the unending demands of Dr Ralf on campus—all these while with the thoughts of Nneoma's sudden disappearance over the years. Despite the fact that other girls on campus were there for him, he was not there for them, because all he needed was Nneoma and peradventure, awaiting the confirmation of Nneoma's death before he could get involved in any other relationship. But, while Nneoma was in the UK, she came in contact with Dr Okehi as she roams about the streets of UK and Dr Okehi was so good to her and advised she should go back to school should she get the chance. Dr Okehi is a lecturer at the Lagos State University of Science and Technology. She only went to the IK on assignment. They both had good terms over there and even wished to meet again.

The quest for going back to school has been the slogan of Nneoma and as such, she learnt so fast at the Fashion and Designing School. She started making and saving money that would take her to school. She applied for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examinations, sat for it and the result was so good that she was amongst those who scored the highest marks. While she was busy enhancing her academic status, at home in Ihite-Agu, Lebechi was so troublesome that she initiated a fight between her family and that of Adaeze. The husband's family fined her for defying the family traditions but she refused the payment of the items listed by the elders of the family because she knew she could suppress everybody with her witchcraft.

Hannah later came back home after spending futile years with her so-called lover, Prophet Elias, who subjected her to all manners of humiliation and maltreatment. The family was happy to see her back home and even wished Nneoma could as well come back home some day. When the Ozo Nkwu of Ihite-Agu died, he was given a befitting burial by all and sundry. Ofomata invited all his university friends to



assist him. He was so happy to see the families of the Ogukwes who paid him homage as tradition demands and wished Nneoma to be among them as his wife to be. The burial ceremony lasted for about seven days because there was much to eat and drink.

Despite the fact that Nneoma works so seriously, she encountered a lot of problems that made her move from one place to another in search of jobs she could do while still going to school. But, it has been made known to many people that she was deported from Italy for prostitution. Yet, she never gave up but Efe who has left earlier for Benin has gotten married and is doing great over there in Benin, according to their telephone conversation.

Though the university went on strike as a result of the riot which led to the destruction of lives and properties as a result of the inflation of tuition and hosiery! fees, this made Ofomata travel home to the village to help his father. Nneoma was offered admission into the Lagos State University of Science and Technology to study Business Education and there she met Ofomata whom she was previously engaged to in the office of Dr Chindo Okehi. At last, Nneoma's family moved back to the main house after Lebechi become ill and was taken to the native doctor's house for treatment. The family was so happy to see Nneoma again in their lives when she came back home. Revolving around a young Nigerian lady of the mid 1980's, Sefi Attah in *Swallow* tells a story of a Nigerian yet bubbling but already beneath the weights of tyranny, wickedness and oppression. The main character Tolani Ajao who in search of greener pastures found herself in the dirt of Lagos with no relation whatsoever but her ever agitated roommate, Rose whom her ex-boyfriend calls "the rumbling Rose" (8).

Tolani who grew up in a remote part of Nigeria had gone to Lagos to find a work and take care of her mother which to her was the only thing she needed money for but being a young girl with her own troubles and nightmares she fell for Sanwo, a good for nothing man who dresses

awkwardly, lives with his uncle and his family in their boys quarters, runs errands for them and has only his numerous business plans and ideas as his only asset. On the other hand is Rose, Sisi's daughter who believes that a man's love is measured by "...what he has done for her", by the time she was introduced to us, Rose had already dated eight men and has broken up with them all, including a Lebanese and a married man. She is inconsiderate, brash but very loyal. Tolani points out that no one ever talked bad about her in the presence of Rose without getting tongue lashed.

It is around these two and their ordeals that Sefi Attah weaves her *Swallow* on. They became roommates because Rose's former roommate, a Calabar girl could not cope with her bad attitude of littering things around and her bad temper too, but because Rose is unapologetic and saucy. She calls the girl a "Calabar witch" and saw her departure as good riddance. Being work colleagues and roommates too gave them the chance to bond with each other and fight their demons together, bad boyfriends, dirty neighborhood, and expensive tastes. Despite their empty pockets, they fought them all together and while they conquered some, some drove them mad. The quest for money and better life in particular drove them apart, while one survived at last, another perished to the afterlife bearing the name of another person.

Sefi Attah's *Swallow* will not be the first or the last novel in the African society to discuss the issue of sexual harassment but hers stands out amongst the already existing ones as she did that while addressing other social issues like drug trafficking, tyranny, bad governance and parental irresponsibility. However, she did not lose focus despite addressing all these issues as the entire novel was woven around sexual harassment and perhaps its consequences.

From the very start of the novel the readers are introduced to two women whose life have been greatly influenced by another man. Rose, who changes boyfriends just the same way she changes her views was advising Tolani to talk her boyfriend into marrying her or give him an ultimatum of six months to do so. When Tolani tries to remind her that

he has promised to do so, she asks “for how long?”(14) and Tolani ashamed to say “two years”(14) didn't have much of a choice than to agree to what Rose has said. They discussed other issues involving men and women, marriage and dowry and at a point Rose says that the system of dowries should be abolished totally as it is primitive, to this, the man seated beside her eyed her.

The very day the two characters were introduced to us played a very important role in the development of the plot and the effects of sexual harassment. It was on that day which they were nearly killed in a road accident that Rose was fired from the office because of “insubordination” as described by Mr. Ignatius, Tolani's colleague and the eldest amongst them. He broke the news of Rose's sacking to Tolani having heard about it from Franka another colleague who was notorious for gossiping, when Tolani rubbished the report, Ignatius reminds her that all the news in the office comes from “that woman's”(21) mouth, therefore this particular one must be truth or close to the truth. When Tolani inquired further Ignatius told her that she slapped Mr. Salako and to this Tolani became worried. To some extent, the entire story line is woven around Rose's sack from the office and what led to it. Nothing else led to Rose's sack apart from the fact that she slapped Mr.Salako for a reason she refused to state earlier but Tolani knew too well the situation between Rose and Salako.

Salako was the branch manager of the Federal Community Bank where Rose and Tolani worked. He was described as the most Senior Manager in the bank and therefore, had the power to sack Rose and no one would question him. At first, she did not understand the idea of Rose slapping him but then she recalled that Rose has complained about Mr.Salako's advances towards her. Salako would pass comments about her body, grab her hand and tickle her palm, and a few times he had tried to hug Rose but she pushed him away. Later on, we find out that Rose has been sexually harassed by Salako and that was what made her slap him; yet, he sacked her and no one ever said a word rather the society where she worked blamed her.

Hakeem blamed her upbringing and went further to say that he knew Rose would be sacked and it was only a matter of time because to him Rose didn't know how to control herself, Godwin said he would pray for her and Franka was of the opinion that Rose must have been Mr. Salako's girlfriend. Nobody in the entire office pointed any accusing finger at Mr. Salako, no one questioned his decision and no one cared to find out why Rose had slapped him, they all blamed Rose and that is exactly the issue Sefi addressed.

The women live in a society where they are constantly harassed by the men and no one questions the morality of the men only that of the women. A woman who couldn't have children will be blamed without anyone questioning the fertility of the husband and a woman who slapped her boss will be blamed for being stubborn, no one would try to find out why!. It is therefore, no wonder that the whole story revolved around this singular decision of Mr. Salako to sack Rose for turning down his sexual advances. Rose's misfortune began after she was sacked from work despite being the best typist in the entire bank and having the best short hand. This shows that the Nigerian system does not care about who the best is or what one is capable of doing so long as she doesn't conform to the desires of her Oga's groin. She is sacked without questions and this system has no redemption because even the poor would have partaken only that they do not have the means nor the power. Ignatius is a good example, despite being old and despite being poor and married with two children, he still wooed Rose. This singular act is deliberately allowed by the novelist to prove that there is little or no redemption for the female folk when it comes to matters of sexual harassment. While Rose suffered the humiliations of a sacked lady, her roommate Tolani battled with her boyfriend over their marriage plans. Sanwo again was able to convince her that all he needed was time and the fact, that he is not a bastard will make him marry her.

After Rose's sack, Tolani was promoted to work at Mr. Salako's office, she was to resume Rose's duty and become his new secretary. This is because Mr. Salako suspected that Rose might poison him. So he called on her friend whom according to him was safe and didn't stand any

chance of being jazzed by the already sacked Rose. Despite Tolani's objection to the post, she soon resumed work as Mr. Salako's secretary and was soon harassed by Mr. Salako just like he did to Rose. Tolani's own came like a shock to her, she never imagined that a man could harass her sexually just the way Salako did yet it happened right in Salako's office. The boss has ordered her to help him get a file from his cabinet that was not too far from him that he could not reach himself, Tolani, surprised by this proceeded to get it for him. It was in the process of reaching for the cabinet that Mr. Salako got up and made his way to the tiny space between Tolani's back and his desk, there he stayed rubbing his pelvic against her with hands on her waist while muttering the word "excuse me" (59). Unlike Rose, Tolani only pushed him back with shock that he fell backwards on his desk.

Tolani never said a word of what happened between him and Salako to anyone. She thought that Rose would be happy to hear it and her boyfriend would blame her for letting it happen to her. she too didn't confront Mr. Salako because to some extent she blamed herself for wearing "sexy shoes" and "fashionable clothes"(61) as if it was a crime to wear those. This was the novelist's way of ridiculing our very society and echoing the injustice women faced; a society that blames a lady for getting sexually abused and harassed; a society where the likes of Sissy expose their daughters to men at a very tender age, she will say to Violet, "dance for uncle"(73); a society where the lady even blames herself for being harassed simply because she wore "sexy shoes and fashionable clothes"(61).

Mr. Salako was not the only one that sexually harassed Tolani in the office neither was she the only woman that was sexually harassed. In fact, most of the women mentioned in the novel were all in one way or the other harassed by men. Tolani's mother Arike refused to marry the king but later slept with her husband's brother to cover his infertility. Violet, Rose's sister who thought that every man she came across wanted to have sex with her, would say "lock him up with me in one room and see him drooling after me"(80). Rose kept going back to O.C

despite being called a lax, Franka later succumbed to Mr. Salako's pressure and the mighty Mrs. Odunsi slept with men so that her husband would be more elevated.

Tolani's second harassment was rather ironical as it came from a man who called her "daughter" (80). Colonel Daodu, a former military man who constantly criticized the government for being despots. He was injured during the civil war and had to be helped up the stairs by Tolani. She describes him as a very tricky man who would touch her lustfully while she helped him up the stairs. She says "one minute, his fingers were on my shoulders; the next they were on my backside..." (81). The novelist could have used anybody but she opted for a man who criticized the government constantly, a man who was injured and has to be helped up the stairs and still a man who calls Tolani "daughter". This was her way of saying that our society has decayed to the core and every man no matter how deformed or principled is still capable of harassing a woman sexually. Mr. Salako in all his sophistication and use of big words had one weakness; he was scared of juju and was always careful not to get charmed. That was the reason he appointed Tolani to replace Rose in the first place. He knew that what he did to Rose was a grave injustice and he thought that she would retaliate by poisoning him so he called on Tolani to clear Rose's desk and become his secretary because according to him Rose was her friend and wouldn't do anything to hurt her. Tolani noticed this weakness and used it as a way of vengeance. On her way to work the next Monday after Mr. Salako pressed his pelvis against her, She gathered items that looked diabolic; a half calabash, limestone and chicken feathers, on getting to the office she placed the stuff on her Boss's table and cursed him, Mr. Salako scared to the bones by this act locked himself up in the office and refused to talk to anyone even Franka who came to see him concerning "their meeting yesterday" (112). It was at this scene that the novelist through Franka's actions insinuated that she might have been sleeping with Mr. Salako.

Franka, a colleague to Rose and Tolani was seen as a gossip in the office According to Mr. Ignatius, all the news in the office comes from her mouth. It was she that spread the news about Rose slapping Mr. Salako

which lead to her sack. It was she that also walked in when Mr. Salako was harassing Tolani and went on to broadcast to the whole office what she witnessed. At forty two, she was already a married woman but her marriage wasn't all that juicy as her husband beats her up. Perhaps this explains why she fell quickly to Mr. Salako. Even at that, she was still married and any rumble with the Boss might as well go down as adultery. However, it wasn't clear whether Mr. Salako forced or threatened her but one thing is certain, Mr. Salako is a man with power who couldn't control his ever burning libido and Franka though not a saint but a gossip who should be very cautious of all her actions around people in the office. So, Mr. Salako might have as well threatened to terminate her contract with the bank or suspend her, either way Franka stands to lose because she would be going home to an ever aggressive husband who is also a woman beater, sleeping with Mr. Salako seemed like the only way out and so, Franka in all her pride was also a victim of Mr. Salako's ever burning libido.

With the presentation of all these women and their ordeals in the hands of men one might want to wonder is there any hope? Is sex and manipulation the only thing the men see when they look at the women? The novelist's answer to this question remains a very delicate and controversial one when judged by the fate that befell women in the novel *Swallow*. Rose's nightmares began when she was sacked from work by Mr. Salako for responding to his advances with a slap and she has the habit of drinking herself to stupor and nagging whenever she feels sad, she wanted to cure herself this way but the job is not what you come across easily in Nigeria even in the 1980's. So for her it was worse than mere sacking, her rent was almost due and she was running out of cash too because she had no savings. It was during this period of her predicament that she came across O.C, a drug trafficker who according to Johnny was based in the United State (US). O.C bought a pair of shoes for her at Tajudeen market and from there Rose threw herself at him. It didn't take time before she became his girlfriend and barely three months into the relationship O.C promised to marry her, she didn't mind, he was rich and he bought her stuff, paid her rent and gave her money unlike Jonny, her ex-boyfriend who was stingy with his money and

would never spend it on Rose.

Roses' relationship with O.C however wasn't as smooth as it seemed, Johnny once reported to Tolani that he didn't like the way O.C treated Rose. According to him, the things he said to her he could not say them all but he was very sure he had heard O.C call her a lax. When Tolani approached Rose to caution her and also tell her what Johnny had said Rose waved it off as mere jealousy from her ex. Although Rose knew that O.C wasn't a good "bobo"(72) yet she didn't care, she was getting the money. This vividly answers the question of whether men just see women as sex toys or not because majority of the women in the novel had nothing to offer but their bodies, especially Rose who believes that a man's love is measured by how much he is willing to give and that was why she left Johnny. Most men already had this orientation and when they approach the ladies' with money and get turned down they get surprised.

Because of money Rose allowed herself to be molested, abused and used by O.C, she didn't mind so long as the money is coming, after all its all she ever wants. Come to the question of hope for women in *Swallow*, in Rose's part there was no hope for women with her type of orientation, she left the man who truly loved her because he couldn't spend on her, she didn't even care to find out what was Jonny's source of wealth all she knew was that he had money and he is supposed to spend it on his girlfriend. Rose is a typical Nigerian girl with the money first orientation, yet she hated and mistrusted the Igbos, showing that there is little or no hope for Rose and her kind. When Tolani asked her about the incidence with Mr. Salako, whether she slept with him Rose could neither say yes or no, she simply told Tolani that it didn't matter whether she slept with him or not after all Tolani did not sleep with him yet she is not sure of her job.

With Rose, the novelist insinuate that there is no hope for people like her. People who believe that a man has to spend on them because they are women. People who think that they are never wrong and want money more than love. Slowly, O.C turned Rose into a mini prostitute



whom he could harass, abuse and insult yet still gets her laid. However, Rose has her own sense of pride and dignity. It didn't take long before she got tired of being mistreated by O.C. She realized that money will make her regain her dignity and decided to make her own money by all means instead of waiting on men to take her bills. She decided to make it big and easy through drug trafficking. It was very easy for Rose to be put through into the drug business because her boyfriend was a trafficker. She tried to get Tolani to swallow cocaine with her and travel to Europe, sell it and make a fortune, Tolani consented but along the line she pulled out because her throat wouldn't just let the morsel of garri she uses for practice pass and she too believed that they would find another job and live just better than they have lived. She tried to talk sense into Rose but Rose refused and went on with swallowing the drugs. She died on her way to Europe bearing a false name because the drug had busted in her belly and caused her complications which lead to her death. In Rose's case, the novelist is rather brutal and straightforward. She insinuates that a woman living in a society where the male folks are in charge must in one way or the other become a victim of sexual harassment. However, being a victim does not define a lady as it is almost inevitable, what defines a lady is how she reacts and how she handles her own case of harassment. Rose was quick to make decisions, had the Nigerian Orientation of relationships and so she failed woefully after Mr.Salako harassed and sacked her.

Meanwhile, the case of Tolani ascertains that there might be hope for women who are sexually harassed because unlike Rose, Tolani handled her own case quite differently and in the end she was not doomed. The novelist used Tolani to make a stand on women harassment and also state that it is very possible to come out triumphant no matter how long or how often one is harassed. Tolani started witnessing sexual harassment even from a very tender age and that was the reason she didn't tell anyone about Mr.Salako's filthy advances towards her. She was thirteen when a boy in her class lifted her skirt and ran away, when she reported to the teacher, the teacher admonished her saying, Tolani, "How could you let such thing happen to you?" (55). As if it was her fault that a boy in her class was already spoilt and fast maturing into a

male adult of our dear society. Although the teacher proceeded to lash at the boy, she did not fail to scold and knock Tolani's head, asking her again... "You yourself, in what way were you walking?" (56)

This is sadly the society we live in. A society where a lady is blamed for getting sexually harassed by a man or even a boy who lacks self control or is ill trained. A society that even the way a woman walked was enough to get her sexually harassed. However, Tolani was quite different from Rose when it concerns the matter of sexual harassment, being exposed at a very young age to the ways of men and knowing very well that it is sadly her duty to take the blame whenever she is harassed by a man. Therefore, she was more mentally prepared to tackle the harassment from men unlike Rose who was never at fault, she always has a way of taking the blame off herself. According to her, "No one cares about Rose; every man wants to use Rose..." (72)

This is what makes Tolani very different from Rose. Tolani already has a very low expectation from men and even when she gets involved with one, she does not find fault in him to leave at the slightest provocation. By the time Tolani was introduced to us, she was already in a relationship with Sanwo whom she once saved. Rose was seen advising her to give Sanwo an ultimatum to pay her bride price or leave him for another man but Tolani was not having any of it. She was ready to stick with Sanwo even though he was jobless and lived in his uncle's boys quarters, does not dress well and always has a bad haircut. Tolani wasn't ready to leave him, she was even ready to give him her savings so that he would be able to pay her bride price but Sanwo refused, he was a principled man who wouldn't want to exploit his woman, although he later took the money and invested it in a business which yielded nothing.

Tolani's relationship with Sanwo is another interesting part of the novel, throughout the whole pages of the novel, Sanwo never confessed his love to Tolani, she was his girlfriend and they fornicated even when Tolani didn't want Mrs. Durojaiye to know. Sanwo would come to his apartment and litter things the way he liked but when Tolani goes over to his place she cannot push a chair out of position without him pulling it

back into position.

No matter how principled Sanwo made himself appear it was very obvious that he was sexually exploiting Tolani, a man like him who doesn't know how to dress nor the right place to barb his hair, a man like him who had neither a good job, a car nor a good house would find it very difficult to find a girl who would love him, stick by him and offer him sex even in her own apartment so he was rather lucky and very opportuned to have met Tolani and he didn't fail to utilize the opportunity, he had sex with her, ate her food, borrowed her money all in the name of love. In the end he didn't still marry Tolani even after she borrowed him her life saving and he lost it all in his dog business.

Sanwo however was in a way different from the other men that Tolani came across in her office, he never forced himself on her and even when she complained about the money she was about giving him he asked her to hold it instead of taking it from her amidst the complaint but why won't he feign rejection when he knew too well more than anyone else that Tolani was a rather desperate girl and would do anything to keep him, he wasn't like the other men in her life he was worse than the other man as his own manipulation was rather an emotional one, he did enjoyed it while it lasted.

Tolani's experience with men however showed that there is still hope for a woman who lives amidst the sexual predators called men, the way she handled her own situation with Salako was what made her different from Rose. The first time she was sexually harassed by Salako she never believed it could happen to her, she called it the “worst” thing that happened to her that month.

Mr. Salako had called her into his office to help him retrieve a file from his cabinet which was an awkward request because the cabinet was rather very close to him and he could get whatever he wanted from it without a stretch but he had his evil intentions to fulfill so he ordered his secretary to help him do it, it was in the process of retrieving the file that he got up and robbed his pelvis on Tolani while holding her waist and at

the same time pretending that he was stuck between the tiny space between them, Tolani's attempt to push him back was rather a late one as Franka had already walked into the office and witnessed the scene, without trying to confirm what happened she went ahead and broadcasted the news that she caught Salako and Tolani in *flagrante delicto* and once again, nobody was ready to question the truth about her story nor ascertain the main truth from Tolani, they all believed that it was always possible and Tolani never bothered to tell them the truth and at the same time she didn't allow the incident break her like it did to Rose, she kept her calm and waited for the next time amidst all the gossip circulated by her colleague, Franka.

It didn't take long before the incident occurred again, Salako who was really not satisfied by his exploits the last time called Tolani into his office once more and asked her to help him retrieve a file from his cabinet, the same approach he used the last time, perhaps, Sefi was trying to let us know that men do not think properly once sex is involved because a man like Salako with all his big grammar should have known to at least change the approach he used the last time because repeating it would have raised some suspicion in Tolani as the outcome of the last time was still very fresh in her mind but he didn't, his libido was high and that was all he cared about.

The command did rise some suspicion in Tolani's head, because she didn't consent to Salako's order, with a flimsy excuse she dodged the task and when Salako asked her to write a report of her disobedience she was only too happy to oblige, she was bent on telling the whole truth and she did tell it as it happened only for Ignatius to question the report, at first he refused to accept the memo because it contained bad reports about the boss and it would surely cause troubles for him as he was a married man but Tolani pressed on and even asked him to confirm from Salako if he wanted, the funny thing is that he didn't even ask if it was a true report or not, he didn't care if his colleague was harassed or not, all that mattered to him was the bad report on the boss, a boss who didn't even care about him or his well being. "When Tolani pressed on, determined not to fall to the system he asked her, "Do you understand

the implications of what you're doing?" When Tolani affirms he says "alright, alright" (75).

The report only resulted in Tolani being termed the most difficult employee in the bank's history, her colleagues instead of supporting her all turned against her, no one would talk to her and no one cared to find out the truth about what made her file the report against Salako, even Hakeem with his little comment affirmed the idea of the society Sefi was trying to create, a society where according Hakeem Tolani could open her legs and get all of them sacked from the bank, he urged them to be careful of her because they didn't know who she was connected to.

Tolani was soon suspended from the bank after she requested for a vacation and got turned down even though it was her right to get the vacation but because she didn't consent to Salako's advances she was denied. In retaliation, Tolani scared him with diabolic items and in response Salako suspended her from the bank, a suspension which later materialized into a permanent dismissal from the office. All these because Tolani refused to open her legs to Mr.Salako

Tolani can't really be called a strong willed woman because Rose almost convinced her into drug trafficking and although she consented she couldn't just do it because she was scared, she had dreams and she believed that Lagos would one day turn into a beautiful place for them but Rose wasn't having any of it, she was tired of being abused and harassed by men and she needed her own money to become her own boss and do away with all the men in her life but Tolani who understood that in our society, when a woman is sexually harassed it is her fault, it might be because of the way she walked, the shoes she wears or her choice of fashion, whatever the case may be, to Tolani, drug trafficking and easy money would not change anything so she stayed back after failing to convince Rose to abort the mission. Rose travelled to Europe and Tolani returned to her village Makoku, a journey which opened her eyes to many things and helped her to attain a better height of self discovery as well as answer a question that have bothered her since the very day her father died, a question of her father's identity.

A detailed comparison of the two main characters of Sefi's swallow; Rose and Tolani shows that it is inevitable for a woman living in Lagos to be completely alien to the harassment of men, especially those in power. Rose was harassed, got sacked and because of her dismissal from office got involved in trafficking and died. Tolani Ajao was harassed, got suspended, nearly became a trafficker but didn't and instead of her life being ruined by a man's libido, she went ahead and embarked on a journey of self discovery which helped her a great deal. The fictional lives of this two women asked and answered a question of the inevitability of a woman facing harassment from man, their two lives also illuminated the important of self will and how long it can go in helping one recover from the shocks of sexual harassment, while Tolani did recover, Rose did not.

While telling the stories of Rose and Tolani, Sefi also told the stories of Arike, Tolani's mother, a woman who grew up in the Makoku of the old where women were forced to marry the king against their will, such could have also been the case of Arike if not for her aunt Alaro, she too had her fair share of male domination and harassment, at a very tender age a boy had threatened to marry her and at night, do to her the things men do to women, later on, the boy married her despite interest from the then Oba. She was almost given to the Oba as a wife and on her refusal was called "ungraceful and stubborn" by her family members. It was her aunt Alaro that saved her from the grasps of the king. Iya Alaro called her aside and told her that she must find a husband, to her, it is the way of their people and a woman her age mustn't remain in her father's house. This is as well an indication that a woman without a man in our society is not far from useless.

Arike never had a child with the man Tolani called her father, he was infertile but the same society that sees the sexual harassment of a woman as her fault blamed Arike for her childlessness, and they said it was because of the bike, Vespa which she rode around that she has become infertile. Arike too was relentless, she never cared what they said about her, she kept on with her business and kept collecting money from her fellow women for keeps, it was not until Tade, her in-law

advised her against riding the Vespa around that she stopped because it was Tade who gave her the Vespa in the first place. Later on we came to understand that it was Tade who was Tolani's father, Arike had slept with him when she found out that her husband was infertile and could not get her pregnant.

Arike's case was not any case of sexual harassment but you can't really ignore hers as it can easily pass for sexual exploitation especially for the fact that her husband was willing to have her sleep with his own brother to cover his own shame, he didn't care about Arike's feeling and her opinion towards the arrangement all he wanted was for his own shame to be covered and when that was done, he kept reminding the little Tolani that she wasn't special and is just like every other person, even when she was yet tender he took him around wherever he went not because he loved her dearly or wanted to show her off but because Tolani took away attention from him, people will focus on the little lively girl and he would have the chance to drum without any disturbance.

Whichever way you see it, Arike's case was a case of sexual exploitation at its peak, what would you call a man who allowed his wife to sleep with his wife to cover his own shame and infertility. When she finally gave birth to Tolani she treated her well and showed her all the love in the world, the circumstances surrounding her birth did not by any means weigh her down, she was a determined woman who would rather die than soil her husband's honor.

Arike's answer to the question of whether there is still hope for women living in a world dominated by men is a straightforward one, it's a yes but for one to survive, triumph and live in this kind of world where a man can allow his wife to sleep with his brother, conceive and birth for him while covering his shame, a world where the male folks would rather shy from responsibilities than take it up like men. It takes determination and strong will to level the playing field and Arike didn't shy to show the other women how it's done. Tolani, Rose and Arike were not enough for Sefi to express the depth of sexual harassment and exploitation the

women of our society suffer in the hands of men she had to also highlight it in the life of Violet, Rose's sister.

Violet was Sisi's first daughter, she came just before Rose and of course with a different father to Rose, Sisi never cared about the upbringing of her daughters, at a very tender age she was already exposing Violet to the ways of men, she would tell her to “dance for uncle, smile for uncle” and Violet would do so and receive gifts from the uncles she danced for and that was how her own prostitution started, although not in Nigeria. She was exactly the woman her mother wanted her to become and believes that, “Whatever you owned, whoever you were and however much you knew, you wanted to have sex with her”. (126)

Violet was a prostitute in Italy and while she was there she met a man named Fidele, a Whiteman who was a disgrace to his family because he, unlike his siblings had pursued a professional career and had become a doctor to the dismay of his siblings who thought that they were all waiting for their mother to die so they could inherit all her properties and share among themselves. All Fidele ever did was complain about his family problems to Violet and when Violet confessed her own family problems to him, he became concerned and confessed that for the first time, he was seeing her as a real person.

A man who has been sleeping with her ever since he met her was telling her that he never saw her as a real person until she mentioned her family problems to him. This too is a case of sexual exploitation and harassment, Fidele was later disowned by his mother for his “bad habits with his African woman” yet Violet stayed by him but instead of treating her good and loving her properly, he only complained about his family politics to her until Violet left him and returned to Nigeria with their daughter Ibimina, she started her hair dressing business afterwards and when Fidele finally came to see her at Lagos, Taxi drivers misjudged her and called her a prostitute who was only running after a white man for money, they even went head to stone her in public, Fidele never came to Nigeria again but Violet who was proud and dauntless didn't let that stop her, she delighted in her daughter whom Rose called ugly and showed



her off at the salon without shame. Of all the women who were in one way or the other mishandled by men, Violet was the one that really stood tall apart from Arike, she too was relentless and ever cheerful so she took her fortune with smiles and perseverance and the end she was a huge success compared to the other women; Rose, Tolani, Arike, Franka and even Mrs. Odunsi.

Mrs. Odunsi, Sanwo's aunt was rather different from the other ladies in the novel, she took pride in sleeping with men, sometimes she even does it to shame her fellow women or teach them a lesson, her statue and the things she did with it was rather ridiculous, she had a bony behind and a hand whose knuckles has turned dark brown because of excessive bleaching, her veins also showed beneath her skin, green!. Mrs. Odunsi's case was rather different from other women in the sense that she was the only one who was willing to offer sex to the men without having to be forced into it, because of her, her husband threw parties and invited rich men from all over the city, she would dance for them and they would spread words of note on her. A very strict and authoritative woman who orders people around, even the almighty Salako.

Her encounter with Salako came when she went to the federal bank to report a case about her bank account, the way she pronounced her name with pride, "chief Mrs.Odunsi". she carried herself like the average male of the society and was happy being laid for the elevation of her husband who knew too well that she sleeps with other men but was not bothered, so long as they keep spreading naira notes on her and he keeps receiving his numerous contracts. While the men thought that they were exploiting Mrs.Odunsi, they never knew that she was indeed the one exploiting them, making them break protocols for her and elevating her husband. I believe that Sefi used the female Odunsi to dish out a vengeance against the men who are too focused with matters of sex and sexual related activities that they do not even notice that Mrs. Odunsi was exploiting and using them, Mrs.Odunsi here becomes a tool used to at least level the playing field but no matter how much Sefi tries to level it the ball will Always be in the men's court and they can always play it as they liked.

## Conclusion

Gone are the days when women are regarded as "pretty playful nothings" that weaken and sap the force of the strongest heroes. The image and role of women manifest in three genres of literature which are drama, prose and poetry. The influence of the colonial masters contributed to the desire of women to play active roles in their society. Taken together, the roles studied show writers can articulate their attitudes towards the position of women in the society. This is seen through the language and patterning of their fictions, the difference between the overall messages of their works indicates their contrasting outlook as we have seen. Although what they all have in common in the sense that these various issues they came up with must be faced and that subjugation, oppression and marginalization of women in the society must be tackled to create equality for both the males and females in the society. In taking the traditional themes of fiction and re-writing them, they are telling us that the common assumptions about womanhood are no longer viable; even males how argue for a change.

This research has shown tremendously how the feminist female literary writers have come up to condemn the exploitation of women by their male counterparts and some fellow women who have allowed themselves to be used to perpetuate various unspeakable acts of violence against their kind. They have pleaded that women should not be seen as totem for the society's sacrifice. Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo and Kaine Agary, just like other female writers of African origin, have succeeded in demanding that the rights of a girl child should be respected as a full-fledged member of the society. And not to be violated by any man or woman; that the woman should be given equal educational empowerment alongside her male counterparts. As feminist writers continue to search critically into the quality of women's lives in view of the human rights enshrined in the United Nations agenda, and raise questions about the shortcomings of entrenched negative social values, their works are compelling and appropriate especially at this time when the needs and experiences of women have become global concern.

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