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LANGUES ET SCIENCES HUMAINES



Université Alassane Ouattara

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# LETTRES D'IVOIRE

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# ***LETTRES D'IVOIRE***

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## SOMMAIRE

### LITTÉRATURES

#### Lettres Modernes

<b>Amara COULIBALY</b> , <i>Théorie et pratique de la narration dans L'île aux trente cercueils de Maurice Leblanc</i> .....	09-17
<b>Patricia N'zi Blah AHIOUA</b> , <i>Les procédés dramatiques de création romanesque dans Moderato cantabile de Marguerite Duras : une stratégie de déconstruction du genre</i> .....	19-28
<b>Lancina Kibouni OUATTARA</b> , <i>Polyphonie et rupture dans le roman français contemporain : Grandir de Gilles Leroy à l'épreuve de la discontinuité</i> .....	29-39
<b>Charlemagne Nanou OKEU</b> , <i>Incrustation des genres journalistiques dans l'espace fictionnel : fondement de l'hybridité postmoderne chez Jean Chatenet</i> .....	41-49
<b>Guillaume Taïgba ROUDE</b> , <i>La fonction référentielle : une contrainte du discours réaliste dans le roman africain</i> .....	51-62
<b>Souleymane YORO</b> , <i>Le rôle spécifique et les différents aspects de la transgression dans l'épopée de Soundjata</i> .....	63-69
<b>Rony Dévyllers YALA KOUANDZI et Laititia Fleurette MELANG KING-ZOK</b> , <i>Ecrire la congolité : enjeux et constances perceptives</i> .....	71-91
<b>François Kopoin KOPOIN</b> , <i>Le folklore africain dans l'œuvre poétique de Senghor: recyclage d'un déchet culturel</i> .....	93-105
<b>Antoine N'guessan KOUADIO</b> , <i>La poésie de Victor Hugo à travers les théories et méthodes des sciences du langage : pour une mission universelle</i> .....	107-117
<b>Joël Arnaud N'guessan YOBOUE</b> , <i>D'Éclairs et de foudres de Jean-Marie Adiaffi : absence significative de la ponctuation et présence symbolique du silence</i> .....	119-127
<b>Armand Koffi YAO</b> , <i>Comprendre le paratexte dans les romans, Sauve-qui-peut à Kaboul, de Gérard de Villiers</i> .....	129-144
<b>Charles Yao BONY</b> , <i>Valeur expressive de l'apposition du participe dans « Il n'y a pas de petite querelle » d'Amadou Hampâté Bâ</i> .....	145-156
<b>Esther Gisèle ZADI Epse GOUAMENE</b> , <i>La modalisation Par discours autre: une altérité soulignée</i> .....	157-166
<b>Michel Kouassi PRI</b> , <i>Le démonstratif : élément de cohésion et de cohérence narrative dans « Notre Voie »</i> .....	167-175
<b>Abiba DIARRASSOUBA</b> , <i>Langage artistique, une pratique de décodage : pour une approche sémiolinguistique des modèles linguistiques</i> .....	177-188
<b>Maxime Z. SOME</b> , <i>Une perspective psycho-pédagogique adaptée au contexte éducatif plurilingue africain. L'enseignement du français langue seconde (FLS) ou langue étrangère (FLE)</i> .....	189-201

#### Anglais

<b>Célestin GBAGUIDI et Adolphe SALOMON</b> , <i>African Women's Emancipation in Sefi Atta's Swallow</i> .....	205-214
<b>Ulrich HINDEME, Pedro EGOUNLETI and Jean-Marc GNONLONFOUN</b> , <i>Exploring beninese pre-service technical teachers' frequency of using SMS</i> .....	215-218
<b>Mexan Serge EPOUNDA and Basile Marius NGASSAKI</b> , <i>Exposition and implication of Characters in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and No Longer at Ease</i> .....	219-232

#### Allemand

<b>Eckra Lath TOPPE</b> , <i>Zur zeit des digitalen. neue herausforderungen für die interkulturelle germanistik in einem globalisierungskontext: eine analyse in einer intermedialen perspektive</i> .....	235-246
<b>Brahima Gnénéfolo SORO</b> , <i>Bismarck et Carl Peters en Afrique orientale : Désaveu ou stratégie de conquête coloniale ?</i> .....	247-256
<b>Youssoufou TRAORE</b> , <i>La Mission de Brême et son projet de „Freikauf“ des peuples du Dahomey vers le milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: programme missionnaire inachevé ou mission impossible ?</i> .....	257-266
<b>Lambert ZOH</b> , <i>La négativité chez la femme : une contribution de Friedrich Dürrenmatt et Cheikh Hamidou Kane au féminisme</i> .....	267-278

## AFRICAN WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION IN SEFI ATTA'S SWALLOW

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper delves into some serious matters which hinder the African woman's emancipation in postcolonial Africa through Sefi Atta's *Swallow* (2010). Indeed, Sefi Atta castigates the subordination of women in postcolonial Africa through a number of practices. Through her female characters, Sefi Atta unveils the hardships of womenfolk in postcolonial Africa. The current paper uses plot analysis to explore the message and story the novel portrays. It shows that patriarchy is one of the root causes of women's subjugation in postcolonial Africa, and that patriarchy brings about poverty among women. Both patriarchy and poverty maintain womenfolk in a state of inferiority. Furthermore, this research paper posits that women's illiteracy causes their financial dependence upon men. Besides, the institution of marriage is also detrimental to women and as a consequence, it helps men keep women in a condition of subservience. With the theory of post-colonial criticism, this paper postulates that Sefi Atta shows concern for the misrepresentation of the African woman in a male dominated society and advocates the African woman's emancipation.

### KEY WORDS

Emancipation, postcolonial, subordination, patriarchy, poverty

### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine les problèmes qui entravent l'émancipation de la femme africaine dans la période postcoloniale à travers *Swallow* (2010) de Sefi Atta. En effet, Sefi Atta fustige la soumission de la femme en Afrique postcoloniale à travers un certain nombre de pratiques. A travers ses personnages féminins, Sefi Atta met en lumière les difficultés de la gent féminine en Afrique postcoloniale. Cet article analyse l'intrigue pour explorer le message et le récit que le roman décrit. Il montre que le patriarcat est l'une des causes principales de l'assujettissement des femmes en Afrique postcoloniale et qu'il entraîne leur appauvrissement. Le patriarcat et la pauvreté maintiennent les femmes dans un état d'infériorité. En plus, ce travail de recherche pose comme postulat que l'analphabétisme des femmes cause leur dépendance envers les hommes. Par ailleurs, l'institution du mariage est aussi nuisible à la femme et en conséquence permet aux hommes de maintenir les femmes dans une condition d'asservissement. Avec la théorie de la critique postcoloniale, cet article postule que Sefi Atta se montre préoccupée par la mauvaise représentation de la femme africaine dans une société dominée par les hommes et préconise l'émancipation de la femme africaine.

### MOTS CLÉS

Emancipation, postcoloniale, assujettissement, patriarcat, pauvreté

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## INTRODUCTION

The gender issue is drawing more and more attention from scholars and authorities all over the world and specifically in Africa because of its irrefutable impacts on women. Indeed, in the mind of most people, being a woman amounts to being an inferior person; in a nutshell, women are marginalized just because of their gender. And this situation has been severely criticized by both men and women for the improvement of women's living conditions in our societies.

Commenting on women's suffering, Mariama Bâ states in an interview: "There is a cry everywhere; everywhere in the world a woman's cry is being uttered. The cry may be different but there is still a certain unity" (Nfah-Abbenyi 8-9). The pioneers in the field of literary works in Africa are men and they profited from the absence or the scarcity of African female creative writers to paint a black picture of African women assigning to them the second fiddle. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has been criticized by feminists and the champions of the woman's cause because there is a negative and demeaning portrayal of the African woman in that novel viewing women as weak and down economically compared to men. As a consequence, women are dominated and relegated to the background in their day-to-day lives.

Yet, recently there has been a rise in the number of African female writers concerned with the problems people of their gender face. And as a scholar rightfully points out: Many African "women embark on the identification of women's personhood by controverting the representations of [...] women in male-centered works" (Ezenwanebe 262). On this note, committed African female writers contend with "patriarchal attitudes and sex-centric ideologies that dislodge [...] women from the centre to the periphery and reconstructs the image of women in her female characters in the hope of freeing them from the bonds of social oppression, making them visible and powerful [...]" (Ezenwanebe 262). As a matter of fact, female contemporary African writers are battling to remedy women's plight in their societies. They act as the voices of the rest of women who continue to bend under the yoke of marginalization and oppression of different kinds. Through their work, they castigate the subjugation of womenfolk in all the domains of life. In that wake, Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido contend that committed African women writers "are critical of the exploitation of women.

African women explore what is useful and what is dangerous to them as women in traditional cultures" (310). One of these advocates of the woman's cause is Sefi Atta, a Nigerian female writer, who has been struggling for women's manumission. Indeed, Atta's novel entitled *Swallow* lays bare some of the hindrances to women's emancipation. This study aims at shedding light on women talking about their own living conditions in a world where gender matters a lot and where being a woman is a curse. The choice of this novel is not made out of the blue; instead, through this novel a woman is denouncing some practices in our African societies which jeopardize women's emancipation.

The present study aims at unveiling some of the root-causes of women's state of subordination in post-colonial Africa. The essential point shall be well demonstrated from a postcolonial and feminist perspectives.

### I- PATRIARCHY, A HINDRANCE TO WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION IN SWALLOW

Sefi Atta's novel reveals some aspects of our societies which pose serious problems to women's liberation and blossoming. Indeed, her novel *Swallow* tackles mainly the subjugation of women in Africa through various means in a society where men are regarded as masters and

women as subjects or worse still slaves. On that score, the scrutiny of Atta's novel shows that patriarchy is a serious threat to women's emancipation in Africa. First of all, it is important to define "patriarchy". Patriarchy, as a matter of course, is a social system which promotes men but belittles women; it is a social order which upholds the superiority of men to the detriment of women. In *The creation of Patriarchy*, Lerner posits that: "Patriarchy, in its wider definition, means the manifestation and institutionalization of male domination over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in the society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and women are deprived of access to such power" (239). It can be inferred from the above quote that patriarchy is a strong institution which opposes women's interests in society. It implies the institution of male domination and thus female subordination. In one word, the term patriarchy refers to a social institution whereby women are kept under control by men. Therefore, the ultimate goal of patriarchy is the ascendancy of men over women.

In fact, patriarchy is not a new reality in African societies. Many researches have shown that the institution of patriarchy is not a new practice in human societies; it has been part and parcel of human societies for quite a very long period. This argument is plainly supported by a scholar when she claims that: "In the beginning of our story all significant societies were clearly patriarchal. There was no single exception" (Göran 17). African societies were, as a consequence, mostly patriarchal. Once again the perusal of Chinua Achebe's book published in 1958 confirms this practice and mind-set in pre-colonial Africa. Undeniably, in that novel, Achebe portrays men as virile and powerful while women are weak and relegated to the background. Yet, the present article is not based on pre-colonial Africa; conversely, it is about the issue of patriarchy in post-colonial Africa.

Post-colonialism is pinpointed as the period after independence up to the present. Even though the term post-colonialism can have different and various definitions, it means the era after independence in former European colonies. In the book entitled *Post-colonial Studies*, the authors define postcolonialism as follows:

Post-colonialism (or often postcolonialism) deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. As originally used by historians after the Second World War in terms such as **the post-colonial state**, 'post-colonial' had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period. However, from the late 1970s the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 168).

It can be inferred from the quote above that postcolonialism has to do with the impacts of colonization by European countries, whether positive or negative, upon nations which are former colonies. It is obvious that colonization has had some influences upon the colonized people one way or the other. As mentioned above, patriarchy was a practice in pre-colonial Africa but in post-colonial Africa, the relationship between men and women must have been influenced. Arguably, the relationship between genders has entered a new dimension because of changes brought about by colonization.

On this note, the setting of *Swallow* is in postcolonial Nigeria; and in postcolonial Nigeria the phenomenon of patriarchy is rife. That is to say, patriarchy is bringing about mayhem in postcolonial Africa. And one is tempted to say that it is getting worse and worse. As a matter of fact, in postcolonial Africa, as it can be seen in *Swallow*, women are allowed to go to school to get

formal education. For instance, the female characters Tolani and Rose, the two protagonists of Sefi Atta's novel have received a formal education. They have come to Lagos to seek a job in order to cater for their own needs and help their parents in their hometowns to make both ends meet. Once in the Nigerian megalopolis, they are confronted with the issue of underpayment. To put it bluntly, it is difficult for them to get a well-paid job because of their sex. Unemployment is a notorious problem in post-colonial Africa but women suffer more from it than men do. Sefi Atta's novel mainly focuses on women's ordeals in a male-dominated world. Life in a megalopolis is tougher than in rural or traditional Africa particularly if one is a woman. That is the reason why the intradiegetic narrator Rose tells her roommate: "It's a war between men and us [women]. A war, you hear me?" (Atta 10).

For Rose, in urban area, men are opposed to women because of money since in postcolonial Africa solidarity is step by step disappearing in favour of individualism. And worse still, unemployment rate, which is very high, causes women to be unfairly excluded from well-paid jobs. Strikingly, the practice of patriarchy in postcolonial Africa causes women to be in the throes of unemployment. In urban life, the system of patriarchy is still present and undermining women's emancipation. To get a well-paid work, very expensive educational qualifications are required, which women rarely have to secure a well-paid work in urban life. On that score, Claire Robertson explains that: "Men generally get more formal education than women, which means that the world of wage labour is in most countries overwhelmingly male. Ninety percent or more of the wage labourers are often male" (Robertson 317).

Things have changed a lot in postcolonial Africa and this has caused women to depend more on men than before because women are excluded from the educational system which is the key to wage labour. Men, on the contrary, are prepared through formal education to get wage works. This is the reason why women's unemployment rate is higher than men's. It is worth emphasizing that only a handful of women succeed in securing a wage work; most women occupy worthless posts at work. Such is the case of the marginalised female characters Tolani and her roommate, Rose Adamson in Atta's *Swallow*. They work as secretaries at the Federal Community Bank in Lagos; apart from them, there are many other women who work at the same bank but the stunning reality is that no woman is occupying any high ranking post at the bank. All the women are under men who rule the bank. This reality confirms the fact that patriarchy hinders women's emancipation in postcolonial Africa. *Swallow* by Sefi Atta proves that patriarchy is a very serious issue confronting women in postcolonial Africa. The system of patriarchy offers less job opportunities to women compared to men as fewer girls are allowed to go to school to get a formal education. Conversely, men take the lion share when there are job opportunities and thus they are able to control women. The intradiegetic narrator ironizes men's top positions in this way: "Mr. Salako was our branch manager, the most senior manager in the bank." (Atta 16). Women are thus placed in a state of vulnerability and weakness.

Due to their position of underlings in a male-controlled society, women constantly face sexual harassment from their male partners who hold the financial power. This is confirmed in Sefi Atta's novel when the intradiegetic narrator gives an account of how Tolani and Rose are frequently sexually harassed by Mr. Salako, their imperialist and domineering boss: "[...] Rose had complained about him many times before, how he'd passed comments about her body, grabbed her hands and tickled her palms. A few times, he had tried to hug her and she pushed him away." (Atta 16). It appears that as the term 'hegemony' is one of the key concepts of postcolonialism, it is "useful for describing the success of imperial power over a colonized people"

(Ashcroft *et al* 107), Mr. Salako, as a true 'coloniser', has exerted his 'imperial power', as the bank branch manager, over the two powerless, weak, and young women or 'colonised people' by taking an unfair advantage of them. Oddly enough, the oppressed female subordinates get sacked as they refuse to satisfy Mr. Salako's sexual lust; and this, with the support of the other men who are supposed to defend the workers at the bank. So, it is almost impossible for women to escape from their persecutors at work because of the bossy system of patriarchy.

In family life, the effects of patriarchy are also felt in postcolonial Africa. Indeed, the institution of marriage is one of the powerful tools of patriarchy to maintain women under male subjection. Life is divided into two sectors, namely the public sector and the private one. Under the system of patriarchy, men work in the public sector while women are kept into the private sector to be controlled by men. According to Mary L. Wentworth, this is how patriarchy operates and helps men keep an iron grip on women. Indeed, she contends that:

A key factor in the subordination of women is the institution of marriage. This institution effectively divided the world into two spheres: the private realm and the public arena. The overwhelming majority of the world's women live out their lives in this private realm where each husband reigns supreme in his own patriarchal-given fiefdom. Over the centuries women have been allowed on the fringes of the public arena in order to sell produce at a neighborhood market, to work as servants, or to labor in factories where they have been mercilessly exploited or, in more recent times, as teachers, nurses, secretaries or social workers under the careful supervision of men. But, by and large, the public arena has been posted with a Men Only sign (Wentworth 6).

Sefi Atta knowledgeably denounces this state of things in her novel. Indeed, in Lagos, Tolani talks about the Chidis family. They have seven children. She introduces Papa Chidi in the following terms: "[...] after work, he walked around the compound with his cloth knotted from his shoulders, looking like a small chief". (Atta 241). As for Mama Chidi, the intradiegetic narrator Tolani says that despite their having seven kids, "Mama Chidi was pregnant again and her stomach was two paces ahead of her. I was sure she would have been an academic anywhere else in the world. Here in Lagos, she was a housewife [...]" (Atta 241). Papa Chidi works in the public sector and Mama Chidi is compelled to stay in the private sector to care for the children. Mama Chidi works as a housewife and is a prolific child-bearer like many other women in the neighbourhood. In the private sector, most women are not rewarded for their efforts. In general, they depend on their husbands for survival. Consequently, they are financially weak and dependent on men. Tolani, the main character of Atta's novel, describes her neighbourhood peopled with many women practicing different small activities for survival: "I passed a woman selling cigarettes by kerosene light." (Atta 100) and "Some children were playing, others were helping their mothers sell." (Atta 102). Through the system of patriarchy, women do not enjoy financial freedom; the practice of patriarchy robs women of their liberty, it places them in a state of permanent dependency and deprives them of their emancipation.

Patriarchy is a social system which has been developed by men to reinforce their position of superiority against women. To maintain women in this state of inferiority, men usually resort to violence. Sefi Atta denounces the physical violence that some female characters suffer in her novel published in 2010 through the intradiegetic narrator "[...] Franka's husband often beat her [...]" (Atta 18). Franka is not alone in the case because Tolani expresses her concern about physical violence against female characters in the Nigerian megalopolis:

Rose had been with eight men in the time I knew her. She had even been with a Lebanese. One man threatened to pour boiling water on her; another kept coming to our office to see her, until she called his house to tell him to stop and discovered he had a wife. But what was the sense in changing men like that? Men who beat, men who stole, men who could kill. You could never guess what they were really like by looking at their faces. They were all over Lagos and I did not want to know them (Atta 10).

Tallying with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory, one can infer that male characters in Sefi Atta's *Swallow* develop a phallic personality in that they "tend to use sex as a means to discharge emotional tensions and will often have sexual relationships that are superficial and lacking in love or affection" (Ellis 114). On this score, these male characters batter their wives bringing about the battered women's physical and psychological sufferings. Rapes, beatings and sometimes killings are examples of physical violence against women. Other women suffer psychological violence through verbal abuses, intimidations and sexual harassments. At their office, the oppressed female characters Tolani and Rose regularly suffer psychological violence from their domineering manager, Lamidi Salako.

Fed up with their constant oppression under patriarchal rule, some oppose such ascendancy by retaliating upon their male torturers. Accordingly, Ashcroft *et al* posit that "the experiences of women in patriarchy and those of colonized subjects can be paralleled in a number of respects, and both feminist and post-colonial politics oppose such dominance" (93). As a matter of fact, in Sefi Atta's *Swallow*, some female characters fiercely resist men's bullying. Surprisingly when the female character Tolani is asked to take over from Rose after being fired for slapping Mr. Salako, Tolani points out: "I felt as if I was being transferred to a war zone" (Atta 50). Tolani is aware that she too will suffer psychological torture from her new boss. And true to fact, she does suffer intimidations and sexual assaults from Mr. Salako. Oddly enough, society somehow legitimates this evil against female characters because male violence against women, no matter what the form, is generally condoned. The phallic authorities generally turn a blind eye on male violence against women.

From all that has been said so far, it is plain that patriarchy is a serious evil confronting women in postcolonial Africa. Its impacts are severely felt by womenfolk who find it difficult to free themselves from that phenomenon.

## II- POVERTY AND FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

Poverty is arguably one of the serious issues the African continent faces; yet, it is claimed that women suffer more from poverty than men because the African patriarchal social system has established a number of barriers to maintain women and girls in a state of stark poverty. In this part of the present article we are going to delve into the factors that cause women's poverty.

Indeed, one of the root causes of poverty amongst African women in postcolonial era is illiteracy and low education. As mentioned before, the key to wage work is formal education; unfortunately, illiteracy rate among women is higher than men's because the African social organization does not promote women's formal education. Instead, women's education is regarded as less important or useless. Omar accurately mentions some factors which limit women and girls' access to formal education:

Several factors such as culture, religious beliefs, and economic situations contribute to the staggering global illiteracy rates among young girls and women. In many countries around the world young girls are not educated because parents feel that they will get married and it

would be a waste to invest in them. Others do not send young girls to school for safety reasons, in fear that she might get raped along the way thus leading to dishonor for the family (1).

Women and girls are discriminated against in the field of education; most rural African parents think it is pointless to educate their female kids. As a result, in Africa, illiteracy rate among women is very high compared to men and thus very few of African women rank high in the management. On this note, Muriungi posits that:

Although gender gap has reduced in primary and secondary education, gender disparities persist in tertiary education (technical and university) and participation rates are equally low at secondary school level. Disparities are also more prevalent among tertiary education programmes with male students dominating such courses as engineering, technology and finance. This contributes to limited knowledge among women to excel in more lucrative sectors such as manufacturing and highly profitable entrepreneurship programmes (118).

At a very early age, girls, in South Saharan Africa, are trained to work and care for their family. Sefi Atta finds fault with this situation through the social situation of the female character Philomena, Mrs. Durojaiye's maid as the intradiegetic narrator puts it: "Philomena couldn't have been more than thirteen years old [...]" (Atta 99). Indeed, the female character Philomena does not have any opportunity to attend school because of her gender; in the patriarchal system, the role reserved for women is to take care of children at home. That is why they are trained to fit that role from an early age. Conversely, boys are allowed to go to school because people believe they are the future breadwinners and as such formal education is primarily necessary for them.

Accordingly, girls and women suffer from illiteracy more than men in the African context. This situation brings about the problem of unemployment as women are not trained to get the required qualifications to get wage works. So, women are trapped in a vicious circle which results into their being in the throes of poverty. Illiteracy and poor schooling which cause unemployment are factors causing poverty among African women.

Another factor which favours women's poverty is the system of marriage. Sefi Atta provides many instances which are detrimental to women and participate to their impoverishment. Undoubtedly, the whole system of marriage, in a male-controlled society, places women in a position of subordination. Indeed, men are masters and as such they are the ones who decide what women can do or cannot. Because women are subordinated to men in the system of marriage, they are bound to limit their personal ambitions and capacities. For example, Sister Kunbi, Brother Tade's wife, is not a free woman; she is hardly allowed to go out: "She could go no further than that stall of hers without his knowing where she was going and how soon she would be back." (Atta 125). Women are treated as maids who are bound to behave according to their masters' will. This attitude of men inhibits women's capacities and ambitions. When women enter into wedlock, they lose their freedom; they cannot undertake any financial activities without the consent of their husbands. In general, their role is limited to the home. Worse still, their work at home is not even rewarded. So, women are actually exploited by men who do not give them any opportunity to be financially independent.

The system of marriage is not in favour of women; it does not provide them with the means to get financial autonomy. It reinforces men's power over women and nurtures women's financial dependence. In the mind of the African men, a woman should be financially inferior to a man; and if need be, a man must prevent his wife from accessing the economic ladder. A

woman's economic prosperity is seen as a threat to her husband's domination. Hence, Brother Tade orders Arike, his brother's wife, to stop doing her business and stay at home to have children. In actual fact, the female character Arike is more prosperous than her husband because she has undertaken some activities which generate a lot of money; Brother Tade is worried about this situation. He expresses his position to Arike in the following lines: "I'd certainly be mortified that you earn more than me, but he [my brother] doesn't seem to care" (Atta 152). So, Brother Tade orders her to close her activities in order to reduce her financial autonomy. This decision negatively impacts Arike's financial activities and consequently exposes her to poverty. In short, the institution of marriage arguably paves the way for women's poverty because women are placed in a position of subordination when they are in wedlock.

### III- A PLEA FOR AFRICAN WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

In the light of the foregoing, something needs to be done to improve African women's living conditions. Steps should be taken by decision makers to change the image of African women in the society. Many feminist associations are campaigning for women's emancipation in the world and specifically in Africa where women face tremendous challenges due to mentalities which relegate them to the side-line. First and foremost, the problem of female illiteracy is a serious issue that should be overcome. Governments should promote girls' education in that when more and more girls are educated, they are able to compete with men and obtain well-paid jobs. As long as girls are excluded from the educational systems, women's emancipation will be utopian. Formal education is a basic human right and as such, all girls and women should be given the chance to be educated so as to be safe from the yoke of poverty and male domination. In addition to being a right in itself, literacy allows the pursuit of other human rights. It confers a wide set of benefits and strengthens the capabilities of individuals, families and communities to access health, educational, economic, political and cultural opportunities. The importance of education is patent, especially for women's empowerment. Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi and Valentine M. Moghadam, in a report entitled "Empowering Women, Developing Society", opine that:

In the increasingly open global economy, countries with high rates of illiteracy and gender gaps in educational attainment tend to be less competitive, because foreign investors seek labor that is skilled as well as inexpensive. Various global trends pose special challenges to women who are illiterate or have limited education. Economies' export orientation and the growing importance of small and medium-sized enterprises create opportunities for women, but women need the appropriate education and training to take full advantage of these opportunities. (Roudi-Fahimi & Moghadam 4)

These findings plainly show that education is a very powerful and effective tool for women's empowerment.

Apart from promoting female education, authorities should see to it that women be financially independent from men. Sefi Atta's novel exemplifies the power and the amount of respect that financial freedom can give to women through the female character Mrs. Odunsi. Mr. Salako rapidly obeys her with awe when she gives him orders because she is financially powerful. Rose and Tolani are aware of the power that money can confer on them when they get rich: "We had seen enough to know that it was possible for a woman to walk into a place and people might almost help her to wipe her ass just because she had money." (Atta 207). If Mrs. Salako meets Mrs. Odunsi's demand with respect even though she is a woman, it is because she is rich.

Another woman in Sefi Atta's novel who proves that women need financial autonomy to be respected and safe from poverty is Arike, Tolani's mother. Indeed, she is financially independent from her husband because she is doing business as cloth dyer and savings collector, which has brought in a lot of yield to her. Owing to her financial self-sufficiency, she enjoys more freedom than other women in Makoku. She is even able to feed her daughter and husband on her own. So, her husband respects her.

It is impossible to help someone against their will. Women themselves should wake up to their living conditions and the body of discriminations they suffer, otherwise, the struggle for their empowerment and emancipation will be doomed to failure. Women are conditioned to view themselves as inferior to men and most of them accept their situation without taking any steps to liberate themselves from the exploitation of their enslavers. Truth be told, women are the ones who educate children and the role that boys and girls should have is defined from childhood. Women, thus are the ones who educate girls to be inferior beings; unconsciously, they participate in maintaining and spreading patriarchy when they educate boys and girls differently, preparing them to assume different roles in future. In one word, women are also to blame because they are responsible for their position in the African society and the perpetuation of the patriarchal system. On this score, Mary L. Wentworth unambiguously denounces how female children are prepared to accept to be inferior people in future:

The patriarchal family, then, forms the basic unit for maintaining social order, training and socializing children for the gender roles, unequal as they are, that they will be when grown. Daughters learn at a young age to cope with emotional and physical abuse, to do the hard work and perform the menial tasks involved in the care of a family. By emulating their mothers, daughters do not see it as out of the ordinary that they are not paid for this work when they are wives and mothers (7).

The homodiegetic narrator carps at this reality through the way the female character Mama Chidi educates her ten-year-old daughter: "Chidi already cooked and washed baby's nappies. She fed her brothers and sisters who couldn't yet feed themselves [...]. I pitied Chidi the most, even though she was always cheerful." (Atta 243).

The onus is on African women now to reverse the ongoing marginalization by giving both boys and girls an equal and fair education. Equality between men and women should start from childhood through an education that is free from injustice. And only women can do that since they are the ones who give children the basic education. So, they can help change mind-sets as far as their position in society is concerned.

## CONCLUSION

The problem of women's emancipation is still a serious one in postcolonial African fiction because female characters continue to face discriminations of many kinds. Sefi Atta's *Swallow* does confirm this fact. This study has shown that the practice of patriarchy is still gaining ground in the black continent and the African woman faces a lot of marginalization and injustice because of her gender, regarded as the weaker sex compared to men. The spread of patriarchy and its structures in our society cause women to be considered as inferior to men.

This paper has also demonstrated that because of patriarchy African women are confronted with the problem of poverty which has more and more a woman's face. That is to say, more women than men bend under the yoke of poverty today in Africa. And this is due to the high illiteracy rate among women which prevents them from getting the required qualifications to have

wage works. As a consequence, women are financially dependent on men. Sefi Atta also castigates the system of marriage which is an institution that does not promote women's emancipation. Actually, the whole system of marriage is detrimental to women in traditional Africa.

To achieve women's emancipation, decision-makers should promote female education and see to it that women be financially independent from their husbands for the spouses to be complementary. But above all, women themselves should be the key players in the struggle for their emancipation; they should change the perceptions that society has towards them by promoting equality between genders through the basic education they give to both boys and girls.

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**PROTOCOLE DE RÉDACTION**

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**Lettres d'Ivoire**, Revue de Littératures, Langues et Sciences Humaines, est une revue scientifique de l'Université de Bouaké. Sa parution est semestrielle. Elle alterne numéro libre et numéro thématique.

Le comité de rédaction de la revue ne publie que des articles originaux de haut niveau qui se rapportent aux Lettres, aux Langues et aux Sciences Humaines et rédigés selon les instructions du présent protocole de rédaction. Tout article qui ne respecte pas les exigences de présentation du protocole ne fera pas l'objet d'examen même si le contributeur s'est acquitté de ses droits.

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Le titre de l'article, le nom de l'auteur, son adresse électronique ainsi que l'université de provenance de l'auteur sont indiqués en début de texte.

Le corps du texte comprend nécessairement une introduction, un développement et une conclusion.

L'article, accompagné de résumés en français et en anglais d'environ 100 mots chacun et de 5 mots-clés, n'excède pas 5000 mots.

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Le texte dactylographié en Arial Narrow 12 justifié est à interligne 1,5.

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Le nombre de cartes, de photographies, de tableaux et de figures complexes doit être réduit pour des questions de logistique.

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Elles ne sont pas en italique.

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**III-2-6 :** Toute modification typographique apportée à une citation doit être signalée par une modification en fin de citation : nous soulignons.

### **III-3 : Références et notes de renvoi**

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Les notes infrapaginales figurent au bas de chaque page et paraissent de façon continue (à chaque page).

L'appel de note est en exposant et suit immédiatement, avant les guillemets fermants et toute autre ponctuation, la citation ou le mot auquel il se rapporte.

Les titres d'œuvres prennent l'italique, de même que les expressions en langue autre que le français.

La première fois que l'on cite un titre ou un texte, une note donne sa référence bibliographique complète.

Pour un ouvrage, la note se présente comme suit : Prénom Nom, *titre de l'ouvrage*, ville d'édition, maison d'édition, année d'édition, pagination.

Pour un ouvrage collectif, n'inscrire que le premier auteur du collectif suivi de l'abréviation latine *et al.* en italique.

Pour un article, la note se présente comme suit : Prénom Nom, « titre de l'article », *titre de la revue*, ville d'édition, année d'édition, n°, pagination.

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Le volume et le numéro sont en chiffres arabes.

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NOM (Prénoms), *Titre*, nature du document (Thèse, Mémoire), Université de soutenance, année.

Exemple :

ANOHI (Adjé Joseph), *Jeu et enjeux du discours rapporté dans l'œuvre romanesque d'Ahmadou Kourouma*, Thèse de Doctorat d'Etat, Université d'Abidjan, 2011.

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NOM (Prénoms), « Titre » ou « Titre. Sous-titre » de l'article, titre de la revue en italique précédé ou non de la mention in ou dans, volume et/ou numéro, mois et année ou saison et année, pp. x-y.

Exemples :

JACQUEY (Marie-Clotilde), « Entretien avec Massa Makan Diabaté : "Etre griot aujourd'hui" », in *Notre Librairie : Littérature malienne*, n° 75-76, 1989, pp. 72-86.

SENGHOR (Léopold Sédar), « Femme noire », in *Poèmes*, Paris, éditions du Seuil, 1964, pp. 14-15.

##### **III-3-2-3 : Dans le cas d'un ouvrage à auteur unique ou d'un collectif**

NOM (Prénoms), *Titre* ou *Titre. Sous-titre*, Lieu d'édition, maison d'édition, collection s'il y a lieu, année.

NOM (Prénoms), « Titre », dans Prénoms NOM [dir.], *Titre*, Lieu d'édition, maison d'édition, collection, année, pp. x-y.

Exemple :

PAILLIER (Magali), *La Katharsis chez Aristote*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2004.

##### **III-3-2-4 : Dans le cas d'un article ou d'un ouvrage publié sur un site électronique**

NOM (Prénoms), « Titre de l'article » ou « Titre. Sous-titre » de l'article, *Titre de la revue* en italique, numéro : *Titre du numéro* en italique, date de mise en ligne s'il y a lieu. Adresse électronique complète précédée de la mention URL : et suivie de la date de consultation entre parenthèses.

Exemple :

DOMINICY (Marc), « L'évocation discursive. Fondements et procédés d'une stratégie opportuniste », in *Semen* n°24 : *Linguistique et poésie : le poème et ses réseaux*. Mis en ligne le 17 mars 2008. URL : <http://semen.revue.org/6623>. (Consulté le 5 août 2011).

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