REVISITING PATRIARCHAL DISLOCATION OF TODAY’S AFRICAN WOMAN: A STIWANIST EXPLORATION OF THE FICTION OF THREE AFRICAN WOMEN

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Abstract
It is naïve to think that the twenty-first century African woman is free from the patriarchal powers that held her ancestral mothers down. Even though she is arguably no longer a fetcher of water and a hewer of wood, she is still bedeviled by myriad of patriarchally imposed limitations which militate against the attainment of her full potentials. Today, her limitations are multifaceted: as a minor, she is neglected, given out in marriage and sexually abused by men; as a youth, she is battered, raped, trafficked and even killed by men, as a mother, she is objectified and abandoned “in the other room” with the burden of motherhood by her domineering male partner. These realities and more are voiced through reputable national dailies, as well as the fiction of most African female writers, including Chika Unigwe, Akachi Ezeigbo and Amma Darko. In On Black Sisters’ Street, Trafficked and Faceless respectively, these three African women have engaged the scholarship of the novel in order to dramatize the woman’s current deplorable realities which result in her exclusion from active participation in her nation’s scheme of things. Using the Nigerian and Ghanaian societies as settings for this unfortunate dislocation, we shall adopt Molara Ogundipe-Leslie’s “STIWANISM” strand of Feminist theoretical paradigm in order to show how these three female writers have engaged their creativities in expressing the multifaceted ways of dislocating today’s African woman. This is with the aim of reinvigorating the call for her protection, education, employment and inclusion in the drive for her nation’s development, irrespective of her economic background.

Key Words: Africa, Woman, Patriarchy, Dislocation, Stiwanism

Introduction
Despite the numerous efforts geared towards engendering adequate protection of contemporary African woman, she still remains an endangered human specie. This is because of the numerous life threatening challenges she faces daily in the hands of her male counterparts. Beyond the age-long debilitating docile roles of wife and mother, her recent challenges have assumed a new dimension. As a minor, she is raped by both strangers and trusted male family members, including fathers, step fathers and uncles. Cases abound where adult males, including teachers and spiritual fathers, nay pastors, meant to guard her dignity, have turned round to use her as an object of sexual satisfaction. As an adolescent, she is kidnapped by greedy men for ransom. At other times, she is kidnapped from her school by ambitious politicians desiring to score cheap political goals through her rescue. Thus, in Nigeria today, we have special nomenclature for groups of girls who have been kidnapped from their schools, such as “Chibok Girls” and “Dapchi Girls”. The prefixes in these names are indicative of the settings of indignity against the innocent Nigerian girl child. It is worrisome that some of these girls have been in captivity for many years and the government has no clue to their whereabouts. Aside of this, in the contemporary Northern Nigeria, thousands of girls are displaced and deprived of decent homes and education due to banditry and terrorism. Majority lose their lives during such attacks, while those who are lucky to survive, end up in internally displaced person’s camps (IDPs) where they are exposed to unimaginable violations by those who are supposed to help in their psychological healing.

The increasing cases of the girl child violations are evident in numerous related headlines of reputable print and electronic media in Nigeria. For instance, on Monday, the 8th of July, 2019 alone, we recorded numerous headline captions across reputable national dailies depicting embarrassing cases of sexual abuses of the girl child. These captions include, “Rape and male Chauvinism” (The Nation); “Another in police Net for raping 15 year Daughter” (Daily Trust); Father Drugs, Rapes 15-year-old Daughter (Premium Times).
Raping Step Daughter (Daily Trust); “Lagos Pastor Arrested for Raping, Impregnating Teenager” (Punch) and "Rape allegation Against COZA pastor: CAN undertakes to reconcile pastor and Dakolo” (Punch). It is pertinent to note that these reported atrocities against the girl child and woman are perpetuated by older men, who are expected to guide and guard them from danger. Reporting one of these unfortunate cases of sexual assault of a girl-child by her biological father, Ukpong writes:

A Nigerian father who drugged and raped his 15-year old daughter is being investigated by the police. The suspect is said to be 39 years old. The victim was forced to have an abortion when she became pregnant for the father. The victim was first raped when she was just 10 after the father allegedly drugged her food (Premium Times online).

These sexual assaults of the girl child by men, as reported across newspapers in a single day portend grave danger for the future of these innocent victims and the nation at large. In saner climes, these sexual offenders against minors will be meted with appropriate de jure sanctions. Unfortunately, the contrary is usually the case in our climes as offenders usually go unpunished due to patriarchal culture and conspiracy of silence by the adult society on such matters. In fact, in most communities, victims may be physically punished or ostracized for speaking out on such despicable abuses. It is pertinent to note that this failure to bring sexual violators of innocent girl children to book is Contrary to the stipulations of the 1989 United Nation’s Convention on the rights of the child, popularly known as the Child Rights Acts (CRA). Amongst many other stipulations on the rights of the child in this document, the act insists that before the age of 18, every child, irrespective of gender or economic background, must be protected from abuse, exposed to the opportunity to grow, be educated and given the right to leisure and recreation. Unfortunately in our climes today, millions of children, especially girls under this age are denied these basic rights unlike their counterparts in the West.

Sadly, her predicaments of abuse and deprivation do not end in her childhood. Thus, as she matures from a sexually violated minor to a young adult, she is soon confronted by poverty and unemployment, which dispose her to male predators who are determined to make a fortune off her dignity by trafficking her to Western Countries as a sexual slave. Often, before departure from Africa, these girls are forced to sign debt bonds and swear oaths of secrecy which keep them perpetually indebted to their traffickers. Hence, they toil for years and decades remitting almost all their resources to offset these exorbitant debt bonds. Today, this inhuman enterprise has continued to flourish despite the numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations established to curb the menace. In fact, the population of young women who fall prey to these predators has continued to rise as they are deceived into believing that the pasture is greener overseas. Sadly, the victims only realize that the pasture is not as green as painted by traffickers when it’s too late to turn back to their native lands. Bemoaning the traumatic experiences of these young African women in the hands of their traffickers on arrival in Europe, Patricia Ebegbulem in her well-researched work notes that:

There is no limit to the type of punishments inflicted on newcomers. Uncooperative women will be regularly beaten, kicked, and burned with cigarettes. They may even be killed as a lesson to others. To keep them from running away, they may be tied up with ropes or handcuffed to a bed. Their captors may pour burning hot and ice cold water on them. Another form of torture is blasting loud music 24 hours a day, which causes serious psychological problems (Trafficking, 31)

On his part, Kolajo views trafficking of Nigerian girls from the perspective of their innocence and age as minors. He bemoans the use of money in the enticement of these future leaders and mothers thus:
Nigerian women made their appearance in the prostitution circles in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague since mid-1990s. Many of them are young. A differentiated market developed with under-aged prostitution. The under-aged (13-19 year old) earns twice or thrice as much in a day as adult prostitutes (*The Plight*, 85).

Implicit in this is the fact that these minors are trafficked to foreign lands for prostitution with the consent of adult members of their respective families and communities. Additionally, Feyisetan in his finding, decries the physical and psychological torture suffered by trafficked female victims, while insisting that their involvement in this embarrassing trade is not voluntary, but a gender related violation. He declares that:

Female victims of trafficking identified in the UK are forced into prostitution against their will. Many are beaten, raped and abused. Young women are at greatest risk. Their youth makes them more desirable to traffickers who are looking for young girls to service the male clients. The forcible recruitment of women for the purposes of forced prostitution or sexual exploitation is a form of gender related violation (*Trafficking*, 6-7).

Aside of trafficking of the female child, many young women in Nigeria have lost their lives in most agonizing and horrendous ways as they have watched trusted lovers severely their vital body organs for money spinning rituals. Again, recently in Nigerian social media, we have seen viral video clips depicting senseless battering of women by men for no justifiable reasons. Writing for the *Punch Newspaper* on one of such unjustifiable battering of an innocent nursing mother by a senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Adebayo reports that “Senator Elisha Abbo was caught in a surveillance camera at an adult toy shop in Abuja assaulting a defenseless nursing woman without provocation” (*Punch online*). On his part, Ibrahim captures the same incident thus, “Senator Abbo who represents Adamawa North Senatorial District was caught physically assaulting a woman who pleaded with him not to assault the owner of the shop” (*The Nation*). Interestingly, the owner of the shop is another woman. The guilt of the battered victim was that she merely intervened with the aim of saving her fellow woman from being battered by the raging “(dis) honorable” senator Abbo. Unfortunately, the physical and psychological trauma of these abuses and dangers, to a large extent impact negatively on their self-esteem and ability to realize their full potential, including leadership roles, like their male counterparts.

From the foregoing multifaceted abuses of the contemporary African woman both as a child, adolescent and as an adult, it is obvious that her naturally and legally deserved protection has taken flight and she is now highly vulnerable to torture and death in the hands of her male counterparts. Interestingly, these unfortunate realities of today’s African woman form the subject matter of recent works of most African female writers, particularly Chika Unigwe in *On Black Sisters’ Street*, Amma Darko in *Faceless* and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo in *Trafficked*. In these novels, these three African female writers have painted a realistic picture of their respective perceptions of the many faces of gender related violations against the contemporary African woman by male folks. But before we delve into the analysis of these texts, we shall consider the theoretical paradigm adopted for this paper.

**Theoretical Paradigm**

This paper adopts STIWANISM strand of African Feminist criticism. Generally, feminism is an ideology hinged on issues concerning the woman, particularly on the need to emancipate her from the powers that hold her down from attaining her full potentials. In other words, feminists, according to Molaro Ogundipe Leslie, concern themselves with the “conditions, roles, and statuses” of the woman in her world. (547). It is in this vein that Abrams describes feminism as “A struggle for the recognition of women’s cultural roles and achievements, and for women’s social and political rights” (*Glossary*, 110). However, in this broad purview of
feminism, STIWANISM can be located within the African indigenous feminist discourse. “STIWA” is an acronym coined and popularized by Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1940-2019). STIWA, according to Leslie implies **Social Transformation in Africa Including Women.** It is popularly known by scholars as Stiwanism. It advocates the need to protect, groom and include the African woman in national transformation. Ogundipe-Leslie is considered as one of the strongest voices in the struggles against female gender *thingification*, inequality and stereotypes in Africa. At the core of her STIWA ideology is the need to make feminism relevant in Africa in view of the peculiarities of the challenges of the African woman. In her essay entitled “Stiwanism: Feminism in an African context”, Leslie emphasizes the role of culture and the context specific nature of the challenges of women in Africa in comparison with their counterparts in the more developed West. Thus, she insists that “Africans cannot be generalized. We must essentialize blackness even on the African continent. Race, class and gender must mediate our discourse” (544). She insists that “the African woman needs an ideology that addresses her reality and, hopefully and preferably, to ameliorate that reality” (547). In this essay, she further propagates the need for “indigenous feminism within the traditional African societies for addressing the oppression and injustices to women” (548). In her painstaking explanation of this essential African based ideology, Leslie declares:

What we want in Africa is social transformation. The transformation of African society is the responsibility of both men and women. The new word describes what similarly minded women and myself would like to see in Africa. “STIWA” is about the inclusion of African women in the contemporary social and political transformation of Africa. Be a Stiwanist. I am a Stiwanist (549).

Leslie’s Stiwanism aptly captures the essence of this paper. It is a call on society, particularly the male gender, to shun all forms of gender based discriminations, abuses and violations which dislocate today’s African girl child and woman from active participation in national transformation as prescribed by Leslie. In other words, there is an urgent need for care, qualitative education and adequate protection of today’s African girl child or woman in order to qualify her for inclusion in the huge responsibility of social and political transformation of her nation. Obviously, her ability to key into this call for collaboration with her male counterpart as prescribed by Leslie in “Stiwanism” will be enhanced by protecting her from the indignity of patriarchal abuses which include parental neglect, child marriage, sexual abuse, kidnapping, trafficking, battering and annihilation amongst many others. Indeed, today’s African woman urgently needs to be unchained from the dislocating, prejudiced perception and treatment as a permanent occupant of, to use President Mohammadu Buhari’s words “the kitchen, the living room and the other room”.

In view of the foregoing established challenges of the contemporary woman and girl child which form the subject matter of our three novels from three African female writers, Leslie’s Stiwanism is an appropriate paradigm for our argument in this paper. This is because, Stiwanism, to use Leslie’s words “allows us to discuss the needs of African women today in the tradition of the spaces and strategies provided in our indigenous culture for the social being of women” (Leslie, 549). It is pertinent to note that “Stiwanism” is just one amongst many strands or types of feminism which include feminism with a small “f”, Social feminism, liberal feminism, reformist feminism, and many more. Each strand is determined by the ideology of its proponent. In this discourse, we shall hinge our argument from the perspective of patriarchal violations and abuses which result in the dislocation of today’s African woman from collaborating with her male counterparts in the social and political transformation of her nation in particular and continent at large.
Discussion and Analysis

In its characteristic role as the mirror of society, the African novel has begun to reflect female fictional characters who are dislocated from positive contribution to the social and political transformation of their respective societies as prescribed by Molara Leslie in STIWANISM. This is due to myriads of violations against them, including unemployment, rape, poverty, trafficking and murder. In On Black Sisters’ Street, Faceless and Trafficked, Chika Unigwe, Amma Darko and Akachi Ezeigbo respectfully, have made commendable efforts at creating a realistic picture of the predicaments of these supposed mothers and leaders of the nation. In On Black Sisters’ Street, Unigwe dramatizes the physical and psychological violations of four young African women, mostly in the hands of men. In this narrative, male characters are delineated as violators, killers and dealers in the sale of young girls as pieces of property exported overseas for prostitution. The victims in this narrative are Sisi, Efe, Joyce and Ama. These young women have found their ways to the red light district of Antwaap, in Brussels, Belgium. Dele, a Nigerian based male predator is the common denominator in their lives. He is the chief trafficker. In order to survive in this foreign land, they must sell their body in form of prostitution, not only to survive, but more importantly to remit money to offset the illegal debt bond signed with Dele before departure from Nigeria. But before getting to this point of their lives, each of these young women has a pathetic history of deprivation and sexual exploitation way back in Nigeria and Sudan. Through a detailed exposition of their lives from childhood, Unigwe brings to the fore, some of the major challenges responsible for their present dislocation from their respective African home lands. These challenges include unemployment, war, poverty, sexual abuse and exploitation.

Chisom (Sisi) is the most educated and most prominent of these four young women. She is in Brussels for sexual slavery due to many years of unemployment in Nigeria. As a university graduate and the only child of her parents, Sisi’s dream is to reciprocate her parents’ sacrifices in her upbringing and education. Armed with good education and sound upbringing, she is hopeful for a rewarding employment. During the years of search for employment, the eternal words of her father on the gains of good education fuels her pessimism and resilience: “The only way to a better life is education. Akwukwo. Face your books and the sky will be your limit. It’s in your hands” (18). Unfortunately, this dream is shattered when she fails to secure a decent employment after many years of futile search with her degree in Finance and Business Administration. Thus, her chance meeting with Dele in a hairdressing salon opens up the expressway to her eventual murder in Brussels. The unsuspecting Sisi is not discernible enough to notice the greed and inhumanity in Dele the trafficker. Concerning this, the narrator tells us that Dele is a man with massive buttocks, a voice like a mad man’s, as well as a tattoo of a small dark drawing of a hammer at the side of his neck (32). In order to further convince Chisom of the lucrative nature of prostitution abroad, Dele tells her:


With much conviction on the good promises of life in Europe, Sisi succumbs to Dele’s antics. But Dele and his collaborators in Belgium will not avail her of this opportunity without dehumanizing her to suit their pecuniary gains. First, her name must change from Chisom to Sisi, a name that will be easy for white men to pronounce. Also, her freedom to make money and keep it is mortgaged to Dele through the signing of a debt bond of Thirty thousand Euro with Dele. He tells her,

Taty t’ousand euro it go cost you o. You tink say na one time you go pay? No be one time oo. Na when you get there, begin work, you go begin dey pay. Instalment payment we dey call am! Mont by mont, yo go dey pay me (34).

His further conversation with Chisom reveals the
pitiable predicament of the trafficked girl child in the Nigerian setting which Unigwe writes about. Aside of the dehumanizing loss of personality and huge indebtedness to Dele, Sisi is further dehumanized on arrival in Brussels by Dele’s collaborators in the characters of Segun and Madam. On Sisi’s arrival in Brussels, she is thoroughly schooled on the rules of sex trade in Antwerp, including the submission of her travel documents (passport), pending the full payment of her debt bond with Dele. Madam tells her:

Hand over your passport. From now until your debt is paid I am in charge of it … my dear Sisi, it’s not your place to ask questions here. You just do as you are told and you’ll have an easy ride. I talk, you listen. You understand? … Silence and total obedience. That’s the rule of the house. Be seen and not heard. 

*Capeesh? (119-120).*

Sisi also suffers the loss of her nationality as a Nigerian as she is forced to lie to Belgian authorities that she is a displaced Liberian Madingo with no travel documents and no surviving family member. Thus, she is further tutored on what to tell the authorities:

Remember, you are Madingo. You have no passport. You escaped Liberia with only your head and the clothes on your back. A white man took pity on you and helped you escape. He saw you outside a church begging for money. He helped you get to the Ivory Coast and then gave you a letter for a friend of his who worked in a ship. You survived for two weeks on what food you could get from the rubbish (121).

After this horrendous hurdle of acceptance and settlement, Sisi joins other prostitutes who earn money through the indignity of prostitution on the cold Antwerp Red light districts of Brussels. The many frustrations of this trade include standing on the street “From eight o’clock at night to six o’clock the next morning, she stood like the other girls with porcelain smiles inside her booth, hoping to hook a big fish” (252). We feel pity for her because it is obvious that she can hardly save anything out of her hard earnings after the compulsory “payment of five hundred and fifty euros per week” to Dele as well as the payment of her rents at Zwartezustersstraat and Vingerlingstraat. Unfortunately, Sisi’s’ attempt to quit this draining and debasing trade by getting married to Luc, leads to her brutal murder in the hands of Segun. Segun is the pretentious gentleman who resides in the same apartment with Madam Kate and the four women. All along, he has feigned the disposition of gentleness and protection over the young women in their apartment. He is described as a man with “only half a brain, whose mouth always hangs open” (293). However, his mission in the apartment and true nature as a serpent is revealed when he visits Sisi in Luc’s absence. Here, he lures the unsuspecting Sisi to the car where he hits a “hammer” into her skull killing her. We are further horrified by the revelation that Sisi’s murder with a “hammer” by Segun is at the instance of Dele who has a tattoo of “hammer” behind his neck. Meanwhile, back in Nigeria, Dele’s reaction to the news of Sisi’s murder reveals his culpability and lack of value for the lives of these young women. Concerning this brutal murder, he boasts: “That gal just fin my trouble. I dey tell them before them commot. Me I be good man. I just dey try to help poor gals. I get three lined up. Them full for front, full for back” (295). Segun’s inhumanity is further revealed in the way he drags her out on the road and pushes her lifeless body into the boot of the car. Sisi’s death in the hands of Segun who acts at the instance of Dele implies her automatic exclusion from her nation’s social and political transformation as required by Molara Ogundipe Leslie’s Stiwa ideology.

Efe is a victim of sexual violation and psychological abuse by the two supposedly trusted men in her life, namely her potbellied lover Titus and her biological father respectively. From a poverty stricken background with an alcoholic father who is a labourer to building contractors, Efe falls for the sweet talks and false promises of Titus to lift her from penury. Unoblivious of Titus’s penchant for young girls and virgins, Efe becomes a sexual toy in his hands from the age of fifteen. When this affair
culminates into pregnancy, Titus denies responsibility, leaving her to cater for the child alone. Again, as the first child of her parents, Efe’s mother’s early demise forces her out of school as she assumes the role of a mother to her three younger siblings. While performing this role, she often grapples with her drunken father’s aggression. The omniscient narrator describes her predicament in the hands of her father thus: “he regularly drowned himself in a glass of ogogoro at the local beer palour … De gin colour his eyes sotey him no even see him feet. He left it up to Efe to look after the house and her three siblings” (58). With an aggressive father who stumbles over his feet after he had had a drink, the narrator tells us that “She could not remember the last time they had a proper conversation. Mostly he yells at her. ‘How long does it take for breakfast to be ready in this house full of women? What does a man have to do to get food in his house?” (62). With a bullying father and irresponsible lover like Titus, Efe becomes a ready victim in the hands of Dele. Thus, he is in Brussels to make money in order to care for her son Lucky Ikponwosa. But the mysterious demise of Sisi frightens her and signals a pessimistic future for the rest of the living prostitutes in Antwerp.

On her part, Ama’s sexual violation in the hands of her “over pious” father, Bro. Cyril began from the night of her eighth birthday. After rewarding her with a lavish birthday party for good academic performance, Bro Cyril turns around the same night to sexually abuse the innocent child. The hypocrisy of this false man of God is evident in his use of the biblical fifth commandment to bring this girl child to submission. Thus he usually asks her, “Ama, what is the fifth commandment?” Honor thy father and thy mother” she would reply” (132). This nauseating abuse of a minor by her father continues without her speaking out to anyone except the walls. When the bubble bursts, Ama is seriously reprimanded by both her mother and Brother Cyril “Shut up, Ama! Shut up. Mechie onwu’. She tried to drag her out of the room … Brother Cyril’s voice cut into her mother’s, … No. Let her talk. Ya kwube. See the kind of child you brought into my house?” (148). This debilitating sexual abuse as well as the shocking revelation that Bro. Cyril married her mother with pregnancy drive her to Mama Eko’s house in Lagos. It is from here that she is trafficked to Belgium by Dele. Through this character, Unigwe indicts the church for hypocrisy and mothers for their carelessness and blindness to the wellbeing of their female children. It is obvious that her escape to Belgium is not an end to her predicament. With Sisi’s mysterious murder Ama is jolted back to the consciousness of her obvious dislocation, not only from the family setting, but also her African nation at large.

Joyce, originally known as Alek is a victim of war from Sudan. She lost her family in the violence of war. Raped and left in pains by enemy soldiers, she ends up in United Nations refugee camp. Here, she meets and falls in love with Policarp, a member of peace keeping force from Nigeria. On their return to Nigeria, their marriage plan is dashed as Policarp’s family will not hear of their first son’s marriage to a refugee foreigner. In this devastation, Alek bemoans her predicament “The soldiers that raped her that night in Daru had taken her strength, and Policarp’s betrayal had left her unwilling to seek it back” (231). For this disappointment, Policarp works with Dele for her travel to Europe, believing their lie that she would work as a nanny in Belgium. To her chagrin, she arrives Belgium to discover that she has been trafficked into prostitution. The dislocation of this character is multifaceted and evident in her travel documents prepared by Dele. These include change of name (Alek to Joyce), and nationality (Sudanese to Nigerian). Thus, the murder of Sisi and the uncertainty of the future of Efe, Ama and Joyce portend their exclusion from their nations’ political and social transformation (Stiwa), prescribed by Molara Ogundipe Leslie.

In Faceless, Armar Darko exposes the predicament of dislocated children who live their nights and days on the streets of Ghanaian cities and slums. However, our interest here is with unfortunate experiences of female characters, including children as portrayed in the novel. Through these uneducated, neglected, hungry, sexually violated and annihilated girl children, the novelist takes us into the physical and
psychological torture suffered by street children in Ghana, while indicting fathers and government for the obvious ruin of the future mothers and leaders of the nation. The Ghanaian fathers portrayed in this narrative are those who refuse to acknowledge or take responsibility for their children. Foremost amongst the men whose actions dislocate the woman from inclusion in societal transformation are Nii Kwei, Kpakpo, Poison, Macho and Onko (corrupt version for Uncle).

As the narrative begins, we encounter a frightened fourteen year old girl named Fofo emerging from the notorious street of Sodom and Gomorrah where she washes carrots to eke out a living. She has just escaped rape and near death in the hands of the notorious, “no-nonsense street lord, Poison of the street” (Faceless, 3). She connects another street friend Odarly, and they both go to tell her mother Maa Tsuru of her unfortunate experience. Knowing Poison for the danger and brutality he represents, Maa Tsuru advises Fofo to flee from him and also informs her of the death of her sister, Baby T. According to Maa Tsuru, Baby T’s lifeless body was discovered “dumped” behind the Rasta saloon kiosk at Agbogbloshie market. In desperate need for money to facilitate her escape from Poison, Fofo is caught stealing and almost killed. She is rescued by Kabria, who is an employee of a non-governmental organization known as MUTE. In collaboration with Harvest FM Radio station, through the programme “Good Morning Ghana”, they launch an in-depth investigation into the lives and challenges of street children in the nation. This inquiry reveals myriads of reasons why these Ghanaian children end up on the streets where they are exposed to unimaginable danger, including rape, trafficking for prostitution, drugs, alcohol, pornography and murder. Foremost among these reasons are men’s promiscuity, men’s abandonment of female partners, and men’s inability to take fatherhood responsibility. For instance, Maa Tsuru’s father abandoned her mother which led to her mother’s curse on her father’s family members, including Maa Tsuru. Secondly, both her husband, Nii Kwei, and her lover Kpakpo abandon Maa Tsuru with four and two children respectively. But before Nii Kwei’s first flight from Maa Tsuru, she suffers violence in his hands for conceiving her third child. The scene of this physical abuse is painted thus:

He pounced on her like a cat on an unsuspecting mouse and began a vicious pounding spree. He pounded Maa Tsuru with his fists, landing the blows anywhere and everywhere and on every part of her pregnant body. The daylight went out of Maa Tsuru. She began to bleed. Kwei grinned (124).

To our dismay, Kwei abandons this bleeding woman and rushes to Abgoo Ayee where he boasts of his strength, demanding to be addressed as the great Dr. Kwei. To his disappointment, the pregnancy survives this brutality as Maa Tsuru gives birth to her third child, a girl whom she calls Tsuru’s baby which evolves to Baby Tsuru; and then, to Baby T” (125). Before his final disappearance from home, Nii Kwei returns to Maa Tsuru to father yet another child. This fourth child is another girl whom she names Fofo. Interestingly, the exit of Nii Kwei, ushers Kpakpo, into Maa Tsuru’s life. Kpakpo is delineated as an irresponsible, homeless and unemployed man who is in desperate need for shelter and sexual satisfaction. About his movement into Maa Tsuru’s small apartment, we are told through the voice of the children that “A man suddenly joined them one day in their one room and Maa Tsuru told them to look upon him as their new father” (128). The narrator further describes him as “a man who had been surviving through dubious means” (131) His movement into Maa Tsuru’s one room accommodation pushes her children into the streets. Meanwhile, Baby T and Fofo live their lives on the street working and bringing whatever they make off the streets to maintain Maa Tsuru and her lover Kpakpo. Kpakpo soon begins to violate Baby T in Maa Tsuru’s absence. It is disheartening to note that at this point, baby T is a mere eleven year old minor. Fofo gives us a glimpse of what Kpakpo does to this little girl “he brushed the back of one hand over Baby T’s breasts and drew down her pants. They fell on the floor” (133).
Onko is another male character whose sexual appetite for minors leads to the dislocation and annihilation of Baby T. Onko lives in Maa Tsuru’s neighborhood. Fofo tells him of the near abuse of Baby T by Kpakpo and he takes advantage of her innocence and sexually abuses her. In the narrative, Onko is described as a kind unmarried man with two sons with two different women. Before unleashing his sexual appetite on Baby T, he endears children to himself:

He was like an uncle to everyone. The children saw him as such, and corrupted uncle into Onko. The young and old all call him Onko. He was known to always have toffees in his room to soothe and calm down crying children. Many of them found it easier to talk to him than to their own fathers (128).

Unfortunately, one day, Onko rapes Baby T until she bleeds profusely. Following the violations of Baby T by both Kpakpo and Onko, she is sent away through Kpakpo’s relative Mama Abidjan. She connects Mama Broni who engages Baby T as a child prostitute. Thus, for years, Maa Tsuru and Kpakpo receive proceeds from Baby T’s sex enterprise. Until the day Mama Broni arrives with the sad news of Baby T’s lifeless body, which was found behind the blue Rasta hairdressing kiosk at Agbogbloshie. As the first to learn of the sad news of Baby T’s murder, Kpakpo disappears three days before the sad news is broken to Maa Tsuru. Baby T’s post mortem shows that “She died from a fatal head injury. There was bleeding on the left of her brain” (149). It is later revealed that Poison murdered Baby T for her refusal as a child prostitute to sleep with Onko. Thus, the murder of Baby T by Poison portends her automatic dislocation and exclusion from the social and political transformation of her Ghanaian nation with the men as required by Molara Ogundipe Leslie’s Stiwanist ideology.

Amongst the many themes in Adimora-Ezeigbo’s Trafficked, the theme of the physical and psychological abuse of the woman and girl child takes the center stage. Trafficked tells the story of Nneoma. In a bid to escape from the frustrations at home she is trafficked into prostitution to Europe. After two years in Rome as a prostitute under a debt bond, Nneoma is sold like a piece of furniture to another trafficker named Baron who operates in London. Like other trafficked girls, in both Rome and London, Nneoma is dispossessed of her passport on arrival. She confesses that “We were not allowed to keep our passports. Madam Dollar might have given our passport to Baron. The narrator tells us that her journey to UK was with Baron who told her he had bought her (16). This transaction entails the cancellation of her indebtedness to Madam Dollar in Italy. On arrival in London, Nneoma soon begins to suffer rape and torture in the hands of her buyer, Baron. She narrates these horrendous experiences in Baron’s hands thus:

Baron sends other girls to brothels and keeps me in his flat. Instead of putting me on the street, he brings me to his flat. Baron is a sadist. He rapes and beats me. I refuse when customers demand oral or anal sex and insist that they use condoms and I’m sometimes assaulted for this (132).

Despite this torture, she is also dispossessed of proceeds from the undignified sex trade. She tells Efe her story “Baron never gave me money. They always claimed I would get no money of my own until I had paid my debt. Even when the customers gave me money, they took it from me” (133). Her hunger for freedom makes her escape from Baron. This escape quickly follows her arrest alongside other Nigerian prostitutes by the police. We are told that: “That cold morning: a dawn raid, an arrest, whisked off to a police station from the house in south west London, ending up in a detention center. The process of removing her from the UK had begun” (14). Thus, Nneoma and fifteen others girls are deported to Nigeria. Despite the shame of deportation as prostitutes, the girls are glad to escape the horrors in Rome, the disorientation and savagery in the London flat. They are glad that they have escaped the humiliation of arrest and detention. The returning girls who cover their faces from media camera are received and rehabilitated at the Centre for trafficked women
known as Oasis Centre for Skills Development (OYCSD). While here, the girls are given the opportunity to realize their full potentials. Thus, Nneoma is trained as a tailor, and later proceeds to the university, while her Friend Efe trains as a hair dresser.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

Available facts and fiction on the many challenges of today’s African woman reveal that men play major roles in their frustrations and displacement. With the age long patriarchal prejudice of submissiveness on the part of the woman, men have continued to unleash varied forms of violations against their female counterparts from childhood to adulthood. These violations include rape, battering, trafficking, abandonment of fatherhood responsibilities, and even murder. As we have demonstrated in this paper, facts on these are available in both print and electronic media, well researched studies, as well as in African fiction, particularly in the fiction of Chika Unigwe, Amma Darko and Akachi Ezeigbo. In *On Black Sisters’ Street*, Unigwe delineates such male characters as Dele, Titus, Policarp, Brother Cyril, Efe’s Father and Segun the murderer of Sisi. The actions and voices of these characters in the narrative displace and dislocate their female counterparts. Amma Darko’s *Faceless* paints a picture of the devastating effects of promiscuity and irresponsible fatherhood on girl children. Nii Kwei abandons Maa Tsuru after fathering four children with her. Kpakpo fathers two children with Maa Tsuru, sexually violates the eleven year old Baby T, gives her out to Maami Broni for Child prostitution, and flees from her at the break of the news of Baby T’s brutal murder. Onko’s violent sexual defilement of Baby T leads to her dislocation from home to street prostitution where she meets an untimely death in the hands of the male street lord named Poison. Akachi Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked* chronicles the shameful act of prostitution in Italy and United Kingdom. In her search for a better life, Nneoma is first trafficked to Italy from where she is sold off as a piece of furniture to a man called Baron who rapes, and batters her at will. Also, way back in Ihite Agu village in Nigeria, Nneoma’s sister Hannah suffers violence in the hands of the self-acclaimed man of God named Prophet Elias who uses her as a punching bag at will. Thus, these numerous faces of frustration and dislocation of the African woman by her male counterparts suggest that Molara Ogundipe Leslie’s call for the inclusion of African women in the social and political transformation (Stiwanism) of their respective societies remains a mirage. Thus, there is an urgent need for a re-orientation of the psyche and consciousness of the male gender on the need to educate and protect the African girl-child and woman in order to prepare them for the all-important role of, to borrow Ogundipe Leslie’s statement in *Stiwa*, “inclusion in the social and political transformation” of their respective climes in Africa. Because they complement the male gender in the divine mandate of procreation and development of the world, they reserve the right to be carried along, This is in tandem with Lee’s declaration in Zaynab Alkali’s *Stillborn*, that “men and women are complementary to each other, walking side by side” (Alkali, 105).

**Works Cited**


Leslie, Ogundipe. “*Stiwanism: Feminism in an African Context*”. Tejumola Olaniyi and Ato Quayson

