

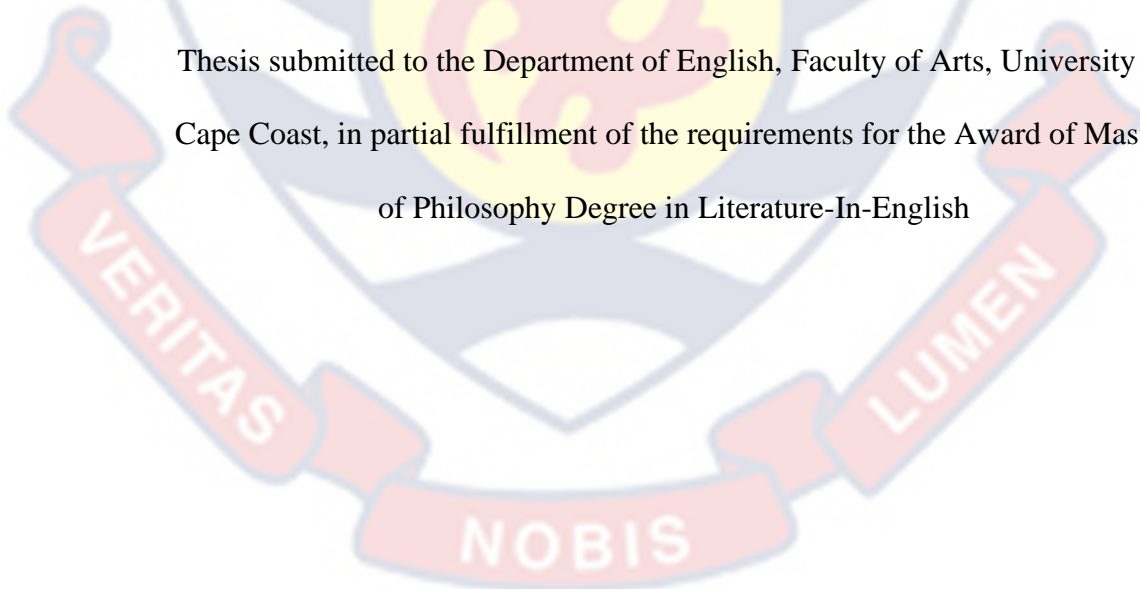
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

HOMOSEXUAL TENDENCIES IN BESSIE HEAD'S *A QUESTION OF
POWER*, EVELYNE ACCAD'S *WOUNDING WORDS* AND AMMA
DARKO'S *BEYOND THE HORIZON*

BY

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Thesis submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of
Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Award of Master
of Philosophy Degree in Literature-In-English



MARCH, 2021

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature Date

Name:

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature..... Date

Name:

Co-Supervisor's Signature Date

Name:

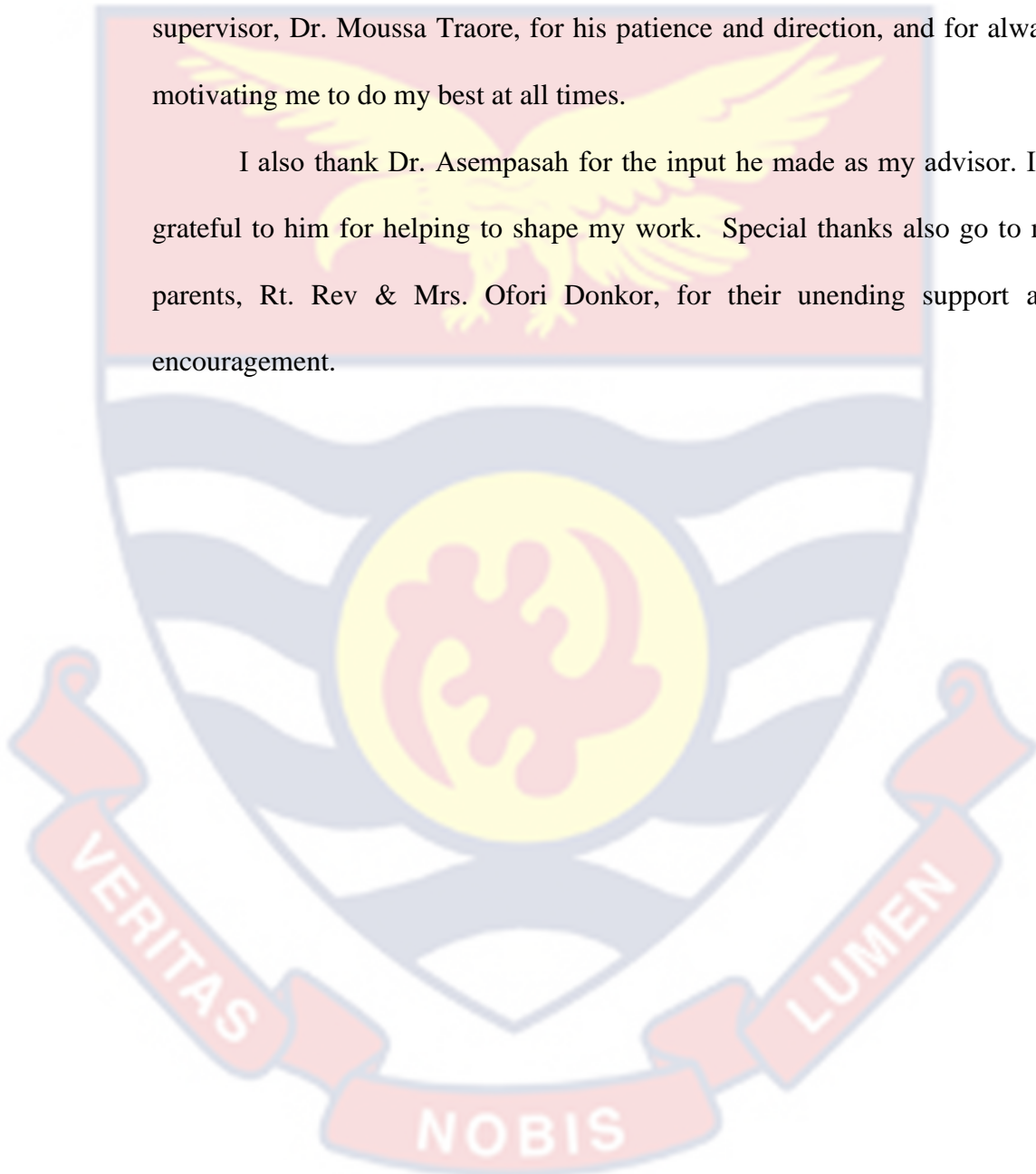
ABSTRACT

This study explores three selected African texts to identify the writers' representation of homosexuality, and the hidden homosexual signs within a supposedly heterosexual environment created by the writers. The fact that all three selected texts are written by female authors is only coincidental, and therefore has no effect on the analysis. Issues arising from the analysis of the three texts reveal a pattern which, though portrayed differently, exists in all three texts. This pattern is, the African, and therefore the African writer, believes in the old and longstanding ideology that homosexuality is a Western practice imposed on the African continent. Inasmuch as the writers of the texts use varying styles of writing in crafting their works, they all seem to hold one message, which is, the African is not ready to swallow the hidden truth that homosexuality did exist in the continent; it is rather homophobia that was imported by the whites. By using queer and psychoanalytic lens, an identification is made of certain characters who are supposed to be heterosexuals indeed exhibit homosexual tendencies, though these tendencies are not glaring. This answers the first research question: in what ways do the characters selected in the texts portray homosexual tendencies? This assertion is developed by using homosexual signs and colour symbols, and also with the help of Sigmund Freud's (1905) various theories on human sexuality. Freud's (1905) theory, for instance, helps to expose how the id, or the unconscious part of the brain, influences human decisions and behaviour. The choice to use Freud solely is due to his belief that all of human's urges are based on a sexual desire.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Rt. Rev & Mrs. Ofori Donkor, and to Dr. & Mrs. Kingsley Donkor.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Questions	7
Significance of the Study	7
Delimitation	7
Limitation	8
Theoretical Framework	8
Lesbian and Gay Theory	8
Psychoanalytic Theory	15
Dreams and Hallucinations	17
Psychoanalysis and Literature	19
Research Methodology	20
Organization of the Work	21
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	22
Empirical Review	22

Theoretical Review	37
The African Perspective on Homosexuality	45
Conclusion	52

CHAPTER THREE: PORTRAYAL OF HOMOSEXUAL TENDENCIES

IN THE TEXTS

Introduction	54
Analysis	54

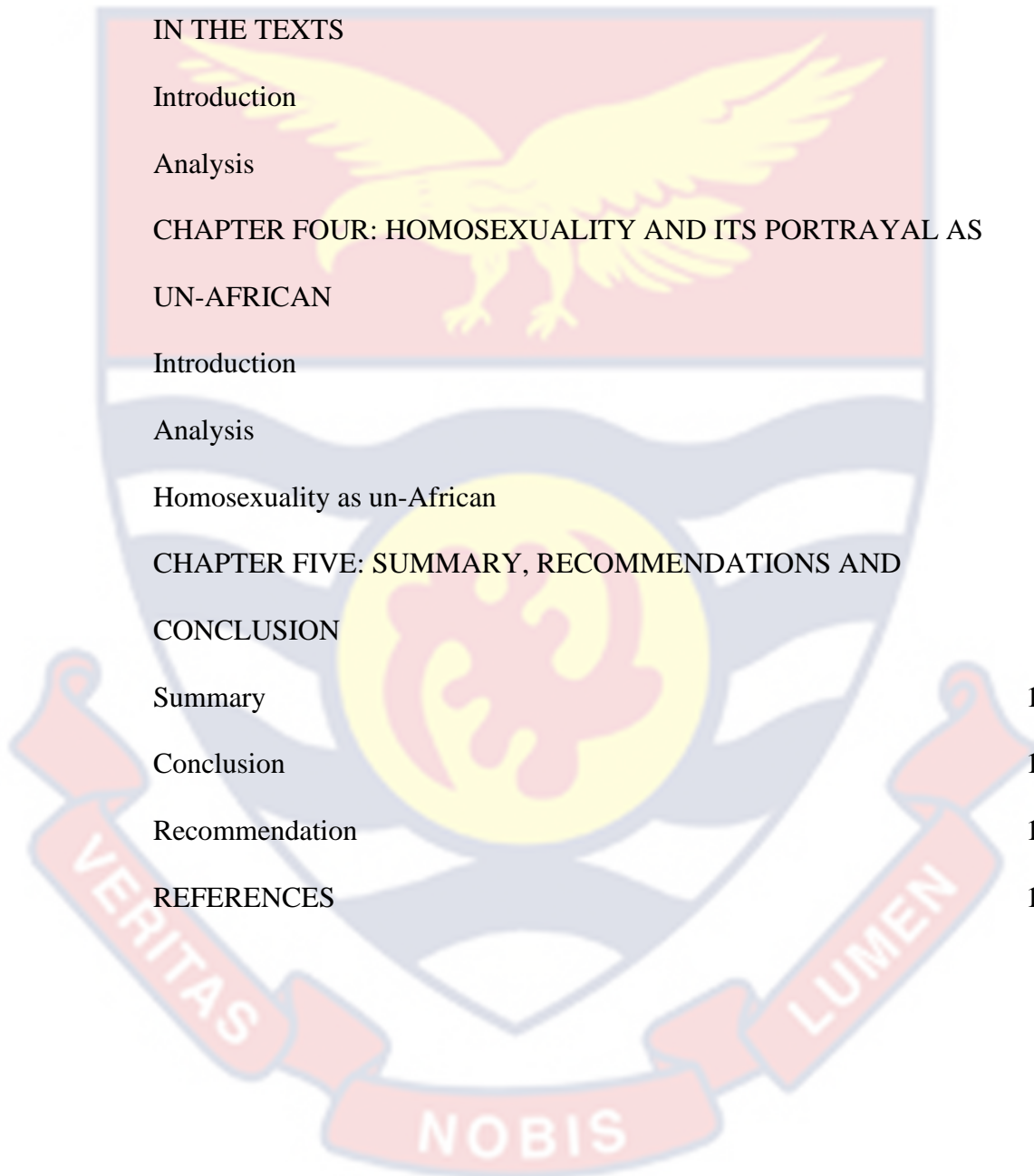
CHAPTER FOUR: HOMOSEXUALITY AND ITS PORTRAYAL AS UN-AFRICAN

Introduction	85
Analysis	85
Homosexuality as un-African	99

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary	104
Conclusion	106
Recommendation	108

REFERENCES	109
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Quite arguably and due to its universality, the traditionally accepted sexuality among humans has been heterosexuality, especially in Africa, from the beginning of time. American historian and author, Jonathan Ned Katz (1990), asserts that heterosexuality is as old as procreation, “ancient as the lust of Eve and Adam... unchanging, universal, essential” (p. 231). Katz however expresses that between 1820 and 1860, heterosexuality, in terms of sensuality, was not in existence, and that “Early Victorian True Love was only realized within the mode of proper procreation, marriage, the legal organization for producing a new set of correctly gendered women and men” (p. 231). Tyson (1999), an author and associate professor of English, explains that up until the 1970s where gay and lesbian movements started springing up, anyone who considered himself or herself ‘different’ – involved any other form of sexuality apart from heterosexuality – could never come out, for fear that he/she would have to face social condemnation. Over the years, ‘queer’ has been used as an umbrella term for those sexual activities that are different from the socially accepted form of sexuality, that is, male-female sexual relations, also known as heterosexuality, as posited by English professor and author, Jagose (1996), in her book titled *Queer Theory*. People regarded as homosexuals were put through harsh treatments such as lobotomy, aversion therapy and genital burning or electric shock, as a way of ‘correcting’ their immoral conducts, so to speak.

According to Tyson (1999), even when these movements sprang up, homosexuals were blamed for the spread of HIV/AIDS and child molestation, and up to the 1970s and 80s, homosexuality was treated as a psychological disorder and included in the American Psychological Association's list of psychological disorders. Jagose (1996) explains that throughout much of the twentieth century, 'queer' was a pejorative term to describe homosexuals, particularly males. She describes queer as "those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire..." (p. 1). Presently, the issue of homosexuality is no longer an odd subject, especially in America, where the act has been made legal in some states. However, this is not the case in Africa. South African writer, Chris Dunton (2007) explains in his article "Wheting be dat? The Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature" that the practice of homosexuality by Africans has been treated with silence, and this silence has been defended by the identification of homosexuality with the West.

Homosexuality has become a subject greatly discussed all over the world, though some years ago it was even a taboo to mention it. Some western writers have joined hands with various scholars and activists in openly discussing issues concerning sexuality. African writers like Ayi Kwei Armah and Chinua Achebe either condemn the act through their characterization or present it as a disease brought into Africa by Westerners. In *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah (1973) does so by creating an Arab predator whose desire was to spend most of the night with his young askari, and never had any sexual desire for the female body. This act of presenting homosexuality as un-

African can be seen in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words*.

Tamale (2014) also explains that “the sad, tired but widely accepted myth that ‘homosexuality is un-African’ has been valorised and erected on the altar of falsehood time after time” (Tamale 3). She explains further that this myth has been played out in a lot of contexts, though historical facts show otherwise and seek to debunk the ‘homosexuality is un-African’ myth once and for all. The same view is shared by Dunton (2007), who posits that, “the practice of homosexuality within African society remains an area of experience that has not been granted a history by African writers, but has been greeted, rather, with a sustained outburst of silence” (p. 733). British editor and writer Bernardine Evaristo (2014) also raises the issue of homosexuality being treated in Africa as a ‘white disease’ in her work “The Idea That African Homosexuality was a Colonial Import is a Myth.” She ends by pointing out what a character in her novel, *Mr. Loverman*, said, that the word ‘homophobia’ is what was brought into Africa, and not the act of homosexuality” (Evaristo 2). This idea is shared by Tamale (2014) and several others, who believe that homosexuality is not defined by a geographical area.

As identified by Dunton (2007), Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* presents homosexuality as a behaviour brought into South Africa by apartheid. Historical studies however show that homosexuality was practised in some parts of Africa long before the invasion of the whites. African journalist, Patrick Ayumu (2015), in an article, identifies evidence of homosexuality in various parts of Africa, including E. Evans Pritchard's recording of the Zande of Northern Congo, who practised a custom which allowed older warriors to

marry younger men between the ages of twelve and twenty, the young boys serving as wives, sexually and domestically. Author of *Homosexuality in Africa: Issues and Debates*, Deborah Amory (1997) asserts that the existence of homosexuality in Africa is not new, and that there is a long-standing history of some African involved in same-sex relations – there is clear evidence suggesting that colonization and mission work rather altered a lot of African sexual practices, since such practices were condemned and seen to be abnormal and barbaric by the white man. She also mentions that it appears the disgust and homophobic views expressed by the whites are what could be at play (Amory 5)

This and other facts revealed by various historians and scholars create some doubt about the notion which has been upheld for so long, that homosexuality is un-African.

Statement of the Problem

The attitude of a number of Africans towards homosexuality, as pointed out by Tamale (2014) and Evaristo (2014), creates an uneasy atmosphere for the subject to be discussed. Some African writers therefore choose to be silent about it and thus confine it to a geographical area. Homosexuality is seen as a residue after the departure of colonial masters who invaded Africa (Tamale, 2014). A blind eye has therefore been turned on the possibility of its existence before colonization, thus its treatment as a disease or disorder, and not as part of human sexuality, as most Westerners see it. Evaristo (2014) points out that one of the most ridiculous myths about Africa is that homosexuality did not exist in the continent until the arrival of the white man, and writers extend this ‘myth’ into their writing, though there are

documents suggesting otherwise. Sylvia Tamale makes mention of the Ndebele and Shona in Zimbabwe, the Azande in Sudan and Congo, the Nupe in Nigeria, to name a few, who engaged in same-sex acts for spiritual rearmament during precolonial times (p. 4). This idea of homosexuality being un-African is thus carried by some African writers into their writings, where characters portraying homosexual tendencies are either influenced by whites or presented as having some sort of psychological illness.

The thesis statement is that some African writers tend to present Africa as a continent with no knowledge of homosexuality, hence creating characters who are heterosexual. Also, homosexuality is presented in African texts as a Western practice, which is in contrast with what some historians and scholars, like Marc Epprecht (2009) and Kehinde Okanlawon (2015), have found. I, therefore, intend to study some selected characters in books chosen in order to identify behaviours and attitudes, and even utterances, which suggest homosexual tendencies. By so doing, it is revealed that selected characters are not as heterosexual as they are presented to be. Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words* will be used for my study, to determine how same-sex desires play out.

Synopses of Texts

Amma Darko is a Ghanaian writer born in 1956 and known for writing several books, including *Faceless*, *The Housemaid*, *Not Without Flowers* and *Beyond the Horizon*. *Beyond the Horizon* is her first novel. *Beyond the Horizon* is a story that gives an account of a woman, Mara, who is made to marry a man looking out for his own interest. Mara is taken to Germany by her husband, Akobi, with the hopes of having a better life. Things, however, do

not go as planned as Mara is made to work as a prostitute as a way of making money for her husband. The novel explores the abuse and exploitation women go through at the hands of their husbands, and other men.

A Question of Power is a South African novel written by Bessie Head.

Bessie Head was born in South Africa in 1937 and has done well to produce several works of art, some of them being *Maru*, *The Cardinals*, *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *A Woman Alone*. *A Question of Power* is an autobiographical novel that gives a picture of a woman's mental struggles as she tries to make sense of who she is. The main character, Elizabeth, leaves South Africa to Botswana after divorcing her husband. While in Botswana, she goes through a series of mental battles and illness and struggles to live a normal life. The struggles continue to the end of the story, where she is able to finally overcome her struggles and accept who she is.

Evelyne Accad is a Lebanese writer and educator who has written many works that centre on women issues and sexuality. She was born in 1943 and lives in the United States, France and Lebanon. Her works include *Sexuality and War*, *Wounding Words*, *The Excised* and *Veil of Shame*. *Wounding Words* captures the lives of a group of women in Tunisia who seek to have their voices heard and take charge of their own lives. Hayate, the main character, visits Tunisia and forms friendships with some of these women. Hayate later comes to the realization that though there is a common issue of patriarchy worldwide, the women in Tunisia hold a different view in terms of how they want to handle feminism and patriarchy in their country. Hayate however makes some friends as she explores the issues affecting Tunisian women and the choices that are made available to them.

Purpose of the Study

This study analyses the selected texts to identify the homosexual signs in them and also shows how writers of these texts present homosexuality as un-African. This work is not to determine the intention of the writers – it is rather to draw to light, the subtle ways the theme of homosexuality plays out in the texts.

Research Questions

The study will find answers to the following questions:

1. In what ways do the characters selected in the texts portray homosexual tendencies?
2. How is homosexuality treated as un-African in the selected texts?

Significance of the Study

My research can serve as a source of information for students who wish to know how sexuality is portrayed by African writers in their works. It also serves as an opportunity for students and researchers to find new interpretations for literary texts, other than what is presented before them. This study can hopefully add to existing literature on the existence of homosexuality in Africa.

Delimitation

Accad's *Wounding Words*, Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Head's *A Question of Power* were used for my study. The reason for the selection of these texts is based on two main points – writings that depict homosexuality as a western import, and heterosexual characters with homosexual tendencies. These texts meet such requirements. This is not to say for a fact that the writers intentionally left room for a queer reading to be done or that it was

their intention to create a homosexual atmosphere around the characters to be analyzed. As explained earlier, there is no justification as to why all three texts are by female authors, since the selection was coincidental.

Limitation

It would have helped to use a larger quantity of books from different parts of the continent, in order to give a wider view of homosexuality in different parts of Africa. However due to limited time and space, only three books were selected for analysis.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by lesbian and gay theory, and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Freud's (1905) psychoanalysis serves as a supporting theory for a broader analysis, and also give a better understanding of the selected characters' decisions and relationships. Selected works by Freud include "Repression" (1915), "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905) and "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1900).

Lesbian and Gay Theory

Though lesbian criticism and gay criticism have different concerns, they have certain similar attributes. They are also listed under queer theory, which involves various forms of human sexuality apart from heterosexuality. This includes bisexual, transgender, and pansexual. Though sometimes used interchangeably, queer theory and queer studies differ in a sense that queer studies is the study of sexual orientation and gender identity. Queer theory is a way of thinking that challenges the traditional assumptions and definitions of gender and sexual identity. It serves as a lens through which queer studies is done. My work, therefore, uses lesbian and gay theory (which falls under

queer theory) to do a queer studies of selected texts. Homosexuality is sexual or romantic attraction between people of the same sex. Homosexual tendencies urges or inclinations that suggest romantic or sexual attraction to someone of the same sex, and is not consciously expressed.

Lesbian and gay theorists have coined some terms to give a clearer view of what the theory involves. Theorist and scholar Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) explains 'minoritizing views' as a way of understanding gay and lesbian encounter and happening that focus on their (gays and lesbians) position as minors in society. She also explains 'universalizing views' as the comprehension of gay and lesbian encounter that aims at seeing the possibility of homosexuality in all human beings. One of the concepts that stress the position of inferiority of gays and lesbians is biological determinism, which is the view that a only a particular number of people in a society or community is born gay, just as we have another set of people being innately heterosexual.

According to Joan Nestle (1981), lesbian criticism and feminist criticism stemmed out of the same root; they both sought to fight the patriarchal system. Both have similar concerns, in that they deal with issues of personal identity and politics. The difference, by looking at works of some feminist and gender scholars – including Sedgwick (1990), Butler (1990), Woolf (1929) – is that while feminists look at issues of sexism and the difficulty in gaining a personal identity for women, lesbians look at both sexism and heterosexism.

Lesbians do have an interest in gaining a personal identity for themselves – the difference is that they do so by fighting the heterosexual community as well. Lesbians believe that heterosexuality serves as another

way of empowering men and making women slaves to men, thereby enforcing the patriarchal system. To some lesbians, patriarchy and heterosexuality cannot be separated. It thus becomes relevant to mention that some lesbians are separatists. Separatists dissociate themselves completely from every male figure, and this includes men who are homosexual and women married to men, as a means of resisting the patriarchal system.

Adrienne Rich (1980) explains that a woman does not have to have the desire to sleep with another woman before she can be called a lesbian. She explains her term, 'lesbian continuum' as experiences shared by women – the sharing of a rich inner life, and creating bonds that fight against patriarchy and also providing support for women.

Rich (1980) again explains the term 'lesbian existence' as comprising:

both the fact of the historical presence of lesbians and our continuing creation of the meaning of that existence... comprises both the breaking of a taboo and the rejection of a compulsory way of life. It is also a direct or indirect attack on male right of access to women...a form of naysaying to patriarchy, an act of resistance (Rich 136).

A lesbian reading of a text would look at how female homosexual characters and macho or manly women are portrayed in literary works about and by lesbians, study supposedly straight texts to learn how they react or respond openly or secretly to the issue of homosexuality; the idea is also to reveal ways that some literary works are given the forced or compulsory heterosexual definitions and explanation (Tyson, 1999). Gay criticism veers towards an approach quite different from lesbian criticism, and the concerns of

the gay community also differ from the lesbian community. Gay criticism is not primarily concerned with self-identity or definition of homosexuality. The issue of gay sensibility is of relevance to gay critics. In Stockinger's (1974) own words:

The obvious function of gay criticism is to articulate its own concerns and then provoke other critical methods into confronting and responding to concerns... Gay criticism must be a watchdog of its own interests making sure that its message will not be deliberately or 'inadvertently' filtered out by critical intermediaries (Stockinger 304).

Though Stockinger's view was shared many years ago, it does not erase its impact on the gay community. Stockinger's (1974) research is one that is well appreciated and recognized by most gay critics and still being used in the gay community. A more recent article by Said Ahmed Aboudaif (2015) rather calls for new ways in defining queer theory, stating that there has to be a rethink to meet recent demands, and that "literary criticism is no longer able to add much and cope with the issues of the 21st century." (p. 76). It is acknowledged that there have been some changes in theoretical issues, but those changes do not meet the demands of recent times. Despite differences in theoretical issues, there are a number of similarities in how gay men and lesbians deal with literary works of art. Just as seen among lesbian analysts, gay analysts try to make out what gay expressions are made of, how these can have any effect on expression in works of art learn ways homoeroticism can be seen in writing that are known to be heterosexual.

There are some terms used in both lesbian and gay criticism which help when doing a homosexual analysis of a text:

- Homophobia – negative behaviour or attitude shown towards gay people, which is mostly woven into a people's laws and beliefs.
- Homoeroticism - erotic depictions that imply same-sex attraction or that might appeal sexually to a same-sex reader.
- Butch – lesbians who are masculine in behaviour or appearance
- Same-sex 'doubles' – people who are similar in terms how they look, and are more of a reflection of each other. They also may have gone through similar circumstances or situations. who look or act alike, or have similar experiences.

These terms are identified in selected texts and they help to give a better understanding of why certain characters are regarded as having homosexual tendencies.

As explained by Tyson (1999), 'queer', as used by the lgbt community, seeks to do away with the divisions created, and rather use it as a form of belonging and oneness. Once the term 'queer' was, at best slang for homosexual, at worst, a term of homophobic abuse (Jagose, 1996). The term was first used by the heterosexual world to refer to homosexuals as strange and abnormal, but later homosexuals adopted it to defend themselves and to make a statement. Homosexuals believed that heterosexists should not be allowed to define gay and lesbian experience. Tyson also explains that the term queer has been adopted by gay men and lesbians "as an attempt to re-appropriate the word from what has been its homophobic usage in order to demonstrate that heterosexists shouldn't be allowed to define gay and lesbian

experience” (p. 336). By using the term to define themselves, homosexuals make a powerful statement: that they determine who they are, not a group of people who do not understand their experiences, or, as their slogan goes, “We’re here, we’re queer – get used to it” (Tyson, 1999). Queer theory explains human sexuality as being dynamic and flowing – it can change at any point in one’s life. In this sense, the theory seeks to say that there is nothing fixed when it comes to one’s sexuality. For queer theory, human sexuality is dynamic and can change at any point in one’s life. Also, the theory carries the view that our sexuality is socially constructed; our sexuality is not inborn, but defined by the culture we live in. What queer criticism does is to identify signs and subtle ways heterosexuality is portrayed, and the response given to same sex attractions by writers and some characters in texts. It also studies texts to explore the weaknesses that exist in presentation of human sexuality.

Sedgwick (1990) asserts that the lesbian interpretive framework available in the 1970s was the separatist-feminine one, and, according to that framework, “there were essentially no valid grounds of commonality between gay male and lesbian experience and identity; to the contrary, women-loving women and men-loving men must be at precisely opposite ends of the gender spectrum.” Though this may be true, both gays and lesbians are primarily concerned with gaining the rights and privileges that are afforded to the heterosexual community. Lesbian existence may however be more concerned with political rights and privileges. Rich (1980) explains that “Lesbian existence suggests both the fact of the historical presence of lesbians and our continuing creation of the meaning of that existence.” (Rich 648). This involves a homosocial awareness that is not deemed essential in gay existence.

Sedgwick (1990) also describes the homosocial existence between men, positing that in a society dominated by men, homosocial desire exists amongst men, and this serves as a way of maintaining and promoting patriarchy. She explains further that this relationship may take the form of ideological homophobia, ideological homosexuality, or “some highly conflicted but intensively structured combination of the two” (Sedgwick 687).

One other thing lesbians and gays have in common is the use of the rainbow colours which symbolize plurality and love of life (Schmoger, 2001). Gilbert Baker’s (a gay artist who created the Rainbow Flag) original design had eight stripes, each having a symbolic meaning for the gay/lesbian community. Presently, pink and indigo have been taken out:

- Red – living
- Orange – healing
- Yellow – sunlight
- Green – nature
- Blue – art
- Purple – soul

The use of these colours in texts adds to the appreciation of a character under analysis, even if it is used subtly.

Queer theory takes ideas from various theories like Derrida’s deconstruction, Marxism, feminism and post-structuralism. Dwelling on Derrida’s assertion that nothing is fixed or stable and that there are no binary opposites, queer theorists are of the view that one’s sexuality cannot be determined by society, and the binaries heterosexual/homosexual are a social

construct meant to favour one over the other. There are some similar features in queer and lesbian/gay analysis:

- Homosocial bonding – non-sexual same-sex bonds. This can produce an atmosphere that could be openly or subtly homoerotic (Flood, 2007)
- Gay or lesbian signs – There are two types of these: features that heterosexist culture stereotypically associates with gay men or lesbians, and coded signs created by the gay or lesbian subculture itself.

Michael Flood (2007) concludes in his essay that male-male relations give meaning to the social and sexual involvement of young heterosexual men in powerful ways. Further explanation is given that homosocial bonds are guarded against the “feminising and homosexualising influences of excessive heterosexuality” (Flood 355). This notion is however not accepted by all theorists, as homosocial bonding is regarded as a form of homosexual interest. Arguably, homosocial bonding is found in almost every form of community and perhaps serves as a tool to identifying homosexual existence.

Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory deals with the conscious and unconscious nature of the human mind, and how our thoughts affect our emotions and everyday life. Stemmed from Sigmund Freud’s (1905) psychoanalytic theory, it is used in literary criticism to study characters and authors to identify childhood traumas, repressed sexual impulses, preoccupations with death and so on” (Delbanco & Cheuse, 2010). Freud’s (1905) theory maintains that societal rules forced on man act as the reason for the inhibitions and repression put on the sexual instinct. One would sacrifice more or less depending on the

person's make up (Freud 1923). Also, Freud believed that everything we do is influenced by the unconscious part of our brains. Freud also asserts that everyone's personality has three structures, and each structure performed a different function. These three structures – the id, ego and superego – influence the decisions made by a person, and that there had to be a balance of the three structures to create a mentally healthy individual.

Freud also believed that homosexuality, as well as any form of sexuality, is determined by a combination of social psychological and environmental factors. He regarded sex as a fundamental aspect of human existence which, when ignored, could be chaotic for the individual. According to Freud (1931), homosexuality, which he also called inversion. This inversion starts at a young age in one's life, where a child would be drawn to the parent that shows him or her much love – that parent then becomes the child's love object. The child then grows to love the people with that gender.

As explained by Freud (1905), the id is controlled by the pleasure principle, which seeks to satisfy the pleasure one feels. The id always seeks pleasure and tries to avoid pain. A lot of other psychologists, like Jacques Lacan (1960) and Carl Jung (1949) disagree with Freud's idea that every urge a person has is based on sex or that everything was about sex. King (2009) explains that though that may be true, Freud (1905) does not mean sex in its actual sense; to Freud, sex is an organ pleasure, and anything that gives pleasure is sex. The id is the impulsive and unconscious part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to the instincts. The ego, according to Freud (1905), deals with reality, or operates by reality principles. The superego deals with what is right and wrong. It controls the urges of the id; in

other words, it uses morals as a tool to keep the id in check, and to make one act according to society's expectations. King (2009) asserts that the superego is reflected in what we call 'conscience' and evaluates the morality of our behaviour. Further interpretation is given by Tyson (1999) that:

The id consists largely of those desires regulated or forbidden by social convention... the superego or cultural taboos determine which desires the id will contain. The ego, or the conscious self that experiences the external world through the senses, plays referee between id and superego... all three are defined by their relationship; none acts independently of the others – a change in one always involves changes in the other two (Tyson 28).

Dreams and Hallucinations

Freud's (1900) essay on dreams and hallucinations is not a theory on its own, but rather adds to our understanding of psychoanalytic theory and its implementation in literary analysis. Freud's explanation of dreams and hallucinations reveals how powerful repression can affect one's unconscious mind, and the role our unconscious minds play when we sleep. Freud (1900) explained that the unconscious expresses itself freely when we sleep, ignoring all limitations. Imagery also plays a rather significant role in dreams. Freud's notion that our libidinal state affects every part of our lives oils what imageries can reveal about one's sexuality. There are both male and female imageries that can be interpreted as sexual symbols. The male or phallic symbols include rockets, guns, towers, swords, arrows or anything that has an upright position or goes off. Female or yonic symbols include caves, rooms, gardens, or any

type of vessel or holder (p. 22). Freud (1900) agrees with the popular belief that a dream is the secret place where all hidden desires are fulfilled. This is to say that whatever pleasure or desire one is not able to satisfy in real life, the unconscious takes over when one sleeps and uses dreams as a space to fulfil the desires that have been repressed, in order to create satisfaction. He goes on to explain that our dreams are expressions of the unconscious filled with desires buried there by the conscious mind. He again asserts that:

Dream may arise either from the id or from the ego... The ego gives evidence of its original derivation from the id by occasionally ceasing its functions and allowing a reversion to an earlier state of things... by breaking off its relation with the external world and withdrawing its cathexes from the sense organs... Since the waking ego governs motility, that function is paralysed in sleep, and accordingly, a good part of the inhibitions imposed on the unconscious id become superfluous. The withdrawal or reduction of these 'anticathexes' thus allows the id what is now a harmless amount of liberty (Freud 166).

However, though such 'harmless amount of liberty' may be attained, Freud points out that extreme repression can lead to mental trauma and neurosis. Neurotic symptoms are derivatives of the repressed, "which has, by their means, finally won the access to consciousness which was previously denied to it" (Freud 1246). The same can be said of hallucinations, which, according to Freud, are very similar to dreams. In his paper titled "The Interpretation of Dreams", Freud (1900) postulates that dreams present as hallucinations

through thoughts, and that a repeated thought or process shows as hallucinations of that same thought or process. This is compared to a memory of musical notes in one's mind, and how this would present itself as hallucinations when one is awake (Freud 231).

It therefore points to the same notion that it is only the repressed stimuli representing itself through different channels, and that dreams only serve as a way of relieving the mind.

Psychoanalysis and Literature

The use of psychoanalysis in literary criticism helps to extend a literary text to involve psychological aspect of the characters or author's lives, and it also blends with the literary criticisms such as Marxism, feminism and reader-response. A psychoanalytic reading of a literary text involves looking at how a character's unconscious state is played out and what it says about the character. It is up to the reader to determine which aspects or concepts of psychoanalysis operates in the text, as one may find that only a part of psychoanalytic theory is applicable. Freud does not forget to mention the use of writing as a tool by writers to deal with their psychological issues. He explains that artists are not so different from the one expressing fantasies and illusions through symbols. To Freud:

The artist has also an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become a neurotic. He is one who is urged by instinctual needs which are too clamorous. He longs to attain to honor, power, riches, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied

longing, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest and all his libido too, to the creation of his wishes in the life of fantasy, from which the way might readily lead to neurosis.

This point does not stand as the basis for writing, but it does give an understanding into various works of art, and also an understanding of the creators of such works. Chosen theories will be used as tools to appreciate selected characters and their interactions and behaviours towards issues concerning human sexuality. Characters that show a certain number of traits that define selected theories will be selected. Though these theories will not fully define who the characters are, it will help determine how and why they behave the way they do in certain situations.

Research Methodology

This is qualitative research. This study gathers needed information on the presentation of homosexuality in my primary texts, *A Question of Power*, *Beyond the Horizon* and *Wounding Words*. Related articles, books and journals were used as secondary sources to support my research. Relevant papers were also added to help make a detailed analysis of the issue of interest, that is, the portrayal of homosexual characters and the treatment of homosexuality as un-African in African texts. Data from primary texts and articles were analysed based on selected theories. Characters and their actions were studied individually and also through interactions with other characters, based on their relationships with people of the same sex.

Organization of the Work

The study is in five chapters. The first chapter, which is the introduction, comprises background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, theoretical framework and methodology. Chapter two consists of literature review, chapter three and chapter four involve analysis of data and discussion of results and chapter five comprises summary, conclusions and recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The previous chapter provided background information on homosexuality and the theories that were used in the studies. The thesis statement was also given in the previous chapter to serve as a guideline for this research. The issue of homosexuality being treated as un-African is not new, and this study is not the first to refute such claims. Various scholars have had a lot to say about the subject of homosexuality and how it is presented on the African continent. This chapter explores some of the literature available with regards to lesbian and gay existence, what queer theory says generally about one's sexuality, the African notion about homosexuality and a look at colonial and postcolonial African literature, under these headings – empirical review and theoretical review. Conclusions have drawn from the findings made.

Empirical Review

Though queer analyses of the selected texts – *A Question of Power*, *Beyond the Horizon*, and *Wounding Words* – are limited, there are queer studies on other African texts that give an insight to the African perspective on homosexuality. Queer studies is done by using queer theory as a lens through gender identity and sexual orientation is understood. It is not surprising to find that a lot of African writers choose to stay away completely from the issue of homosexuality. The thought that homosexuality is a Western vice is carried by most African writers into their writings, especially colonial writings. That notwithstanding, scholars and writers have brought out research and studies showing that homosexuality has been a part of African practices for years, and

that the only thing un-African is the name ‘homosexuality’, not the act. Marc Epprecht (2005) identifies that African novels portray homosexuality as something coming outside Africa to stain the continent. Writers create characters that are heterosexual, but begin to be sexually deviant once they come into contact with a white man. In *Two Thousand Seasons*, for instance, the author, Ayi Kwei Armah, creates a people free from any form of Western practices, as he puts it, until their community is invaded and taken over by Arab traders who force the suruki (soldiers) to have sex with them (p. 7). An analysis of Dibia’s *Walking With Shadows* and Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* reveals the same position a lot of writers take when raising the issue of homosexuality in their works (Okafor, 2015). The study identifies that Africans insist that gayness is ‘alien’ to the history of their people.

What is observed in *A Question of Power* is that the main character, apart from having a mental illness, is also confused by her own sexuality since she finds herself in a sexual act with some other women when she hallucinates. It seems that Elizabeth, the main character, has to fight what is evil in order to find herself. A similar observation is made in Ajayi’s (2009) analysis of the same text. A study of the psychology of the main character, Elizabeth, shows various ways in which she displays some level of confusion in terms of her sexuality. It is observed that the novel presents a story of the beginning and experience of neurotic problems in the life of the female protagonist, Elizabeth, and how it is linked to her sexual confusion. We find that Elizabeth struggles with accepting that she has homosexual tendencies. Homosexuality, according to Ajayi (2009), is a “social problem that causes Elizabeth’s mental agony and is linked to apartheid which involves

denigration of a group by the mere assertion of another group” (Ajayi 4). He opines that apartheid is the cause of social vices and wrongs, adding that one such vice bred and nurtured by apartheid is homosexuality. In Ajayi’s view, the coloured man in South Africa has lost his masculinity due to apartheid and the social vice (homosexuality) it plants in South Africa. Hence:

Elizabeth’s psyche cannot accept the fate of the coloured men with equanimity; it replays the symbolic nature of this denigration at a time when the conscious mind should be at rest and turns Elizabeth’s nights to torture periods (Ajayi 4).

Ajayi’s assertions raise speculations as there are no proofs or documents to support his claim. There is also no evidence to suggest that apartheid is what introduced homosexuality into South Africa. Argument can be raised that apartheid contributed to the increase in the number of people who practised homosexuality. What is evident is the practice of homosexuality in South Africa before colonial rule and apartheid, as reported in Murray and Roscoe’s (1998) work. Men with power in the mining sector engaged in homosexual practices (had sex) with young boys, and these boys served as ‘wives’ to the older men (p. 180).

Unlike the Western world where writers now write freely and openly about homosexuality and portray such ideas explicitly, it is hard to find an African literary work that discusses the issue freely. Amma Darko, in *Beyond the Horizon*, does what almost all African writers do, by blaming the act on the white man, though her main character, Mara, exhibits some lesbian tendencies before having any contact with a white man (instances will be seen

in the next chapter). A clear picture of the African perception of homosexuality is created through an assessment of Armah's text, *Two Thousand Seasons*. Lopang (2014) asserts that, "Armah suggests in *Two Thousand Seasons* that homosexuality is what separates the African from the European. Heterosexuality is what defines the black culture of family and identity..." (Lopang 81). Lopang identifies that though Armah mentions homosexuality in his text, it follows the same pattern of denial as shown in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Lopang (2014) explains further by saying that:

The idea is that this society and, by extension, African society prior to colonialism was exclusively heterosexual and had cultural and spiritual pillars that supported the institution of marriage... The idea that Armah wants to project is that women's primary obligation is to carry the seed of man and to populate the earth... What Armah suggests is that homosexuality is what separates the African from the European... The African homosexual is an individual with a fragmented personality, overwhelmed with shame and hopelessness... In African literature we see something entirely different, in that, though there is no proven litmus test to label a race as essentially homosexual and another as essentially heterosexual, the writers would like it to be this way (Lopang 81).

In agreeing with this assertion, the belief is that any act that is not heterosexual cannot possibly be conceived by the African mind.

Heterosexuality is not what defines the African culture, as it is evident that the idea of a heterosexual Africa has only been implanted in the minds of Africans for particular reasons, some of which are not known. There is no denying that African history has been filtered (mostly due to a lack of proper documentation) and, without the revelations made by scholars and archaeologists, what is left is a story that suits the social construct that Africa has always been a heterosexual continent.

There are several other African works where writers create a heterosexual environment and in the process present homosexuality as an outside practice. This idea is seen in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, and Bessie Head's *Maru*, to name a few. There, however, seems to be a new trend coming up in African novels and cinema in terms of how the continent now views homosexuality, though it is still presented in most works as Western. Frida Lyonga's (2014) analysis of two contemporary Nigerian Film, *Men in Love* and *Rag Tag* reveals the same African notion that homosexuality is Western (through the reaction of some of the characters). What seems to be rare in these two texts is that the authors are quite expressive in portraying the homosexual characters. Lyonga (2014) explains that Nollywood films on homosexuality "highlight heterosexuality with non-straight persons assigned back seat roles as secondary characters, who attempt to ruin heterosexual relationships but fail in the end" (p. 791). Lyonga (2014) recognizes that though the movie *Rag Tag* portrays male homosexuality as any other form of sexuality, it does not come freely without disapproval, in that Tag's (the main character) father is disgusted by the act and sees it as un-African. Nigerian cinema has however

changed in a sense that there have been productions in recent years where the main characters are homosexuals. An instance is the short film *Hell or High Water*, where a male pastor (who is married to a woman) who goes back to his boyfriend to rekindle their love. They are caught by the boyfriend's ex-wife and their secret is revealed. In the end, the pastor is denounced by church and family.

In Adenekan's (2012) work, the assertion is made that writers across the African continent play a key role in sexual politics, and that:

Some of the important literary figures of the last century positioned same-sex desire as part of the sexual excess that some urban Africans copied from the West, or as a trend that colonial rule brought to Africa. For some of the new writers in the online space, the figure of the homosexual African is no longer being used as a body that literature deploys in the project of talking back to the West or in the project of nation building; rather, writers and intellectuals alike in the digital age are pointing to this figure as being part of African history (Adenekan 104).

Though this may be true, the position taken by such writers seems indefinite, and so still leaves the impression that writers are talking back to the West through literature. Most of African writers using the online space appear reluctant in creating a homosexual African in their works, and are careful with how homosexuality is portrayed, though there are some who present homosexuality as an African practice, and not western. A rather bold work that

gives a different view is that of Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie. In *Jumping Monkey Hill*, one of the characters, Ujunwa, gets angry when a white man suggests that homosexuality does not reflect Africa (p. 108). This, obviously, is different from what is commonly seen in a lot of African texts. Adenekan (2012) expresses that emerging writers are able to express free thoughts online about sexualities since they are not controlled by politics of book publishing, and therefore use the digital age to reverse the long-lived ideology that homosexuality is un-African. Dunton and Palmberg (1996) also discuss the silent treatment given to homosexuality, and they assert that:

What remains conspicuous is the abstention among African writers, and even among the most searching and responsive of these, from a fully characterized and non-schematic depiction of a homosexual relationship between Africans... the practice of homosexuality within African society remains an area of experience that has not been granted a history by African writers, but has been greeted rather with a sustained outburst of silence. The identification of homosexuality with the West has helped defend that silence. An official history has concealed the reluctance of African writers to admit homosexuality into the bounds of a different kind of discussion.

(Dunton & Palmberg 733).

Other works by various scholars point out the same issues raised by Dunton and Palmberg (1996). Desai's (1994) analysis of *The Interpreters*,

shows Joe Golder, the main character, as an African-American who serves as a character used by Soyinka as an emblem of everything that is wrong with a Western-based romanticized Afrocentricity (p. 737). He identifies Golder as a man alienated from his Nigerian colleague, who read him as a doubly foreign person – not only is he an American, he is also one who engages in sexual practices unknown in indigenous Nigerian society. The atmosphere created by African writers who seek to support or defend the un-Africanism of homosexuality, just as is seen in *The Interpreters*, is welcoming for any African having the same belief, while it becomes difficult for writers with opposing views to fit into such space, for fear of being labeled.

Documented facts are hard to come by in terms of proving the existence of homosexuality before colonization, thus, it makes the argument unbalanced and almost always goes in favour of the generally accepted notion that it is a Western practice. Dennis Brutus' (1969) poem, *Letters to Martha*, gives the same message that homosexuality is a Western import. In the poem, the persona describes the temptations that come with apartheid – smoking, drugs and sodomy. He describes the 'fits and asthmas' experienced, and the pressures so great to enforce sodomy (p. 106).

Chimamanda's short story collection, *The Thing Around Your Neck* is worth mentioning as one of the few African literary texts that deserve attention. The first story in her collection, *On Monday Of Last Week*, is about a Nigerian woman, Kamara, who has moved to the United States and finds herself sexually attracted to another woman called Tracy, hoping that something fruitful will come out of the attraction. Kamara's hope is raised when she is asked by Tracy to pose as a nude model. Though nothing comes

out of this emotional attraction, Adichie gives a strong impression that Africans can be as homosexual as any white person without the initiation coming from the white person. It seems that Nigeria has taken the lead in erasing the silence that has existed for decades now over the issue of homosexuality and its presence on the African continent. Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* is seen to be one of the strongest books that talk openly about homosexuality in Africa. Ugandan writer, Monica Arac de Nyeko, is also one of the few writers who hold the same view as Okparanta and Adichie, as seen in her award winning *Jambula Tree*. *Jambula Tree* talks of two young girls caught in a sexual act on Ugandan soil. One of the girls, Sanyu, is taken to London and her 'friend', Anyango, writes a letter that recollects the moments they shared together and the shameful act that led to Sanyu being sent away. Anyango ends the letter by saying:

In the night you lift yourself up in my eyes each time,
again and again. Sanyu, you rise like the sun and stand
tall like the jambula tree in front of Mama Atim's house
(Nyeko 12).

The character feels no shame in the act, though she writes that she goes for confessions. No mention is made of a Western character. It is quite ironic that London is mentioned in the text as a place that is not welcoming to people who are seen to not be morally upright (p. 4). In an interview with the writer, Monica Arac de Nyeko stated that homosexuality is indeed a difficult subject and also points out the hypocrisy that surrounds the subject. The story created by Nyeko is not imaginative, as it is something that happens in reality, in that

there are a number of Africans who practise homosexuality, and do so in hiding.

Azuah (2005) raises a point that is quite known in both lesbian and feminist communities. He asserts that the voice given to lesbian writing is blamed on feminism, in that feminism is seen to “accommodate lesbianism which can be considered as a radical form of lesbianism. Both feminism and lesbianism are often lumped together as foreign to the African world-view” (p. 131). This is a wrong notion that is developed from misinterpretation and misunderstanding of what feminism is about. Some Nigerian women writers like Zaynab Alkali are not comfortable with their works being categorized as feminist writing. Such writers have sought to distance themselves from works and ideas that are suggestive of homosexuality in Africa

Woubi Cheri stands out as a perfect documentary to disprove the African belief that homosexuality is un-African. The documentary depicts a part of the Ivory Coast community where gayness is chosen as a form of lifestyle. ‘Woubi’ means a male who wishes to play the role of a wife, including having sex with the male partner. In no way are these people persuaded or coerced into the act of homosexuality, and the people accept it as being part of the culture. There is no shame in the practice, and the people have a rather different perception about homosexuality. As the Nigerian movie industry continues to explore various themes that were once seen in Hollywood, it has gained recognition when it comes to the issue of homosexuality in African art and literature.

Another study made about African art debunks claims that homosexuality is not African (Lamp, 2015). It reveals that homosexuality has

been part of African culture for years, where various forms of ambiguous sexuality were found throughout African traditional art, some including images of androgyny, hermaphroditism, and transvestism. Mention is also made of various African cultures that depict homoeroticism, where:

Man-boy sex, or at least the representation of it, is most common. Among the Temne of Sierra Leone, for example, the last boy to be initiated is given the name 'Tithkabethi' (vagina initiate). Boys in initiation often wear women's clothes, as documented among the Temne and among the Nandi of Kenya. Among the Ndembu of Congo (Kinshasa), the chief instructor of the boys' initiation is called the 'husband of the novices', and the novices themselves are called 'mwadi' (senior wives), and are said to be 'married by the chief male visitors to the initiation lodge (Lamp 3).

Various instances are mentioned, and there is a clear depiction of the phallus as the most common use of eroticism in African art – phallic representations that are made by, made for, and used by men exclusively. There is also cross-dressing in African art, with men dressing as women in various African ceremonies (Lamp, 2015). These and many other articles have been successful enough to prove that Africa is not distinctly a heterosexual continent, and the knowledge of homosexuality has been known to Africa for a very long time.

Most African women writers have also taken up the course to debunk such claims that any form of sexuality is un-African. Women in Northern

Mozambique and Lesotho are examples of same-sex relationships and sexualities, located outside of the heterosexual norms in Africa (Yvonne Vera, 2005). These relationships were socially and culturally accepted in Mozambique, and were celebrated by women and their husbands in the Lesotho context, maybe because they existed alongside women's heterosexual relationships and were not disruptive to the gender power system. Vera suggests that "Maybe, it is not homosexuality that is un-African; but that it is Western constructs of sexualities and homosexuality, located within a dominant Western discourse and applied to sexualities in the African context that is 'un-African.'" (p. 1). This may however not be the case, in that very little recognition has been given to the subject of sexuality in Africa. Also, there is little or no difference between African and Western sexuality. The difference lies in what is commonly known and accepted.

In examining African literature during colonialism and how sexuality was portrayed in texts, a reason given for the silence of writers is that they – the writers – felt the need to construct an 'upright' African image (Lopang, 2014). Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is mentioned as a "classic example of a text that was ultra conservative in its image of black sexuality." Lopang opines that:

It is possible that Achebe's reason (and that of the writers who sought to bring to attention an alternative view of the African identity) to omit sexuality from his text was to shatter the stereotype of the insatiable African... Even when African writers depict heterosexual experiences, the narrative is functional at best (Lopang 2).

Sexual expression in most of West African literature is completely erased, in that most of the characters display little pleasure, and even when they do, it is given very little space in said novels, as writers sought to raise issues pertaining to oppression and social stand. Ferdinand Oyono is seen as one of the writers who choose to “portray his male indigenous characters as sexually disinterested during colonialism. Lopang (2014) makes the observation that:

There is thus, for the reader, a realization that a discourse on sex and society had no role to play in telling the African experience; that it was anathema to building a profile of the African image... Writers focused solely on issues that addressed what to them was the African condition in the midst of the white man’s incursion... This is odd, in that if writers wanted to show the detrimental effects of colonialism, the issue of homosexuality should have been explored essentially, since it is alleged that African homosexual is a myth. Works of the early African writers suggest that deviant sexual behaviour was non-existent among the blacks and among the whites who lorded over many such Umofias and Dangans that Achebe and Oyono depict (Lopang 2-6).

From Lopang’s submission, what may have been missing for early writers was a proper documentation of African sexual practices. There is also the possibility that writers at the time were not interested in the topic of sexual

practices as a major problem of colonization. Writers were perhaps only interested in what they believed was a direct effect of being ruled by the white man. Again, while there was evidence to prove the negative effects of colonization, one that was hard to prove as Western import was homosexuality. According to Epprecht (2005), the African explanation for men and women who were sexually abnormal is that there are humane ways of understanding people who were not heterosexuals. There was a sense of even honouring such people because of the understanding or interpretation given to people who were homosexuals. It is also very uncommon to or rare to find African literature with lesbian themes, though there are a few documentaries that talk about it:

African cultures had ways to explain those men and women who did not fit the social ideal. These included a wide range of spirit possessions, most commonly, a male ancestor inhabiting a living female person, and vice versa ... Knowing that Africans today are arguing from it eloquently and courageously can help to dispel commonly held stereotypes of Africa as totally heterosexual and as a passive victim of the international development scene (Epprecht 138).

There also exists what is identified as the 'new voice' in lesbian writing. Azuah (2005) describes the emergent lesbian voice as a voice that is very different from existing feminist writings and positions. These new voices portray female characters in sexual and emotional relationships with women. The works of these authors introduce lesbian characters into their stories, a

trend hitherto from Nigerian feminist literature. Mention is made of some texts of Nigerian writers, stating that:

The texts of these writers reflect the finding of the preliminary survey that there is indeed lesbianism in Nigeria but that it tends to be hidden in the lives of the Nigerians who marry but keep homosexual partners outside of their marriages... These characters in the stories of Shoneyin, Abioye, Okekwe, and Azuah live such double lives. In their lesbianism, these characters show a marked difference from characters in previous feminist writing... (Azuah 132).

There are several other examples of works that give a good description of representations of homosexuality in African cinema, Alexie Tcheuyap (2005) states rather bluntly that “Africans do not see any sense or pleasure in enjoying the ‘dirty parts’, parts through which all the stinking ugly substances are drained.” (p. 143). The African has no interest in displaying sexual pleasures in the public eye, and so it becomes odd to display such acts in African novels, let alone displaying it in movies. With the growing interest in the existence of homosexuality in Africa, the best approach would be to unveil the facts that are available only to a few Africans who have chosen to explore the mysteries that hang around the subject of homosexuality.

There exist some criticisms done on the *Wounding Words* and *Beyond the Horizon*, mostly based on issues of patriarchy and subjugation of women. Kammampol's (2017) work on *Beyond the Horizon* discusses the harsh treatment women are made to go through in a society whose system favours

men. He mentions that in a quest to show her “anti-patriarchal tendencies, Darko portrays the male characters as “drunkards, rapists, exploiters predators and monsters” (Kammampool 2). As identified by Dunton (2007), even works done on the representation of homosexuality suggest that it is alien to Africa, and that it was imported by the white man. This therefore creates a gap for further studies to be made on how some African writers present homosexuality in their texts. Though some modern African writers have begun to openly discuss this issue in their works, there are still a few post-colonial writers who believe homosexuality was conceived by the white man, just as we will see in the texts I have selected for my analyses.

Theoretical Review

Queer theory assumes that our personal identities are unstable and in constant flux, and this is drawn from Derrida’s deconstructive theory. It is a theory that is powered by deconstruction, feminism, and psychoanalytic theories. Berlant and Warner (1995) have this to say about queer theory:

Queer commentary takes on varied shapes, risks, ambitions and ambivalences in various contexts. The danger of the label ‘queer’ theory is that it makes its queer and non-queer audiences forget these differences and imagine a context (theory) in which queer has a stable referential content and pragmatic force. The panicky defensiveness that many queer and non-queer humanists express has to do with the multiple localities of queer theory and practice (Berlant & Warner 344).

‘Queer’ is an umbrella term for the various forms of sexuality some people identify themselves with, excluding heterosexuality. Some theorists posit that instead of theorizing queer in terms of its opposition to identity politics, it is more accurate to represent it as ceaselessly interrogating both the preconditions of identity and its effect (Jagose, 1996). The implication of this assertion is that there would have to be a shift in queer representation and understanding. However, it would seem quite impossible to do away with theorizing queerness since identity politics has become part of the design of queer theory. It is also mentioned that the term ‘queer’ is used to describe a growing theoretical approach which has progressed from studies in homosexuality (p. 1). Queer theory analyzes various forms of deviations such as homosexuality, bisexuality and cross-dressing, whereas lesbian/gay studies solely analyzes homosexual identities and culture. This research focuses mainly on homosexuality in the African context.

Sedgwick (1990) asserts that the word it was during the last quarter of the 19th century that the word ‘homosexual’ came into Euro-American discussion, though the practice had been in existence before then – it is only the name that was unknown. Agreeably, the lack of name does not erase the existence of the practice. Stockinger (1974) also reveals that for a very long time, no one dared to go beneath the surface and read the symbols of artists and works of art, when doing so might discover homosexuality. Stockinger (1974) mentions the many journals and resource materials available for gay criticism in literature, and points out that “gay criticism is rapidly becoming a force which conscientious critics and teachers will have to confront” (Stockinger 304). Writing about homosexuality at the time when the name was

not even known meant going through a lot of harassment and criticisms. This is not the case now; there are a lot of literature on homosexuality, especially in countries where homosexuality is legal, like Canada and U.S.A. Much of what has been done in lesbian/gay criticism identifies homosexual tendencies implicitly or explicitly in literary texts. This is shown through the use of certain colours, nature, and also through the behaviour and deconstruction of characters who carry such tendencies.

Gay men and lesbians, for several years now, have had to fight for rights and privileges extended to people who are heterosexual. Homosexuals with HIV/AIDS were not treated because it was believed that they were the cause of that ailment and at the same time, it would have served as a way to cure the world of homosexuals. Mark Blasius (1992) explains that:

When the psychiatric definition of homosexuality-as-illness was overturned through political problematization of the power of psychiatrists by the lesbian and gay movement, the AIDS epidemic then allowed for the remedicalization of homosexual sex as disease producing, generating yet another political problematization through AIDS activism (Blasius 644).

Presently, homosexuality is no longer seen as an ailment, and homosexuals with HIV/AIDS receive treatments, though there is still more to fight for. The lesbian/gay community sees this as homophobic and does not understand why they are not given the same treatment as the heterosexuals. According to Rich (1980), terms like 'homophobia', 'heterosexism' and 'heterocentrism' place lesbians and gay men in a minority group, stating

women identification as a source of energy, a potential springhead of female power, curtailed and contained under the institution of heterosexuality. A more recent work by Layli Phillips (2020) explains that both heterosexism and homophobia encompass all forms of oppression related to sexuality, sexual orientation, preference, gender role and gender expression, “particularly when any of these fall outside what society deems normal or traditional” (Phillips 1). Further explanation is given that such terms are placed upon homosexuals by the heterosexual group with the aim of obtaining dominance, and that one’s sexual object should not be determined by society, but by the individual. Though this point is greatly accepted by the gay community, and even used as a centre of their argument, there are other theorists and psychologists, like Sigmund Freud, who believe that homosexuality is only an inversion one experiences. Freud’s (1905) work on human sexuality explains that people whose sexual objects are people of the same sex are referred to as ‘inverts’. According to Freud (1905), people who are inverts in behaviour are attracted to people of the same sex, noting that persons of the opposite sex are never the object of their sexual desire, but leave them cold, or even arouse sexual aversion in them (Freud 619). Psychology, however, does not give a remedy for homosexuality, if it is truly a mental disease. The notion of homosexuality being a mental illness has long been discarded. It can however be applied if there are signs of neurosis, just as is displayed by Elizabeth in Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power*. Freud’s (1905) assertion that homosexuality could be an inversion of one’s normal sexuality is disputed by Sylvia Tamale (2014), who makes her argument from the point that sexuality and gender cannot be separated. For Tamale:

Sexuality and gender go hand in hand; both are creatures of culture and society, and both play a central role in maintaining power relations in our societies...

Gender provides the critical analytical lens through which any data on sexuality must logically be interpreted (Tamale 16).

These assertions, therefore, point to the idea that a race or continent cannot be taught or made to practice a particular form of sexuality – whatever form of sexuality one chooses to practise already exists within the person. Society only determines which one is preferred and seen to be normal. Though Tamale (2014) describes both gender and sexuality as social labels, she fails to identify what is regarded as a fact for a lot of people. The reality still remains that one is born with some particular sex organs that determine whether to refer to a person as male or female. As will be seen in the analysis, one's sexuality does not change the gender a person belongs to, whether biologically or socially determined.

There is also an argument that homosexuality should be viewed as “an ethos rather than as a sexual preference or orientation, as a lifestyle...as a subculture, or even as a community” (Blasius 644). In explaining further, Blasius (1992) views ethos as a more suitable way of understanding lesbian and gay existence politically, stating that:

The key to understanding ethos is through the lesbian and gay conceptualization of ‘coming out’, understood as a process of ‘becoming’ in which the individual enters into a field of relationships that constitute the

lesbian and gay community... living as a lesbian or gay man consists in more than a sexual orientation, a lifestyle, or even being a member of a community... a shared way of life through which they live (Blasius 642).

Viewing homosexuality as an ethos requires that there has to be a redefining of homosexual identity; in a bid to push for acceptance, the homosexual community has politicized their identity, which now seems to be the main agenda for its existence. A brief history is given by Valverde (1985) in *Sex, Power and Pleasure*, where she states that both sex and love between women were part of European and American culture from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century "...while strictly speaking there were no lesbians until the turn of the twentieth century." Valverde (1985) again affirms that:

Sexual activity between women was the object of the voyeuristic fascination of decadent French poets who fantasized about kinky sapphists... However, this sexual activity was not envisaged as a real alternative to the heterosexual life. It was an exotic spice to relieve the sexual boredom of courtesans or the men who orchestrated these proto-pornographic encounters. This kind of sexual activity was rare and confined to the social fringes... The romantic friendship of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was an accepted feature of social life that did not assume the women

involved were in any way deviant or anti-heterosexual (Valverde 77).

From these assertions, it appears the only thing absent from this era of sexual relationships between women was the term 'lesbian.' Though confined and rarely spoken about, it was more of a lifestyle than a political agenda. There seems to be a shift in terms of why homosexuality is practised in the West and in Africa. In the Western world, there has been a move from advocating for homosexuality to be a norm, to advocating for legal and political rights. African homosexuals are however not free to publicly make their sexual preferences known, one main reason being that it is criminalized.

History has it that the decisions of particular men and women to act on their erotic/emotional preference for the same sex, along with the new consciousness that this preference made them different, led to the formation of an urban subculture of gay men and lesbians (D'Emilio, 1983). According to D'Emilio (1983), the answer to the question of how "the complex, well-developed gay community emerged can be attributed to WWII (p. 467). There is the position that the war disrupted traditional patterns of gender relations and sexuality, and temporarily created a new exotic situation conducive to homosexual expression. This is to say that, having been separated from their families and from the world for so long a time, these soldiers satisfied themselves, emotionally or sexually, by creating relationships with their own kind. Evidently, the common thread existing in works by various historians is that at a point in time, there was a growing interest in same-sex relationships, and this was caused by a separation between the male and female gender. During the 19th century, the need for a community that cared and provided

affection for its members arose, and from this community there has been an emergence of political concerns surrounding homosexual experience. Presently, the concerns of the lesbian and gay community do not border only on emotional support, but also on the need to be accepted and given the same opportunities that have been made accessible to the heterosexual community, as mentioned earlier. Arguably, the focus of such individuals who had separated from their spouses was to satisfy themselves sexually, doing away with any nuance associated with being a homosexual.

It is submitted that some male writers during the 1890s chose to portray the male body in a form that was either loathed or loved by readers, depending on their sexual interest (Sedgwick, 1990). Friedrich Nietzsche and Oscar Wilde were used by Sedgwick (1990) as examples, with Wilde described as the “embodiment of, at the time, a new turn-of-the-century homosexual identity and fate... a late-Victorian sentimentality” (Sedgwick 132). The case still remains that one’s sexual preference affects how homosexuality in writings is received. There is, however, an increase in the number of heterosexuals who are not bothered or are accepting of homosexuality as a norm. Geographical location also counts as a factor, in that the western world, like America and United Kingdom, receive creative works that depict homosexuality with little or no debate, whereas creating such works in Africa raises a lot of questions and derision. Another aspect to Sedgwick’s (1990) assertion is that the male body no longer gives away the man’s sexual interest. Males with feminine attributes were once regarded as gay, but currently it is hard to tell just by physical features. There are well-

built muscular men who are gay, just as there are men with feminine features who are not gay.

Again, Sedgwick (1990) gathers that the female body is described in a way that appeals to lesbian readers. A man's body described in any sensual form is quite uncommon and thus, either scares the homophobic or excites the gay man who cannot openly show it. It is therefore not surprising, according to Sedgwick (1990), to find that there is domination of lesbians and homophobia over gay existence, creating more gays hidden in the closet. The female sexuality takes very different and diverse paths from male sexuality.

The African Perspective on Homosexuality

Works by scholars like Pearse (1983), Tamale (2014), Evaristo (2014) point to the hidden truth that Africans are not ready to accept that homosexuality was practised on the continent before the arrival of the Europeans. It is not clear how Africans came to the conclusion that homosexuality is a foreign practice, but we cannot deny that some Africans are into this practice, irrespective of what their religion tells them. Africans generally believe that anything morally wrong with the continent is an imposition by the western world. The idea that the whites are the ones responsible for anything bad or unacceptable does not erase the acts, but rather suggests that Africans are vulnerable and dependent on the Western world.

There are several works that point to the fact that Africa is made up of thousands of ethnic groups with rich and diverse cultures and sexualities (Tamale, 2014). Mention is made of the San people near Guruve, Zimbabwe, as an example, where their ancient cave paintings depict two men engaged in some form of ritual sex. Another instance given by Tamale (2014) is that of

precolonial times in Uganda where the ‘mudoko dako’ or effeminate males among the Langi of northern Uganda were treated as women and could marry men, and also in Buganda, one of the largest traditional kingdoms in Uganda having an open secret that Kabaka (king) Mwanga II, who ruled in the latter half of the 19th century, was gay (Tamale 3-4).

Quite a similar opinion is expressed by other authors, like Chris Dunton (2007), who asserts that a lot of African writers, such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Wole Soyinka and Kofi Awoonor portray homosexuality in their texts as a ‘Western disease’ or an imposition made by the Europeans during colonial era. The fact that great writers like these believe in ‘the homosexuality is un-African’ myth, goes a long way to influence the general public into accepting it as the truth. Again, constructing stories that suggest that homosexuality is a western import disregards the various historical facts that say otherwise. A study of homosexuality in Africa by Whipple (2010) reveals that for a lot of Africans, homosexuality:

as it exists nowadays is unknown to traditional African societies. There was no man-to-man sex... In contrast traditional chiefs of priests in the process of their enthronization were known to have lived in isolation and therefore participated in ‘recurrent’ masturbation to satisfy their sexual desires. This is what was perceived as homosexuality (Whipple 2).

Evidence shows that this was not the case. Historical reports disprove the idea that Africans had no knowledge of homosexuality prior to colonization.

Whipple (2010) goes on to say that at the time of African colonization, the legality of homosexuality in France and England was different. According to his study, England had criminalized homosexuality in the sixteenth century during the rule of Henry VII and continued through the twentieth century. Presently, homosexuality in England is no longer criminalized – in fact, there has been an increase in the number of people who identify as homosexual (“The Guardian”, March 2020). France, on the other hand, had abolished the criminality of homosexuality after the French Revolution in 1791. This would mean that Africa’s criminalization of homosexuality is rather what was imposed by colonization, and not the practice of homosexuality. The analysis also shows that only one of England’s old colonies has legalized homosexuality, the old colony being South Africa. Some African countries where the practice of homosexuality calls for death penalty include Uganda, Sudan and Algeria. Also, from 2007 to 2011, the percentage of legally discriminatory countries fell from 75% to 69%. It is safe to say that it is homophobia that was brought into Africa. It brings to question the African belief that Africa as a continent was once ignorant of the act of homosexuality.

It is also documented by Murray & Roscoe (1998) that among the Nkundo (of the then Belgian Congo), the younger partner penetrated the older one, a pattern quite contrary to the usual pattern of age-graded homosexuality (p. 143). There are also reports of Nkundo women acting as ‘husband and wife’, and married women engaged in such act. The opinion is made by Murray that the denial of homosexual behaviour in a culture should caution against acceptance of claim that there is no homosexuality in a culture on the

basis of lack of mention in any particular ethnography. Lianne LaFrance (2016) posits that:

Claims that same-sex behaviour is not indigenous to African cultures are the result of various discursive practices and other factors that have established and reinforced the belief in a singular, exclusively heterosexual African sexuality... Racist and heterosexist assumptions colonial imperatives and proximity to colonial and postcolonial regimes led many authors to ignore, discount and trivialize homosexuality in African cultures in favour of affirming that Africans were singularly and exclusively heterosexual (France 8).

Lianne (2016) points out the fact that Africans are silent when it comes to the issue of homosexuality and that this absence of discussion has led many to believe that homosexuality is indeed foreign to Africa. The African notion that homosexuality is a western import makes it easier to not discuss the topic at all, since discussing it may imply opening up space to acknowledge its presence. The submissions made by Murray & Roscoe (1998) and Tamale (2014) are enough to pay closer attention to works that explore African sexualities before colonization. The objective is not to normalize queer acts, but to create awareness of Africa's history and to do away with the wrong information that we as Africans have been fed with for so long a time.

In addition, Fortuin's (2015) work affirms the same African ideology concerning homosexuality – that it is un-African. Fortuin (2015) explains thus:

Like many other African countries that suffered under colonialism and racial oppression, South Africa borrows many of its constructions concerning sexuality from the colonial motherland... prior to South Africa's emancipation from racial oppression in 1944, many of the laws that governed the sexual interactions of the citizenry had been introduced into the statutes during Dutch and British rule (Fortuin 45).

This is no different from what is seen in the notion shared by Frida Lyonga (2014), who, in agreement with Desai, says that “ferocious backlash against homosexuality that is characteristic of many African politicians is grounded in the notions that homosexuality is un-African” (p. 784). The emphasis being made is on the un-Africanism of homosexuality and not on the politicization of the act, though one does not deny that homosexuality has been pushed into the politics of many African countries.

The little knowledge of African sexualities before colonization is partly due to the notion that sexuality as a subject has a bad connotation, and that talking about it is evil or forbidden. Gender and sex are also hardly talked about due to the negative perception surrounding the topic of human sexuality. Though some theorists believe that these terms mean the same thing, others are of the view that they are terms used by society to push their agenda. In Judith Butler's (2004) *Undoing Gender*, she points out that a lot of people believe gender is the same as sexuality and that the word gender is only a code for homosexuality. According to Butler:

No simple definition of gender will suffice, and that more important than coming up with a strict and applicable definition is the ability to track the travels of the term through public culture. A clear cut definition is required, especially by the lesbian feminist group, because to them, it is a problem to view sexuality and gender in the same light, in that it is another way to oppress and block the progress made by women (Butler 186).

In *Boldly Queer*, a book on African perspectives on same sex sexuality, 'queer' and 'LGBT' are described as an unfortunate adoption of Western constructions and labels, though it serves as a term used to describe people who are gender non-conformists or homosexuals. The perception is that such labels allow for non-conformists to be marginalized even more, though the intention may be for identification and to create more recognition for the queer community. This notwithstanding, the use of the terms 'queer' and 'LGBT' has added to the awareness of sexuality as a global existence and not as a 'condition' assigned to a geographical area.

Binta Bajaha (2015) identifies various ideas that feed the African view that homosexuality is un-African. She begins by saying that "First, the characterization of homosexuality" reveals the forgetfulness of most African experience after colonization (Bajaha 1). Bajaha (2015) goes on to show how the 'un-Africanism of homosexuality is not only untrue, but "inherently contradictory", describing the act as a "political manipulation at its finest, created to mask the growing hardship faced" (Bajaha 3). The idea becomes

contradictory, as Bajaha (2015) puts it, in that our colonial masters and missionaries stood against any form of sexual immorality, and also contradictory because African heads who claim to fight colonialism still use practices and rules that were ones used to suppress the African people. It therefore makes it difficult to understand the forceful ideology that Africa is a continent free from same-sex activities. It becomes quite apparent that most Africans, if not all, would rather play ignorant of their own history or deny its existence in order to avoid any discussion concerning precolonial sexual practices

Western human rights advocates have tended to respond to claims about the un-African nature of homosexuality with counter-assertions, including recitations of the history of colonial imposition of anti-homosexual norms, and anthropological observations that seem to refute African contentions (Kahn-Fogel, 2013). The assertion is made that before the latter part of the twentieth century, “those who supported homosexual rights tended to assume that homosexuality was naturally occurring and independent of culture or social circumstance” (Kahn-Fogel 374). Whiles this may be true, culture and social circumstance play a major role in one’s sexual choices, and sexuality has been attached to social and cultural practices for a long time. Though it is acknowledged that one’s sexual preference is influenced by society, society cannot be the primary determiner of a person’s sexuality.

Much awareness is being created, through writings and campaigns, for the world, and especially for the African continent to realize that same-sex desire has been in existence for a very long time, and that if anything has been imposed on the African continent, it is the criminalization of homosexuality.

Conclusion

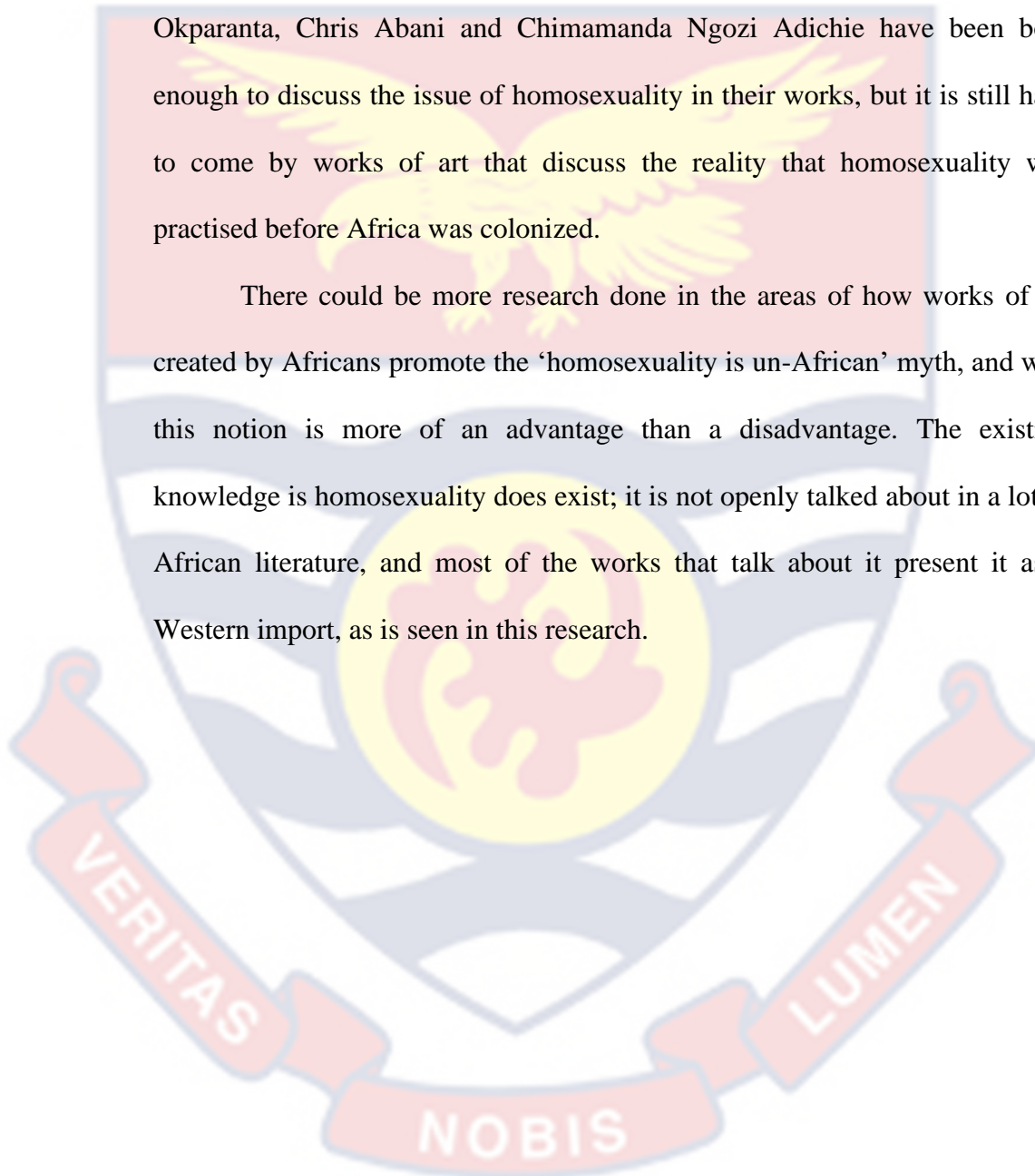
The above findings reveal one belief that most queer theorists have in common – that one’s sexuality cannot be determined by society. However, it is quite obvious that the environment within which one is raised may influence their sexual identity. Theorists like Sedgwick (1990), Rich (1980) and Butler (1990) agree that one’s gender is culturally imposed and that no one is born with a particular type of sexuality. This school of thought is followed by a lot of theorists and activists seeking to normalize queerness (‘queerness’ is used here as an umbrella term for the LGBTQ community).

The African perspective on queerness has not changed much. The idea is still held that homosexuality is a foreign practice, and Africa is a homophobic continent. South Africa is one of the first countries that legalized homosexuality, but what is on paper is different from what is being experienced by the gay community. A 2018 report indicated that 44% of the gay community experiences different forms of abuse (Pillay, 2018). Kate Hairsine (2019) reports that in Nigeria, about 47 men were detained in 2018 for “public display of affection with the same-sex.” Ugandan police also arrested 125 people in a gay-friendly bar in November, 2020. Two of the reasons mentioned in the report are colonial laws and the idea that homosexuality is imported by the West. There are still elites who claim that homosexual practices are imported, though there is enough evidence to show homosexuality was practised before colonization.

Some existing African works of art contribute greatly to the old notion that homosexuality is un-African. Works of prominent writers like Amma Darko, Ama Ata Aidoo, Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta have generally

regarded homosexuality as a practice from the whites; it is therefore no surprise to see readers and aspiring writers adopting the same notion. There are, however, a few writers who are stepping out of the circle to discuss homosexual existence in Africa in their writings. Writers like Chinelo Okparanta, Chris Abani and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have been bold enough to discuss the issue of homosexuality in their works, but it is still hard to come by works of art that discuss the reality that homosexuality was practised before Africa was colonized.

There could be more research done in the areas of how works of art created by Africans promote the 'homosexuality is un-African' myth, and why this notion is more of an advantage than a disadvantage. The existing knowledge is homosexuality does exist; it is not openly talked about in a lot of African literature, and most of the works that talk about it present it as a Western import, as is seen in this research.



CHAPTER THREE

PORTRAYAL OF HOMOSEXUAL TENDENCIES IN THE TEXTS

Introduction

We find in the previous chapters that sexuality (and homosexuality for that matter) is regarded as part of human identity that is understood differently among the human race. Though theorists like Sedgwick and Butler would want us to believe that sexuality is fluid and prone to change at any time, there are still others who believe one either belongs to a particular orientation or not – there is no fluidity. That notwithstanding, the African continent presents a new argument: that until the arrival of the white man, the African only knew one form of sexuality – heterosexuality – and that there was nothing like homosexuality on the continent. This idea is carried by various African writers like Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah and Amma Darko. This chapter of my work uses Sigmund Freud's (1905) psychoanalytic theory to discuss the three selected books – *A Question of Power*, *Wounding Words* and *Beyond the Horizon*. This is in an effort to answer the first research question; in what ways do the characters selected in the texts portray homosexual tendencies?

Analysis

Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, Evelyn Accad's *Wounding Words* and *Beyond the Horizon* by Amma Darko are strong and exciting texts that can be analyzed through different lenses without distorting their beauty. *Wounding Words* has been regarded over the years as a very powerful book that empowers and fights for the rights of women, and Evelyn Accad has been recognized as a strong voice for women through her writing and music. *A Question of Power* is described as "a very subjective novel because the entire

narrative is filtered through the disturbed consciousness of Elizabeth and the relationship between the internal and the outside world..." (Kumar & Satyanarayana, 2014).

Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* is about a woman, Elizabeth, who leaves South Africa and a cheating husband to live in Botswana with the hope of having a better life. While in Botswana, Elizabeth works as a teacher but later becomes a gardener and also helps others to learn how to farm. However, she keeps going into a different world created in her mind and has to fight to maintain her sanity. Her mental state begins to affect her relationships with people in the real world and she begins to ask questions about good and evil. She is even dismissed from school for her abnormal behaviour, and her insanity begins to affect her relationship with her only son. The story ends with Elizabeth falling asleep, with one hand placed over her land (Head 206). The story unveils the struggling moments in the life of Elizabeth as her mind is constantly in turmoil, which makes her question what is right and wrong. Head uses two men, Dan and Sello, to represent good and evil. Though these male characters completely exist in Elizabeth's imagination, they play key roles in forming Elizabeth's view of the world. While Sello tries to show Elizabeth the 'right' way, Dan also does everything possible to convince Elizabeth that nothing is pure, and that good also contains evil. There is an intense struggle within Elizabeth, as she is put through several phases of what seems to be dreams and hallucinations.

There are theorists like Carl Jung and Alfred Adler who disagreed with Freud's sexual theory. Though they acknowledged that Freud was a great psychologist, Freud's assertion about sexual urges being the primary motivator

was not accepted, among other theories he came up with. However, Freud's theories have been adopted by some psychologists and used to develop their own ideas. Freud's sexual theory suits the nature of this analysis, hence its adoption. Freud's (1900) paper on dreams will be used to explain Elizabeth's constant dreams, and how these dreams also suggest that Elizabeth exhibits homosexual tendencies. There are a lot of explanations as to why we dream or why our minds can create certain vivid pictures that are visible only to the individual seeing it. Sigmund Freud (1901) describes dreams as a store-house for repressed feelings and thoughts. Freud identifies that "Every action and thought is fueled by the unconscious, and these are sometimes released through dreams" (p. 448). This point becomes relevant in Elizabeth's case because Elizabeth's experiences with Dan and Sello occur in her dreams, in addition to the hallucinations she has regularly, as stated earlier.

Elizabeth finds that apart from having strange dreams, she sees these men, Dan and Sello, even when she is awake, and is also taken to a world where Dan, the evil one, shows her so many sexual misconducts, such as Dan having sex with a girl he (Dan) referred to as Miss Sewing Machine, right beside Elizabeth (Head 127) and also with another woman called Madam Loose Bottom (Head 164). The showcase of various sexual activities in Elizabeth's nightmares could be the power of her unconscious having control of her. We find Freud's (1905) term 'amphigenic inversion' playing itself out in Elizabeth's unconscious. In this sense, the person may be with someone of the opposite sex, but may be attracted to someone of the same sex, and this is what happens to Elizabeth, whose sexual desires (which is in her unconscious) are displayed only in her dreams.

Dan also puts in quite an endless effort to show Elizabeth what her sexual preference should be. Dan describes Miss Sewing Machine as a “specialist who can go with a man the whole night and feel no ill-effects the next day” (Head 127). Elizabeth also seems to be interested in Miss Sewing-Machine, as she is to remember her with deep affection (Head 129), and Miss Sewing-Machine always “looked at Elizabeth as though she knew what friendships between women were really like” (Head 129). Attention is drawn to Elizabeth’s interest in Miss Sewing-Machine, which heightens Freud’s point that the sexual focus or target of an inverted person (homosexual) is always belonging to the same gender, and “persons of the opposite sex are never the object of their sexual desire... or even arouse sexual aversion in them...” (Freud 619). In this sense, Elizabeth sexual object or interest is not Dan, but Miss Sewing-Machine, who also seems to have some sexual interest in Elizabeth.

Dan leaves nothing to chance as he does everything possible to make Elizabeth see the ‘defects’ in Africa: “To sex he added homosexuality and perversions of all kinds” (Head 137). He makes his countless sexual activities with both men and women seem normal in the eyes of Elizabeth and tries to convince her that it is something that happens everywhere: “Two men gave her a lift... into town when Dan turned on his homosexual record. He was anxious to impress upon Elizabeth that it was a universal phenomenon. The record said: ‘They’ve tried it too. We all do. We try anything’.” (Head 138). His next move was to sleep with another man called Mr. Ghanzi (Head 139) as a way to get Elizabeth to believe that she really is one of them, and that it is not a foreign practice. Dan then displays various women with several sexual

capabilities. He always describes them in a sexual manner and calls them names that depict their libidinal stages – Miss Womb, Miss Sugar King, Miss Chopper (Head 146-148).

In one of her dreams, Elizabeth finds Dan sexually involved with four Asian men, and there she realizes Dan is a homosexual (Head 120). As explained by Freud, all suppressed desires seek to fulfill themselves through the unconscious mind, and in Elizabeth's case, her repressed desire for a homosexual relationship reveals itself through Dan's sexual acts with males.

There's the question of why Bessie Head chooses to present these homosexual tendencies as a dream or hallucination. However, by doing so, we are made to see and understand the battles and dilemma of a woman who is desperately in search of who she really is. Elizabeth's hallucinations begin when she moves to Motabeng in Botswana, and from the beginning she finds herself speaking to an unknown figure that she later names Sello. Elizabeth's conversations with Sello, and later with another figure she names Dan, dwell on issues concerning humanity, love and, mostly, sexuality. Both Dan and Sello reveal certain images that make Elizabeth question her own existence. Sello is described as a god, righteous and truthful (Head 12-25), while Dan is seen to be the horrifying creature tormenting Elizabeth at every opportunity he gets (Head 165-169). When Elizabeth later finds that Sello is also homosexual, she asks her friend, Tom, if one person can ever have good and evil in them. She enquires from Tom what he feels about homosexuality. The answer Tom gives her is:

There aren't any gays around here. The last time I saw a gay was in America. This is one of the most unobscene

societies in the world. Men just sleep with women, and that's all there is to it (Head 161).

Elizabeth's question to Tom shows that she is aware that part of her struggle has to do with her confusion about her sexual orientation. Freud's (1905) studies on hallucinations show that hallucinations are acts or things that may have been seen when one is young, and these reappear into the conscious. According to Freud (1905),

Perhaps it may be a general characteristic of hallucinations to which sufficient attention has not hitherto been paid that in them something that has been experienced in infancy and then forgotten returns. It may be that the delusions into which these hallucinations are so constantly incorporated may themselves be less independent of the upward drive of the unconscious and the return of the repressed than we usually assume (Freud 2067).

Elizabeth grows up thinking she'll end up in a psychiatric hospital – like her mother. She grows up in an environment where coloured men kiss each other in the streets, and dress as women (Head 44). This therefore has an effect on how she sees herself and where she fits in, in the society she finds herself. It can be said also that she is curious of her own sexuality and would have wanted to explore further if the society she finds herself in did not frown on homosexuality. Her curiosity may have heightened as a result of seeing people involved in homoerotic positions on the streets of South Africa. What makes it more believable is that she (Elizabeth) was once married to a gay

man (Head 19), and may have had her desire for a same-sex relationship repressed due to fear of being ridiculed. It can be argued that Elizabeth's inability to divorce her husband right after finding out he is gay (she left her husband a year after finding out he is gay) could be a sign of interest, in that she also could have had the desire to be with someone of the same sex and was not too bothered by her husband's choice of sexual partners, hence her later experience of seeing mental images of naked women (Head 126-127). Though she was married to a man, Elizabeth never displayed any form of attraction towards her husband, and her relationships with some of the female characters suggest a deeper attraction rather than just a cordial relationship (as we will later come to realize in the analysis).

According to Freud (1915), repression serves as a strong defense mechanism which individuals use to ignore any unacceptable impulses. Defense mechanisms are basically used unconsciously – they don't have to be forced into operation, and they serve as a way of coping in the real world. In Elizabeth's case, her need for homosocial bonding was repressed and only arose when she began having nightmares and hallucinations. Her move to Botswana can also be deconstructed as the operation of denial of the desire for homosocial bonding, and while in Botswana, she replaces her sexual urges with a socially acceptable lifestyle – gardening and helping people in her new community.

In Freud's (1915) paper titled "Repression", he uses hunger to explain his view on how repression can create tension in one's life. Though dated, the points he raises in this study remain relevant and applicable:

Let us take the case in which an instinctual stimulus such as hunger remains unsatisfied. It then becomes imperative and can be allayed by nothing but the action that satisfies it; it keeps up a constant tension of need. Nothing in the nature of repression seems in this case to come remotely into question. (Freud 1245).

Freud continues by saying that “Repression certainly does not arise in cases where the tension produced by lack of satisfaction of an instinctual impulse is raised to an unbearable degree” (Freud 1245). This is what happens to Elizabeth, as her mechanisms for defense are no longer there to keep her instincts in check. Elizabeth is no longer able to fight her instincts, and her hidden self takes charge of her mental faculties. This happens because, according to Freud (1915), the need by the instinct to be satisfied grows stronger once it is given the required attention, which in turn reduces all mechanisms put in place to control that desire. In other words, repression and all other defense mechanisms lose their effectiveness, as the desire or pleasure becomes stronger.

Elizabeth’s work in the garden does not dismiss or erase the homosexual tendencies depicted. Her desire to finally work in a garden only enforces the homosexual urges she tries so hard to hide. Also, the fact that she develops interest in gardening only goes to fuel what Freud says about dream symbolisms, which interprets garden as a female (yonic) symbol. A garden is seen to represent fertility and femininity. It is also regarded as a symbol of the female body, and also a source of calm and comfort. This adds to other yonic symbols Elizabeth sees in her dreams. Elizabeth sees things like water, sling

(which has a concave shape), and rosette (Head 33). These symbols and others mentioned in the text could be interpreted as Elizabeth's need for a homosocial bonding, as the yonic shapes and objects she sees contribute to a yearning for a connection with someone of the same sex – and her desires to be sexually satisfied by someone of the same sex.

Elizabeth almost always finds herself walking into a room or an open space, which, according to Freud, symbolizes sexual intercourse. At a point, she is shown an opening, a “small, round, deep, opening in the earth from which her soul had emerged... a black shapeless mass with wings” (Head 43). Freud asserts that the room represents the vagina and womb of a female, and the act of walking into that space symbolizes penetration, which, for Elizabeth, represents a force pulling her into a homosexual desire. The important thing to note here is that the main character, Elizabeth, was always the one entering that space – a woman's space.

The reason why homosexuality seems to be dominant over Elizabeth's other experiences can be attributed to Freud's position that one significant cause of neurosis can be attributed to the individual's sexual life, in that a problem in a person's sexual life greatly affects their mental state. Elizabeth is presented as one who has had difficulties in terms of sexuality, from what she observed in her previous community – South Africa – and as a child who witnessed the mental instability of her mother. There is however no evidence to show that she suffers mental torture because of her mother. In other words, one's mental state can not be said to be hereditary, though, as Freud maintains, it can be a factor.

As is the case, Elizabeth's neurosis cannot be explained as a result of her mother's madness (Head 16), but as a result of a confused sexuality, so much so that she gets curious and wonders what the people around her think about homosexuality (Head 161). Additionally, Elizabeth's inability to balance her id and ego creates an over-anxious and unstable person who has been controlled by the super-ego for a very long time. We find throughout the text that Elizabeth desires to live an acceptable life and is aware of what is right and wrong. She is informed of what is normal and abnormal, and for someone who is trained in a mission school (p. 15), it is considerably easy for the superego to take over the decisions she makes for herself. Ann Dobie (2002) submits that:

The superego provides additional balance to the id, for it furnishes a sense of guilt for behaviour that breaks the rules given by parents to the young child... it operates according to the morality principle, for it provides the sense of moral and ethical wrongdoing... it works against the drive of the id and represses socially unacceptable desire back into the unconscious. Balance between the license of the id and the restrictions of the superego produces the healthy personality, but when the unconscious guilt becomes overwhelming, the individual can be said to be suffering from a guilt complex. When the superego is too strong, it can lead to unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the self (Dobie 52).

The ego differentiates between what is existing in one's mind from what is happening in the real or external world. It serves at a tool to create a balance between reality and delusion. Freud explains that it is what is presented to the id, whose only aim is to receive satisfaction (Freud 708).

What Elizabeth's ego does is to channel her pleasure principles into doing something profitable for her society – gardening. Her unstable mental health costs her her job as a teacher – the principal of the school gives the reason that Elizabeth is known to shout and scream at people in public, and that they are doubtful of her sanity (Head 66). In one of Elizabeth's hallucinating moments, Medusa, another female being who also appears in Elizabeth's dreams, reappears with Sello to torture Elizabeth by hurling bolts at her, to the point where her (Elizabeth's) son is awakened to find his mother on the floor of her bedroom, with burnt items on the floor (Head 92-93). Mention is made of Medusa wanting to talk to Elizabeth about her vagina (Head 44). Medusa even makes an extra effort of creating a very clear and explicit image for Elizabeth with the intention of sexually arousing her (Elizabeth):

It was about her vagina. Without any bother for decencies she sprawled her long black legs in the air, and the most exquisite sensation travelled out of her towards Elizabeth. It enveloped Elizabeth from head to toe like a slow, deep, sensuous bomb. It was like falling into deep, warm waters, lazily raising one hand and resting in a heaven of bliss. Then she looked at Elizabeth and smiled a mocking superior smile: 'You haven't got anything near that, have you?' (Head 44).

Without mercy, Medusa tells Elizabeth she doesn't belong to Africa: "Africa is troubled waters, you know. I'm a powerful swimmer in troubled waters. You'll only drown here. You're not linked up to the people. You don't know any African languages" (Head 44). In that moment where Medusa makes these remarks, Elizabeth is made to experience a strong sexual feeling which is likened to a "slow, deep, sensuous bomb" (Head 44), which represents an explosion of Elizabeth's repressed libido; her id takes over every control she has over her desires to the point that it finally expresses itself without any defense.

Medusa's presence in Elizabeth's life deserves more attention as she appears to have a greater influence and control over Elizabeth than both Dan and Sello. According to recorded history from Greece and some African countries, Medusa was one of the three daughters of the Gorgons, though some records say they were four. Medusa was the only one who was mortal. History has it that Medusa was once a very beautiful woman, and the most alluring of the three sisters. Having sworn to celibacy, she rejected every offer that came her way. However, while worshipping in the temple of Athen, Poseidon (god of Neptune) raped her, and as was the custom of Greek, which stated that a defiled woman is punished since she is blamed and not the male, she was punished and also turned into a monster (for desecrating the temple). Her once beautiful hair was turned into numerous snakes, and had the power to turn anyone who stared at her into stone. Perseus was sent to kill Medusa, and when he cut off her head, a winged horse, Pegasus, sprang out.

Though feminists regard Medusa's situation as an unfair treatment and just one of the many cases where patriarchy is empowered, Freud interprets

the mythical Medusa rather differently and with a strong sexual theme. In Freud's terms:

The sight of Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone... For becoming stiff means erection. Thus in the original situation it offers consolation to the spectator; he is still in possession of a penis, and the stiffening reassures him of the fact. This symbol of horror is worn upon her dress by the virgin goddess, Athens ... (Freud 1650).

Freud posits that the Greeks were strongly homosexual, hence it would be almost impossible not to identify a woman serving as a symbol of who is castrated and therefore puts off or scares another person, particularly of the same gender or sex. It is not known why Bessie Head chose to use Medusa as a figure that constantly appears in Elizabeth's hallucinations and does not just appear but keeps tormenting Elizabeth mostly using sexual activities (Head 163-169), but it seems quite evident that Medusa's only aim is to make Elizabeth respond the way she (Medusa) wants, even to the point of daring Elizabeth by 'declaiming her sexual superiority' to Elizabeth (Head 63). Elizabeth finds that Medusa praises herself and boasts about what she can do sexually.

Using Freud's deconstruction of Medusa's head as a woman's genital with a lot of hair, it only goes to show the intensity of Elizabeth's desire for a sexual encounter with a woman, and not just a homosocial bonding. Though Sello mostly appears with Medusa, Medusa pays no attention to him (Sello), but rather seems focused on Elizabeth. In Elizabeth's eyes, Medusa's plan was

to control Africa – to Medusa, Africa is not as pure as Elizabeth is made to believe:

She simply wanted to be the manager of the African continent with everyone she found disagreeable... From the Sello in the brown suit issued a low mean of anguish..., seemed to be desperately attached to that thing Medusa had which no other woman had... It was abnormally constructed, like seven thousand vaginas in one, turned on and operating at white heat. And an atmosphere of brutal desire pervaded everything, stagnated everything, and the wrenching, miserable battle of fierce tug-of-war stretched on and on with no end in sight (Head 64).

The description of Medusa's libido as something no other person had comes as a means to entice Elizabeth into accepting her sexuality. The use of water as a metaphor for Africa goes well to back Rich and Derrida's stand on the fluidity of one's sexuality. It can be interpreted as a continent still striving to accept the hidden sexualities that exist within the continent and our blatant denial of the truth that there are, indeed, homosexuals on the African continent, thus making it a troubled continent. The descriptive image created is strongly homoerotic as well, in that Medusa, a female, is able to raise a very high sensual feeling in Elizabeth, one she cannot withstand, a feeling so strong that Elizabeth "falls into a deep hole of such excruciating torture that, briefly, she went stark, raving mad" (Head 44). The ability to satisfy a desire or impulse always creates pleasure for the individual. Therefore, the inability to

satisfy such pleasure would create uneasiness and pain, the mental turmoil and torture Elizabeth constantly experiences.

Freud posits that due to the complex of penis envy, women are more drawn to being homosexual – the curiosity about the penis and the horror of women later draws them to being sexually attracted to someone of the same sex (Freud 1650). Freud (1922) draws out this conclusion as a result of his deconstruction of Medusa's snake hair as penises and the cutting of her (Medusa's) head as castration. Freud further explains that "When a boy, who has hitherto been unwilling to believe the threat of castration, catches sight of the female genitals, probably those of an adult, surrounded by hair, and essentially those of his mother that explains that the terror of Medusa is a terror of castration." (Freud 1650). Another interesting thing to note is how Medusa turns bolts, which is a phallic symbol, into round balls (yonic symbol) and keeps hurling them at Elizabeth (Head 92). This act only supports the claim that Elizabeth's homosexual tendencies are much stronger than her efforts to refuse them. It is not mentioned why Medusa chooses to turn the bolts into round balls – the round ball is a female symbol. It can however be explained that Medusa is aware of Elizabeth's hidden sexuality and she (Medusa) being a representation of the female genital area, only seeks to entice Elizabeth into accepting that she (Elizabeth) is sexually attracted to women. Elizabeth's efforts to fight Medusa only cause her headaches and mental breakdown (Head 93).

Elizabeth becomes aware that her experiences in South Africa are being used against her. In a place where she was only known as "coloured," she acknowledges that in the part of South Africa where she lived, all the

coloured men were homosexuals who “openly paraded down the street dressed in women’s clothes” and “tied turbans round their heads, wore lipstick, fluttered their eyes and hands and talked in high, falsetto voices” (Head 45). For someone who is also “coloured,” it would have been normal for her to also be homosexual in South Africa, where the act was only seen to be either normal or “accepted as a disease one had to live with” (Head 45). That notwithstanding, Elizabeth succeeds in suppressing every urge of the id, and accepts the constructs of society. Diamond (2008) explains that women of all “orientations may experience variation in their erotic and affectional feelings as they encounter different situations, relationships, and life stages” (Diamond 3). Queer theorists have maintained that one’s sexual preference is only determined by the environment or society in which one exists, without regarding the individual’s preference. This thus supports the idea that Elizabeth was only heterosexual because her society told her to be. The result of this ‘compulsory heterosexuality’, as Rich (1980) puts it, is the constant fights and struggles Elizabeth experiences, which almost puts her in a state of permanent madness.

Elizabeth resorts to wishing for death several times because she feels defeated and helpless. In such situations where one feels hopeless and beaten, it is not strange or bizarre for one to call for death, especially when the pain one suffers turns out to be unbearable. Death is seen by many, if not all, as a rescue from life’s sorrows and challenges. Elizabeth’s constant turmoil is clearly as a result of her inability to satisfy her libidinal instincts, which, according to Freud, is the basis for human survival. Freud maintains in his work on human pleasure that the pleasure principle dominates one’s mental

life, explaining further that “The mental apparatus endeavours to keep the quantity of excitation present in it as low as possible or at least to keep it constant” (Freud 1914), and that “There exists in the mind a strong tendency towards the pleasure principle, but that that tendency is opposed by certain other forces or circumstances, so that the final outcome cannot always be in harmony with the tendency towards pleasure” (Freud 1914). It can thence be deduced that Elizabeth’s desires were primarily opposed by her fear, her environment and her defenses. She was evidently afraid of being someone unacceptable, and this becomes worse as she is not able to accept herself. She grows to accept society’s description of her – a mad woman’s daughter, a coloured woman who belongs to the less respected. Her reason for leaving South Africa is shattered, as she faces an even worse battle, one much greater than discrimination and racism.

Elizabeth’s visions become stronger and intense, to the point where she begins to identify with these ‘weak, homosexual coloured men who were dying before her eyes’ (Head 47). Elizabeth is able to deny, in her hallucinations, that she is not a racist and has never been that (Head 47), but not once is she able to make a stand on whether she is a homosexual or not. It supports Freud’s claim that:

Under the influence of the ego’s instincts of self-preservation, the pleasure principle is replaced by the reality principle... The pleasure principle long persists, however, as the method of working employed by the sexual instincts, which are so hard to ‘educate’, and starting from those instincts, or in the ego itself, it often

succeeds in over-coming the reality principle, to the detriment of the organism as a whole (Freud 1555).

Freud is right in saying that the instincts that are unsatisfied and controlled by the ego are repressed and thus felt by the ego as unpleasure.

According to Freud, this can turn into some sort of mental trauma or become a danger to the individual, which is what happens to Elizabeth. She gets to a point where she completely loses it in a shop and starts screaming, “Oh, you bloody bastard Batswana!! Oh, you bloody bastard Batswana!!” (Head 51), and then passes out. It therefore comes as no surprise when people begin to look at her with skeptic eyes, as her behaviour in public suggests that of a mad person. Her son even tells her his classmates say she is mad (Head 185). Elizabeth finds it hard in dealing with Dan and Sello, and her situation becomes even worse and unbearable with every passing moment, to a point where, upon seeing Dan with his boyfriend (in her mind), she shouts, “Die, die, die, you dog! I hate you! I hate you!” (Head 173). In that moment, however, there is an old woman, Mrs. Jones, visiting Elizabeth because she (Mrs. Jones) heard Elizabeth is sick. Elizabeth, clearly not of herself, strikes the woman on the side of her head and runs to her room (Head 173).

Freud is of the opinion that sexual instinctual forces are the bases of psychoneuroses, which we find in Head’s text. Freud asserts that both the ego and the instinct of one’s libido affect the level of signs of neurosis that may be experienced (Freud 630).

By applying Freud’s interpretation, it is not surprising to see Elizabeth go through such mental battles. Elizabeth admits that homosexuals are laughingly accepted as one of the oddities of life (Head 117), and so she feels

that such disturbances are not normal for the sane and ordinary people. By using Freud's (1901) study on mental illness, Elizabeth's denial of a certain instinct which has been suppressed would only cause her such mental trauma. It would then not be the other way round, where her insanity would cause her to have hallucinations and dreams about homosexuality. Freud (1901) opines that, "Repression demands a persistent expenditure of force, and if this were to cease the success of the repression would be jeopardized" (Freud 1245). When one is awake, the mechanism which has been forced upon the individual then becomes unhealthy; there is then no choice than for the repressed state or feeling to show itself. Instinctual impulse is also repressed, and it could be in very different states. In Elizabeth's case, her libidinal instincts, which have been repressed for so long a time, become active only when she's asleep or hallucinating, probably because, to her, her mind is the only safe place where she can satisfy her desires and also to allow her id to take over.

Elizabeth then finds that the man she presumed was holy was also a homosexual, a revelation made by Dan. Sello, the 'holy' man, appears with his boyfriend (Head 148), thus making Elizabeth question her belief in what is right. Apart from being represented as an evil god, Dan can be interpreted as the id (pleasure principle) of Elizabeth. This is so because he only seeks to achieve satisfaction for Elizabeth's sexual desires without considering the consequences. Sello is also depicted as Elizabeth's ego, seeking to enlighten Elizabeth on what is right and wrong, and also reminding her of what is socially accepted. Through Elizabeth's struggles, she comes to realize that Sello is not as pure as she thought he was, and that he is not without darkness. There is, therefore, difficulty in creating a balance for her. The id (Dan) and

the ego (Sello) struggle to maintain dominance in Elizabeth's life, and this only leads to chaos and torture for Elizabeth. Even the people Elizabeth had dealings with everyday had been portrayed by Dan as immoral people, and Dan would give "a vivid, indelible fact about their sex lives" (Head 160).

What cannot be dismissed or downplayed is the power of the human mind and the role it plays in our daily lives. This truth is appreciated by Freud and other psychologists like Carl Gustav Jung (1969) and Jacques Lacan (1960). Although Jung and Lacan disagree with Freud on the point that sex or libido is central to one's being, as expressed by Dobie (2002), they do not ignore the fact that the mind's state greatly affects one's daily lifestyle. Bessie Head does seem to agree, in that she builds a story and creates a character whose mental state affects every aspect of her life. Freud elaborates that in the first neurotic type, the subject becomes sick because he or she refuses to satisfy the need. Elizabeth is put in a situation where she either has to abide by what her environment tells her, or go by the desires which seem so strong that it can no longer stand being ignored. Her situation one of a battle between the mind and the reality around her. She therefore experiences a great deal of frustration since her libido only gets heightened, hence making her have very little control over her being. Her work life and social life also suffer because her mind is drawn towards seeking a way to provide satisfaction for the libido which has been pushed to the background for a very long time. What is left, as Freud puts it, is constant neurotic episodes which can only end when her instinct receives what it desires.

Elizabeth's 'damned-up' libido chooses to present itself through the countless nightmares and hallucinations as the other 'possibilities of

satisfaction'. The struggle Elizabeth goes through mentally opens her eyes to the reality that the African continent, and any human being for that matter, contains both good and evil. The madness goes on till she is hospitalized again (Head 176). At a point where she is discharged and finally opens up to Tom about her ordeal, she tells him, "Things I'd never have thought of get to dominate my mind and create neurotic fears." (Head 194).

After going through all the torture and neurotic episodes, Elizabeth finally comes to a better understanding of herself and life as a whole. She is finally able to accept herself, and rests with one hand on her land, as a gesture of belonging (Head 206). This act of Elizabeth could mean that she has finally come to terms with who she really is and has accepted to embrace her sexuality without fear. Her decision to accept her experiences and embrace her hidden identity allows her to be free from her mental torture and live as she pleases. It does not come as a surprise, for it seems to be the only turn for her, since her constant denial only drives her to insanity.

Though *Wounding Words* and *Beyond the Horizon* do not give room for a deeper psychoanalysis to be made, there are still a few instances that allow for a queer analysis to be done. Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words* describes an Arab society where women are given a rather defined role to play in society, with consequences for any woman who goes against the set expectations. That notwithstanding, a group of women come together to give women a strong voice. Nayla, who is a member of this group, does not reveal much about herself, but a close study of her character reveals the loud opinions she holds and also the strong, relentless woman she is. Nayla's way of facing issues is quite different from what Hayate, a major character in the

text, expects. *Wounding Words* takes a rather different turn, in that the issue of homosexuality is generally presented as a Western concept, and there's a stronger sense of homosocial bonding than we see in *A Question of Power*.

Nayla's character is a perfect example of someone who gives little or no attention to their own needs, ignoring almost all desires or impulses. Freud opines that repression is used by individuals as a way of making their impulses inoperative. By doing so it seeks to replace such urges with other elements, which may only create conflict within the individual (Freud 1078).

This seems to be the case with Nayla, as she is found to be strongly against any discussion or idea that reflects on her hidden impulse. She is uncomfortable with showing affection towards any woman, except her mother, and withdraws when she is shown affection. This is seen in how she reacts towards Hayate, her friend. In one instance when Hayate hugs Nayla, she (Nayla) 'steps back, as if embarrassed by the display of affection' (Accad 6). Nayla is the exact opposite of Hayate in that, while Hayate expresses her emotions freely – even to the point of pointing out the beauty of the other women – Nayla is defensive of her emotions and resorts to condemning views that are against what she believes in. Her first impulse is to express displeasure and discomfort as a way of defence. As explained by Freud (1915), an impulse is only controlled or repressed if it “produces displeasure instead of pleasure” (Freud 1245). He posits that since pleasure is produced whenever an instinct is satisfied, there has to be the possibility that an external stimulus is internalized. In Nayla's case, it can be said that her position is strongly influenced by the environment she finds herself in. She could be said to be in denial of the bond she desires from the women, especially from Hayate and

Aida, who seem to show affection freely without worrying about being judged. The women find themselves in an environment where women are subjugated in every aspect of their lives, and, as observed by Hayate, where patriarchy is greatly upheld.

Nayla could be said to belong to the second type of libido, as identified by Freud (1931). An individual with this second type of libido, also known as the obsessional type, is controlled by the super-ego. Such people pay extra attention to their conscience and are also governed by fear. They are more internally dependent. Nayla rejects any form of affection, and also views sexuality as a social vice (Accad 164). This could also be due to the environment she finds herself in, where people, especially the women, are trained to forego their needs and heed to the demands and instructions of society. Nayla therefore is highly influenced by the need to please rather than to be pleased. It therefore does not give her the room to identify these tendencies, which are hidden in her unconscious.

Apart from Nayla being defensive of her opinions, she also exhibits signs of being very judgemental of other people's opinions, especially when such opinions centre on feminism and womanhood. She expresses her distaste for Hayate's stand on issues concerning women in Tunisia. Nayla gets angry and, in an "aggressive tone", wants to "know where the relationship lies between American feminism and what is happening in Tunisia" (Accad 164).

A study of Hayate's character will serve as a way to give a better understanding of how the subject of sexuality is handled by Nayla, an African, and Hayate, a Lebanese. It will also help to acknowledge the contrasting view that lies in the middle of the African and the Western concept of sexuality.

Hayate is forward and open to views and ideas concerning feminism and women's sexuality. Her opinions on women's sexuality are peculiar to the other women. She even regards sexuality as a way of fighting the patriarchal system in Tunisia. During one of the women's meetings, Hayate makes a presentation on ways to fight patriarchy, stating that:

An aspect of this theory of the 'woman in the centre' is the lesbian point of view. Lesbians declare that their preference is more than sexual, it is political. A woman who no longer needs masculine approval is no longer his hostage. If the personal is political, the choice of woman in a personal relationship has great political importance. Due to their sexual preference, lesbians are free to seek their emotional nourishment from other women rather than from men. Adrienne Rich criticises feminist theories for not treating heterosexuality as a political institution. She thinks that heterosexuality is instilled by all sorts of mechanisms tied to male power: physical violence, sexual slavery, rape, the ideology of romantic love (Accad 161).

To Hayate, lesbianism is not just based on emotions, but a political movement that would go a long way to weaken the patriarchal society. She believes that her friends would agree with her and support her opinion that a woman's sexuality should not be determined by a society that gives men the power to control women. She views lesbianism as a path to freedom for the women.

Hayate has no problem allowing her id to be the basis for the decisions she makes, which would mean that her internal stimuli operates stronger than any external stimuli. That is why her view on sexuality does not change even in an environment with opposing views. She wonders why Nayla can't be like Aida, one of her friends. The women's attitude towards the issue of sexuality contradicts their attitude at the party for Rima, one of Hayate's friends. Hayate is confused as to why the women turn on her after some of them drink too much and start kissing each other (Accad 112). Some of the women blame Hayate for the immoral behaviour exhibited by some of them. Hayate comes to the conclusion that it is the "fear of what a person desires and rejects at the same time" (Accad 112). She believes that the people's fear of being judged causes them to reject the bond and excitement they are experiencing at the party, though it is an experience they enjoy. At the party, there is an "unravelling, a letting go of repressed desire, an unleashing of instincts, a collective reversal of the usual behavior" (Accad 113). It seems that these women reveal the hidden homosexual tendencies when the id takes over, as a result of the egos being suppressed by the alcohol. Hayate is made a centre for blame and condemnation since the women are made to dig out a part of them that has been buried for so long. These African women find themselves dealing with an issue they have kept hidden from a patriarchal society and even from themselves, as they touch and kiss each other.

Hayate identifies as the third type of libido, known as the narcissistic type. According to Freud, this type is described in negative terms. For people belonging to this type:

There is no tension between ego and super-ego..., and there is no preponderance of erotic needs. The subject's main interest is directed to self-preservation; he is independent and not open to intimidation. His ego has a large amount of aggressiveness at its disposal... People belonging to this type impress others as being 'personalities'; they are especially suited to act as a support for others, to take on the role of leaders and to give a fresh stimulus to cultural development or to damage established state of affairs (Freud 1887).

Hayate displays a high level of independence in her dealings with the women in Tunisia, despite her desire to build strong ties with them. Hayate admits that she thought she had found "the place of her fulfilment – a place for dialogue and solidarity among women" (Accad 116). She however finds that she had "idealised the women, their journal and their movement, and that these women had projected their own frustrations on to her and also onto themselves" (Accad 116). Her bitter experiences with some of the women, however, do not shake her own ideas and beliefs, as she assures herself of the fact that some of the women share in her ideas, and also finds comfort in knowing that people like her exist everywhere in the world (Accad 118).

Hayate's acceptance of who she is, just by expressing her opinions freely, and her need to be a source of support and strength for the other women describes not only an independent person, but also enables her to get drawn to a few of the women who express a yearning for a homosocial bonding. This form of bonding serves many purposes for the women, including a feeling of

acceptance and a way to find a voice for the women who were constantly subjugated. An advantage of this is to raise the women's interest in political issues and any other decisions made for and about them, as they meet to discuss vital issues like culture, lack of civil rights for women (Accad 150-152), and homosexuality (Accad 153).

Hayate's friend, Aida, seems to be more like Hayate, and also shows more passion and concern for nature, mostly as a way of fighting the patriarchal system. Aida mentions to Hayate that men subjugate nature just as they do women (Accad 3). Aida's view of nature as feminine comes as no mistake, in that she draws the same strength and affection from nature as she does from the women in her circle, especially from Hayate. The sea, which is interpreted as the subconscious human mind by Carl Jung, serves as a source of energy and strength for Aida (Accad 2). Her constant need to be close to nature suggests that she has a strong desire for female affection. Her demeanor and expression even changes when she is close to the sea or trees, and she expresses the comfort and peace she feels whenever she is able to do that (Accad 2). Freud describes the subconscious mind, which he calls preconscious, as part of the human mind that is not solely unconscious and can easily be recalled. For Aida, what lies within her preconscious is made conscious at the sight Hayate and nature. Aida's attraction to the sea is therefore not hidden, and when she enters the water, she is described as the "goddess expressing her vitality to women" (Accad 1). The feeling of warmth Aida experiences is linked to the feeling she gets from Hayate. This goes beyond ordinary friendship; it creates a sense of belonging that can only be experienced from a homosocial bonding.

Just as we find women like Elizabeth, Nayla and Hayate exhibiting some homosexual tendencies, the same is seen in *Beyond the Horizon*, with characters like Mara and Gitte portraying signs that suggest they might be “inverted” (sexually interested in someone of the same sex), as Freud (1905) puts it. One would overlook the effects of Mara’s psyche on her daily life and interactions with other female characters, since she is portrayed as an average African woman going through an unfortunate but rather common situation found among most African women. A lot of women who are given out for marriage face abuse from the men they marry. This, however, does not erase the subtle but present signs that suggest homosexual desires. Presenting Mara as a typical African woman would make it quite easy to overlook the possibility of her seeking same-sex desire, rather than arguing that she has a desire that has been suppressed so well that it is almost nonexistent. It brings to bear the power of the suppressed consciousness. One occurrence that gives the impression that Mara may have a sexuality veered towards people of the same sex is when she implies that she experiences no sexual pleasure when she is with Akobi, her husband (p. 84). Admittedly, Mara’s sexual preference cannot be determined just by the absence of affection towards her husband, but there are instances that suggest that Mara’s affection could be veered towards someone of the same sex, even if there isn’t any sexual attraction involved. Here, we rely on Sedgwick’s (1978) position that one can be a lesbian as far as she relies on her fellow female for emotional support (Sedgwick 136).

Mara’s awareness of the absence of any romantic bond between her and her husband, Akobi, does not go unnoticed. When her fellow prostitute

asks her if she loves her husband, she explains that she does not know what it is to love a man, and that her marriage was arranged. She tells the friend that she only knows to please, obey, serve and bear children for a man. She knows nothing about loving a man or being with him (p. 86). Her statements suggest that her sexual experience has only been an act of duty, and implies that there hasn't been any sexual satisfaction or desire on her part. Akobi is therefore neither Mara's sexual object nor sexual aim. This brings us to Freud's (1905) statement that, "the person from whom sexual attraction proceeds is the sexual object, and "the act towards which the instinct tends is the sexual aim", and proceeds that there are deviations when it comes to both terms (p. 618). Though it can be argued that Mara does not marry the right man, it does not do away with the possibility that she is not interested in a sexual relationship with a man.

Freud's (1909) essay on family romances is essential here, as we can agree that a child's formation of principles and beliefs starts from what he or she observes in the home. Freud's assertion is that the child has a strong wish to be like the parents, especially the one of the same sex. What Mara observes in the home is a picture of a woman who is greatly obedient to her husband. There is no form of affection shown her mother by her father. This, in turn, can affect her sexual development, in that she could be drawn to the sex that showed her more concern and love. Evidently, Mara received love and care from people of the same sex – her mother, Mama Kiosk, Kaye, and even Gitte, who was married to her husband, Akobi. Mara's sexual preference may not be regarded as a relevant theme like women oppression, abuse and sexual slavery, which have been looked at in a lot of works, but it is relevant in

understanding her relationship with her husband, and even her understanding of love and marriage.

Mara falls into Freud's second type of libido, the obsessional type. Freud (1931) explains this as "the predominance of the super-ego, which is separated from the ego under great tension. People of this type are dominated by fear of their conscience instead of fear of losing love. They exhibit an internal, instead of an external dependence..." (Freud 1887). It could be said that Mara's greatest fear is being a divorced woman and, coming from a society where divorce was more of an abomination, being ridiculed for not being able to keep a home.

There are still other reasons why Mara is believed to have married only out of a cultural and social obligation, and why she might be interested in a same-sex relationship. What plays out here is Freud's (1931) postulation that fixation could be a cause of homosexuality. This assertion, though arguable, applies to Mara in a sense that Mara's role model, when growing up, was her mother. She grew up wanting to be her mother, and knowing only the mother as a care-giver and friend. In her reminiscence, she mentions playing with her mother, who places her (Mara's) fingers on her coal-black thighs (Darko 2). She is therefore able to identify with people of the same sex, and draws support and comfort from them. In the absence of her mother, she connects emotionally with the other women she meets, though she still stays married to Akobi, her husband.

What Osey, Akobi's friend, introduces Mara to is a pornographic film where two African women are seen having sex with each other and with other men. It can be said that Osey was indirectly trying to get Mara to mentally

accept what she was expected to do once she settled in Germany. There is light thrown on Mara's sexuality, with regards to her reaction (she is both intrigued and shocked) towards any incidence or occurrence relating to sex. If one can argue that Mara expresses shock only because the public display of sexual intercourse is abhorrent and unacceptable in her society, we can also argue that there is a part of her that would allow for such behaviour if only it was not dominated by a greater principle, which is the super-ego. The super-ego centres on morality and extremely condemns any act that does not meet its standard. Mara's friendships with Mama Kiosk, Gitte and Kaye would seem normal since there are no sexual activities involved. For someone like Mara, who was once driven by morality and decency, it would be quite far-fetched to suggest a homosexual relationship is at play. However, according to lesbian theory, lesbianism is not only about sexual desires; gaining emotional support and affection from a fellow woman can be regarded as lesbianism.

It is quite evident that the characters selected from the three texts have one thing in common, and that is their sexuality. It cannot be stated emphatically that these women were looking for a way to satisfy their desire for a homosocial bonding or homoerotic activity, since other arguments can easily be raised from different angles. What is made quite clear here is that homosexual tendencies do exist in all three texts, whether mentioned directly or not, and there are also instances in all three texts where homosexuality has been treated as a foreign practice – which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOMOSEXUALITY AND ITS PORTRAYAL AS UN-AFRICAN

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have identified how one's psyche can inform the choices made and how the human mind can affect our daily lives. This is not to say that the study made draws a conclusion on the sexuality of the characters selected, since different theories can give different views. In this chapter, a queer analysis of Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words, Beyond the Horizon* by Amma Darko and Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* will be made to further explore homosexual tendencies in the texts. This chapter will also answer the second research question – how is homosexuality treated as un-African in the selected texts? By using lesbian and gay theory, certain characters and characterization in selected texts will be deconstructed to unveil the hidden sexualities within the texts. Again, the word 'queer' is used here as an umbrella term for lesbian and gay criticism.

Analysis

Evelyne Accad's *Wounding Words* describes the life of a Lebanese woman, Hayate, who moves to Tunisia with the hopes of creating awareness for women and to empower them to break free from the patriarchal system forced upon them. In her attempt to fight for the women who have been subjugated and controlled by patriarchy, Hayate makes close friends with women who identify themselves with her, also making enemies within the group because some of them do not share in her ideas, and are also convinced that her beliefs are too foreign and not accepted in their part of the world.

The novel basically condemns male domination and seeks to explore ways of empowering women. The main character, Hayate is a feminist who strongly believes that women should be allowed to make their own choices in every aspect of their lives. What feminists and lesbians have in common is that they both fight the patriarchal system, and lesbians do this by resisting heterosexuality. Perhaps, it is for this reason that the male characters in the text are only referred to as ‘boys’ or just ‘men’, and never described in the way that some of the female characters are described. While the female characters are given certain attributes, the male characters are mostly mentioned in passing. The only male who plays any role – Hayate’s landlord – is presented as a pervert. He asks Hayate to undress for him to look at her (Accad 119). He does not stop there but, in his act of persuasion, goes on to scare Hayate even more by saying, “You’ve got a beautiful body. You are making me crazy. I want to suck you. I want to see it” (Accad 119). This terrifies Hayate so much that she calls the embassy and is given a new apartment. This act of the landlord, which would be insulting and degrading to any woman, becomes even more abhorrent to a woman like Hayate, who believes that men have been given too much power over women through heterosexuality. To a separatist like Hayate, the male figure should not be given any form of dominance in a woman’s space. Though the landlord could not rape her, the experience gives her more reason to do away with male relationships.

Evelyne Accad’s *Wounding Words* seems to push for the acceptance of homosexuality through the narrative. This is evident in her use of nature through the descriptions given about nature. Nature is mentioned several times

and compared to women. The words ‘sea’ and ‘sand’ are mentioned severally in the text, and even used in describing some of the women in the text. An instance is found in the poem that describes Aida; “Woman of Tunisia, alone in the sea at nightfall” (Accad 1). There is also a clear description of the sea as

Hayate sits to relax:

The sea is calm, shining under the sun’s rising. Hayate notices how quickly the sea changes colour! With the passage of just one cloud or one gust of wind, it spans all the shades of blue, green, silver, gold or violet. Nature’s transformations are in harmony with her deepest being, searching for subtleties... Now the sea takes on a reddish hue. A grey-mauve mist rises from the water, firing the horizon (Accad 9-10).

For lesbian separatists, a connection with nature means freedom of expression without male dominance. By drawing closer to nature, a sense of belonging and acceptance is created in the text. According to an article written by Catriona Sandilands (2002), nature always played a very important role in lesbian separatist politics, even though it is rarely mentioned. Sandilands posits that:

In early separatist rhetoric, male culture was exemplified by the city, and a movement of women into “new” and more innocent space, a nature not yet written on by male culture, would facilitate the founding of a new lesbian culture. In addition, rural separatists viewed the land as a place that could restore physical and

spiritual health to a group of people sickened, literally, by (heteropatriarchal capitalist) corruption and pollution and thus as a sort of paradise on earth to which women could be admitted if they recognized their oppression at the hands, and in the lands, of men (Sandilands 138).

Sandrilands (2002) explains further that the adoption of nature by feminists and the lesbian community serves as a stand to fight patriarchy and to change the long-existing interpretation of the environment which only seeks to favour men. It is perhaps for this reason that Accad gives much relevance to nature and also connects it to the women in the text. The notion of nature being a source of power for lesbian separatists seems to be existent in the text at the time Aida and Hayate have a discussion about men and society:

Men are destroying the Earth with their weapons of war. I wish I could tell them to dive into the sea, without fear and not in a spirit of vengeance and conquest, so they could see the marvels the sea creates. They would come out transformed and decide to end pollution and destruction. If they learned to love Nature, they would also love women better (Accad 3).

Hayate agrees by stating thus:

I'm becoming more and more aware of just how much the patriarchal system is built on the exploitation of Nature... Men reinforce their strength by subjugating Nature just as they do women. Love for Nature works

like a salve on wounds men inflict. If only we could communicate some of this love! (Accad 3).

To these women, men have no love for nature and only aim to destroy it. It is understandable that nature is regarded as feminine, since nature in itself gives life. However, to these women, it goes beyond the productive aspect – it has to do with the helpless and dejected state nature finds itself, which, according to these women, is the fault of men. And it is this same treatment that these women experience at the hands of the men in their country. Sandrilands (2002) further explains that lesbian separatists sexualize nature, regarding it (nature) as an erotic partner. Whiles some women see this idea of sexualizing nature as unnatural, there are still others who believe that this has “involved carving out an idea of ‘natured’ female sexuality in defiance of what they see as an urban-masculine patriarchal sexuality” (Sandrilands 150). It is therefore not surprising that Accad creates an atmosphere where the women in Hayate’s circle find comfort in their natural environment.

The use of certain colours also plays an important role in the queer analysis of the text. One gay and lesbian community pride symbol is the rainbow flag, which comprises six colours – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and lilac. Colours have different meanings for different people around the world. Just as certain tribes and organizations have different interpretations for even the same colours, so does the lesbian and gay community. The rainbow flag was designed by gay rights activist Gilbert Baker in 1978, to represent gay pride and to also serve as a means of identification for the gay/lesbian community. The use of these colours appeals greatly to a queer reading. In homosexual terms, the colour blue signifies confidence, trust and art; red

signifies light, and yellow signifies the sun. Orange is interpreted as healing, green signifies calmness, while lilac means spirit. Accad uses some of these colours in a way that connects the characters to their emotions. During one of their meetings, Hayate is entranced by the performance of one of the women, Ahlame, during a poetry recital. Hayate compares Ahlame to a “red bird of paradise in flight, a nightingale singing in the evening, a dove, its wings transparent as white clouds pierced with sky. She has the majesty and softness of roses... the perfumed splendour of lilacs, the unparalleled quality of white lilies” (Accad 57). In another instance, Hayate expresses a feeling of fulfilment when she relaxes by the sea. For anyone who already exhibits strong attraction to someone of the same sex, these utterances leave very little doubt she is homosexual. Apart from the rainbow colours serving as a form of identity and pride for the queer community, the colours serve as a way of creating acceptance and belonging for people who belong to such a group. The feeling of warmth and belonging derived also makes the colours greatly symbolic. The meaning of the colours, to the queer environment, gives off a feeling of energy and love. We find this in the text from the use of the environment, which bears some of the colours of the gay pride – green, red, blue and yellow. The feeling that Aida and Hayate receive from observing nature is the same feeling derived from the colours. To Aida, the sea, which is blue, is comforting, and the trees, with their green leaves, gives energy (Accad 2).

There are other ways Hayate displays some homosexual tendencies, though they are not explicitly shown in the text. Her interactions and encounter with some of the Tunisian women suggest that she desires

homosocial bonding or even homoerotic relationships. In an instance where her friend, Aida, expresses sadness about her failed marriage, Hayate massages her 'knotted' neck, and then Aida expresses satisfaction by saying, "Your fingers on my neck are undoing my suffering" (Accad 26), and they sit on cushions looking upon each other 'with admiration, their radiant faces illuminated by candlelight' (Accad 27). This can also be seen as homoerotic. Homoeroticism denotes erotic depictions that imply same-sex attraction or that might appeal sexually to a same-sex reader (Tyson, 1999). According to Sponsler (2007), "The terms homoeroticism and homoerotic refer to the tendency for erotic feelings to be projected onto a person of the same sex. They thus imply a preference for sameness over difference and stress the role of emotion" (Sponsler 1). She further explains that the term 'homoeroticism' served as an act of moving from the biological meaning attached to the concept of homosexuality, to a term that "is able to describe feelings, attitudes, and desires that reach beyond gender identities" (Sponsler 2). Sponsler's assertion is not different from what most theorists believe, that an attraction to someone of the same sex goes beyond gender boundaries, hence homoeroticism covers both emotional and physical attractions. It thus suggests that the attraction between Hayate and Aida is more than a sexual connection that appeals to a homosexual reader, and more of a place of identifying a feeling of both sensuality and acceptance.

There are other instances in the text that are suggestive of a homoerotic behaviour. When Hayate visits Aida in her home, Hayate is fascinated by Aida's looks and even her body movement, and even feels an expression of freedom "emanating from her" (Accad 94)). Hayate's emotional

reaction to Aida's presence and movement appeals greatly to a homoerotic desire. After her confrontation with Nayla, another woman from the women's group (with whom Hayate wishes to form a strong bond), Hayate breathes deeply and "recalls Aida, her breasts naked to the wind, advancing through the waves" (Accad 73). Another instance is when Hayate notices the beauty of Ahlame, one of the women in the feminist group: "suntanned and her hair and hazel eyes brilliant... squared-off haircut and a dropped waist, off-the-shoulder dress, her mouth bursting with sensuality" (Accad 170). Hayate even goes on to tell Ahlame that she is beautiful and full of life (Accad 170). Homoeroticism is displayed not only through pictures or images, but also through descriptive words, which gives an impression of desires that add to homosexual tendencies.

Homosocial desire is described by Sedgwick as social bonds between persons of the same sex, specifically applied to activities as male bonding (Sedgwick 696). Sedgwick (1985) is however of the opinion that the chain of women loving and relying on each other goes deeper than social and emotional bond aspect; it is more than expressing feelings and sentiments (Sedgwick 697). This implies that homosocial bonding between women is more than just friendships and associations. It seeks to attain a level of acceptance and belonging. Homosociality, as seen in *Wounding Words*, displays a yearning of fulfilment and belonging, which we see mostly between Aida and Hayate. There is also Hayate's desire to be connected to Ahlame. Hayate describes Ahlame so strongly the first time she sees her. Hayate seems to be captivated by Ahlame's presence and movement, and does not hesitate to show it (Accad 57).

One other character who appears to connect strongly with Hayate is Martine, whose identity – or sex – is not known until later in the text. We see at the latter part of the text that Martine is a woman, and also drawn to Hayate. Martine had also fled her country with the hope of gaining freedom, and had met Hayate at a time when she felt helpless. Hayate is attracted to her when they meet the first time, and still recollects Martine's black leather suit, her black hair and eye-liner which accentuated her black eyes (Accad 182). Martine also displays certain characteristics of a butch. Butch refers to a lesbian who is masculine in appearance, in terms of dressing and behaviour. Butch-fem started in the 1950s and served as a conspicuous flag of rebellion and as an intimate exploration of women's sexuality (Nestle, 1981). It also served as a way for lesbians to separate themselves from feminists who did not share in their culture. The need for a homosocial bonding is, however, not accepted by all the women in the text, though they all wish to fight the patriarchal system. One such woman is Nayla, whom Hayate tries in vain to bond with. She feels that Hayate's writing about sexuality in Lebanon is irrelevant. To Nayla, sexuality is of no importance to these women who wish to be free from the control of men. She also feels that the issue of sexuality is just a thing of luxury and an immoral subject to even discuss.

The issue of same-sex doubles is also raised in the text, with Hayate seeing Aida as her soul sister:

They discover what they lack... More than this enriching and exalting mirror, it is the other – the same and yet different – which adds to the relationship (Accad 124).

Same-sex doubles is described as an abstract form of gay and lesbian signs with individuals who are similar in terms of appearance, behaviour or situations (Tyson, 1999). She continues by saying that they may have homosexual or homosocial union, or they may not have even come across each other. As is seen in the text, both Hayate and Aida draw strength from each other through the emotional bond they have, and this bond is also made strong by their quest to resist the heterosexual culture in which they find themselves. They both have a connection unlike any other in the text, and they both hold and agree on the same opinions. The similarities they share therefore cannot be taken merely as a coincidence, but a form of bond that provides trust and dependency on each other.

In Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara, the main character, is made to marry a young man, with the belief that her life will be full of roses with him. She however faces abuse right from the very day she starts living with her husband. After her husband travels to Germany, Mara joins him with so much excitement and anticipation, and dreams of wearing the white man's (European) clothes and being sophisticated. She is forced into prostitution by her own husband, and all hopes of having a better life are shattered. The only time homosexuality is mentioned is during Mara's stay in Germany, and the people said to be homosexuals are not blacks, but two German men (Darko 109-137). The fact that Amma Darko attributes homosexuality to the white-skinned man supports the "general" notion of Africans, that homosexuality is un-African, hence its portrayal in the text as such.

Mara does not indulge in any sexual activity with any woman, but her need to identify herself with other female characters makes her a woman-

identified kind of lesbian, drawing psychological and emotional strength from other female characters wherever she finds herself. This may be due to the fact that the women she meets have similar experiences in terms of marriage and relationships with men. This spells out what Rich (1980) calls a lesbian continuum, which she explains as a range of woman-identified experience, and not just the fact that a woman has consciously desired genital experience with another woman. The explanation given is that a female can be in and out of a lesbian experience at any point in her life, adding that the existence of a lesbian continuum serves as a support system for women who have been forced by society to accept the heterosexual culture. Hence, Mara cannot be labelled as a heterosexual just because she is married to a man.

We find in *Beyond the Horizon* a character that conforms well to society's demands and thus finds it hard to adjust to the lifestyle she meets in Germany. Mara can be said to be conforming to a cultural and social setup – a heterosexual society – but by applying a lesbian analysis to the text, she (Mara) becomes a woman-identified woman lesbian. When Mara is brought to the city as Akobi's wife, she finds that there is no love between her and Akobi, who beats her for no reason. She finds herself building some kind of friendship between Mama Kiosk, a tenant, and herself. This relationship starts on the day Mama Kiosk asks Mara to throw her rubbish away for her (Darko 10). As Mara keeps doing this a close bond is formed and it is from Mama Kiosk that Mara gains comfort. She becomes emotionally dependent on Mama Kiosk and values her enormously. Mara is found to be in a lesbian continuum entirely, though her sexual activities are with men. The description of Mama Kiosk store as blue (Darko 18) may add very little information to why Mara is

said to have some homosexual tendencies. However little, it appeals to a lesbian reading and interpretation as a sign of homosocial bonding. This is because the colour blue, one of the colours of the rainbow flag, represents art or serenity, and also adds to complete meaning of the gay pride.

While in Germany, she forms friendship with Kaye, also a prostitute, who has also had a similar experience as Mara. She describes Kaye as a “stunning black beauty” (Darko 116) and she is the first person to whom Mara narrates her ordeal. It is true that Mara sleeps with men and not women, but her desires and emotions are greatly directed towards women. She even misses Gitte, a German woman married to her husband. She rather pities her and grows to like her, admitting again that not seeing her in a while made her miss her (Darko 118). Gitte can be said to have that same attraction for Mara, from the way she shows affection towards Mara. She gives her a handkerchief just to see Mara again (Darko 126), a gesture that very much depicts a homosocial bonding, which can again be read as homosexual. The connection between Gitte and Mara may seem like two women who have just been put in a bad situation. However, using a queer lens allows for further interpretation and explanation. By interpreting this connection as a form of lesbian existence, we use Rich’s (1980) position that lesbian existence comprises both “the breaking of a taboo and the rejection of a compulsory way of life” (Rich 649). Rich adds that lesbian existence serves as a direct or indirect attack on male right of access to women (Rich 649). The implication here is that Mara’s relationship with Gitte is not just an ordinary friendship, but a way to be free from Akobi’s control in order to form a bond that is more of a lesbian existence.

Mara's physical description of the female characters, like the "pretty blond stewardess" (Accad 57), Kaye's "stunning black beauty" (p. 116), leaves enough room to suggest that Mara is not really as heterosexual as she is presented to be. These are traits of someone who desires a homosocial bonding. Homosocial bonding manifests itself in many forms and institutions, from friendships, social circles, and single-sex clubs, through athletics and the military, to prisons, convents, and monasteries. Although homosocial relationships are not sexual, there is often an element of homoeroticism in them (Sedgwick, 1985).

Though both *Wounding Words* and *Beyond the Horizon* push for women's freedom from male domination, it is done differently in a sense that while Darko condemns the act of homosexuality and presents it as foreign to Africa, Accad rejects male domination by approving homosexuality and condemning the attitude of Africans towards homosexuality through the characters created, perhaps the reason why the word 'sexuality' is several times in the text. Accad's work veers towards Rich's view of the need for a lesbian continuum and rejection of the heterosexual culture as a way of promoting feminism.

Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* presents homosexuality in a very complex manner since the text deals with a battle of the mind in a woman's quest to find herself. This semi-autobiography exposes the complexities of the mind through the main character, Elizabeth. In Pearse's (1983) discussion of this text, he identifies the writer's emphasis on the psychology of the main character, hence making the social factors contributing to the main character's psychological state subsidiary. The fact that Head presents homosexuality

largely as a mental state is a boost to Gayle Rubin's statement that "the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity", in a sense that it is filled with "conflicts of interest and manoeuvre, both deliberate and incidental." (Rubin 143). The sexual activities or sexuality of any given people is therefore based on what is popular at a given time. The mind then plays a role in what we accept as our sexuality versus what we find unusual or unacceptable. What the African sees as a disease, the white man sees as a normal human behaviour worthy of acceptance, irrespective of one's geographical area.

Despite Head's effort to create a character that is incapable of being attracted to someone of the same sex, she leaves room for Elizabeth to be analyzed as someone having homosexual tendencies. Pearse (1983) raises the issue that Bessie Head seems governed by the Freudian assertion that the sexual libido is central to man's psychic behaviour. This gives the impression that Elizabeth was never fully satisfied by her husband, who was a womanizer and a homosexual, and this led to her being mentally unstable, meaning that she can only be satisfied by someone of the same sex. It also becomes more convincing when Dan, the 'demon' in her hallucinations, tells her that she doesn't have a vagina (Head 13). Elizabeth, however, does not involve in any sexual activity with any female character, but she expresses some likeness towards Kenosi, one of the village women she trains to become a gardener. She gets fascinated by Kenosi's beauty and movement, which is described as resembling the movement of a cat – quiet, soft, intensely controlled (Head 89). Elizabeth later gaily tells Kenosi she (Elizabeth) would definitely marry Kenosi if she were to be a man (Head 90). She is drawn to her physical

appearance, and this creates a sensual feeling in her. Elizabeth can be said to be going through or experiencing a lesbian continuum, as her relationship with Kenosi gives her a sense of comfort and acceptance. The smile she gives after Elizabeth's comment suggests that she enjoys the idea of being liked by another woman, and the edges of her eye "crinkled up with a deep humour" (Head 90). This goes in line with Rich's (1980) assertion that every woman has the potential of being a lesbian; not in terms of having sexual relations with women alone, but in a sense that woman-identification, where one draws emotional and psychological support from another, is "a source of energy, a potential springhead of female power" (Rich 657). There is also the occurrence of a rather strong but strange attraction between Elizabeth and Miss. Sewing-Machine, one of the women Elizabeth sees in her hallucinations, and she's the only one Elizabeth believes could express "normal, human feelings," and Elizabeth observes that she looks at her (Elizabeth) "as though she knew what friendships between women were really like, and she stood out like a star of beauty in a howling inferno" (Head 129). It appears Elizabeth's need to form a bond does not exist only in real life, but also extends into her dreams and hallucinations, which is evident of how strong her desire for a homosocial bonding is. This also adds to her constant visions of seeing people of the same sex in sexual activities.

Homosexuality as un-African

In all three texts, we find that homosexuality has been made to seem foreign to Africans. What Bessie Head does differently from Evelyne Accad and Amma Darko is that, through the voice or, better still, the perception of a foreigner, homosexuality is westernized and detached from the African

continent. A fair argument would be that Elizabeth exhibits homosexual tendencies because she is mentally ill and also, she is half white. Then again, it can be argued quite fairly also that, though she is half white, she had no white influence, in that she was raised in a black environment where black customs and culture applied. Another thing Bessie Head does, quite similarly to Accad and Darko, is that she is not subtle in mentioning the countries the homosexuals come from. In *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara is told by her friend, Vivian, that the man she (Vivian) had married for her staying papers was a homosexual German (p.109). Mention is made again of another German man who is a homosexual, and whom Akobi's lover, Comfort, marries in order to obtain a stay permit in Germany (p. 137). Almost all the German men who were married to the African women are described as homosexuals.

In *A Question of Power*, Elizabeth's husband is said to have a boyfriend who is a white man (Head 19), and Elizabeth is said to have lived in a time where "nearly all the Coloured men were homosexuals" (Head 45). In one of Elizabeth's nightmares, Dan is seen clung to by four Asian homosexual men (Head 120). Elizabeth's friend, Tom, also tells Elizabeth that there are no gays in Africa, and that Africa is one of most unobscene societies in the world. To him, when it comes to Africa, "men just sleep with women, and that's all there is to it" (Head 161). Bessie Head's attempt to alienate homosexuality from Africa is quite evident, as she creates a homophobic atmosphere through her characterization of the main character. The need to present homosexuality as alien to Africa by most African writers is an attitude Timothy Johns mentions in his discussion of K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*. He asserts that many postcolonial leaders see themselves as performing some kind of

homosexual exorcism by arresting and executing homosexuals in their countries. South Africa is the first country to terminate same-sex discrimination, though they also view homosexuality as foreign, and appearing to have been promoted by European capitalism, globalization and apartheid.

The very idea that homosexuality may have existed in Africa before the arrival of the Europeans is discarded by African writers, as seen in Head's text. At the time Elizabeth lives in South Africa, drag queens (men who dressed as women) were seen in the streets kissing each other and being laughed at (Head 45). The explanation she gets, which she calls "reasonable," from an African man is a man cannot act as a man when he is always referred to as a boy, and that it even becomes hard to maintain one's manhood – "I was walking down the road the other day with my girl, and the Boer policeman said to me, 'Hey, boy, where's your pass?' Another man addresses me as boy. How do you think I feel?" (Head 45).

The same situation is seen in *Wounding Words*, when Hayate is told in one of the women's meetings that homosexuality is one of the luxuries of the Western world, and that it is not something Tunisians are interested in. Nayla is also among the women who attack Hayate for talking about American feminism and sexuality, which they find to be unimportant to countries of the Third World. They see rape, pornography and lesbianism to be the "prerogative of western countries, rich industrialized countries that can afford the luxury of sexuality with all of the excesses that it brings; countries of the Third World are too occupied with survival to think of these perversions." (Accad 164). This makes Hayate question why people of the Third World

would not be interested in sexuality. She finds it to be a desire as important as any other.

Johns (2010) expresses his opinion on Africa's stance on the existence of homosexuality in Africa, stating that, in his view, "The idea of settled heterosexual African origins is farcical" (Johns 251). The practice of homosexuality in South Africa has largely been blamed on apartheid, and though the act has been legalized, it is still seen by most black South Africans as a Western canker. It is partly due to this reason that a lot of writers choose to be silent. Dunton (2007) raises concern about the silence given to homosexuality, explaining that the given "history" has concealed the reluctance of African writers to "admit homosexuality into the bounds of a different kind of discussion" (Dunton 733).

The existence of homophobia – a fear or hatred of homosexuality – is greatly fuelled by what Adrienne Rich terms "compulsory heterosexuality," which she explained as the enormous pressure to be heterosexual (Tyson, 1999). Perhaps it is this pressure that Hayate realizes soon enough, which encourages her to convince the women to resist patriarchy. We find a thread that runs through *Wounding Words*, *Beyond the Horizon* and *A Question of Power* – any form of sexuality other than heterosexuality is presented as a foreign concept or practice. It seems apparent that Darko holds the view that any kind of sexuality besides heterosexuality cannot be found in Africa, a continent believed to be pure and devoid of any sexual promiscuity

We are reminded of Evaristo's (2014) position that African people have practised a wide range of sexualities, and that there is not enough documentation about its origins (p. 1). This, however, does not erase the few

documented practices. Evaristo (2014) describes the idea of homosexuality being a colonial import as a myth, mentioning countries like South Africa, Egypt and Benin as places where homosexuality existed before colonisation (Evaristo 2). Same-sex relationships in Africa were far more complex than what is being preached to us by champions of the ‘un-African’ myth, explaining further that in precolonial Africa, there were a lot of activities that involved same-sex sexuality (Tamale, 2014).

Much of what has been done by these three writers point to the general belief by Africans that homosexuality is a Western decadent, and it gives a rather strong impression that these writers – Darko especially – carry the same notion. It can then be concluded from the above analysis that the texts, while creating a homosexual-free Africa, allow for one to see signs of homosexuality in the characters mentioned. We cannot, however, state emphatically the intentions of the writers. It therefore creates doubt in the reader’s mind as to whether homosexuality is really un-African. It appears rather difficult, if not impossible, to prove that a particular form of sexuality can be determined by one’s encounter with the Western world or by the geographical setting within which one finds himself/herself. Perhaps the silence with which African writers treat the existence of homosexuality in Africa needs to be broken in order to handle the issue of homosexuality not as limited to a geographical area, and not as a Western decadent.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The intention of this research is not to condemn or praise a particular sexual preference. The aim is to identify a trend that seems to be common in a lot of African literary works, especially colonial and postcolonial literature. While this work may add to an already existing knowledge, it does not give a definite proof that writers intentionally create works to convince readers that homosexuality is a foreign import. The first chapter of this work has provided the background of the study, stating that, inasmuch as heterosexuality is seen to be the accepted form of human sexuality, especially on the African continent, there are a number of people who rather prefer to be with people of the same sex as theirs. The thesis statement is that a lot of African writers create a purely heterosexual African environment in their works, and the idea of homosexuality is mostly linked to a non-African in the story or the Western world as a whole. Also, though we would like to believe that homosexuality is foreign to the African continent, several studies prove otherwise. Before the arrival of the Europeans, there were certain tribes that practised homosexuality.

It appears, quite evidently, that what has been imported into the continent is the word 'homosexuality', and not the practice. Answers have been found to the questions of how homosexuality is subtly portrayed, and how homosexuality is treated as un-African. The second chapter of this work has dealt with the review of related literature on lesbian/gay theory and homosexuality in Africa. It has been revealed that inasmuch as the practice

exists, homosexuality is still given the silent treatment where writers either do not talk about it at all or, even when they do, blame its existence on the white man. As mentioned earlier, Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* is a perfect example of how African writers associate homosexuality with the white man. The second chapter again looked at various views scholars and researchers have on homosexuality in Africa and around the world, and the rising interest and growth in the subject. Scholars like Azuah (2005), Tamale (2014), and Dunton (2007) explain the impossibility of homosexuality being un-African, by showing evidence of homosexual practices in precolonial Africa. Dunton's (2007) work mentions some African literary works that choose to treat the subject of homosexuality with silence, or as a Western import, examples being *The Interpreters* and Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother*.

The findings by scholars mentioned in the second chapter are not far from what is seen in the analysis made in chapters three and four. This is in terms of the African ideology that homosexuality is a foreign practice. By using Freud's psychoanalytic theory in the third chapter, some characters from the three selected texts were seen to portray some homosexual tendencies. The use of Freud's work greatly helped to understand the said characters' mental and emotional status, and also gave way to make an observation from their perspective. We also find in the third chapter that the characters that portrayed homosexual tendencies hide their desires due to the environment they come from. Though these desires are hidden, they are not erased from the mind. Elizabeth's case in *A Question of Power* acknowledges the power of the mind and how it affects our relationships and communication with others.

The fourth chapter analyzed the three texts using queer theory, specifically lesbian and gay theory from theorists like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adrienne Rich. The representation of colours, characters and their behaviour in the selected texts were studied to identify the homosexual tendencies present, not disregarding the language used between mentioned characters in their conversations. An analysis was made of various instances where homosexuality was represented as un-African or a Western practice. It was observed that most of the characters described in the texts as homosexuals were not Africans. It was also revealed that though most of the characters were married to the opposite sex at a point, their interests were people of the same sex.

Conclusion

Though the analysis made here does not define the writers' motives, it does give a general view of the African in terms of human sexuality and what is expected of Africans. What this work does is to explore and unveil the issues of homosexuality that have been downplayed in most African works of art, though they exist. Little or no mention is made with regards to the practice of homosexuality on the African continent, and though it cannot be stated with certainty why this is so, it appears that there is the fear of encouraging or promoting the act, hence the silent treatment. The idea of homosexuality being a hard topic to discuss does not dismiss its existence on the African continent. It appears that most writers would rather erase the issue of homosexuality altogether, or present it as a forced practice. Even when mention is made of the subject of homosexuality and practice on the African continent, it is done,

almost always, with the African character having some level of connection with a Western character.

The narrative of Evelyne Accad, Bessie Head and Amma Darko is given a different twist by using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, and lesbian/gay theory. Without changing the narrative or destroying the beauty of these stories, the analysis of selected characters from the three texts reveals another dimension of the African story which is very often buried under the supposedly strong heterosexual environment created within the texts. This dimension is the issue of sexuality in the African context, which is hardly discussed or even mentioned. Mark Gevisser (2014) recounts what the leader of the Nigerian Senate, David Mark, said about homosexuality in 2014: "There are many good values we can copy from other societies but certainly not this one" (Gevisser 11). This implies that Africans, along with copying certain Western practices, have also adopted the practice of homosexuality, which, supposedly, is not African. The findings made are these:

- African writers generally do not talk about sexual practices in Africa without involving a white man.
- The issue of sexuality is treated as foreign in a lot of African texts.
- The homosexual tendencies identified in the characters are not explicit; they are created, consciously or unconsciously, subtly.

These findings imply, therefore, that the issue of sexuality is not a topic that is seen as deserving much attention in the African context, let alone the issue of homosexuality. It cannot be said with all certainty, why there is a deep and continuous pressure by some leaders and influential writers to

sustain the ‘un-African sexuality’ on the continent and to make everyone. Some writers do not see the need to discuss it when there are other issues they find more important. There is, perhaps, the hope that by preaching that it is un-African, the interest in homosexuality can be controlled, if not erased totally.

Recommendation

It would be erroneous to suggest that the analysis made here is complete or definite in presenting the African writer’s representation of homosexuality. There is room for further studies into this topic, and I will recommend that various areas like recent literary works on the African perspective of gender and sexuality, representation of homosexuality in African movies are looked into to give a wider understanding of homosexual representations in African works of art and how characters are made to portray such ideas. I will also recommend that documentaries and anthropological works are included in further studies on African sexualities.



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