

**INTERROGATING CHILD MOLESTATION AND ABUSE IN
CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF SADE
ADENIRAN'S *IMAGINE THIS***

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Abstract

*This paper examines the presentation of child molestation and gender abuse in the contemporary Nigerian society in the work of Sade Adeniran. The novels *Imagine This* is employed to interrogate issues of child molestation and gender abuse in selected text and the resultant the psychological, physical and emotional damage. The Liberal Feminist theory is employed as it appropriately addresses the postcolonial presentation of the issues addressed. The primary text is used as primary data while the internet and commentaries provide resource material for the work.*

The research is expected to throw light on the various angles from which molestation of children occurs in the most unexpected circumstances.

Introduction

Child molestation can be defined as a kind of child abuse involving an adult and a child, where the child is used by the adult to thrill his/her sexual desires. This form of child molestation manifests in various degrees as engaging in sexual activities with the child either forcefully or by any other unaccepted means. Its occurrence is found in diverse settings, ranging from home to school and other environments. Generally, females are more prone to experience prone to this form of abuse and also face the most traumatic form of child molestation. It has been approximated at about nineteen percent (13%), with males being seven percent (7%). Existing data reveals that majority of child molesters are usually familiar or acquainted with their victims and that thirty percent (30%) of these abusers are related to the children; often their father, brothers, cousins and other extended family. While thirty percent (30%) of them are just acquaintances like family friends, teachers or even neighbors, it has been established a large number of child molestation cases culprits are usually men. However, research on female child molesters show that about fourteen to four percent (14% to 4%) of offenses are reported against boys and that six (6%) of offenses reported against girls are committed by females, mostly adult women.

However, gender abuse which is otherwise known as gender-based brutality can be defined as collectively violent acts that are primarily or exclusively committed against women. In some cases it is considered a hate crime; this type of violence targets a specific group with the victim's gender as a primary motive. This type of violence is gender-based, meaning that the acts of violence are committed against women expressly because they are 'women'. Through the novel, the Adeniran draws attention to quite a number of issues that prey on the society and these are perennial social issues such as poverty and lack of parental guidance.

Literature Review

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states that;
is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms. Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between Men and women and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.

Child Molestation and Gender Inequality are both issues that have been existing for time immemorial, misinterpretation of religious and cultural material, text, and norms by the dominant gender in either patriarchal or matriarchal societies have also aided in its prevalence in today's society. "A recent census places the population of Nigeria at over 160 million people thereby making it the largest black African country." (Onwe 279), the present conundrum of Nigeria's social, political and especially economic decline lies not in its lack of resources but in its lack of technological power, knowledge workers and managerial system. According to Onwe, (279),

the necessary technology, industrial, managerial and political know-how
to pull its resources together in a stable economy and
also to take care of the basic needs of its population is
something Nigeria is yet to develop

and where there is scarcity of resources, there is bound to be poverty, illiteracy, and necessary infrastructure needed for survival, and in this situation, a person, driven by fear, frustration and anger, might be driven to do the unspeakable, even up to child abuse, molestation and even trafficking, not just on the adult's part, Onwe (279), citing Ebigbo (2003) asserted that

poverty and unfavorable living condition seems to be prevalent affecting
children. And if children are to be the leaders of
tomorrow, what lies in store for the nation if not crime,
cultural conflict, religious crisis, economic and social
factors, family disintegration, environmental threats,
and political challenges?

(Onwe,279). Although, gender inequality will persist regardless of economic and social states, even though a generalized observation shows that societies that have limited socially constructed laws on masculine and feminine sexes thrive more than societies who don't, in fact, most third world nations thrive instead on their roles and responsibilities at the expense of their success. Gender is simply defined as socially constructed roles assigned to males and females in a community, gender inequality, is what has led to the mistreatment of females, not just in Nigeria, but around the world as well.

Citing Dukor (2010), Uzuegbunam (185) opined that

Philosophically, women in domestic violence in Nigeria
should be understood from the African world View or
philosophy. This world view is based on the theistic charter

that explains the interaction or relationship of human beings in the society including marriages from the system of values existing in that society. Thus, for Africans, every sex group is organized on the existence of certain division of labor, and distribution patterns of privileges and duties. These subsequently require skills, habits and legal standards for satisfying needs. Hence, in pre-colonial Africa, Nigeria inclusive, the epistemological foundation specified that there was no intention for inequality, injustice and lack of freedom.

Perhaps this is true for all institutions whose policies or social trends favor gender inequality, but what is today termed as ‘gender inequality’ by activists and feminists in Nigeria, was simply an innocent allocation of roles and functions based on skills transferred from generation to generation, perhaps the goal was not to undermine women, but an ignorant attempt at survival and maintaining order, nonetheless, the issue of gender inequality and child molestation is one that is prevalent in Nigeria. It is well known that writers are products of their environment as much as the environment is a product of writers who address issues concerning them. Gender inequality and Child Molestation are prevalent issues which have been addressed in recent literature but continue to haunt our homes and society.

In addressing child molestation, Onwe (283), citing (Ebigbo 2003) claimed that “in urban areas, children are usually faced with the daily struggle for survival and material gain” he also went on to say that “child neglect, vagrancy, kidnapping and hawking amongst many others are the most seen routes of child abuse” According to him, “It is disturbing how children from the rural areas are sent to families in the cities to serve as house-maids and house-boys”. This to a large extent has broken the traditional culture which takes away the child’s opportunity for personal growth. Children who have been sent to work as house-helpers may also be expected either by their parents or by the families they serve to sell items for food, clothing and general merchandise on the streets. In most cases, they are part-time street traders and prone to many of the damaging aspects of street life. Similarly, in the eastern and western parts of Nigeria, children may have to attend morning or afternoon school so as to be able to hawk goods out of school hours, although there are children who have to trade on the streets the whole day. The income generated by the children helps their families or house-madams financially or help to pay for school fees of their children as opposed to the social contract they had with the parent from village to train the child. Although most of them have to return home at the end of the day, an increasing number which also includes girls, manage to survive and exist on the streets, contrary to the training promised. Record has it that about 64 million girls worldwide are child brides with 46% of these in south Asia and 41% percent in West and Central Africa. Evidently they are married off before the age of 18. The girl-child marriage is pregnant with potential risks like VVF, and associated pregnancy related complications which may cause life extinction. As a result, about 140 million girl-children in the world have suffered female genital mutilations. (Onwe 281, 283 citing TELL, 2014). It is sad to observe that most Northern Nigerian Muslim Communities currently practice girl-marriage; the case is even more rampant among the Northerners with fewer practice in western and south-south and south eastern Nigeria and in some parts of the western world. In South Eastern part of Nigeria for instance, such cases of getting married to girl-child still persist, especially among the

illiterate rural dwellers. The girl-mother is susceptible to suffering medical complication at times which is referred as the *vesico vagina fistula*. To deal with the issue, Government established a medical outfit the *Vesico Vagina fistula centre*, to treat females with the medical complication of vesico vagina fistula. The centre serves the females in the country, Ajanwachukwu, According to Ajanwachuckwu, (2012) cited by Onwe, (281)

Accordingly, the Muslim religion prohibits girls from becoming pregnant before marriage but the same religion encourages early marriage because it is assumed that a girl should take a husband before her second menstruation. The tradition of early marriage is very difficult to change and has led to abusive practices which are condoned by parents. there is the assumption that the single largest factor behind child abuse is poverty but the truth is that the religious and values and unequal gender relations also play an important role, and supposedly, violence is a human rights issue, and human rights are fundamental to values of dignity, equality, non-discrimination and non-interference (Uzuegbunam 185) and these rights cut across gender, social, cultural, political, class, religious and geographical issues.

On a daily basis, humans, properties and resources destroyed in their millions. With the problem of gender abuse and child molestation, also comes attendant issues that also threaten the fundamental rights, and dignity of women and children in Nigeria, hence, threatening the sustenance and balance of the society in which these victims find themselves. Violence, Rape, Human Trafficking, Kidnapping, Child Abuse, Female Genital Mutilation, just to mention a few, ideals about methods to treat members of each gender, spawning from an ignorant misinterpretation of religious and cultural texts, threaten the success and development of Nigeria each day. A greater tragedy being that minimal efforts taken to liberate victims from this callousness is majorly undertaken by citizens, and Non-Governmental Organizations, with little or no support from the government. Research has shown that, a number of times, people who engage in gender abuse and child molestation are pedophiles suffering from one kind of paraphilia or the other, at extreme cases, pedophilia. Paraphilia is a pattern of reoccurring sexually arousing mental imagery or behavior that involves unusual and especially socially unacceptable sexual practices. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, a pedophile is a person who has a sexual interest in children. Illiteracy is another factor that causes Gender Abuse, Child Molestation and its attendant issues, it is important for parents and children to be well oriented and educated on issues concerning gender abuse and child molestation in order to avoid being victims, to each other, and of other people. Parental Guidance, sensitization and education is very important to the eradication of gender inequality, and child molestation in the near future. More disturbing is the endemic problem of Female Genital Mutilation (hence FGM), a practice which is rooted in beliefs and traditions, spanning for several decades but have stubbornly despite the ongoing outcry against it. Some lasting complications may include severe pain, infertility, sexual dysfunction, other obstetric complications and even death.

This is a lens of gender and gender equality that places emphasis on traditional understanding of the human nature and personhood: rationality, individual autonomy, self-fulfillment (characteristics possessed by all).

This work adopts Liberal Feminism because of its emphasis on the equality of opportunity; meaning that everyone deserves an equal chance to develop their rational and moral capacities so that they can achieve Personhood. Because of the false belief of the society about the nature of women being less intellectually and physically capable than men, the woman has been excluded from myriads of opportunities and they are unable to attain their true potential. Liberal feminists therefore argue that women share the same rational human nature men do and so should be given the same educational opportunities and civil rights as men are given. The goal of women's liberation is to free women from oppressive gender roles; sexual and gender equality created by the society. This Feminist ideology led to advances in the economic sphere, in equality of opportunity and civil rights. The major problem with Liberal feminism is the fact that it tends to accept male values as universal values i.e. all women should want to become like men or aspire to masculine values. The protagonist records her encounters as each day passes in her journal, and relates her disgust and dissatisfaction with life in Nigeria. Like most children born in England and returned to Nigeria, she endures the culture shock. She relays to Jupiter the dissatisfaction and frustration she has been experiencing. In her journal, she describes her adventure towards wisdom; an insightful record of a voyage through memory, imagination and a re-imagined past. (334). Her utilization of English Language as a variant and a sign of her distinction as a Nigerian writer is one of the striking highlights of the novel, just like postcolonial works and on the other of equivalent significance is her utilization and realistic plan of precepts according to Ashcroft et al, (8). Artistic use of proverbs in the Nigerian scholarly scene had concentrated for the most part on traditional proverbs and the nature, structure, shape and setting of sayings in writing. Olatunji (1984), Bamgbose (1968) Nwachukwu-Agbada (2002) and Yusuf (2002) talk about the nature, highlight, work, execution, substance and setting of maxims while Aderemi Raji-Oyelade dissects the language structure and structure of Yoruba post proverbs as new alteration and the radical talk of proficiency and advancement among Yoruba Youth (301). Jegede (2008) finds axioms and post proverbial in their literary settings and underscores their importance in postcolonial works. Jegede's attention has been on dissecting precepts in specific territories; utilizing distinctive cases to decide if they proper the rationale of traditional ones or they change them by contracting or elongating them.

In *Imagine this*, Adeniran constructs meaning and reality through the protagonist's proverbial discourse by creating a picture of a reality that is haphazard and governed arbitrary rules. Adeniran uses proverbs to engage in dialogue with alternative social structures which are indiscernible to the protagonist who struggles against this (Ana Maria Sanchez Arce, 77). The rural setting of the plot provides an opportunity for learning the indigenous culture and beliefs. Sade Adeniran uses proverbs that are capable of generating further texts, he opines that proverbs operate three levels of meanings. The literal meaning is taken as what is said but the philosophical and contextual meanings have cultural implications; even when proverbs are drawn and displaced from an un-identified location and securely grafted into other cultural spaces. She uses proverbs as an attempt to connect with the indigenous voices. Proverbs therefore becomes a code with which she wants to identify and against which she struggles.

Lola invites us into her thoughts, life experiences and plights and through this, the reader is able to come in contact with her and her society.

Child Molestation in *Imagine This!*

Omolola and her younger brother Adebola experienced childhood in London with their parents for some time before they started living with their foster parents after their mom left them when Lola was only eighteen months old. On a fateful day their dad who is also known as Mr Ogunwole shows up in their foster home at Kent and removes his children from their foster home and brought them to Nigeria. Lola feels like her dad, sibling and her are three musketeers as they live in Lagos together until one day a change happens in their concord as a family which prompts an alternating side of life for Lola and her sibling Adebola. Their dad separates the family by sending his children to live with various relatives. He sends Adebola to live with his brother Uncle Joseph in Ado Ekiti and Lola with Iya Rotimi his sister in Idogun. This move discourages Omolola because Idogun is a town without the fundamental accommodations she is used to and no one understands her English and she doesn't understand anybody either.

However, she lives with a family that shows so much dislike for her, Iya Rotimi and her children. She is constantly maltreated and also accused incessantly of doing things she did not do and deprived of food most times. She is later sent to live with her grandmother "Mama" who treats her no better than Iya Rotimi. This is a choice her dad tackles as he becomes acquainted with the way his sister treats his daughter. Long before her arrival in Idogun, she gets the shocking news about the death of her brother. His burial is not accompanied with the type of the customs that she found in Baba's burial, her grandpa as result of the fact that her sibling was too young for death. After his burial, Lola's dad takes her back to Lagos to live with him. This torment made her withdraw from everybody into herself and unable to respond to what anybody needed to advise her including her dad when she desired to. She is being dealt with in Lagos as her dad and everybody trusts that she is sick. Her dad marries the cook woman whom she met in the house. Unfortunately for Mr. Ogunwole, her father, he is killed before he could mend the gap between his little girl and himself. After her dad's demise, with little or no reason to remain in Idogun, Lola returns back to London as a full developed lady to start another life which has continually being her fantasy on her landing to Idogun as a child.

Death is inevitable in the human experience although often times it comes unexpectedly. Death as used in the novel connotes a body of messages as it meets the characters affected based on different times. Adebola's death is a painful exit that occurs as a result of his ill-health which resulted from the physical and emotional torture meted out to him by his uncle. Uncle Joseph maltreated and enslaved Adebola during his stay in his house instead of treating him as a member of his family. This is seen as he explains to his sister Lola about his stay in his Uncle's house in page 43, 'I caught Adebola crying again so I asked what was wrong and he finally told me about living with Uncle Joseph. He has to wait until everyone has eaten and gets the leftovers. Uncle Joseph does not allow him sleep on a bed even though there's a spare one. He's treated more like a servant and he hates living there'. Adebola's death being a painful exit, Lola expresses the pain and hurt she feels insides; his death became a wound in Lola that cannot heal. Lola's plea for her brother to come back made him reveal himself to her and this gracious gestures makes Lola happy. In her words,

‘After days of despair thinking my fasting and prayers had not worked, I woke up and Adebola was sitting on the end of my bed. It is truly a miracle!’ (93).

Death is a transition from the land of the living to the land of rest as in the case of Baba. This is because he had come of age to join his ancestors and a descendant of the royal family. His burial is a ceremonial activity for the egunguns who are messengers of the gods and the escorts of Baba from the land of the living to the land of the dead. This is reflected in Lola’s narration ‘Baba Dayo has arrived from the farm and is on his way to Baba’s house. I wanted to go with him but I’ve been told that women are not allowed out tonight because Baba was a descendant from the kings of Idogun and when a descendant dies, the egungun come out to guide the spirit into the next world’ (36). Bisi’s will to die is seen as against the wish of people especially of her age but Bisi sees it as an escape root for her problems as she was pregnant for a man who was not her father. As narrated by Baba Ade by Mama, ‘Mama said she hears from Iya Tayo who sells fish down the market, that Bisi was with a child and it wasn’t her husband’s. He can’t have any because he lost his thing in an accident’ (102). She willingly gives herself to the land of the dead which means she is tired of living as a result of the humiliation and torture she has to deal with as a result of her marital problems.

Finally, death can be seen as a symbolic concept in the novel. The treatment Lola receives from her father and her relatives kills the love, trust and affection that she has within her family. This is reflected in the way she addresses her father and in her words My ex-father only came to see me once, but that’s okay, I’m used to him not caring... I’ve come to accept the fact that the man who gave me life doesn’t love me, that my mother never wanted me, my only brother is dead and never coming back and my grandmother is the meanest person alive. None of it matters, now I’ve got to just take things as they come. (99) According to Merriam Webster dictionary,

violence is the use of physical force to harm someone, to damage property. Violence and Child abuse includes the physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment of a child, or the neglect of a child, in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s physical and emotional health.

Lola reveals the face of violence in her narration of Uncle Joseph’s act to her; When the egunguns left, Uncle Joseph dragged me inside by the car and pushed me against the wall. I banged my head and started crying and he said I was never to disobey him again and he gave me four lashes of the cane while the kids made fun of me’ (61). This occurred because she wanted so much to see the masquerades that she trailed them. This phase is additionally depicted in the school among the students. Lola being a small student in size has a few individuals in school who dislike her and she is beaten up by one of them as she narrates, ‘I’ve been beaten up by Akin. I’ve got a bruise on my head and a cut on my knee and I think I’m going to have to go to the Medical Centre because it won’t stop bleeding...’ (82). this happened as a result of the fact that Lola punished him with the aid of Miss Opeyemi. Violence is also portrayed in the novel as Iya Rotimi makes a public show of Lola after the leaf Babalawo confirmed her as the thief even when she pleaded not guilty of the crime, ‘As she dragged me home, all other kids were shouting, ‘Ole, ole (thief thief)’. They threw stones but Iya Rotimi stopped them just as one of the stone from Yinka hit the back of my

head' (25). Lola and Adebola also faced Psychological Violence arising from the neglect from their father, Mr Ogunwole. According to her, he deprived them privilege of enjoying the full rights of being his children by secluding them to the unsafe rural environment despite the many pleas from his children to let them stay with him. This then became a factor in Adebola's death and Lola stays for a short while with but is beaten and sent back to Idogun after a physical form of violence which was to please his new wife 'Cook Woman' as Lola calls her. Before sending her back, her father tells that he wanted to talk to her in his room only to realise too late when she saw twenty canes that he wanted to beat her and he spent most of them on her body.

I just rolled up into a ball on the floor while the strokes kept landing. In the end, I think Uncle Niyi broke the door and stopped him... I felt the familiar wrench, the pins and the needles piercing my heart and I didn't want to live. I was still curled up on the floor and all of a sudden it became difficult to breathe, my arms and legs became heavy and then there was nothing, everything went back and I woke up in the morning here in the hospital. Only Uncle Niyi has been here to visit me, he brought me my things from his place. He hasn't been here to see me yet... he said that the house is too small for them and it would be better for me to finish my education in Idogun (98).

Lola comes back to Idogun where she prayed and tried all her best to leave. When she finally returns to Lagos with the assistance of her Uncle Jacob her dad's cousin, her dad does not try to look for her as she moves into some relative's home to find shelter from where she is being rejected. He acknowledges his obligation to her as his daughter when she turns into a fully developed woman who was past the point of no return as Lola's heart was at that point dead towards him and when he attempts to mend the gap between them he dies without accomplishing it. Lola is portrayed as a victim of torture and it is presented in the novel as Iya Rotimi who is in charge of Lola begins to exhibit this face of torture on Lola on their way to the village. 'Daddy had given Auntie some pocket money for me, but she wouldn't let me have it.... She and her youngest son, who is about five, ate a whole loaf of bread by themselves and didn't offer me any (5). Lola faces torture again in school on her very first day and this was by the maths teacher Mr Adesanya who tortured Lola severely out of jealousy and hate because she has been to the white man's land as narrated by her, 'he made me walk on gravel with my knees...come and show us how this is done in the white man's land, or just because you have been to the land of the white man does not mean you are better than anyone else' (14-15). Lola faces emotional torture also by her cousin Yinka to achieve her evil plans;

Yinka accused me of stealing Iya Rotimi's chin chin. I'd never been near it. A house search was carried out and the nylon pouches were found in my suit case. No one believed me when I said I hadn't put it there and I wasn't allowed to have dinner. Now, whenever something goes missing the fingers point at me and I

get punished. I never get dinner and I have to wash all the dirty plates... (19).

As a result of all these, Lola resigns to her fate as she possesses a negative picture of herself now and psychological torture, 'My heart is empty, I feel no pain or joy. I just don't feel anything anymore. My life has no purpose. I am nothing; I seem to be marking my life as a bookmark in somebody else's story' (120). Lola and Adebola were not only tortured by their grandmother but also their father. He takes advantage of their love, trust and care as children for him to fulfill their selfish desire. He sends them to live with their relatives and this causes Adebola's death. His son's death does not still serve as an eye opener to him as he sends Lola back to Idogun after the misunderstanding that took place between Lola and one of the cook woman's daughters. He does not care if she is his blood, as he beats her to a state of unconsciousness and visits her once in the hospital before she goes back to the village. The torture meted out on Adebola and Lola constitutes psychological and emotional torture. Adebola as a young boy faces violence and torture from the hands of his Uncle Joseph. He is used more as a slave than as a relation, he is made to put the house of his Uncle in order as revealed by Lola, 'I caught Adebola crying again so I asked him what was wrong and he finally told me about living with Uncle Joseph. He usually has to wait until everyone has eaten and he gets the leftovers. Uncle Joseph doesn't allow him sleep on a bed even though there's a spare one left....' (43). He is their servant and does all the domestic chores; he has to take care of the baby when he gets back from school (59). Eventually, Uncle Joseph's maltreatment in terms of violence and torture leads to Adebola's death as he uses Adebola as a slave continuously even in his very sick state. He does not treat or care about his health and this drains life away from Adebola at a tender age of twelve. Lola on the other hand, also faces violence and torture from her grandmother. As narrated by Lola, 'Mama didn't even say goodbye. She's just upset that she is losing her personal slave (48). Lola started living with Mama after her father found about the way his Iya Rotimi treats Lola but this made no difference to the young girl as Mama Attitude towards her is not any better than Iya Rotimi. Mama is assisted a great deal by Lola to do the house chores but yet she starves her of food and even when she is given food, she is given a little portion that cannot cover up the energy lost in carrying out her designated assignment. Mama prefers to feed her other grandchildren to their satisfaction and horde food from Lola so much that she could not stand the rate of starvation she was going through, in her words; Mama and I have had a big fight. I got fed up going hungry, especially when there's food in the house. So I found some money, bought some fish from the market and made myself some stew. The pepper I picked from the farm, the palm oil came from the many containers she's got hiding under her bed. Under there is also half sack of rice left over from Baba's funeral.... I was so hungry...I'd finished cooking stew and had just put the rice on when she walked through the first door. She sniffed the air and began to shout loudly; You are stealing my food, you ungrateful child. Thief ooo, everyone come and see this child', she screamed... she ran to the back yard, drained the rice that was already half cooked and poured water over the wood so I couldn't continue cooking (46). Violence and torture is any act of action or inaction that result in pain and this has been distinctively portrayed in the text through the character of Lola.

From the beginning of the novel, we see how Lola's father brought them from London to Nigeria and to the rural areas for that matter. He believes that it takes the whole village to train a child. Lola loves her family and does not want to be separated from them just like

the way her mother left. She does not know her mother but she prays and hopes that one day she will see her mother. Separated from her brother, she is left alone with her only companion; her journal where she writes down all her experiences until she meets her boyfriend, Tobi who is not always around due to the nature of his job and she couldn't deal with the distance between them. She suffers from alienation '*sometimes I dreamed that the red slippers transported me home, but I am still not sure where home is*' (56). Typically, the home is set in the past, in the memories of childhood, which is the only basis for a purpose, the home of memory, which is the only basis for a sense of identity. It is obvious that Lola's past and childhood are rooted in London. As a result, she has no knowledge of Nigeria as a part of her childhood memories as capture in the novel. She misses her brother and '*I'd sit on his grave and reminisce about living in Kent, moving to London and the life we once had. I lived in the past and I lived for the past*' (121). So, she moves through life from childhood to adulthood with the conviction that her home is London because of her disillusionment with life in Idogun, her village. She says,

I really hate it here, I want to go back to London...we live in a mud hut,
which has two rooms, but one for storage and the other
for bedroom. There isn't enough space for everyone...
there is no electricity, no water, no television and no
friends to play with (6).

It is hard for her to refer to Nigeria as home because the home as she describes it is a place of comfort, trust and love and all of this is absent in her experience in Idogun. In her words; I suppose, I have to get used to calling this place 'home'. But I have to

say right now my real home is in London... I really hate
it here, I really want to go back to London...no one
understands a word I'm saying, there's no water, no
electricity, no television...I can't go to school because
they in Yoruba and I can't read, write or even speak it
properly yet (8).

Her dislocation from London to Lagos and then to Idogun which has a great effect on her interpretation of home as a result of the treatment she receives in Nigeria from her supposed family members and this concludes the feelings of love for London and hate for Nigeria. The novel also highlights the three major religions in Nigeria, the Christianity, traditional religion and Islam. Christianity is the dominant religion in the Nigerian society as mirrored in the novel. The novel opens in the beginning with Lola praying to God to change her father's heart. 'I prayed and prayed because Daddy said that God answers the prayers of little children' (5). Being a religion that came with the advent of colonization, it has had great effect on the Nigerian society as the people that still worship in the traditional way still go to church on Sunday and partake of the Christian religious celebrations. This is shown in the character of Iya Rotimi and her family, 'today is Sunday and my Auntie, Iya Rotimi took us to church' (3). She believes greatly in traditional religion and is a faithful practitioner but still follows the Christian religion which is a product of civilization. Uncle Niyi's character also portrays this. He gives to the gods what belongs to them through sacrifice, 'the cow has been killed...with its neck stretched out over the hole, kola nut and schnapps were offered to the gods and our ancestors' (64). Lola's faith in God to return her brother back to life is shown in the Christian religious practice of fasting and prayers which

she embarks on in the novel; When her brother dies, she nearly loses her mind and goes into unbearable self-flagellation in fasting beyond human endurance.

Today is my ninth day of fasting and I'm weakening for food, but I must be strong...I am at the halfway mark of my fasting. I've been drinking water to keep my spirit pure so that God will listen to me when I pray to him on that final day...ten more days to go and I will finish my fasting and God will bring Adebola back to life (89-90).

Lola is in a perplexed state due to her religious experience. She believes in God, but also likes the traditional religion as her affiliation for it is well expressed where she states that she will like to see the witch doctor and also the Islamic religion as her escape route, her narration; She decides to become a Muslim on Fridays because that's when she has double period of labour... (101). The novel shows the effect of religious clash that leaves one confused. This is because those who indulge in the traditional religion also try to indulge in the Christian religion. The Christian religion as shown in the sermon of the pastor portrays God as the Supreme Being and so it's against serving other gods as seen in page 101 '... the pastor was in the middle of his sermon. It was something about worshipping other gods and I really felt bad...' Another instance of clash is portrayed in Mama's reaction towards the Islamic religion when she sees Lola coming from mosque, 'she caught me on the way to the mosque.... She dragged me out of the line and back to his office and I had to stand while they talk. I am not allowed to go to the mosque' (106). As a result the theme of religion portrays the Nigerian culture as one that can't but manage with other religions as its co-existence is of significance.

Sexual exploitation of young females is rife in the novel. Lola's confusion leads her to almost follow in the steps of her friend, "Maybe I should take a leaf out of Ngozi's book. She had about three Sugar Daddies: one was paying for her education, one gave her pocket money and I think the other one gave her money, too. It seems a woman can't be anyone unless she has a man beside her, so Ngozi has three. Bottom power will take a woman far..... (153). This theme of sexual exploitation is expressly portrayed in many instances in the novel. One of the instances include when Lola was seeking admission to the university. As portrayed by Sade Adeniran, it is almost a fact that without connection in the Nigerian society, achieving certain things might be almost impossible due to corruption. Without knowing someone in the position of power, most things might become seemingly unattainable. For instance, Lola's friends had to deploy the connection they had to get virtually everything they wanted, her friend at the lesson was always sleeping with different men to get what she wanted. Lola's dad although it was not stated vividly portrayed a bit of corruption. It could be inferred that he was involved in shady dealings that made him wealthy suddenly after years of struggling. Another instance that we can infer from about his shady dealing was when he was shot anonymously on the bridge when he was on his way home. A major factor that promotes social decadence is frustration. Frustration drove Lola's dad to dump his children in the village with the excuse that it takes a whole village to raise a child. His complete neglect of his fatherly duties and obligation to his children as a result of the fact that he had no money to was triggered by frustration.

Language and Style

Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This* is narrated from the first person narrative and the language used is simple and easy to comprehend. *Imagine This* is an epistolary novel written in a diary form. The novel emphasizes the importance of the Africanisation of English through the use of proverbs and Nigerian pidgin. Language is a device the novelist uses in representing the heritage of the protagonist. Proverbs are foregrounded and graphically enacted and Yoruba and English overlap in the novel *Imagine This*. It is obvious in the novel that the Nigerian society as seen from the characters perspective is a country that still maintains and observes its oral traditions like storytelling and use of proverbs irrespective of their introduction to the western culture. It is easy to understand and relate with the events which are unraveled in the novel as there are loads of emotional involvement.

Conclusion

In *Imagine This!*, Adeniram portrays a troubled society, fraught with all the attendant problems of that being a brings and how predatory individuals take advantage of the cultural bias against the female gender. The novel reflects the themes and style of contemporary writings which dwell on emergent problems and experiences of modern society. This also shows that Sade Adeniran has a deep sense of history as she depicts creativity in her work and mastery of the Yoruba culture in her work. She is in tune with her language as the depth of her knowledge of the Yoruba Language is demonstrated in her choice of character names.

It is clear that irrespective of setting, child abuse and gender molestation has been in time memoria as Sade Adeniran's has revealed in her text and it is obvious that she believes that child molestation and gender abuse has shaped certain people's lives, their present day lifestyle, values and moral ethics. The novel raises provocations and reaction concerning child molestation and gender abuse and everything that revolves around it.

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