



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Mohamed Khider University of Biskra
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of Foreign Languages

MASTER THESIS

Letters and Foreign
Languages English
Language
**Literature and
Civilization**

Ambivalent Sexuality in Sefi Atta's "A Bit of Difference"

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
Degree in Literature

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**Academic Year: 2020-
202**

DEDICATIONS

In honor of my father Kabouche ElBay, who has been the delight to our family with his wisdom, warmth, and generosity, you will always be remembered in our hearts and prayers; may Allah grant you mercy, forgiveness, and the highest place in Jannah.

I would like to dedicate this work proudly to my beloved step-mother, Aisha Menacer, who showers me with her endless love and who always pushes me forward.

To the most important woman in my life, my mother Sailaa Hadda, who taught me how to overcome life's hardships.

To my wonderful sister, Widad and her little family who are always there for me, have never abandoned me, and have never failed to remind me of who I am.

My dear sister Afef, Thank you for the endless hours we've spent on the phone almost every day since I started this journey, also thank you for your reading the chapters, and for your insightful suggestions. You encouraged me more than you can imagine.

Kesmia Fadia, my closest friend, you have been a part of this dissertation throughout its development. Thank you for patiently listening to me try to go through my ideas for months, as well as for reading the chapters.

Finally, thank you to my brothers Mohamed and Rachid, for never letting me sense my father's absence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is the result of a great deal of kindness on the part of many; First and foremost, I want to thank my supervisor, Ben Abdelrezak Abdelnacer. I owe him my gratitude for his suggestions; I really enjoyed working on this topic. You've not only given me insightful feedback on this work but also offered emotional support during my toughest times it is largely down to him that this work has come to completion; without his early support and assistance, this thesis would not have been completed.

I would like also thank my other jury members, Dr. Salim Kerboua for accepting to read and examine my dissertation. Your classes impacted me in many ways. Thank you To Mrs. Asma Cheriet, for creating in me a passion for African literature.

Declaration

I therefore declare that the content of this dissertation is purely the result of my research, and that appropriate references or acknowledgements to the work of other researchers are made where required.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ghania Kabouche', written in a cursive style.

Ghania Kabouche

ABSTRACT

Sefi Atta argues in "*A Bit of Difference*" about the effects of social expectations and the normative representation on those who are sexually ambivalent in Nigeria. She also demonstrates, as a feminist, the prevailing view of homosexuality and how African reactions to it are more violent. Because heterosexual culture is the norm and any other sexual identity is unnatural and humiliating, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) develops. The present study aims at investigating ambivalent sexuality in Sefi Atta's "*A Bit of Difference*" and in order to achieve the main objective of this study, the queer theory, postcolonial theory, and psychoanalytical feminism theory have been used. According to the investigation results, the African Diaspora is a result of being free of social expectations and patriarchy, of many Africans, particularly LGBT individuals, homosexuality is not biological, and homophobia is a vestige of colonialism.

Keywords: Ambivalent sexuality, Diaspora, Homosexuality, Homophobia, LGBT, Patriarchy, PTSD.

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ملخص

General Introduction

Introduction

African women writers develop a broad awareness for themselves and the world around them. Their writings decolonize their minds from the imprisonment of man habit of thought, and redefine their perception of who they are, nurtures it, and expand it beyond societal norms and restrictions. Women literature in Africa, concentrating largely in Nigeria, tends to take a feminist aspiration, where most of their novels like Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and Aminatta Forna's *The Devil That Danced on the Water* (2002) discuss the hardships of the African woman, especially in rural villages. Women writers challenge societal norms and traditions; equality, gender relations, social class, forced marriages and sexuality. Atta's *A Bit Difference* stands from African novels whose themes are heavily transgressing the gender and sexual conventions.

Literature Review

Homosexuality is shaped by the region and society that people live in. Unlike the Western world, homosexuality is banned by social norms and religion which consider it as "western import" as Yewri Museveni, the Ugandan president, claimed in his interview (CNN2014). In their Book entitled *The Gender of sexuality* (2011), Pepper Schwartz and Virginia Rutter explain that American and European societies show more tolerance to deviant sexual orientations. In addition, Michael R Kauth's *Handbook of the evolution of Human sexuality* (2006) focused on the identification of implicit conceptual assumptions about sexual attraction and the operational definition of key terms, such as homosexuality and heterosexuality in order to promote a greater integrity of conceptual models; this book helps identifying concepts that this research relies on. Ellis Havelock attempts to reconstruct norms of sexuality, especially homosexuality. In his book: *sexual inversion*

(1897), he proposed that homosexuality was a common biological manifestation in human beings and animals alike. Biographer Phyllis Grosskurth states that Ellis believed his research as “part of a moral revolution” he claimed that homosexuals represented a possible third sex that transcended male/female bodies and masculine/feminine gender roles. He also discussed homosexuality in relation to gender, class and sex.

The Rationale of the Study

The reason that made me choose this topic is because this topic will give me a deeper insight into sexual differences, and also because this phenomenon nowadays saw a big recognition. Moreover, African women literature was under the investigation of many scholars and critics for its affiliation in the western language and genre, but also in studying the characteristic, biological and psychological aspects of human societies and cultures.

The Statement of the Problem

Ambivalent sexuality has become a trending theme in many literary works around the world. African writers are also interested in depicting images on those individuals of ambivalent sexuality, especially Nigerian women writers. Sefi Atta, the Nigerian feminist writer, develops a genuine concern in this topic in her novel: *A Bit of Difference* where the secondary character Bandele who adopts western attitudes that clearly manifested in his ambivalent sexuality.

Research Questions

1. How does ambivalent sexuality shape characters' behaviours in Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*?

2. In what way has ambivalent sexuality affected characters' perception of their social life in Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*?
3. How does characters' sense of victimhood depicted in Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*?

Hypotheses

To support the above formulated research questions, the present work is fuelled by the following related hypotheses:

1. Ambivalent sexuality shapes the bulk of characters behaviors as it affects their psychological fabric.
2. Ambivalent sexuality reflects characters' fragmented gender roles.
3. Characters' sense of victimhood is constructed by the writer to show the consequences of having Ambivalent sexuality.

Methodology

The researcher uses a number of theories and approaches to analyze theme of ambivalent sexuality in Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*. She uses queer theory to explore characters' deviant sexuality. She also includes postcolonial theory to investigate the aftermath of colonization on social and cultural sphere in which the author's work takes place.

Objective of Study

- 1- To learn about African postcolonialism and African women literature.

- 2- To explain how African writers used English as a vehicle to transmit their interest in the field of gender and sexuality studies.
- 3- To investigate Ambivalent sexuality in Sefi Atta's novel *A Bit of Difference*.

Scope and Limitation of Study

This research is confined to the study of Bandele's ambivalent sexuality of Sefi Atta's novel *A Bit of Difference*. This research focuses on the state of forging sexual orientations out of societal norms.

Over View of Upcoming Chapters

This research is divided into the following sections. The first chapter examines the historical context of African writing in English, as well as the usage of new subjects by the third generation of Nigerian writers, such as Sefi Atta's works. The second chapter of this research investigates at the psychological trauma that people with sexual orientation experience as a result of social expectations and standards. The third chapter closes with homosexuals in Nigeria being victimized, causing them to be embarrassed of their identity.

Ambivalent sexuality has been studied for years and scholars are still interested in investigating its outcomes in the African society, where it did not find a wide recognition due to the societal norms and religion. This subject is dealt in Africa mainly in Nigeria by the author Sefi Atta; that her writings is considered Postcolonial and takes feminism aspiration.

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1.1 Introduction

This chapter deals mainly with First, postcolonial literature, which starts from the colonization period until now; this literature Deals with the problems and effects of decolonization on the areas that was formerly under the European rule such as: Asia, Africa, India and other areas around the world. However; African Postcolonial literature is the interest of this investigation where famous writers such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe are considered the main figures of African postcolonial literature. They share the same experiences of being subjects of previous British colonial rule.

Second, the debate Between Ngugi and Achebe about using western languages such as “English” in African independent countries such as “Nigeria” where This debate highlights the role of Language in shaping one’s culture and restoring their identity and also by language you are addressing a certain audience. The emergence of the novel that was the major literary genre created a challenge between the writers and also was criticized by many who favored African traditional orality. Achebe’s most famous novel is *Things Fall Apart* was published two years before the independence of Nigeria.

There are women writers who had effective role in the decolonization process where they created their own language to free themselves from the double oppression of patriarchy and colonization. Nigerian female writers challenging the hegemony of the patriarchal societies by adopting feminist ideologies such Flora Nwapa, the first African woman novelist published in Britain, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Sefi Atta. “*A Bit of Difference*” is Atta’s novel that’s going to be discussed thoroughly in this chapter, from its major themes to the style of the author.

1.2 Postcolonial African Literature

Postcolonialism addresses many issues and become the center of interests in many fields; it has been defined by many scholars yet some of these definitions highlights the objective of this research. According to Depika Bahri, Associate Professor in the English department at Emory University, in her article Introduction to Postcolonial Studies (1996) Postcolonialism is considered as reaction against the colonial oppression on natives, yet, it deals with the effects of the colonizer on culture and society from the moment of colonization until now.

Colonization did not only tried to take control on the colonized countries and take advantage of them but also tried to obliterate character contours. M.H Abrams states postcolonialism as “the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourses that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France and other European imperial powers” (Cited in Samuel 2002); since postcolonial literature comes from the term postcolonialism the editors of *the empire writes back* declares that both, postcolonial literature and postcolonialism deal with the effects of colonization on literature. Example of the postcolonial literature that seeks independent identity is the postcolonial African literature; where political independence was not African writers’ only concern but also to retrieve their culture, traditions and language to be free from imperial cultural control.

1.2.1 The Language Debate

The most important thing in the decolonization process is language, where Africa’s two leading contemporary writers and thinkers Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Chinua Achebe disagreed on the importance of using Native language. Ngugi thinks that writers should use their native language (mother tongue) so the message would be clear and targets Africans

who can easily understand and relate. Thus the meaning would not be lost in translation to preserve the origin of the culture. Ngugi calls for using African languages after years of using English thinking that native language is a way to transmit not only feelings of loss but also to show your cultural belonging, identity and the real African traditions and tales. Ngugi explains how African identity and culture demolished because of the colonial education which imposed their language over the colonized native language to facilitate cultural control. In *Decolonizing the Mind 1986*, Ngugi wrote “the domination of a people’s language by languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized.” Ngugi and his fellows call for originality, losing the native language means losing the identity.

Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka were opposed to Ngugi’s thoughts and used the colonizer’s language to address the postcolonial experience which Ngugi found it misleading since their works rejects colonialism. Achebe views are different where he considers that English is a vehicle to transfer the African experience of colonization to the world. Achebe stated that

The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. (Quoted in Emenyon 82)

Achebe suggests for writers to use the language of the dominant, to be able to speak to a universal audience of very particular "peculiar" personal ethno-socio-cultural "experience." He aims to portray the reality of people who have been "conquered" via the language of "conquerors." As a result, Achebe alters the language's capability. He

aspires to broaden the scope of the language. It is no longer necessary for it to only speak for the powerful. It has the ability to speak on behalf of people who have been denied authority.

1.3 Postcolonial African English Literature

African literature is any work of literature written by an African, in Africa and about the African experience. Due to western education millions of African writers used English as a “medium of expression”, First African novel Written in English was by Ekra Agiman also known by Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*.(Encyclopedia). That states the conflict between African world and the English world. However, the late generation of African writers decided to broaden their writings to surpass that of the colonization, they wrote about worldwide themes such as sexuality.

To give English a local tone, Nigerian writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chinua Achebe and Sefi Atta, Africanized English by borrowing Nigerian words and phrases of everyday vocabulary; shortening English words and pidgin English which “is the result of the contact and convergence between African and English languages and cultures at the most rudimentary level” (Bamiro 16). In his work, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, Wole Soyinka gives an illustration of Pidgin English.

Chume, fool! O God, my life done spoil. My life done spoil finish. O God a no' get eyes for my head. Na lie. Na big lie. Na pretence 'e de pretend that wicked woman. She no go collect nutin! She no' mean to sleep for outside house. The prophet na' in lover. ... O god, wetin a do for you wey you go spoil my life so? Wetin make you vex for me so? I offend you? Chume, foolish man you life done spoil. Your life don

spoil yea, ye... (29)

1.3.1 African Women Literature

Many African female writers deal with women struggle under patriarchal society, such as domestic abuse, forced, unprotected sex by partner and lack of female education, furthermore, any roles constructed by society to limit women's independence. Mariama Ba the iconic Muslim, African novelist, and a feminist who was born in Senegal, she was awarded with a Noma Prize for writing on her novel "*So Long a Letter*", it has been, first, written in French than translated into many language. It also got a huge attention from critics of religion and marital institutions rules in oppressing women. Buchi Emecheta, a Nigerian Feminist writer her works focused on the politics of race, gender and sex taken from her personal experiences. Her novel "*In The Ditch*" tells the story of the struggles of a Nigerian woman to fit into a European community. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nigerian feminist writer she also concerned herself with the portrayal and experiences of African women, in her play "*For Love of Biafra*" she highlights the sufferance of an Igbo women (her own ethnic group). All this women promoted their lives and works for giving a voice to the experiences of women in order to raise their awareness and promote their rights.

1.3.2 Postcolonial women literature Main Issues

African female writers' aim was to write a way through liberty for African women who are double colonized; by colonizer and men habit of thought, the colonizers' reason for colonialism, according to Aimé Césaire in his book (*Discourse on Colonialism 1950*), was that their purpose was to civilize the world. Native women were exploited as a symbol of cultural subjugation by the colonizers. When Spivak said, "white men saving brown women from brown men" she was referring to British participation in India's Sati rite (1988) African

women writers found themselves challenging not only being represented as subject despite of the decline of imperial rule, but also challenging the prevailing assumption that white western middle class women are the norm.(Cited in Bahri 2016)

All of the female protagonists in African women's literature are oppressed in some way, limiting their freedom; they lack chances such as education, independence, and growth outside of the home. African women's writers demonstrate how women are portrayed as victims of societal backwardness and how African women are traditionally neglected. African women's writers demonstrate how women are portrayed as victims of societal backwardness and how African women are traditionally neglected.

They write of the narrowness of women's lives, restricted by male imposed parameters, and marginalisation, because of their gender, from significant positions in areas of national political and economic decision-making. They show how culturally constructed 'woman's space' constrains, binding the female to motherhood, the home, providing food, either through farming or the market-place, and working in a limited range of paid employment, including petty trading or prostitution to support the family, or simply themselves. (Wilson 1997)

Sefi Atta, like other African female writers like Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa, tries to transform the way African women are portrayed by making their characters independent and against the system of patriarchy while also rejecting moral norms and gender representation that limit women and men's self-development. *A Bit of Difference*, Atta shows the characters rejection to societal control and chose to settle in London away from social constraints in Nigeria.

Migration was also a major theme in African women's writings. Where leaving home is a means of surviving and escaping the nation's social, political, and economic problems. One of these reasons of migration that African writers discussed is the failure of post-independence nations to provide opportunity for individuals to establish programs that would better their living situations, especially unwelcomed gays who are forced to reinvent home from the Diaspora.

1.4 Sefi Atta's works

The Nigerian contemporary writer, Sefi Atta, earned the respect and praise of many Nigerian writers such as Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie for her works that won several literary awards including the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa in 2006, and the Noma Award for publishing in Africa. Atta published three novels- *Everything Good Will Come* (2004), *Swallow* (2010), *A Bit of Difference* (2012). That Saw big recognitions widely in the African continent, in the United Kingdom and in the United states. The status and roles of women in the Nigerian society is depicted in Atta's literature. The three novels portray the hereditary challenge to patriarchy and how African women fight for their own liberty from societal expectation of marriage and motherhood that are impressed from birth, Atta represents real life circumstances of the African women through her characters.

In *Everything Good Will Come*, Enitan who struggles following the cultural expectation that she was raised on; to marry, to become professional and to have children. Later when she faces misogyny inherent in the society, she decided to divorce her emotionally oppressive husband and raise her daughter far from any male privilege, she successfully resists patriarchal norms. "She also realizes that there is an opportunity to be free but that this would mean rejecting the traditional social values of Nigeria"(Collins2015) In

this novel, Enitan was able to see the men in her life believing themselves to be as Collins described, “omniscient deities”, it is here when she decided that the subaltern can speak.

1.5 A Bit of Difference

Sefi Atta’s novels are based on real life experiences that she witnessed or heard of as she studied and lived in Nigeria, England and United States. Atta writes about the Nigerian culture and tradition and how Patriarchal society can still be active despite the distance. With experiencing self development, in her three novels, Atta’s female characters were depicted powerful, Independent and rebellious.

A Bit of Difference partly set in London and Lagos, the main character, Deola Bello 32 Nigerian expatriate who works in London as a director of the Internal Audit Office at LINK, a nonprofit organization. The novel narrates the independent lifestyle of Deola Bello abroad over the expectation of society, she is already aware of the patriarchal society of her homeland and how the destiny of women is drawn since birth Deola is distanced from family and friends in London and also the pressure to get marry and “born a pikin” (Atta162) that she has so far evaded.

Atta depicts the courage of Deola for returning back home to Lagos for her father’s five year memorial service and staying according to her own rules not as she was expected of her so she stays in hotel instead of the family home to avoid getting pressured by her mother on marrying and having children. Deola gets pregnant from one night stand from someone she meets during her visit, Although she experiences fear and panic of contracting aids, dying, and pregnancy, Deola rejects societal imperatives and designs her life plan, she makes choices about her life, as well as her sex life, marriage, motherhood and professional life; She returns to Lagos to have a child, begin a relationship with the father, However she is hesitant

about being a wife although she has feelings for wale.

In his book “*Writing Contemporary Nigeria*, 2015” Collins explained that “Atta’s novel touches on the transgenerational progress of women so that they can thrive in Nigeria without having to give up any of their happiness because they learn to live on their own terms and reject society patriarchal expectations of motherhood and marriage while empowering themselves in the professional realm”

Atta’s characters portray the example of the African Diaspora, Where most characters who have found their freedom away from their native country decided to ignore the idea of returning back home. “*A Bit of Difference*” represents not only the pressure that Nigerian society puts on women but also negotiates the pressure that LGBT people face in Nigeria and their struggle of fitting in abroad. Part of the novel is a true examination of the life of a Nigerian Homosexual expatriate in London, “Bandeleg” Deola’s manic depressive, author Friend from home, with extreme identity issues. “Bandeleg” found in London what he did not get in Nigeria, acceptance, the reason that made him abandon his country and has feelings of shame towards his country “Nigeria is not my home” (Atta 52)

Atta’s aim was to reflect the struggle of transculturalism which is spotted in many of her characters. In the novel, Bandele is more English than Nigerian, he was in an old fashioned school in England called Harrow. He is a homosexual who is afraid of his family's reaction if he comes out. Since homosexuality is strongly prosecuted in Nigeria, almost no one dares to be openly homosexual. Atta exemplifies the diasporic nature of Nigerians: even though they don't feel Nigerian, their transculturalism binds them to Nigerian ideology.

According to Atta, diasporic Nigerians will never be completely free of African cultural standards, and their home nations' social expectations will accompany them

anywhere. In order to attain self-fulfillment, the main character Deola has managed two nations' societal expectations she even welcomed her friend "Bande" sexual identity where in the context of African fiction and in real life. Sexuality is ignored, marginalized, and inappropriate which makes Atta's works bold in challenging the existing discourse in novel ways.

1.5.1 Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference* Main Themes

Sefi Atta as Nigerian English writer, in her writing, she spent a lot of time researching modern Nigerian culture and tradition. Her work provides new insights on modern topics of African literature, from overcoming obstacles such as patriarchal normative norms to delving into diasporic perspectives through themes such as Patriarchy, Hybridity, Culture Clash, Alienation, Colonization, Globalization, Sexuality, Gender, Trauma, Language Loss and exile.

1.5.1.1 Sexuality

The word "sexuality" is often misunderstood and associated with the physical act of sex. Oliver Phillips states that sexuality "can be described by referring to a broad variety of bodily actions and physical behaviors," but he goes on to say that sexuality often encompasses the unpredictable, ambiguous "emotional manifestations of passion, affection, and desire" (285, as cited in Mtenje 2016)

Sexuality in Africa is socially constructed space and identity that is renegotiated in response to normative expectations regarding human sexual behavior on a regular basis. Africa, which criminalizes alternative sexualities and whose conservative figures have consistently vilified alternative sexual orientations and activities as "un-African" in public, writers also were punished if ever wrote about sexual orientation "They criminalize

homosexuality via homophobic laws, mark as deviant even those suspected of being homosexual and, in some instances, censor and threaten to imprison writers who tackle subject matters that are considered Transgressive” (Mtenje 2016)

Focusing on 21st century Nigerian writings or what is called third generation texts because Nigeria serves as a convenient yardstick by which the rest of the continent can be measured. Anti-gay law and propaganda are on the rise in most of Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa, and bigotry and numerous literary reactions to it are on the rise in Nigeria and that is what Raymond Williams, in his essay “*Dominant, Residual, Emergent*” refers to as "emergent," because it challenges existing discourses in new ways. In this sense, a sizable number of novels and short stories from across Europe today feature gay characters or same-sex impulses. Examining the body of literature created in Nigeria, a nation with some of the continent's most strict anti-gay legislation as well as some of the continent's most well known literary voices such as Soyinka, Sefi Atta and Chimamanda Adichie, sheds light on how the literary world critiques homophobic discourses and investigates the daily worries, wishes, pleasures, and anxieties of those who encounter same-sex attraction. (Simms, 2016)

1.5.1.2 Identity Crisis

In terms of language, culture, and education, post-colonial countries remain under Western influence. These nations enjoy following the westerns by embracing their ways of life, particularly when their citizens travel to western countries, and they face numerous challenges in this process of assimilation. One of them is identity crisis, which is caused by cultural clashes. Identity is a multifaceted concept. It is a person's conception and presentation of their individuality or social affiliations such as national identity and cultural identity. In psychology and sociology Identity may be described as a distinguishing feature of a person or as a trait shared by all members of a social category or community. (Tiwari 2013)

Identity crisis was invented by theorist Erik Erikson, who thought it was one of the most significant conflicts people experience in development. An identity crisis, according to Erikson (1970), is a period of intense analysis and experimentation of various ways of looking at oneself. Migrants are confronted with this issue when living in a foreign country due to cultural and religious differences. In *A Bit of Difference*, Bandele comes to England, for obtaining a high-quality college since moving in he sets out to dismantle his native identity in order to become a British citizen. He adopts all of their ways of living, acting and behaving in a Western manner. “He sounded completely English and all she knew about Nigerians who spoke that way was that they looked down on Nigerians who didn’t” (Atta 45) Deola said about Bandele. Even his perceptions of his own native origin and history have changed.

- “...writes the same postcolonial crap the rest of them write, and not very well, I might add.
- Deola laughs. “Isn’t our entire existence as Africans postcolonial?”
- “They should give it a rest, the whole lot of them. Africa should be called the Sob Continent the way they carry on. It’s all gloom and doom from them, and the women are worse, all that false angst” (Atta 48)

1.5. 1.3 Exile

Walter Mignolo in his book *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking* (2000) expands on the global scope of this wave in academic exile, stating that it includes an ever-increasing number of those who have been victims of persecution in their home countries and have been forced to flee, as well as those whose political, dissident position has forced them to consider alternate living arrangements. There's also a strange awareness of the trend of academic exile from the Third World,

especially former colonies, to the West. However, whether in a general or specific context, the initial joy of discovering new places to live is often dampened by the trials of exile. (72Cited in Olaoluwa, 2007)

Being homosexual in a homophobic country such as Nigeria, society is in itself an internal exile, the environment, the society of heterosexuals would not feel like home anymore. Open up would make you a stranger who has to explain himself all the time. Bandele also did not find acceptance to his sexual orientation in Nigeria but survived the pressure of heterosexual society. He decided to make England his home where he can live openly and without being persecuted for his sexual identity, since The Immigration Rules officially recognized same-sex marriages in 2000 according to Kingsley Napley the Immigration Law Blog.

1.5.2 The Style of the Author:

Despite not considering herself a feminist writer, Atta's story is heavily influenced by feminist ideas, especially Nigerian Feminism, which is less radical than its Western counterpart and prefers a non-violent approach to conform to Nigerian reality. The didactic aftertaste of Nigerian feminist novels persists. (Reyes 2017)

Though characterization is one of Atta's strongest points as a writer, in the way that each character, minor or major, is blessed with a tale and a characteristic that lasts throughout the narration, the progression of the novels by "anecdotes, flashbacks, side comments and observations" that means according to The Guardian "as the flashbacks and characters pile up, it becomes hard work to keep track of them all" (2014). Atta continues to stick to this narrative format because it encourages her to be more creative. As a result, Atta interweaves common people's stories with daily events in order to affirm the reality of the fictional

characters through accurate representations of contemporary Nigerian culture overwhelmed by political unrest. The writer's narrative choice helps to emphasize the very different ways in which “Nigerian society and culture have been distorted by the negative impacts of neo-colonialism and globalization” (Collins 2015, as cited in Nwokocha, 2019).

Sefi Atta has a bold narrative voice, she is not afraid to tackle difficult subjects. In her novel *A Bit of Difference*, Atta tackled homosexuality as a topic which challenges the stereotypical and preconceived notion of African sexuality as Homogeneous body. Homosexuality is regarded as a western impact on Africa “non African”. Marc Epprechet in his Review of “*Recent Trends*” explains the increase of African authors writing about none normative sexualities in order to prove that “not consistently and dogmatically homophobic or heterosexist” in their texts. (As cited in Mtenje 95) This entails treating homosexuals with the integrity that is always absent in most African nation-states' politically homophobic discourse, as well as questioning the status quo of homosexuality as un-African. (Mtenje 96)

1.6 Conclusion

Postcolonial Nigerian English Female writings reveal the social and political problems of the newly independent Nigeria. Women used literature to examine and portray domestic spheres such as sexism and sexuality, criticizing binary representations of women, representations of non-normative or homosexual sexualities, economic crises, and national disintegration. They agreed to address Nigeria's urgent social and political challenges. Women's writings from the third generation, especially those from the Diaspora, demonstrate that identification is not granted, and women's commitment to negotiate postcolonial truth is unstoppable. The third generation of Nigerian authors, like Sefi Atta, introduced new issues to African literature, such as sexual orientation, which were formerly taboo and still are in some African nations. Atta's characters are a depiction of the real world

where homosexuals are being oppressed by anti LGBT laws, families and society. These individuals suffer several mental health issues because of the rejection, pressure, and discrimination.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Debate, Ambivalent Sexuality

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2.1 Introduction:

Postcolonial literature and societies in general are affected by the colonizer's culture, where it is seen that many Nigerian works were in English or French languages. The essence of subjects post colonialism is depicted in postcolonial literature as a continuous quest for identification; However, cohort writers often called "third generation" in Nigeria emerged and began to discuss recent themes that were Prohibited, Taboo before in the African literature. Writers like Chimamanda Adichie, Helon Habila, and Sefi Atta and other Nigerian strong voices who felt compelled to speak against criminalized homosexuality.

Sefi Atta in "*A Bit of Difference*" portrays the psychological condition of a Homosexual Nigerian man in London, where he doesn't feel completely free of social constraints. This chapter will demonstrate the effects of having an Ambivalent Sexuality - poor mental health, low well being and other feelings of shame and being out of place.

2.2 Gender:

Gender has become controversial in modern literary criticism. It has been dissected and analyzed by a number of theorists and critics, such as Judith Butler and Judith Lorber, evoking debate on gender has become customary faith for these scholars to study the impact of gender in the social and psychological development of individuals. Individuals have been, in the course of their lives, interacting with either the same or the opposite gender; these interactions pave the way for the emergence of usual and customary ways of doing gender. "Gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life, yet Gender like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly "doing gender" " (quoted in Lorber 203)

Judith Butler's Gender Preformative Theory explains that Gender is a socially

constructed concept, it is not the product of sex nor does it seem to be as predetermined as sex, it is created by performance. Repeated actions teach people how to perform gender. They naturalize their gender success by doing so over and over again. She claimed to be biologically built rather than culturally or socially constructed until their gender performance is naturalized, when she said:

“Because there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. The tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of its own production. The authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the construction compels one’s belief in its necessity and naturalness.” (522)

Thinking and behaving as females and males is not by biology but rather is a result of how society expects the individual to think and behave based on his/her sex. (Butler 1990) women were expected to be emotional, take care of the home and kids, and men were expected to be aggressive, self confident, and take care of finances, even occupations such as teaching is expected to be for women and engineering is men’s job.

The Social Construction of Gender Theory is explained as “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” Simone de Beauvoir's formulation, separates sex from gender and argues that gender is a progressively developed feature of personality, it is not a biological aspect (Butler 1990).

Norms and perceptions form emotions, impulses, and behaviors. People of various genders work in a variety of professions, and these occupations affect women's and men's experiences, which result in different emotions, relationships, and abilities. The feminine and masculine are two different forms of being. Each side is defined by what the other is not. Butler explains that by naming, dressing and other gender markers, a sex category becomes a gender status. Transgender people are people that associate with a role that is distinct from their biological sex (for example, they were born with male sex characteristics, were assigned male at birth, and treated as so as a child, but now identify as a female, woman, or someone else entirely) and this is called "Gender Identity" (Lorber 113)

Butler explained that the verb "become" seems to have a consequential uncertainty for Simone de Beauvoir. Sex is not only a cultural concept imposed on sexuality, but it is also a form of self-construction in certain ways. To become a woman is a series of intentional and appropriative actions, the learning of ability, or a 'project,' in Sartrian words, to assume a certain corporeal style and meaning. When the word 'become' is described as 'purposefully presume or emulate,' Simone de Beauvoir seems to be advocating for a voluntaristic view of gender. What do people think of gender as a societal construction if genders are, in certain ways, chosen? Nowadays, it is common to think of gender as being passively defined, as if it were created by a personified form of patriarchy or phallogocentric vocabulary that comes before and defines the subject. (Butler2019)

Recently gender has been recognized as the social construct that it is and many other genders have appeared, people who fall outside of the binary have been termed gender queer the term emerged in the 1990s and is defined as "any type of trans identity that is not always male or female. It is [also] where people feel they are a mixture of male and female" (Monro13). Gender queer engulfs diverse identities that share dis-identification with rigid

binaries. while “non binary” a more modern, commonly used term today is defined as "an umbrella term that includes those whose identity falls outside of or between male and female identities; as a person who can experience both male and female, at different times, or someone who does not experience or want to have a gender identity at all" (Matsuno & Budge 2017)

2.3 Sex:

In the absence of surgical intervention (surgery or hormone therapy), sex is unchangeable and fixed. It corresponds to a collection of biological characteristics. It is defined by Physical and biochemical characteristics such as Female and male genes; Males have one X chromosome and one Y chromosome, while females have two X chromosomes, This basic genetic variation gives rise to other biological variations such as hormones (testosterone and estrogen), and reproductive organs (testes and ovaries). Primary sex characteristics are the genitalia, and secondary sex characteristics are the variations that occur during puberty that are caused by hormonal differences between the sexes.

However the XX and XY that is commonly known in not the only genetic variation of sex, sex is just as diverse as gender and other combinations include XXY, XYY, XXX... some variations may cause developmental problems such as the 45,X also known as turner syndrome. Some of these variations can also lead to ambiguous or undefined sexual features leading to the presence of intersex people.

"Intersex" is a word that refers to a number of situations in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't match the traditional meanings of female or male. (Mikkola2017) Many infants who are born intersex are forcibly assigned to either a boy or a female and even surgically “corrected” to match a single gender when our world relies

on a binary basis when it comes to gender.

Intersex can be divided into 4 categories

- 46, XX INTERSEX: The person has the chromosomes of a woman, the ovaries of a woman, but external (outside) genitals that appear male

- 46, XY INTERSEX: The person has the chromosomes of a man, but the external genitals are incompletely formed, ambiguous, or clearly female

- TRUE GONADAL INTERSEX: The person must have both ovarian and testicular tissue (hermaphroditism)

- COMPLEX OR UNDETERMINED INTERSEX DISORDERS OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT: Many chromosome configurations other than simple 46, XX or 46, XY can result in disorders of sex development. (Intersex: MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia 2015)

2.4 Sexuality:

Since its emergence as a field of research in the latter half of the nineteenth century, sexuality has been defined by many critics and scholars; Lorraine Code argues that “Sexuality is a complex and contested domain. It became central to western understandings of human identity with the birth of scientific sexology just over a hundred years ago, as doctors and policy makers began to usurp the role of the Church in the social regulation of bodily pleasures and reproductive practices. (Code 442) According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) the term “sexuality”, first entered the English language in 1879, in its contemporary meaning of “possession of sexual powers, or capability of sexual feelings”.

Sexuality is often thought of as a natural force driven by biological drives, and as a "private" experience by scholars such as Jackson when he explained that 'To think of sexuality in terms of drives is to see it as something we are impelled towards by inner urges beyond our control and beyond the reach of social forces ... and to imply that sexuality is unchanging and unchangeable. (Cited in Lynch 89)

Sexuality theories have largely been based on an essentialist perspective, shifting from a conception of sexuality as the manifestation of natural biological desires to a conception of sexuality as an identity; sexuality came to be treated as a type of identity, such as homosexual or heterosexual. When it comes to theorizing regarding identity and sexual identity, psychology has been especially influenced by an essentialist ontological and epistemological approach. In accordance with Freud's libido hypothesis, the prevalent psychological assumption was to emphasize the hormonal and intrapsychic determinants of sexuality at first.

Theorizing sexual orientation as an innate, primary component of identity primarily determined by cultural rather than biological internal factors but nevertheless regarded as equally fixed, subsequent approaches adopted an identity paradigm. This way, the same biologically deterministic construction of sex/gender described in the previous section has had far-reaching and long lasting consequences on how identity has been built in social science studies. The view that sexuality is an intrinsic property of a person that is independent of social or historical context that has characterized most thought around sexuality and sexual orientation can be defined as the view that sexuality is an underlying nature that exists in individuals that has characterized most thinking around sexuality and sexual orientation. (Weeks, 1987; Rubin, 1984; Stein, 1992 Cited in Lynch 2012)

Gayle Rubin, in his essay "*The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy'*"

of Sex” (1975), addressed the cultural variety of sexuality in her conceptualization of sex/gender systems in the following way:

The needs of sexuality and procreation must be satisfied as much as the need to eat, and one of the most obvious deductions which can be made from the data of anthropology is that these needs are hardly ever satisfied in any ‘natural’ form, any more than are the needs for food. Hunger is hunger, but what counts as food is culturally determined and obtained.... Sex is sex, but what counts as sex is equally culturally determined and obtained. (165)

Within this context, in this view, people are considered as having certain indisputable characteristics (hormonal, genetic, psychological and so forth) that identify them as belonging to the “corresponding” category (Epstein, 1998; Stein, 1992). Weeks describes this as the belief that by describing our sexuality or sexual orientation, we are relating something about our “true essence of being, our real selves” (Cited in Lynch 31)

2.4.1 Psychological Trauma:

In daily life, people are exposed to stressful experiences that exceeds their coping abilities on a regular basis which leave them with lingering negative thoughts, flashbacks, and anxiety , also developing a feeling of hopelessness, its effect varies depending on the individual's particular life conditions, climate, and resilience.

Trauma is described by the American Psychological Association (APA) as “an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster.” Trauma can be defined according to the survivor’s experience. the effects of the traumatic experiences that the survivor witnessed or experienced in his life differs, whether it be a single incident

like natural disasters , crimes, Loss, or a series of incidents, such as neglect, child abuse, or battering relationships. To put it another way, not everyone who witnesses a potentially stressful incident would become mentally traumatized. However, after being subjected to a significant stressful event, certain individuals will experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). (Herman 33)

PTSD is upsetting and has a negative impact on a person's everyday life and relationships. It progresses when the effects of trauma linger or worsen weeks or months following the traumatic incident. Shock and denial are common reactions right after a traumatic event. Unpredictable thoughts, nightmares, tense relationships, and even physical effects like headaches or nausea are all long-term responses. Although these emotions are common, some people find it impossible to go on with their lives. Psychologists may assist these people in developing healthy coping mechanisms for their feelings. The horrific experience that precipitated the crisis causes the individual's confidence in a just and fair world to be shattered. The individual's sense of control, attachment, and purpose is damaged by the incident or circumstance (Herman 36)

The individual's mind reacts to the trauma in the same way as the body reacts to pain. The subconscious will make an effort to achieve homeostasis. Psychological trauma is a state of extreme pain that causes a disruption of the healthy state, resulting in psychological disequilibrium. The individual's normal coping skills fail to react to the psychological trauma, resulting in psychological disequilibrium. The person will experience severe distress as a result of this reaction, as well as functional disability.

According to Jon Allen, a psychologist at the Menninger Clinic in Houston, Texas, and author of *Coping with Trauma: A Guide to Self-Understanding* (1995), a traumatic experience has two parts subjective and objective: "It is the subjective experience of the

objective events that constitutes the trauma...The more you believe you are endangered, the more traumatized you will be...Psychologically, the bottom line of trauma is overwhelming emotion and a feeling of utter helplessness. There may or may not be bodily injury, but psychological trauma is coupled with physiological upheaval that plays a leading role in the long-range effects” (14).

Trauma has no age, gender, social class, ethnicity origin, geographic location, or sexual orientation constraints. However, many scholars argued that LGBT people are more likely than heterosexuals to suffer from mood, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse disorders. (Alessi et al, 2013). Because of a toxic social climate that promotes bigotry and heterosexism, LGBT people experience persistent social tension which reflects specific risk factors such as social alienation, bigotry, and victimization, and they can partake in harmful habits such as heavy alcohol and substance use and unhealthy sexual conduct, both of which have negative psychological and physical health consequences. In his article “Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Population” Meyer stated that “this excess exposure to stress leads to an excess prevalence of psychiatric disorders among LGBTs compared with heterosexual individuals” (2003)

2.4.2 Ambivalent sexuality:

In antiquity, ambivalent sexuality was both fundamentally disturbing to social order and profoundly appealing, especially in a society where gender roles seemed so central. Referring to the conflict between what is deemed normal and promoted and what is prohibited and denied within human sexuality, sex and gender. Ambivalent sexuality can be manifested in those who are insecure about their sexuality and how it doesn't fit the frame that society has constructed for them.

In a society that promotes heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of sexual expression; ambivalent sexuality rises within those who do not fit societal norms. Heterosexuality is fed to them daily, directly and indirectly through various forms. While their instincts point them in a different direction creating an internal conflict of whom they are versus who they are supposed to be, putting them in a bad psychological state.

Societal norms born from tradition and religious beliefs, it formed an obstacle between these individuals and their society and becomes a reason for them to feel like an outcast and lose their sense of belonging. Many homosexuals, transgender and other non conforming individuals to the heterosexual framework that rules over their traditional society choose to leave their country in an attempt to survive, find themselves, and lead better lives. These individuals seek acceptance and or at least neutrality and carelessness towards who they are and how they want to live. However, leaving a society that is unaccepting and cruel does not end the suffering of these individuals as the rejection they have faced whole life will continue to live inside them and the years they lived has an outcast amidst hate have become a part of who they are and how they act, their personality have formed around and within those unfortunate circumstances.

Although it is true that one cannot heal in the environment that broke it, leaving said environment does always guarantee healing. These individuals are likely to struggle with various forms of psychological issues from post traumatic stress disorder to self hate, depression, suicidal tendencies, and self rejection. A feeling they have to battle through and survive either by turning inward and becoming narcissistic and self absorbed, because They have realized they are the only person they have, and the only person who will be there for them, and out of spite for society they choose themselves over all and everyone, and those who are kind and supportive of them become collateral damage, because once survival mode

is on they cannot risk turning it off for a passing gesture of kindness or love or the second way of coping with the global rejection of their identity, is by hating themselves and wishing away their existing.

Those with ambivalent sexuality live with depression and anxiety and suffer tremendously because of their inability to live in a society where they do not feel safe and welcomed. Every day is a battle with both themselves and others, either self absorbed or depressed and anxious. In both cases post traumatic stress disorder is present, for these people every encounter they have with outside world is possibly traumatic, from being rejected by their family to possibly being hate crimed by their relatives or strangers in the streets. This mental health condition (PTSD) comes as a result of these terrifying events and manifests itself through severe anxiety, negative thought patterns and uncontrollable flashbacks to the event. It can last months, years, or even lifetime if left untreated and it reshapes their mind and soul effecting their actions, reactions, thoughts, and outlook on life, it destroys relationships and leaves them with difficulty trusting, sleeping or concentrating, feelings of guilt and shame takeover and an emotional numbness replaces the beautiful person they once were.

Following the prohibition of homosexuality on a national scale, which had come from German unification, the first movement for the rights of sexual minorities in the world arose in Germany at the end of the 19th century. By 1902, there were splits within the movement over this issue, with Magnus Hirschfeld maintaining the third sex model and Benedict Friedländer arguing that homosexuality was the greatest, most perfect evolutionary stage of gender difference, with the male gay "inverted type" representing hyper-virility and possessing higher leadership and heroism abilities than heterosexual males (Sedgwick 1990 cited in Mottier 2012). The argument that heterosexuality, homosexuality, lesbianism, and

even sexuality were developed in the nineteenth century does not imply that the concepts were coined during that time period. More essentially, it implies that the three basic aspects linked with the conceptual machinery of sexuality, in particular the notion of "natural" sexual impulse, the claimed biological foundation for gender distinctions, and the notion of sexual identity, substantially impact how individuals – notably in the West – feel and make sense of their sexualities and identities in modernity. (Cited in Mottier 2012)

The biological paradigm of sexuality viewed homosexuals as deviant people who needed to be cured, rather than as sinners or criminals. Despite the fact that certain sexologists, such as the British scholar Ellis Havelock, considered homosexuality as inborn but not an illness, much of sexual science has been focused with problematizing and exploring these "marginal" sexualities, as well as considering ways to "fix" the disorders through treatment. Until 1973, the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual recognized homosexuality as a mental disease, as did the World Health Organization. After gay rights activists and opposing psychiatrists claimed that the problem was homophobia rather than homosexuality, similar psychiatric classifications were banned in the United Kingdom in 1994. (Mottier 2012)

2.5 Conclusion:

Theories of sex, gender, and sexuality as intrinsic essences have been employed to propose several sexual "types" Homosexuals, heterosexuals, bisexuals and other categories. Sexuality, gender, and sex are all intertwined. Typical views about masculinity and femininity, or "proper" ways for men and women to act, have shaped societal meanings surrounding sexuality. The natural sexual behavior included only Heterosexual desires and acts and was considered the norm, any other sexual category that does not fit to societal expectation were considered to be abnormal. Since Homosexuality is considered as a

violation of the norm (cultural heritage), many individuals with sexual orientation faced rejection and discrimination from their families and countries. Many countries established anti LGBT Laws, Despite the fact that the rules are rarely enforced, they have serious implications for LGBT persons. These individuals are likely to struggle several forms of psychological issues from self hate, depression to alienation, where most LGBT people chose to take other European countries that welcome their sexual identity as a home.

**Chapter Three: *A Bit of Difference*, Victimizing
the Other**

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3.1 Introduction

A Bit of Difference depicts not only the real life of Nigerian expatriate in London but also shows the struggle of Nigerian homosexuals in Nigeria and London. Sefi Atta added a twist to the Nigerian novel by using homosexuality as a topic to examine society's rejection of them, which caused them to battle with mental health difficulties. Atta focuses on homosexuals being a victim of societal pressure that results not only abandoning their countries and families but also develop feeling of hate towards them. Men and women are both victims of societal expectations and leaving to a western country to live free is the solution for most third world countries. However, Atta as also a Nigerian expatriate that lived and studied in a different countries, put alienation and victimization as major traumatic issues that even a successful individual suffers from.

A Bit of Difference is a novel that discusses the cultural norms that are born with every Nigerian women and men. Not only does Atta break new ground in the African novel by portraying male characters as weak, dependent, and in opposition to societal norms. In addition, Atta portrays a gay character who is depressed as a result of his own ambivalent sexuality. At the same time, feel superior for dismissing Nigerian culture and loving British culture.

3.2 Characterization

Sefi Atta's characters depicted differently regarding the use of power and their action. Unlike her close friend Bandele, Atta portrays Deola, the female protagonist, as powerful and independent. Bandele in the other hand was recognized as Seyi's brother, who attends an old fashioned school called Harrow, hangs out with expats in Nigeria, and talks fancy English that appears to be an attempt for him to fit in some place other than with his brother's Nigerian set. Deola when first met Bandele had the impression that he is a show off "He sounded completely English and all she knew about Nigerians who spoke that way was that they

looked down on Nigerians who didn't" (Atta 45). Bandele was suffering a mental health issues because he is ashamed of his sexual identity, he suffered depression because he had to live with a secret for years. Deola noticed that his English made him effeminate and by his gestures everyone was making discriminatory remarks. She thought of it as the effects of living in London. His colleagues called him "the bobo who went mad because he couldn't accept the fact that he was black" (Atta 55). In the novel, Bandele was behaving badly toward his friend, family, and even his boss because he feared people's treatment, so he gets defensive. Bandele is a weak character; he is not self-sufficient; his father intended him to go to Cambridge like him, but he dropped out to write his novel "His father never mentioned the novel, as if doing so might prove Bandele right" (Atta 55). He insulted his family to break their connection since he couldn't endure the burden of being the son who brought shame to his family. In addition to being gay, he is also a "snob." Bandele considers himself superior to other Nigerians and looks down on them, he did not find acceptance in Nigeria he was not safe there. He considers London to be his home because it accepted him, and he never considers returning to Nigeria, where he told Deola, "Nigeria is not my home." (Atta 52)

Bandele's hatred toward Nigerians stems from their archaic mindset and for considering homosexuality to be a "heinous crime," Bandele despises the fact that gays in Nigeria are stigmatized and punished, and that the majority of them would hide their sexual identities by marrying and having children. Nigeria not only reminds him of his origins, but it also makes him embarrassed of them. He was well aware that though Nigerians living overseas may appear modern and educated, they do not view gays as natural human beings.

He speaks English language which made look down on Nigerians who do not. His feeling of inferiority in his hometown led him to believe that his education in England and his pedigree had given him an advantage in life. "Everyone is a yob to him" (Atta 51) He considers Nigerians to be ignorant, especially if they do not speak English; he mocks and

ridicules them, despite the fact that they are his colleagues in writing. Bandele who feels privileged professionally look down on other African writers. He believes he is the one who should win the African Writers Prize, and he becomes enraged when he does not. What enraged him even more was the fact that the writer who won his work discussed the neo-Nazi assassination of a Nigerian author. Bandele mocked the writer's speech "He gives his thank-you speech: "I yam vary grateful, I yam vary humbled.' I could puke at this" (Atta 181) Thinking that they patronized the writer.

Throughout the novel, Atta illustrates the male character Bandele, as dependent who has never worked. "He lives in Pimlico and the city pays for his rent and upkeep." (Atta 210) Bandele Davis grandiosity keeps on showing in the novel. He keeps on acting like England owe him something. "which he might describe as aristocratic English because his grandfather was knighted by the Queen" who turned his back on Nigeria, "Sir Cecil Adeyemi Davis, who opposed the movement on the grounds that Nigeria was not mature enough for self-governance, thereby earning himself a knighthood."(Atta 153) This reveals how colonialism's impacts on the Nigerian people's mentality are far-reaching. Bandele struggled to conceptualize and construct something really African (his works) because of his strong inferiority mentality, which he formed as a result of cultural erasure.

Bandele also abandons what he is unable to complete. He left Nigeria because he couldn't fight for his right; he pushed his family away because he couldn't come out to them because he was afraid of their reaction; he was afraid of losing his life. For years, he successfully kept his Nigerian friend out of his life, never discussing a topic with her in which he was the subject "He does this, changes the conversation whenever he is the subject"(Atta 221) he is embarrassed of himself; he believes it is ok to display his sexuality in front of a westerns but not in front of a Nigerians since they would not understand, Atta explained this as "that Nigerians sometimes trust foreigners more than they trust each other"(Atta 169)

Bandeled continued to write novels because he didn't want to feel useless, not because he enjoyed his profession. "I just don't want to feel so worthless anymore." (Atta 53)

Deola said "I can't live up to their expectations. Why should they live up to mine?" (Atta 224) except that Bandeled cares of what other's expectation and what would they say about his sexual orientation even though he left Nigeria and keeps dissociated with Nigerians in London. "Knowing what the natives are like?"(Atta 222) his anxious and scared of Nigerian judgmental opinions on him what made him act all masculine and cruel so that his sexuality wouldn't be questioned. He is a complex multidimensional character that has many conscious reasons why he act the way he does. Some reasons maybe the misogyny ingrained in him by society, him being gay but a man first and therefore feeling a sense of superiority and being a judge over his friend Deola when he referred to her as "Damaged goods" (Atta 221) because she is pregnant from one night stand.

His aggression is of teenager who is mad at the world. Bandeled's fear for being exposed and judged for his identity makes him rushes to be the aggressor to avoid being the victim of aggression; if he only manages to keep Nigerians down and degrading them he would be safe. However, sometimes Bandeled shows he is supportive and caring to Deola when he worries about her; if ever she looks down on herself and to not settle for less because he once was in her shoe. "You're selling yourself short. You're always selling yourself short. Stop selling yourself short. Of course they would employ you. Of course they would. With your background" (Atta 50) He's especially concerned about her relationship with a Nigerian man, having lost faith in Nigerians. He adds "I'm serious. He'd better be nice to you. That's all I'm saying. I don't know what he's like, but if he's anything like the others, then don't do that to yourself."(Atta 270) When it comes to his writings and relationships, Bandeled is extremely guarded and careful. He only wanted to ensure that his sexual identity remained hidden. Deola thinks that he is acting grandiose "she can't tell Bandeled's natural grandiosity

from the symptoms of his illness. He has since learned to live with the black people in his council estate” (Atta 55)

3.3 Transgressive Lines

Sefi Atta as she belongs to Nigerian Diaspora, in England has been overloaded with feminist thoughts. Thanks to the effects of westernization and tolerance. Sefi Atta, though her works criticize the way her native society exclude individuals with different sexual orientation in this fame and according to what has been revealed through the examination of her work “*A Bit of Difference*” homosexual characters intend to perceive themselves as strangers in their homeland and in the same time feel accepted abroad (England).

Because of his differences, Bandele fled his homeland to separate himself from mainstream heterosexual society and culture. The realization that he is different is swiftly followed by the awareness that his difference is bad, humiliating, and should not be mentioned aloud. He decided to distance himself from his home friends and family because his ambivalent sexuality is deemed a crime, sin, and psychiatric disorder in his home nation (Nigeria). Bandele chose England as his home because it provided him with a level of freedom and safety that he could not find in Nigeria “Nigeria is not my home” (Atta 52)

Bandele pushed his family away from him first by disappointing his father who intended him to go to Cambridge like him, but he dropped out to write his novel “His father never mentioned the novel, as if doing so might prove Bandele right” (Atta 55). Then by assaulting and humiliating them. Bandele despised Nigerians and avoided associating with them at all costs. He referred to Nigerian gatherings as "Black things" (Atta 49) and his explanations included that they aren't hard workers and are stuck in the past, but he was scared around them, fearful that they would expose his secret “black people scared him” (Atta 49). Bandele opted not to expose his identify to the one person remaining around him despite his cruel treatment to her (Deola) since she is also Nigerian. He argues that Nigerians do not

comprehend how it feels to go against the grain, despite the fact that Deola has experienced the same thing. They are both enslaved by the greatest kind of power, namely norms. Deola questioned why he kept his sexual identity a secret from her. He replied “You’re Nigerian” (Atta 220) he adds “I wasn’t taking any chances. Nigeria... It was such an emotionally brutal place to grow up in.” (Atta 220) He is obsessive about avoiding identifying as a Nigerian because he believes that being a Nigerian has degraded him. Deola thinks that “His snobbishness is exasperating. Everyone is a job to him” (Atta 51) Deola believed that “His English accent made him effeminate” (45Atta) but she did not believe he was homosexual since “He has a rude, boyish walk” (Atta 217) because he tried to hide his sexual identity by showing masculinity that he does not have. “He is spiteful in a way that most men are not” (Atta 217) Bandele, on the other hand, overstated his anger and defensiveness in a manner that most men do not.

Bandele uses writing as a kind of therapy, telling Deola that he writes books not to express himself, but to avoid feeling worthless as a result of his sexual identity's humiliation and persecution. “*sidestep*” was his first novel (49) and his second novel’s title is “*Foreign Capitals*” he explained that it is a love story deserves to be red “Two people. Just two people who are unsuitable for each other.” (181) Bandele was uninterested in postcolonial literature, believing that authors should go on and write about topics that are important to people, rather than postcolonial “crap.” He says “They certainly don’t want to hear from the likes of me, writing about trivialities like love.” (Atta 180) He felt ignored since his work was not regarded what Africans deemed racism and postcolonial. Bandele is furious because no other form can capture Africans' attention.

3.4 Victimizing the other

Victimization of homosexual people continues to be a widespread problem throughout Africa. Individuals suffer verbal and physical injuries as a result of acting in ways that violate

social standards. In her work "*A Bit of Difference*", Atta depicts Nigeria as a hostile environment for gays. In a heterosexist culture, being homosexual exposes homosexual people to minority stresses.

In the novel, Atta attempts to portray homosexuals in Nigeria who are likely to be victims of hate crimes through the character Bandele. Bandele's homosexuality forced him to depart his homeland in order to avoid mixing with Nigerians who made discriminatory remarks about gays because Men were expected to be rough and severe; otherwise they would be referred to as "bobo" (Atta 55) in Nigeria. He even refuses to identify himself as a Nigerian. Being a Nigerian caused him nothing but pain, humiliation and mental health problems. The only way to maintain his existence was to show masculinity that he lacks. He was forced to endure disgrace and agony without challenging his culture that considers him sinner.

Atta also sought to demonstrate the pandemic of violence that homosexuals in Nigeria face, including hate crimes, anti-LGBT laws, and even Sharia law practices. People fear what they do not understand and try to abolish it if possible. Being homosexual, especially of a poor economic status, is considered the worst thing you can do in a third-world country where ignorance and poverty abound. "she heard about a man up North who was sentenced to death by stoning under Sharia law and of course he was poor" (Atta 222) here Atta demonstrates how religion and social laws are not only sexist, but also hypocritical, because these homosexuals are easy targets for "a bunch of backward religious fanatics" (Atta 206) as Bandele described them. Demonstrating that class matters, Atta depicts Bandele's brother's ambivalence over whether his anger stems from the discovery that his brother is homosexual or from the fact that his brother is in love with a steward who works for their family; when she wrote

"I was with our steward in the boys' quarters. We were not doing

anything. He was laughing and I was laughing. You're surprised?
Well, there it is, a steward. He was nice. Nice to me. Seyi beat him up.
He wouldn't hit back. He just ran around trying to dodge Seyi, then
Seyi cornered him by the barbed-wire fence. His uniform got caught in
it. Seyi kept punching him. He ran away" (219)

Bandele believed that in order to continue living his life he had to keep his true identity a secret for years from his family and every Nigerian he knew "Wish it were so easy that all I have to do is pretend I'm not in love It's my bloody, secret I've held for years." (Atta 219) most gays in Nigeria were forced to not only hide their identities, but also to marry and have children. Being compelled to be and act in a way that is directly opposed to who you are makes these people feel ashamed and degraded. These individuals were victims of cultural norms and religious rulings that give rise to expectations for appropriate gender performances. In the novel, Sefi Atta tries to explain this by writing "In a way, ignorance helps. Nigerians are not overly concerned so long as gays have the decency to marry and have children" (222)

In Nigeria, Bandele's sexual orientation was embarrassing, aberrant, and rejected, leading him to loathe his cultural identity, resulting in not just identity conflicts but also mental health problems. His "brutal" experience in Nigeria left him depressed and enraged, with which he is now unable to cope. Bandele continues to see himself as useless in all he accomplishes, believing that his words are the only thing worth considering. Bandele's tragedy has made him protective in his writing and relationships; he sets boundaries for his friend to talk to, and he trusts no one with his secret, even if his Nigerian friend is more accepting of sexual orientation. Coming out in his environment, where being homosexual is not socially acceptable, might result in violence, rejection, and discrimination. He realizes that the Nigerian attitude against homosexuality would never change. People will always remember him as the one who didn't make it to be a man. Atta explained his frustration

saying that “even the most decadent and perverted Nigerians vilify them, while those who are more open-minded worry about their proliferation as if they were an infestation of mosquitoes” (Atta 106)

3.5 Traumatized feeling of shame

Sefi Atta makes it clear that growing up in an environment where heterosexuality is favored and expected may be a doubly isolating and unpleasant experience for Bandele. Gays are made aware of homophobia and heterosexism from an early age, and they begin to get obvious messages that being homosexual is not acceptable. These homosexual individuals are frequently left alone to carry their challenges and the pathologic sentiments associated with being homosexual in a hateful culture.

Bandele's feelings were a combination of rage and spitefulness. Except for those, he never displayed any other emotions. Emotions are feminized and degraded in African culture. This has led to a destructive need for protective denial and dissociation among homosexual men, hiding underlying shame and terrible feelings of loneliness. As a result, Bandele have been denied the psychological and social benefits of experiencing emotions. So he wouldn't experience the sense of otherness that homophobia and heterosexism instill in homosexual people. “For me it was having to endure all those false divisions” (Atta 221) Bandele felt forced to exhibit masculinity because he was ashamed of his deviant sexuality. Hiding his actual self caused him to construct a false identity, which caused him to experience great despair and melancholy, which ended in trauma.

The dread of rejection from Bandele's family and friends adds to the cultural stigma of homosexuality. He had to keep his true identity a secret from fear of being rejected and losing the respect of his family, especially because his father was well-known in Lagos. Post-traumatic stress disorder developed as a result of his long-term stress caused by prejudice and

the realization that he is different. He chose not to come out, live away from blacks, and develop a false identity. He got so traumatized that he changes any topic he is the subject in. when his friend asked why he didn't tell her he is gay, he was very mean and protective he even changed the subject and asked her why would she go home now that she "damaged goods" judging her for having a child from one night stand. His insult was in response to her reaction to the fact that he was gay. "The women in the novel were skinny blondes with AA-cup bras. They wore ballet flats and had names like Felicity and Camilla" (Atta 49) Bandele was desperate enough to write a novel about a heterosexual relationship in which he described women's bodies in order to live as the gender he was assigned at birth and then live his actual identity in secret.

Bandele's continued denial and discomfort with his own personality which overall harmed his health. He was afraid that if his family found out about his sexual orientation it will disown him, so Bandele wanted to stop his stress and beat them into it. He insulted and humiliated his family when he was hospitalized for depression and as soon as he got discharged his family left him. Bandele tried to make them believe he was mentally sick but still a man, as if being insane was fine compared to being homosexual who brought shame to the family "Now he was so lost that even Seyi was ashamed of him" (Atta 46). Bandele bears responsibility for his brother's death because the night Seyi found out that Bandele is gay he got drunk and had an accident that caused his death. Bandele keeps blaming himself for what happened, and fears of what will happen if his family also knows. "I think of that holiday though, all the time. My parents, my sisters and Seyi. I fucking killed him, you know" (Atta 219) this experience resulted severe pain, sadness, and hate for the Nigerian culture, people, and country that he would never call home because home was not necessarily a safe place for him.

Studying in Harrow (London) made Bandele admire the western culture. He develops a

colonial mentality thinking it would make him superior just like the whites. He changed his living place to Pimlico “He was in Brixton temporarily, but he threw a tantrum and demanded to be moved. He told his social worker he was only familiar with Belgravia and black people scared him” (Atta 49) his sexual orientation made him disgusted and angry with black people, their culture, and their language. Being Nigerian made it hard for him to be who he is because Nigerians wouldn’t comprehend that gays did not select this lifestyle. No one decides to suffer prejudice, stigma and cruelty. Bandele is a shamed of everything that is black, Nigerian, and of traditional mentality, he even see postcolonial literature is a pitiful chance to make black writers famous saying that “He writes the same postcolonial crap the rest of them write” (Atta 48) and he adds “They should give it a rest, the whole lot of them. Africa should be called the Sob Continent the way they carry on. It’s all gloom and doom from them” (Atta 49) He feels that if he were English rather than Nigerian, things would turn out differently, so he begins to act like one. It was a method of being English to show hatred towards black people, culture, and literature that degraded them. “That’s why I’ve never liked going to these black things....Black events. They always degenerate into pity parties.”(Atta 283) His belief that England is not a racist country leads him to interpret this phrase as a justification for non-whites not to work, “It’s just an excuse for the West Indian immies not to work,” he once said. “Class is everything over here.”(Atta 51) despite the fact that he is also not working and depending on government to pay his bills and house “the fact that he lives in Pimlico and the city pays for his rent and upkeep. Britain is great in a way, she thinks, but Bandele is not grateful. “Pimlico,” he often says with derision, as though he has fallen in status” (Atta 210)

Bandele, as a Black homosexual, faces more homophobic prejudice and hostility than white homosexuals, resulting in a low sense of self-esteem and self-worth. He suffered the conflict between being black and being homosexual. By denying his sexual orientation he suffered health problems associated with chronic stress and depression, he kept worrying

about other Nigerians he look down onto, to find out about his sexual orientation when he called them “who once called Nigerians a bunch of backward religious fanatics” (Atta 266) like it is more shameful to be judged by Nigerians.

3.6 Conclusion

Sefi Atta does not have a stereotypical representation as male and female. This shows that “*A Bit of Difference*” mirrors the complex representation of men and women in contemporary society. Demonstrating the fact that even homosexual men were victims of patriarchy in Nigeria. Atta depict the character Bandele as a victim of societal norms and western ideas that he kept on believing. He suffers serious mental health problems as result of society’s rejection, and feeling of shame. Atta shows the trauma and stigma that homosexuals experience in their homeland and abroad, where they are forced to keep their sexual identities a secret.

In “*A Bit of Difference*” Atta demonstrates a clear representation of the effects of colonialism on African people and even more on homosexual people. Bandele kept his true sexual identity hidden, which caused him to abandon his other identity and develop feelings of shame and hatred for his homeland, facilitating the development of a colonial mindset in which he felt superior to and looked down on his homeland.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The postcolonial African literature is the interest of many African writers who deals with effects of decolonization on natives. European languages were being used to serve African writer's goal in decolonization process. Many African female writers used their power of words against colonial oppression and male hegemony. The third generation of Nigerian writers where the most to use freedom of expression to deal with topics that ones where forbidden or shameful. English became the most commonly used language in Nigerian works, and Sefi Atta, a modern Nigerian writer, has tackled a variety of subjects that are relevant to the African community as a whole. From her own experience as a Nigerian who lived in European countries other than Nigeria, Atta helped to expand the Nigerian literature to include the influence of Nigerian society on expats abroad.

Atta's work reflects the complicated image of men and women in modern society. She shows a significant departure from conventional social activities or behaviors that do not fall within the categories of male and female participation. Atta attempts to draw the reader's attention to societal concerns that are ignored in African society by creating broken characters. In her work, *A Bit of Difference*, Sefi Atta enters to a direct conflict against African philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of the community above the individual.

Atta's depiction of a Nigerian fractured character that is gay is little bit of boldness in a homophobic country, where homosexuals experience a difficult time while living in Nigeria under anti-LGBT legislation and Sharia rules. That was generating sadness, self-loathing, and a sense of being an outsider in a place that was supposed to be home. Atta's research focuses on how one's geographic location influences one's personality, resulting in disparities in ideas and perceptions between individuals who live abroad and those who stay in Nigeria. Atta's character felt more at home in the British community, where he was accepted, than in the Nigerian community, where he was rejected.

With her unique approach of handling themes that were formerly taboo and embarrassing, Atta reinvigorated the Nigerian novel. She depicted the pressures of society and the complications of life for a Nigerian Homosexual, where cultural standards play a key influence in establishing gender roles. She focuses on addressing the difficulties and challenges that Nigerian society imposes on gays, resulting in alienation, mental health issues, and the breaking of family bonds. Because only heterosexual desires and behaviors were deemed natural sexual behavior, and any other sexual categorization that did not conform to cultural expectations was considered aberrant, Gays, according to Atta, are easy victims of society. Therefore their lives are in danger; they had to defend themselves by moving overseas, embracing masculinity, and concealing their sexual identities. Those who were unable to escape their homeland were forced to adopt a false identity, by marrying, and having children.

Through her male character Bandele, Atta portrays the theme of homosexuality in African societies. Homosexuality is considered a sin in his homeland. Homosexuals were bullied and exposed to various forms of violence and coming out to their family and friends caused them discomfort and stress due to the fear of rejection and discrimination. These people struggled with mental health issues as a result of their sexual ambivalence and the facts that their identities would not be embraced. Being a black homosexual is more likely than being a white gay to endure homophobic insults and shame, leading to feelings of worthlessness and numbness. Bandele was a victim of society standards even though he left Nigeria but he still traumatized of the previous experiences there. He became very defensive and rude as means to protect his secret identity that he even got his family out of his life so they will never know. He also blame himself for his brother's death, the night his brother knew about him he beat Bandele's lover and threatened to tell their father but he died that night in a car accident drunk. Bandele feels that his sexual identity is so humiliating that it

should not be spoken openly. He looks down on black people, particularly Nigerians, because of their culture, which marginalizes and rejects LGBT minority.

Gender identity is who you feel you are inside and how you express those feelings through how you act, talk, dress, etc. Why a person is gay is a mystery. However, studies demonstrate that biological influences that begin before birth are likely to influence sexual orientation. Although sexual orientation is normally established early in life, it is not uncommon for your desires to change over time. Part of the explanation is genetic, but because most identical twins of gay people are straight, heredity doesn't explain everything. The "fraternal birth order effect" is one of the most consistent environmental theories for homosexuality. In general, the older a man's brothers are, the more probable he is to be gay. For older or younger sisters, younger brothers, or even adoptive or stepbrothers, the impact does not exist. The explanation for this, according to Ray Blanchard, a psychiatry professor at the University of Toronto, might be that the mother's body starts an immune response on her unborn son's fetus. As the authors of the paper explain:

Male fetuses carry male-specific proteins on their Y chromosome, called H-Y antigens. Blanchard hypothesized that some of these antigens promote the development of heterosexual orientation in males ... Because these H-Y antigens are not present in the mother's body, they trigger the production of maternal antibodies. These antibodies bind to the H-Y antigens and prevent them from functioning. (Cited in Khazan 2016)

They state "Homosexual orientation does not grow in frequency with societal tolerance, but its manifestation (in behavior and open identity) may." This logic that a permissive culture fosters homosexuality has been used to justify anti-gay laws in Uganda,

Nigeria, and other places. These laws marginalize and disgrace LGBT individuals. They won't, however, be able to eliminate a sexual inclination that is universal, long-lasting, and totally natural, whether due to DNA, hormones, or antibodies. (Khazan 2016)

African homophobia is a vestige of colonialism; it is not an African production as many think of it. 32 countries that criminalize homosexuality are from Africa and more half of these are previous British colonies. Africa's leaders often claim that homosexuality is an imported western evil, like former Zimbabwean president "Robert Mugabe" who called homosexuality "un African". In fact it is quite the opposite. Homophobia is a vestige of colonial rule, and although people like to say that colonialists brought homosexuality to Africa, they are the ones who are actually introduced penal codes to outlaw gay sex in the continent. Prior to European colonization, traditional African societies had much more relaxed attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Igbo and Yoruba tribes that are found mostly in Nigeria did not view gender in binary terms. The Dagaaba people tribe in Ghana did not assign gender based on one's anatomy, but rather, the energy they presented. In fact, ancient Egyptians acknowledged a third gender, and many of their deities were androgynous. In the 16th century, the Imbangala people of Angola had "men in women's apparel, with whom they kept amongst their wives" mean while in the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, King Henry the eighth was criminalizing gay sex. In England, men were being sentenced to death by hanging for engaged in homosexual practices. Meanwhile in Uganda, there was openly gay monarch, King Mwanga 2nd, who actively opposed Christianity and colonialism.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Africa was forced to adopt new values, and homophobia was legally enforced by colonial administrators and Christian missionaries. In fact customary laws were tweaked to conform to colonial rule. They were given ancient cultural legitimacy and then legally enforced by customary authorities who were backed by colonial power. And

so, anti LGBT laws not only made their way into the constitutions, but also into the minds of many African people. And sadly, generations later, many still believe that Homophobia is a part of their culture. (Kalende 2014)

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Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A: Sefi Atta

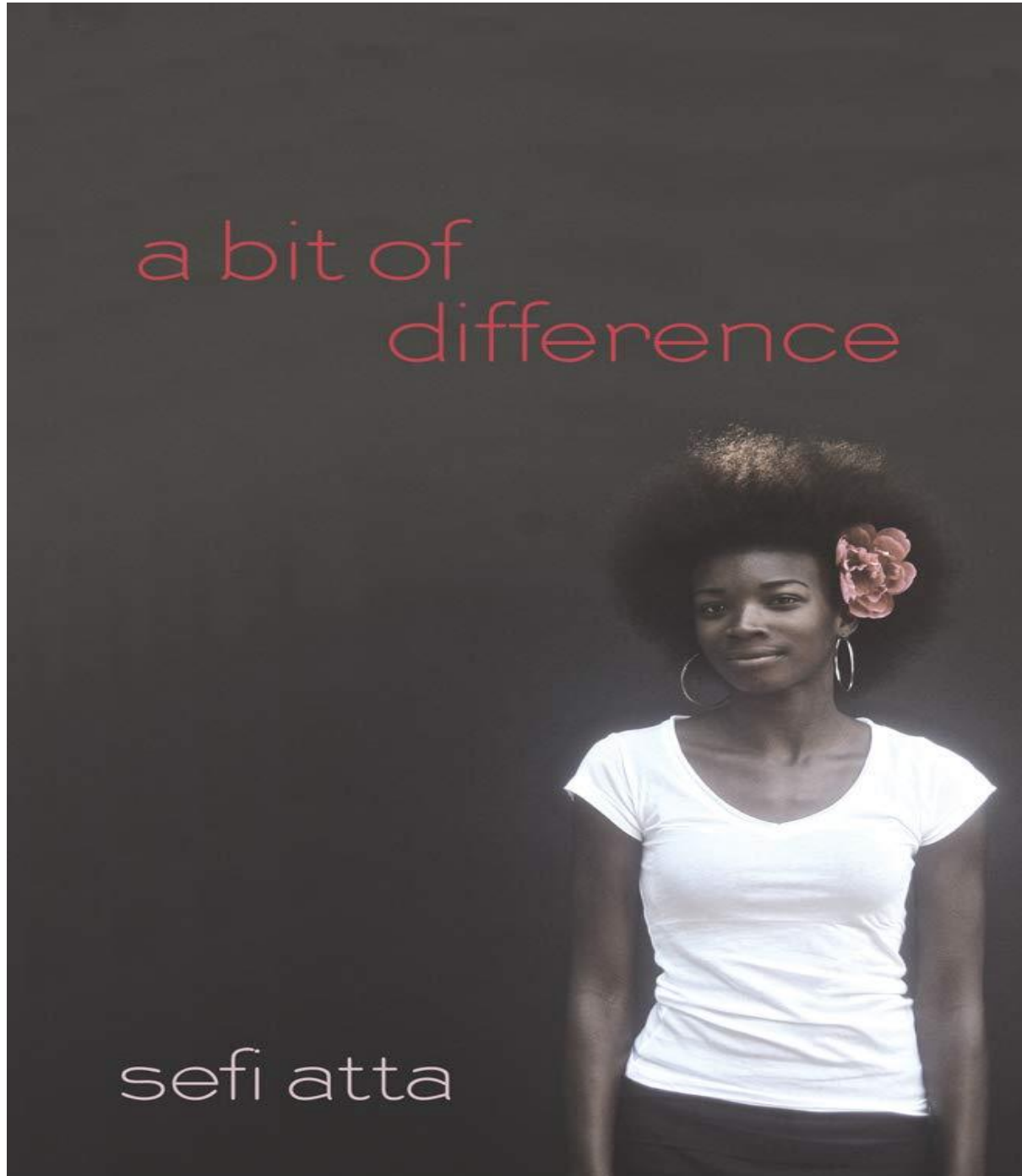
Figure 1: Shows a picture of the Nigerian contemporary writer Sefi Atta



Helon Habila. "A Bit of Difference by Sefi Atta – Review." *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 22 Feb. 2018, www.theguardian.com/books/2014/feb/22/a-bit-difference-sefi-atta-review.

Appendix B: *A Bit of Difference*

Figure 2: Shows Sefi Atta's novel Cover "*A Bit of Difference*"



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Glossary

Glossary

Ambivalent sexuality: those who are insecure about their sexuality that doesn't fit the frame that society has constructed for them.

Androgyny: is the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics into an ambiguous form. Androgyny may be expressed with regard to biological sex, gender identity, or gender expression.

Hermaphroditism: the condition of having both male and female reproductive organs.

Heterosexuality: sexual attraction between two members of the opposite sex (woman, man).

Homosexuality: sexual attraction between two members of the same sex (man, man).

Hypervirility: A feigned rare condition used by infertile men in the senile stage of their life.

Intersex: "do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies.

Phallogocentrism: In critical theory and deconstruction this term is coined by Jacques Derrida to refer to the privileging of the masculine (the phallus) in the construction of meaning.

Pidgin English: denoting a simplified form of a language, especially as used by a non-native speaker.

Postcolonialism: a theoretical approach in various disciplines that is concerned with the lasting impact of colonization in former colonies.

Queer theory: it rejects conventional or mainstream behavior, including sexual identity but also a range of identities including race, disability, and gender. It rejects essentialist nature of theories of identity based on binary oppositions (male/ female).

Third generation writers: Nigerian writers of the 21st century most of whom live in Europe and USA. These writers explore the cultural and social complexities of their country of origin, but they examine other themes as well.

Transculturalism: extending through all human culture, or involving, encompassing, or combining elements of more than one culture.

Transgender: denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

ملخص

تناقش سيفي أنا في كتابها "القليل من الإختلاف" تأثير التوقعات المجتمعية، و التمثيل العام و المؤلف على أولئك الذين هويتهم الجنسية مختلفة في نيجيريا، توضح كذلك بصفتها نسوية، وجهة النظر السائدة عن المثلية الجنسية، و كيف أن ردود الأفعال الإفريقية اتجاها أصبحت أكثر عنفا، لأن الثقافة الجنسية المغايرة (الإنجذاب للجنس المغاير) هي العادية و المألوفة و أي هوية جنسية أخرى تعتبر غير طبيعية و مهينة ، و من هنا اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة يتطور للفئات الأقلية. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقيق في الجنسانية المخالفة و المتناقضة في رواية سيفي أنا "القليل من الإختلاف" و للوصول إلى الهدف الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة تم استعمال ، نظرية الإختلاف الجنسي، نظرية ما بعد الإستعمار، و نظرية النسوية النفسية التحليلية. وفقا لنتائج هذا التحقيق، الشتات الإفريقي هو نتيجة التحرر من التوقعات المجتمعية و النظام الذكوري الأبوي خاصة بالنسبة للمجتمع المثلي، فالمثلية الجنسية ليست بيولوجية و رهاب المثلية من بقايا و آثار الإستعمار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المثلية الجنسية ، اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة ، الشتات الافريقي ، النظام الذكوري الأبوي ، رهاب المثلية .