

AUTHORING THE UNSPEAKABLES, MORALISING THE PUBLIC SPHERE: A

LITERARY EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL COMMITMENT AND THE ARTISTIC

VISION IN SIFISO NYATHI'S *OEUVRE*

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis critically analysed how Sifiso Nyathi, through his *oeuvre* commits to moralise the public sphere, by authoring the commonly unsaid and veiled societal matters. The *oeuvre* is comprised of five texts, three plays; *God of women*, *The oracle of Cidino*, and *Tears of fears in the era of terror*, a novel; *The other presence*, and an anthology of poems; *Ballads of insomnia*. Each text of the *oeuvre* deals with a kind of overarching silence in society. The main purpose of the study was to analyse how the author enunciates, re-assesses, makes a judicious inquiry and articulates issues that defy articulation. The researcher evaluated the artistic vision used in the *oeuvre* to bare the “unspeakables” and the commonly controversial issues that are aggressive toward accepted knowledge. The study employed a qualitative approach and data was analysed using content analysis. Due to the broad nature of the study, the researcher adopted three theories; Maria Pia Lara’s illocutionary approach, The African worldview and Ecocriticism as lenses through which the “unspeakables” were analysed. The study’s major findings revealed that Africans are highly spiritual, superstitious and their belief in ‘another presence’ is undisputable. A patriarchal treatment of women is also bared in the *oeuvre*. Moreover, Nyathi’s artistic vision is engrossed of day to day life matters in the life of a typical African community which are expressed through various artistic visions. The author succeeded in authoring the “unspeakables” in the Namibian society, allowing imagined alternatives and wide-ranging shades of opinions to be explored. The study concluded that the author successfully employed various artistic visions in the three different genres in his quest to moralise the public sphere. Nyathi authors what society views as taboo, unutterable and forbidden, subsequently bridging the gap between literature and the “unsaid” social realities, opening up avenues for further inquiries and debates. The study strongly recommends further research on “unspeakables” in different genres of African literature to explore the extent of similarities or differences in “unspeakables” in other African societies.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved family; My husband Valie and our beautiful daughter Tuyakula. My siblings, Tangeni, Niilonga, Tuli and Tuna and especially my parents, Tate Timotheus and Meme Justina Iitula. All their love, support and guidance brought me this far.

## **DECLARATION**

I, Leena Kaunapawa Iitula, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

In authoring the “unspeakables”, this study analyses how Nyathi socially commits to moralise the public through the various artistic visions employed in the *oeuvre*. The study endeavours to examine how Nyathi unveils the taboo and the forbidden. It further explores how Nyathi, through literature, defies the norm to create a platform to voice the realities of the various “unspeakables” in society through a variety of artistic visions. Nyathi’s artistic forms employed in various genres of the *oeuvre* offer an approach of addressing, interrogating and thinking through some of the most difficult fixations and challenges society encounters on a day-to-day basis, allowing the silenced to be thought through in a new, perhaps digressive, evasive oblique yet still meaningful and memorable way. The study therefore seeks to elucidate the theme of social commitment and public sphere moralising by unveiling the “unsayables”, therefore persuading the readers to act and change their attitude towards these “unspeakables”. This is an introductory chapter, introducing the study by presenting the orientation of the study, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms used in the study and the organisation of the study.

### 1.2 Orientation of the study

Authoring of “unspeakables” to moralise the public sphere is crucial to society yet appears to be understudied. This study seeks to analyse critically the spiritual, moral, physical and the same sex orientation among other “unspeakables” in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*. As a social art, literature is committed to societal values. Pankaj (2011) asserts that literature serves the role of a potent medium of communication which entails more responsibility than privilege to the

writer. Furthermore, the publication of a literary work is essentially an act of communication through which the writer enacts his personality and vision of life on the society (Pankaj, 2011). Holm (2010) also affirms that the reader is strongly linked to society, its ideology and belief systems and will understand a work of literature accordingly. Hence, literature can serve as a powerful tool for communicating the commonly unsaid, unsayable and unspeakable societal matters.

Nyathi's *oeuvre*, consisting of three plays, a novel and an anthology of poems, explores various "unspeakable" social and cultural aspects of the African community. The author particularly makes a judicious inquiry, enunciates, re-assesses and articulates issues that defy articulation. In the *oeuvre*, the author manages to bring out societal matters, so disturbing that they persistently haunt society but refuse to be identified, described, articulated or explained in every day discourse. These are issues pertaining to, among others, the spiritual, the physical, the moral and the sexual. From the foregoing, the focus of this study, therefore, will be to interrogate critically how Nyathi reveals certain truths which are commonly seen by society as taboo, in a quest to moralise the public sphere.

Each of Nyathi's work deals with a kind of overarching "silence" in society. The "unspeakables" are those aspects of society that go beyond the habitual norm. Hence, according to Marewe (2008), since the 'non-standard' issues are peculiar in society, they are 'othered', rendering them either misrepresented or unrepresented. However, avoiding confronting the "unspeakables" shelters these taboos and obscures them in silence. The study therefore examines how Nyathi commits to uncover these silences, by incorporating that which cannot be said into the language of the text through the *oeuvre*. Furthermore, the "unspeakables" are not consistent in all societies, what might be regarded as taboo in one society may not necessarily be taboo in the next society (Marewe, 2008), hence the study explores how the nature and significance of the things that are not, or cannot be said in the

Namibian societies are authored from an African perspective, focusing particularly on the spiritual, moral, physical and sexual vision among others in Nyathi's *oeuvre*, as elucidated in this study.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Literature provides the platform to speak directly about the “unspeakables” and the “unsayables”. According to Oosterling (1999) modernism presents a way of dealing with taboos, of cultivating the heterogeneous or, as it were, presenting the unrepresentable. This study thus attempted to interrogate how Nyathi, through literature as a common tool of interacting with the readers, commits to socially moralise the public sphere by authoring the issues which society views as “unutterable”. Authoring the “unspeakables” can provide a way forward, a means to open the future, by opening up on issues, those under taboo, and those that are forbidden (Boemer, 2010).

Multiple studies (Mlambo & Kandemiri, 2015; Holm, 2010; Oosterling, 1999; Rogers, 2010; Namulondo, 2010; and Greenfield, 2014) have been conducted on the ‘unspeakables’. Almost all the studies look at the ‘unspeakables’ in isolated texts and specific contexts, it appears no study focuses on an individual author’s *oeuvre*, creating a gap for the proposed study. While an element of ‘unspeakables’ is arguably present in virtually all the studies done on the topic, this study intends to explore a single author’s collection of literary works in its entirety. Each of the selected author’s text grapples with a kind of ‘silence’ by employing the ‘unspeakables’ in various ways, gradually arriving at a holistic analysis and moralising of a collective society. The study thus intends to uncover the reoccurring societal ‘unspeakables’ in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

In the quest to author the “unspeakables” in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*, the study seeks to meet the following objectives:

- Critically analyse the presentation of the various “unspeakables” in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*
- Examine how the public sphere is moralised through the articulation of the “unspeakables” as evidenced in the author’s *oeuvre*
- Explore how the various artistic visions are employed in the three different genres of Nyathi’s *oeuvre* to bring to the fore the “unspeakable”

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The study will offer renewed insight into Nyathi’s works and African literature in general. The unique approach of blending different genres of literature; plays, poetry and a novel in exploring the “unspeakables” will bring novelty to Nyathi’s and other literary works. The new insight will add to the body of existing literature and go beyond isolated texts from Nyathi, as it offers an analysis of the whole *oeuvre*, using a critical angle which has not been investigated before. The study centres around hidden issues in society in an attempt to bridge the gap between literature and social reality as well as to examine how the author of the *oeuvre* moralises the public sphere by authoring these “unsayables”.

#### **1.6 Limitations of the study**

The study only focused on a single author’s work, Nyathi’s *oeuvre*. The study however, conducts an in-depth analysis into the “unspeakable” issues presented, therefore unravelling all the taboos presented in all the texts. Furthermore, the study is confined to the illocutionary approach and the African worldview which serve as the overarching theories with Ecocriticism as a supporting theory, to explore the topic. The three theories are best suited to describe the major themes of the study; the social commitment of moralising the public sphere, sexuality and the physical environment in which the texts take place. Lastly, as the

study interrogates the authoring of the “unspeakables”, other themes in the *oeuvre* which may not be classified under the “unspeakables” will not be explored as they do not fall within the scope of the research study.

### **1.7 Definition of key terms**

In order to facilitate an understanding by the reader on how the study develops, it is important to highlight some of the most prominent terms. Hereunder, the following terms are defined:

**“Unspeakables”** – that which cannot be openly said; issues that society is usually silent on,

**Moralising** - Reflecting on or expressing opinions about something in terms of right and wrong,

**Public sphere** - The public sphere is an area in social life where individuals read literary work to freely discuss and identify societal problems,

**Artistic vision** - A writer’s way of viewing issues, their perspective, their talk in the type of work they do, the structures, codes and the images they use in the story they wish to convey.

### **1.8 Organisation of the study**

This study is made up of five chapters. Chapter 1 gives the introduction of this study which is divided into; the orientation of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of terms used in the study. Followed by Chapter 2 which provides the theoretical framework where the selected theories which will serve as the lens through which the study is analysed are discussed. The related literature, divided into subtopics is also discussed under this chapter. Chapter 3 gives the research methodology employed for the study. Thereafter, Chapter 4, analyses and discusses the “unspeakables” as presented in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*. The final, Chapter 5 contains the conclusion as well as recommendations.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter introduces the study “Authoring the “unspeakable” moralising a public sphere: A literary examination of social commitment and the artistic vision in Sififo Nyathi’s *oeuvre*”. The chapter includes the introduction, orientation of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, significance and limitation of the study. The next chapter reviews the literature related to authoring the “unspeakables” and moralising the public sphere as well as social commitment and artistic vision presented in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*. Chapter two helps to gather the literature related to the research topic, which will help to illuminate the study as well as enable the researcher to identify the gap in knowledge related to the topic.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature and discusses the theoretical framework in relation to the research topic – “Authoring the ‘unspeakables’, moralising the public sphere: A literary examination of social commitment and the artistic vision in Sifiso Nyathi’s *oeuvre*”.

The literature review is divided into subtopics, beginning with the introductory part, followed by defining the “unspeakables” and a thorough discussion on the theoretical framework, as well as a justification why the chosen theoretical framework is appropriate for this research. The subtopics further discuss the major themes to be analysed in the research. These subtopics include; review of related literature, authoring the “unspeakable”, social commitment and moralising of public sphere, the spiritual vision, superstition, the physical environment, the “unspeakables” of homosexuality, the “unspeakables” of land, churches and prophets of profit, patriarchal treatment of women as well as the “unspeakables” of war. A discussion on the subtopics is crucial for this research, as it aids in the comprehension and analysis of themes in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*. Due to the historic nature of some of the subtopics as well as limited review on some literary aspects, reference to scholars such as Attinasi (1965); Asante (1987); Bailey (1955); Bakthin (1987); Baldwin, (1980); Barker, (1999); Chinua (1981); Dzama and Obome, (1999); Foss (1992); Hayes (1995); Holmes (1974); Lamb (1982); Lara (1998); Lawrenz, (1995); Levitt (1952); Mbiti (1969); Nobles (1985); Oosterling (1999) and Schiele (1994) was made.

#### 2.2 Discussing the theoretical framework

Due to its broad nature, the study will adopt two main theories and one supporting theory.

The research will adopt the Illocutionary approach and the African worldview concept as the main critical lens, with Ecocriticism as supporting theories.

Maria Pia Lara's approach of illocutionary (Nyambi, 2011; Nabutanyi, 2013) is the first main theory for this study. The term illocutionary force was introduced by a British linguistic philosopher, John Austin, in 1962, to refer to the social function of what is said, which is a form of speech act. Lara (1999) elaborates the illocutionary approach in a new way. According to Meyer (1998), while the traditional speech act theory takes single sentences as the bearers of illocutionary force, Lara (1999) uses the term illocutionary force more widely for the impact of whole narratives on the symbolic domain. Lara (1999) further elaborates that collective narratives acquire normative legitimacy because they are filtered through the public sphere where actors create fragile and falsifiable agreements about what needs to be done in the social world. Lara's (1999) concern is with women's treatment and inclusion in society. Nyambi (2011) applied Lara's approach in a study which examined how the cultural domain contributed towards the search for the "just society" while Nabutanyi (2013) applied it to explore African children's troubled experiences. Considering this study's focus on how Nyathi commits himself to moralise society in the *oeuvre*, the study adopts Lara's notion of illocutionary force. This study hypothesises that Nyathi creates an explanatory moral quest to reveal the "unspeakables", as is discussed in the study.

The second main theory for the study is the African worldview. To understand the African worldview, it is imperative to first of all understand a worldview in general as this is from where the African worldview derives. According to Chalk (2006) a Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant is almost universally credited with coining the German term "Weltanschauung" (intuition of the world) to suggest a particular philosophy or view of life in 1790. Over the years, the term evolved through usage by various scholars in Philosophy. By the end of the nineteenth century, "Weltanschauung" was considered to be a companion

concept to Philosophy and was a part of the normal vocabulary of the educated German. Its usage spread from Germany to other parts of the Western world, spreading throughout Europe and into the English language and was translated as worldview.

A worldview is the comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things (Shaw, 1986). Everybody has a worldview because everyone has beliefs that guide their action and interpret events around them in some kind of sensible way. In concurrence, Barker (1999) defines worldview as the way a person tends to understand his or her relationship with social institutions, nature, objects, other people and spirituality. It provides us with the much-needed foundation for behaviour, thoughts and assumptions which govern how we live. Through it, we have the basis of how we perceive our world, for example whether we consider the community a critical part of our lives or only family, our belief in the spiritual world or not etc. Our worldview guides our understanding and interpretation of the nature of reality.

Given the above, an African worldview theory is therefore based on African cultural beliefs, practices and values. For many decades following the introduction of worldviews, black scholars and researchers (Baldwin, 1980; Nobles, 1985; Asante, 1987 & Schiele, 1994) have argued for an alternative social science paradigm that is grounded in the cultural background and reality of the black experience. Graham (1999) asserts that the African worldview has emerged amidst growing demands for a shift from the hegemony of ethnocentric paradigms of human knowledge to a culturally pluralistic one. The African worldview theory is a combination of the classical and contemporary, continental and diasporic Africa, overarching perspectives on human experience and the natural and phenomenal world (Rabaka, 2007). This worldview informs the way in which Africans relate to phenomena. The African worldview theory includes beliefs and practices such as belief in God, belief in ancestors, nature, adulthood, belief in witchcraft, traditional healing, polygamy and rites of passage (Thabede, 2014). These exhibit enough commonalities to warrant being called an African

overview. Some scholars have used the African Worldview theory in their studies (Acquah, 2011; Chalk, 2006; Dzama & Obome, 1999; Lawrenz, 1995).

Taboos are not consistent in all societies. The world is differently defined in different places (Thabede, 2008). What may be regarded as taboo in one society, may not necessarily be taboo in another. It is from this understanding that the study employs the African world view theory, as the second main theory in analysing the taboos, the “unspeakables” and the forbidden presented in the *oeuvre*. The African Worldview theory is relevant to this study as the super natural and spirituality are among the major themes in the *oeuvre* and are amalgamated in the theory. The *oeuvre* is set in Africa and depicts African people’s ways of life. This renders the African worldview theory eligible to this study as it depicts the African day to day view of life and phenomena.

Ecocriticism as the supporting theory of the proposed study will help explore how Nyathi integrates nature in the *oeuvre*. Although the term ‘ecocriticism’ first appeared in William Rueckert’s essay in 1978, ecocriticism only started developing in the 1990s. It is defined by (Fenn, 2015) as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Ecocriticism involves the critical and pedagogical broadening of literary studies to include texts that deal with the non-human world and our relationship to it. Over the last three decades, Ecocriticism has emerged as a field of literary study that addresses how humans relate to non-human nature or the environment in literature. Today, with the development and expansion of ecocritical studies, any line between human and non-human nature has necessarily been blurred. Ecocriticism has come to mean not only the application of ecology and ecological principles to the study of literature, but also the theoretical approach to the inter-relational web of natural cultural and supernatural phenomena (Shikha, 2011). A number of scholars have conducted studies on Ecocriticism; Battacharyya, (2012); Iheka, (2015); Lusinga, (2016); Romadhan, (2012) and Van Wyk, (2012). These studies place

emphases on literary criticism often focusing on impacts of environmental problems on humans as well as a link between affluence and environmentally friendly attitudes, and Ecocriticism in postcolonial thought and literature. In incorporating Ecocriticism, this study in contrast explores the link between nature and society with a particular focus on spirituality from an African worldview perspective, an area which appears not to have been studied.

According to Gumo, Simon, Evans and Collin (2012), African spirituality was communicated through nature. This opines that natural phenomena have spirits that define the relationship between humans and nature that is interlinked and interdependent. Most African communities believed that the environment was the abode of the spirits, the living dead and ancestors. Natural phenomena have spirits that define the relationship between humans and nature, which is linked and interdependent. Hence, the African spiritual worldview creates sacredness and respect for nature, reverence for hills, forests, animals, and rivers. This is a crucial facet amalgamated in the study, therefore, by applying Ecocriticism, the study will analyse how this close relationship between nature and society has been textualised in the oeuvre from an African worldview perspective. Together, the three theories; Illocutionary, African worldview and Ecocriticism are best suited for this study as they will facilitate bringing out the “unspeakable” aspects in the *oeuvre* by providing the appropriate lenses.

### **2.3 Review of related literature**

A number of scholars have carried out studies on the “unspeakables”. Greenfield’s (2014) study comes close to the intended study as it focuses on the “unspeakables”, concentrating on a collection of texts. The focus, however, is on the aspect of trauma and the texts are by different authors while this study focuses on a collection of a specific author. Scholars, such as Mlambo and Kandemiri (2015) and Masule and Kangira (2014) focused on Nyathi’s *The other presence* and *God of women* respectively. However, it appears no study has been

carried on Nyathi's *oeuvre* in its entirety, as well as the specific thematic focus of "unspeakables". This study thus intends to fill this gap by encompassing all of the author's literary works. Furthermore, Mlambo and Kandemiri (2015) looked at the "unspeakables" focusing on the spiritual world, while Masule and Kangira (2014) looked at how women are represented in the play *God of women*, leaving the 'unspeakables' of war, homosexuality and the fake prophets unstudied, which further creates a gap for this study.

#### **2.4 Authoring the "unspeakables"**

The Namibian society often struggles to express and come to terms with matters regarded as taboo. These are commonly controversial issues or issues that are hostile towards accepted knowledge. Nyathi attempts to unveil and bring to the fore issues which are commonly concealed by mirroring them in the *oeuvre* therefore reflecting their existence. By voicing the unsayable, society ought to reassess its body of knowledge; accede its limitations and shift away from veiling the "unsayables". Franke (2011, p. 65) refers to the "unspeakables" as "that which cannot be said", while Marewe (2008) refers to the "unspeakables" as issues that society is usually silent on. This study thus analyses how Nyathi manages to articulate the qualitative aspects of life such as the spiritual, moral, the physical and same sex, sexual engagements which are some of the issues which the Namibian society is silent on.

Writing allows the "unsayable", the taboo and the forbidden to be articulated through encoded, oblique, and disguised ways (Boehmer, 2009). Through the *oeuvre*, Nyathi defies the norm by making use of the platform to voice the realities of the various "unspeakables" in society through a variety of artistic visions. Boehmer (2009) further enunciates that the conceptualisation of the "unsayable" and the visible voice stems from the understanding that

story telling encourages that which till now has been silenced and subdued to be fossilised in a meaningful and memorable way.

Writing enunciates that which society shies away from unveiling outside of writing. It allows the silenced to be thought of in a new, perhaps digressive, evasive, oblique, yet still meaningful and memorable way (Attridge, 2004). This implies that artistic forms such as structures, codes and various genres offer an approach of addressing, interrogating and thinking through some of the most difficult fixations and challenges society encounters on a daily basis. Hence, through writing about the “unspeakables”, society gets an opportunity to reflect on its inclinations therefore allowing imagined alternatives and wide-ranging shades of opinion to be explored. As Soueif (2009) maintains, writing animates an interrogation of the status quo, yet it casts beyond it as it projects worlds beyond even those that are being resisted. This study therefore explores this notion further by analysing how the “unsayable”, the taboo and the forbidden is articulated by Nyathi.

## **2.5 Social commitment and moralising of public sphere**

Literature is a socially dedicated art. According to Pankaj (2011), the term commitment is used as an equivalent to an undertaking or an obligation which the writer commits to work for an individual, an ideology or an institution. The writer’s belief may include non-political areas such as moral, religious or aesthetic and literary consequences. Furthermore, committed literature is bound to be subjective, reflecting the author’s stand regarding major social questions (Pankaj, 2011). In light of the above, Nyathi socially commits to author the “unspeakables” in order to bridge the gap between literature and the “unsaid” social realities as explored in the oeuvre.

An author has the capacity to conceive a new line of thinking for the readers through literary work. Writing literary work can be a performative action of rummaging for a “new beginning” (Nyambi, 2011, p.2). Through literature, storytelling turns into the expressive exercise of collective judgment. Literary works are therefore viewed as complex means of communicating difference and alternative subjectivities in the creation of a new public by influencing societies’ view about certain matters. As Chinua (1981) puts it, the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. The collaboration between literary work and real life makes novels potential and subtle sites for achieving some major temporal realities hence a transformed line of thinking as well as a fresh way of looking at matters which are seen as taboo, as this study explores.

This notion concurs with Nussbaum’s (2005) view of how literary work affects a reader. According to Nussbaum (2005), literary work speaks to an implicit reader who shares with the characters certain fears and human concerns. Therefore, the reader can establish bonds of identification with the characters. In so doing, the very structure of the interaction between the text and the reader invites the reader to see how the mutable features of society and circumstance bear on the realisation of shared hope and desires. Furthermore, literature allows writers to bring to the table wide-ranging shades of opinions for exploration and thus allowing the multi-voicing on contentious issues and opening up constructive possibilities (Barber, 2009). Nyathi’s *oeuvre* achieves its cogency through its creative use of artistic visions and its powerful use of language.

Literature has always constituted an important part of the public sphere. The public sphere is referred to by Forslid and Ohlsson (2010) as a space outside of state control, where individuals can get together for debates, conversations, and discussions, thus forming a public opinion. Therefore, the study furthers this notion to refer to the general readership of literary texts as the public sphere. This concurs with Nyambi’s (2011) views on the public sphere as a

negotiated space in which narratives participate in the ongoing processes of social metamorphosis towards the just society. The study elucidates the theme of social commitment and public sphere moralising as key in Nyathi's *oeuvre*. As Barber (2010, p. 14) stresses, "popular culture in Africa is saturated with moralising", therefore influencing the perception of certain "unspeakables" by society and persuading the readers to act and change their attitudes towards these "unsayables". This is an important but little-known reference point illuminated in the study.

Furthermore, authors use literature to express themselves regarding social matters. Literature allows writers to bring to the table wide ranging shades of opinions for exploration and thus allowing the multi-voicing on contentious issues and opening constructive possibilities (Barber, 2009). The *oeuvre* is the instrument the author employs to constructively open up to society on matters that would normally be regarded as unmentionable using varying tones. As Greenfield (2014) asserts, literature appeals to the intellectual side of people, and it serves as a means of entertainment. The *oeuvre* employs both the hedonistic as well as the didactic artistic visions to articulate the unsaid.

In communicating to the public sphere through literary work, the author ought to convey meaning via a range of voices and points of view. The social diversity of speech types and the differing individual voices permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships. Language of a literary text is therefore a social phenomenon whose social texture and temporal currency is appropriated by the writer to signify certain social issues. Bakhtin (1987) as cited in Cardoso (2011) asserts;

The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes one's own only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adopting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. (p.58)

It can be construed from the quotation above that when deciphering literary expressions in relation to their social and historical embeddedness the readers are able to decode not only the social and historical footings around the utterance but also the amalgamating circumstances around the subject of concern. Therefore, it is safe to say that in Nyathi's quest to moralise the public sphere, various artistic visions are incorporated in the text with very rich historical and cultural manifestations, which the reader has to relate to in order to infer meaning. The *oeuvre* is set in recognisable everyday life and is characterised by recognisable people and unfolds in line with day-to-day logics of cause and effect, thereby making it possible for the reader to relate to and the author to achieve the purpose of moralising the public sphere.

## **2.6 The artistic vision**

Artistic vision is an artist's way of perceiving matters, their perspective, the type of work they do and the story they wish to convey. For the purpose of this study, art will be referring to literature. According to Attisani (1965) literature is art and meaning. In literature, the art is presented in a communicative medium of words, these words subsequently form the poetical part of literature, the structure, the phrasing and the description. All these encompass an author's artistic vision. In any art, the artist faces the problem of presenting a creative vision through a medium. Thus, the literary artist's medium is and must be a message bearer. Nyathi, through the literary medium of words artistically creates typical African day to day experiences which society commonly chooses to veil. This creative artistic vision as created through the use of various descriptions and literary devices such as imagery and figurative language as shall be elucidated in the study.

An artist develops their artistic visions over time. After the artist's vision has been apprehended, the readers may proceed to discuss the concrete, person changing effects of the work's vision (Mamuena, 2011). In this area, the effect of literature becomes highly subjective. Nyathi overtime compiled an *oeuvre* which through its analysis reveals the author's (Nyathi) artistic vision. Mamuena (2011) further posits that in approaching literature, the first object is to apprehend the artistic vision of the author. The author is part of a community and thus embodies as well as reflects the values, dreams and fears of that community. Hence, to be an author is not merely to have a certain factual relation to a text, it is rather, to fulfil a certain socially and culturally defined role in relation to the text. Nyathi's literature embodies, as well as reflects the values, traditions and fears of the Namibian community. Therefore, to be an author is not merely to have a certain factual relation to a text. It is rather to fulfil a certain socially and culturally defined role in relation to the text. Nyathi's artistic vision is explored to reveal the social and cultural taboos through an incorporation of various creative processes. Nyathi's work mirrors the "unspeakables" in society and the environment, and charts the development of an artist who seeks to live beyond the norm and unveil the "unutterable", as shall be revealed in the discussion.

## **2.7 The spiritual vision**

Unlike the natural world which is physical and can be observed, the spiritual world is unseen by the human eye and has to do with spirits. Spirituality refers to the experience of being related to or in touch with an "other" that transcends one's individual sense of self and gives meaning to one's life at a deeper than intellectual level (Scoeder, 2012). Lewis (2006) concurs by explaining that the spiritual refers to personal beliefs that help people make meaning of phenomena in their lives. Death especially is considered as a phenomenon that cannot just come naturally. It is something that always happens because of the existence of

another presence and not just mortality itself (Ziwara, 2015). Moreover, Acquah (2011) affirms that African cultures believe that there are unquestionable spiritual forces that are more powerful than humankind and this opens up the African to the divine and to seeking affinity with these spiritual powers, be it traditional or religious.

Africans believe in spiritual protection by the ancestors. Ancestors are believed to be elders who have passed on to the other world. Acquah (2011) asserts that the African thought regarding death is that it marks a transition from this earthly life to the world of the spirits or ancestors. In that understanding, most African communities believed that death did not mean the end of life it was only perceived as a transition from one existence to the other. Although the dead were in the unseen world, they still continued to be part of the living community spiritually and were acknowledged (Acquah, 2011). Although the living did not see them, they believed the ancestors were still with them in the family and the community.

So much respect was accorded to the ancestors. Machinga (2011) stresses that offering sacrifices to ancestors demonstrates respect for the ancestral spirits, ensuring protection from the spiritual entities and creating a sense of security. Also, the graves of ancestors were usually respected and sacred shrines Gumo, Simon, Evan and Collins (2012). They further assert that, if community members allow the destruction of sacred spaces, it is believed that ancestors would curse or punish the offender with misfortune or even death.

## **2.8 Witchcraft**

The African worldview encompasses the belief in witchcraft. In a broad sense, witchcraft describes all types of evil employment of mystical power generally in a secret fashion and is used to designate the harmful employment of mystical power in all of its manifestations

(Mbiti, 1969). This concurs with Adinkra and Adhikari's (2014) definition, they define witchcraft as;

A supernatural power possessed by a person who is known as the witch or wizard. Witchcraft is used to influence the health (longevity, sickness, drowning, and death) or behaviour of another person (the witchcraft victim) or to cause a physical action e.g. (drought, earthquake) or social event (unemployment, divorce, motor accidents) in the witches or victim's society. (p. 34)

Witchcraft is believed to be brought about through mystical powers possessed by witches or wizards. It is aimed to stop or influence and bring about unusual and unfortunate occurrences such as accidents, disagreements, death, domestic and public hostility, loss of property, sickness and failure. Witchcraft is generally taken to mean harmful magic performed by witches or wizards. It is typically not a learned craft involving long study or highly developed ritual expertise. It often carries the implication of close alliance with or worship of evil supernatural entities Bailey (2017). The unfortunate occurrences in the *oeuvre* are believed to be due to these mystical powers, making it a crucial aspect of analysis in this study.

The witchcraft phenomenon is unspoken and cloaked in silence for a number of reasons. In some parts of Africa, the "victims" avoid making it known that they are cursed with the fear that speaking out will provide the witches and wizards with the knowledge that the curses they have casted were successful therefore inviting new curses by different means (Burnside, 2012). Burnside (2012) further posits that in other parts of Africa, people believe that public discussion of occults gives the occults power therefore the best way is to not discuss witchcraft activities. These attributes generate fear and suspicion in societies. Whatever the reason may be, most individuals avoid openly talking about this mystical phenomenon, making the unspeakable of witchcraft relevant to this study.

Wizards, witches and sorcerers possess mystical powers. Kagema (2014) maintains that mystical power may send curses or harm including death from a distance, practitioners can also change into animals. They can convert inanimate objects into biologically active living creatures or enable experts to delve deep to reveal hidden information, or reveal the future, or detect thieves and other culprits. This is in line with Mbiti's (1969) claim that witches are able to turn themselves into animals like hyenas, owls, or other nocturnal creatures or into spirit bodies to attend spirit assemblies or to accomplish their evil errands. Bewitchment is believed to be from envy, jealousy and vengefulness. For example, a destructive witch would use their power to destroy the crops of a successful farmer. Also, a witch could use their power to afflict illness or death upon someone's son or daughter who could even be a member of his/her family.

In Africa, most societies hold beliefs in mysterious powers. It is indeed a part and parcel of the African traditional religion. This is because, according to Mbiti (1969), in African worldview, nothing happens by chance. Unfortunate cases are therefore believed to be caused by some other person in a direct way or through mystical forces. To be freed from mystical powers, people seek protection from medicine men and diviners. Since these malevolent forces are believed to be everywhere, some people wear charms, bands and beads around wrists, necks and waists for spiritual protection. Kagema (2014) asserts that individuals wear charms, take medicines or get them rubbed into their bodies by consulting experts such as diviners, or medicine men, to counteract the evil effects of this power, or obtain power charged objects for curative, productive or preventive purposes. It is for this reason that some Africans wear, carry or keep charms, amulets, and other objects on their bodies, in their fields or homesteads containing the same power, an aspect depicted in *The oracle of Cidino*. The specialists provide charms, amulets, medicines and other protective objects, placed in secluded places in the house or the field and may be called in to perform cleansing rituals in

homes of those believed to have been witched. According to Mbiti (1969) it is believed that good witches and wizards are able to utilise their witchcraft power to facilitate prosperity. These types of witches are believed to be beneficent witches or may be called witch doctors. This of course comes at a price, as people are asked to pay fortunes in order to get this protection. An aspect depicted in the *oeuvre*.

Witchcraft accusations are common in most African cultures. The most unfortunate part of the witchcraft accusation is the witch-hunt that comes with witchcraft accusations, making it a major societal problem. Diagnosis of witchcraft and identification of putative witches may be made by religious functionaries by revelation through prayer and witchdoctors through divination Adinkra and Adhikari (2014). In recent years, the number of media reports featuring violent harassment, torment and discrimination of alleged witches has mushroomed in Africa (Action Aid, 2013; Shrestha, 2012 & Whitaker, 2012). Since witchcraft is viewed as a primary representation of evil, the opinion individuals clench to, brings about fear, despise and desire to remove from society those suspected or accused of it. Hayes (1995) observes that between 1994 and 1996 hundreds of people were killed in the Northern Province of South Africa after being accused of witchcraft. Witchcraft accusations are not new, it is a phenomenon which has been around for years. This is affirmed by Holmes (1974) who states that the existence of beliefs and practices of witchcraft and sorcery were witnessed in Britain a thousand years after the birth of Christ. However, the British authorities condemned these practices and persons who were accused of it were dismissed as social misfits. It is therefore no surprise that Nyathi authors this unspeakable phenomenon in the *oeuvre*, in his quest to moralise the public sphere.

Witchcraft accusations have bitter consequences. They may lead to intimidations of the victims. These accusations may further lead to risks of both mental and physical abuse. Dahal (2013) posits that accusations of witchcraft, refutations, accusations and counter

accusations lead to assaults, physical battery, and other forms of interpersonal violence against the victim such as psychological abuse meant to shame him or her. Which is more or less the same fate suffered by Elder Simvula in *The other presence*, after the death of his nephew.

It is specific members of the community who are accused of superstition. Adinkra and Adhikari (2014) attest that most people accused of witchcraft are women, males are rarely accused of witchcraft. Adinkra and Adhikari's (2014) findings coincide with those of Mgbako and Glenn's (2011) that women are more often accused of witchcraft than men by asserting that compared to their male counterparts, women in Africa are disproportionately accused of witchcraft. Of the forty-five witchcraft cases in the Leitner Malawi mobile clinic, only four involved accusations of witchcraft were against an adult male. Even during the early modern period, people stereotypically thought of the witch as a female figure Natrella (2015). This conviction could be attributed to the belief in some communities that the practice of witchcraft is passed from mother to daughter through matrilineal linkage.

Ironically, witchdoctors who claim to be able to identify witches are often men Adinkra and Adhikari (2014). The male-dominated social structures that identify witches and rule on their fate also illuminate the gendered nature of witchcraft accusations. This conclusion is however contrary to how witchcraft accusations are represented in *The other presence* where a male Elder Sinvula is accused of witchcraft. Also, in polygamous marriages, rivalry among co-wives may cause one woman to accuse of another wife of witchcraft as represented in the play *God of women*.

The elderly and widows are also not spared from witchcraft accusations. The elderly are commonly accused because according to Emmanuel (2013), the elderly people may look different: With wrinkled skin texture and they may not be able to walk due to muscle

weakness. They may have missing teeth and may not look as smart as an average person. Also, they have lived longer and have a lot of experience and therefore can tell what may happen in the future based on their experience. These attributes may render them being accused of witchcraft. In a study on witchcraft in Ghana and Nepal, available evidence shows that widows are more likely to be associated with witchcraft activities (Dahal, 2013). This could be attributed to the absence of physical protection from a male partner.

## **2.9 The physical environment**

While the spiritual world is unseen by the human eye, the physical environment can be observed. Physical environment is the part of the human environment that includes physically observable factors. The physical environment is another critical “unspeakable” in Nyathi’s works. It refers to the totality surrounding a substance or a person’s existence and the way they relate to the world (Gumo, Simon, Evans & Collin, 2012). This encompasses all the living organisms and the naturally occurring non-living things, including water, air, land, all plants, human beings and other animals and the existing inter-relationships. Certain animals and animal activities in the *oeuvre* are viewed as a bad omen, and certain plants are used in spiritual healings in the *oeuvre*. This study elucidates how Nyathi incorporates nature and spirituality to reveal its relationship with man.

There is and always has been a close relationship between nature and literature. This close relationship between nature and literature is evidenced in the works of poets and other writers down the ages in almost all cultures of the world. Tošić (2009) affirms that there is a relationship between man, the spiritual world and the environment. The constant relationship in literature between nature and literature led to the recognition of the following significant two terms in literature, ‘ecology’ and ‘ecocriticism’. According to Fenn (2015), both terms, ecology and ecocriticism share a fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the

physical world, affecting it and affected by it. These two terms are relevant to this study, as part of the study analyses how people relate to their physical environment as represented in the *oeuvre*.

There is a thin line between the spiritual and the physical world. African spirituality was conveyed through the physical environment. Schroeder (2015) contends that natural environments seem to be the primary setting for spiritual experiences. This is in line with Gumo et al. (2012) assertion that African spirituality is communicated through the environment. Hence most natural features in the *oeuvre* are viewed to be bestowed with spiritual powers of either the gods or spirits of the ancestors.

African religious spirituality is communicated through the environment. For years, African spirituality has been augmented through the physical environment owing to the fact that Africans adulated all things on earth including the heavens above. According to various African spiritualities, humanity dwells in a religious universe, such that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God (Gumo et al., 2012). Accordingly, it is religiously believed that all that which exists on earth is a creation of God, from human beings, animals and all naturally occurring resources. Therefore, all these physically occurring phenomenon are regarded as the reflection of God as regarded in most African societies.

In the same vein, impious African spiritualism is also imparted through the environment. The vast African belief in superstition and the supernatural generates veneration for certain physical environment phenomena. According to Gumo et al. (2012) in African societies, many people recognise that the spirits operate in the human world through various natural entities. Therefore, there is certain reverence for natural phenomena such as specific forestry,

animals, animal activity, water bodies, rocks etc. This expounds why particular events and occurrences are viewed as taboo and particular places are worshiped in the *oeuvre*.

Some animals are viewed as sacred and bear superstitious connotations. The snake, particularly the python is one of the animals perceived to be sacred and highly superstitious. Snakes, with their legless bodies and bellies to the ground have long been considered a bad omen and a symbol of evil (O'Connor, 2012). This apprehension of snakes traces back to the biblical times, where the malevolent snake encouraged Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and give it to Adam, leading to both Adam and Eve's banishment from the garden of Eden. Snakes have frequently represented evil in literature and folklore. In concurrence, Gumo et al. (2012) contend that the snake is thought by some people, to be sacred, especially the python which may not be killed by people. A substantial number of societies relate serpents with the living dead or other human spirits and their appearance represents a bad omen.

Furthermore, black cats are also associated with superstition. According to O'Connor (2012) black cats with their lustrous coats, blazing eyes and ability to nearly disappear in the darkness have long been seen as sources of bad tidings and are considered bad omens. Today in most cultures, people commonly believe it is bad luck if a black cat crosses ones' pathway. Black cats, hold a place on the list of bad omens as they are considered "foreboding of ill-luck" (Bilauca, 2016 p.18). This belief is particularly typical in *The other presence*.

In respect to birds, those which hunt in the night and those with predatory behaviour have many myths around them. In most cultures, owls for instance have been proclaimed as bad omens. Authors and poets use owls to represent evil. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the poet William Wordsworth used owls in his writing as a symbol of doom. In *Julius Caesar* as well, William Shakespeare incorporated owls to prophesy the murder of Caesar. O'Connor (2012)

contends that in the folklore of many cultures, the screech of an owl is often considered as a sign of bad things to come.

By contrast, there are also superstitions in the healing power of some natural entities. Some cultures connect not only with natural entities that are considered dangerous and evil, but also with natural entities considered symbols of good. A good example would be that of water which is used in rituals connected to healings, cleansing and blessings. Gumo et al. (2012) contend that rivers and streams are often accorded sacred significance, especially when they are believed to be dwelling places of spirits. Hence, water or water bodies are utilised for divine ritual purposes. It is also common in most societies for domestic animals such as cattle, goats, chickens and sheep to be used for sacrificial purposes to appease the ancestors or pay for services of a spiritual healer. Therefore, physical entities may also be associated with positive customs which are beneficial to the environment, as shall be revealed in the *oeuvre*.

Totems are a positive way of preserving the natural environment. A totem is defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary (2017) as an object such as an animal or plant serving as the emblem of a family or clan and often as a reminder of its ancestry. A totem is therefore a living organism, a plant or animal which is deemed with esteem, worship and high regard. Gumo et al. (2012) states that totems are symbols that bind people who believe themselves to be of one blood, descended from one ancestor and bound together by a common responsibility to each other.

In the African overview, an individual is born into a specific clan and these clans are named after either a plant or animal. Every member of the clan is obliged to protect ones' totem by protecting the plant or animal his or her totem is named after. Jean-Pierre (2013) distinguishes three elements in totemism. Firstly, the social, which is the connection of an

animal species or a vegetable or an inanimate object with a given group of the community. Secondly, the psychological, which is the belief in a relationship of kinship or filiations between the member of the group and a given animal, plant or object and thirdly, the ritual, which is obedience to the totem in terms of taboo about the consumption or use of the natural item. All these three elements of totemism identified by Jean-Pierre (2013) are represented in the *oeuvre*. In concurrence, Katsande (2013) maintains that the concept of using totems demonstrated the close relationship between humans, animals and the lived environment. Overall, the concept of totems consolidates kinship and reinforces conservation.

Sacredness of certain ecological features also promotes conservation. According to Marumo (2016), the sacred are those things, situations, and places that are set apart, very special, and emit an aura of the holy. For the purpose of this study, sacred are places and things in the physical environment, which are set apart, as they are associated with spirits and superstition. Certain tree species and some forests are declared sacred. The basis of this sacredness varies. Some sacred forests draw their sacred quality from ritual practices that take place there. Forests can also be used for initiation rites, for rituals and worshipping ceremonies dedicated to some trees, while some other forests may be cemeteries for burial of the dead (Jean-Pierre, 2013). Hence, sacred forests are referred to as so because of practices in those places where ordinary people are not permitted subsequently leading to conservation of these physical environmental entities, as shall be revealed in the study.

## **2.10 Superstition**

Superstitious beliefs are common in human societies and nearly all human societies have some superstitious tendencies. According to Levitt (1952), for a phenomenon to be referred to as superstitious, it should have the following characteristics; It should be fundamentally irrational, it should be popularly accepted, it influences the behaviour of the holder and lastly

superstition should be a belief in supernatural phenomena in the conventional sense with no sound evidence to support it. These characteristics are accurate to the superstitions represented in Nyathi's *oeuvre*. Zad (2014) delineates superstition as;

Believing in phenomena for which there is no experimental evidence, estimating a mystery by another mystery; believing that the world is directed by chance; offering the thoughts, desires and intentions with reference to their original nature; Belief in the supernatural, miracle, magic and divination; Superstition is based on ignorance and its infrastructure and origin are false hopes. (p.2)

The above definition proclaims that superstition breeds from ignorance. In the course of human progression, humans are constantly faced with certain phenomena of reality. Since wisdom is normally puzzling and troublesome, humans prefer superstition to reasoning and imagination to the truth. When a being fails to justify something scientifically, illogical belief takes over. When one is uninformed, lacks knowledge or has an irrational fear of ill fortune, chances of them being highly superstitious are very high (Aggarwal, 2012). Some humans tend to avoid knowing the true facts about major human events and choose to lean against superstition. Hence, it is not surprising that many superstitions deal with significant occasions in human life such as birth, marriage, pregnancy as well as death, to mention but a few. Therefore, to warrant that only good things happen and to avoid misfortune, people become superstitious. The aspect of superstition is exhibited strongly in the *oeuvre*, particularly in *The other presence*.

Superstition is a social phenomenon and a product of social context and conditions. In the case of a repeated sequence of events, the human mind develops a certain regularity of the occurrence of a particular chain of events (Fedorova & Kazan, 2015). Certain baseless

beliefs were born from the beginning of history, with the rising sun and the appearance of the moon on a dark night.

Different people may be more superstitious than others due to varying reasons. Women's tendency to superstitious beliefs are generally higher than men's (Zad, 2014). Findings of a study on belief in horoscopes by Hawthorne (2014) revealed that approximately one third (30%) of North Americans believe in astrology, and women are more inclined to believe in the horoscopes than men are. This could be attributed to the fact that women generally yearn for comfort and a peace of mind. Horoscopes mostly carry predictions which are positive, encouraging and optimistic which is exactly what women want to hear. This aspect is true about the women in the novel *The other presence*, where more female characters are presented to be more superstitious than the male characters. Similarly, social and economic status of people plays an important role in the tendency to superstition such that people with low social and economic statuses have more tendencies to superstition (Torgler, 2003). This aspect is strongly revealed through the characters Thomas in *The other presence*.

Superstitious beliefs may also be attributed to social factors such as poverty and lack of medical care. A good example is the situation reported in Malawi. Mgbako and Glenn (2011) affirm that Malawi has one medical doctor per 50 000 people and many people live in villages far from urban areas where most of the doctors are clustered. Therefore, when a community member dies of a disease, the surviving relatives, friends and fellow community members have little access to autopsies to be aware of the cause of death. The unfortunate situation necessitates an explanation since medical science is not reachable to provide one. Therefore, when unexplained deaths strike, people often seek out witchdoctors who indisputably attribute the deaths to witchcraft and often claim to have identified the alleged individual who caused the misfortune. The novel, *The other presence*, suggests that lack of medical care fits the above described pattern.

Some superstitious tendencies may be uniform. Most of the folklore beliefs are devoted to creeds of which some are regional, some national and others international (Zad, 2014). For example, the ill-omened number thirteen, the ominous black cat crossing the road, opening an umbrella inside the house et cetera, are generally present in various human societies world wide. It is also a common practice that when someone sneezes, the person nearby automatically responds with a “bless you”. This is a continuation of a superstition that is thousands of years old, which was a blessing believed to ward off the devil which was understood to enter into the body of a person when they opened their mouth to sneeze (Foss, 1992). These superstitious beliefs may have been formed opinions which were passed on from generation to generation, altered as time goes by and exchanged through the mixing of cultures. They are however still observed without thinking of their origin. Different people may not believe them with the same significance, whereby some people may consider them fallacy and some believe them steadfastly. Characters especially in *The other presence* have a trend of blindly observing certain superstitions without any explanation.

### **2.11 The “unspeakables” of homosexuality**

Homosexuality is usually a taboo subject because of the complicated and controversial social and cultural issues which surround it. It is a subject most individuals choose to be silent about, however, in the quest to moralise society, Nyathi openly pens this unspeakable in the *oeuvre* thereby opening a platform to society for scrutiny of this rarely discussed behaviour. The Webster’s New Word College Dictionary (2008) defines homosexuality as an act involving or characterised by sexual attraction between people of the same sex. This act may be between male individuals who are referred to as gay or between individuals who are both female, in this case referred to as lesbian. For the purpose of this study, this subject will be mostly discussed in the African context as represented in the *oeuvre*. Also, the term homosexual will be used as synonymous to gay or lesbian.

There are two main theories in attempting to find out what causes homosexual attractions. The first theory claims that homosexuality is determined by biological or genetic factors, implying that people are born gay. To prove this theory, various studies have been conducted, from differences in portions of the brain, to genes, finger length, inner-ear differences, eye-blinking, and neuro-hormonal differentiation (Crouse, 2016). Regrettably, all studies trying to prove that homosexuality is biological had methodological flaws and have received major criticism perforating enormous holes in the theory. The second theory is that homosexual attraction develops primarily as a result of psychological and environmental influences and early experiences (Crouse, 2016). In the public sphere, the latter theory has appears to be gaining favour and the former theory has been declining in recent years. Whatever the cause of homosexuality may be, in African communities the act is viewed as sinful, unnatural and unacceptable, as shall be revealed in the study.

A longstanding scholar maintained that there are two types of homosexuality. Bailey (1955) maintained an opinion that there are two types of homosexuality, namely, homosexual condition or inversion and homosexual pervert. According to the scholar, the genuine homosexual condition or inversion, as it is often termed, whatever the cause may be, is something for which the person can in no way be held responsible. In itself, it is morally neutral like the normal condition of heterosexuality. The pervert as the term suggests, is not a true homosexual, but a heterosexual who engages in homosexual practices. He/she may do so casually, from motives of curiosity or in exceptional circumstances or habitually, as a prostitute or in pursuit of novel sensual experiences. The latter type of homosexuality is represented in *The oracle of Cidino*.

Due to the strong negative connotations attached to homosexuality, most people choose to keep it a secret. Because of the strong cultural aversion towards the practice, many people choose to remain in the closet and live surreptitious lives (Obasola, 2013). Kerrigan (2013) shares the same sentiment. Expressing that many homosexual individuals are involved in heterosexual marriages and relationships and still conduct same-sex affairs outside the marriage or relationship due to the fear of coming out in the open about their sexual orientation. By coming out and revealing their homosexual orientation, one risks the possibility of being cut off by their families as well as being isolated in society. Some individuals however are gradually coming out of the closet to assert what they perceive to be their constitutional rights (Obasola, 2013). These individuals do not want to be regarded as abnormal and weird but rather want people to recognise and respect their sexual orientation.

The bible condemns the act of homosexuality. According to Obasola (2013), in ancient Greece and Rome, the pairing of same sex partners during the act of love making was not considered out of the ordinary. The disapproving connotations attached to homosexuality began to surface just prior to the emergence of Christianity and the bible. As Christianity flourished, so did the hatred of homosexuality, hence the persecution of those who were caught engaging in such acts. The first reference to a homosexual encounter in the bible is recorded in Genesis. In this book, an account of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is told. Among their numerous acts of debauchery was homosexual behaviour, clearly demonstrated in the incidence of Lot's encounter with certain men of the city. The men of the city wanted to have carnal knowledge of the two visitors who had lodged in Lot's house. They inquired from Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may know them, carnally" (Gen. 19:5). Sodom and Gomorra were destroyed because of their immoral sexual behaviour. It is instructive to note that Sodom became so depraved that the

term “sodomy”, derived from the word Sodom is now synonymous with all forms sexual immoralities.

The disapproval for the homosexual act is expressed in judgemental terms in the bible. The book of Leviticus, 18:21-23 states “I am the Lord. Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable, such an immoral act is totally repugnant to God.” It was due to such abominable acts that God judged the Canaanites (Lev. 18:24-25). Most believers’ attitudes and beliefs towards homosexuality are therefore influenced by the bible. According to Malamba (2014), most religions categorise behaviours associated with homosexuality as unnatural, ungodly and impure. Hence, such a strong intolerance of those who engage in homosexual behaviour in most nations for biblical reasons, including Namibia.

Most African leaders have openly denounced homosexuality. South Africa is the only country in Africa which accords the most legal rights to homosexuals. The country offers full rights to people who engage in homosexual acts and legally allows same sex marriages. The rest of the continent has either outlawed and criminalised the activity or have specific laws which apply differently to heterosexual and homosexual individuals. Most African leaders view homosexuality as abominable and un-African, they denounce it as evil, unnatural and incongruent to African culture and psyche (Obasola, 2013).

A brief review of some of the African leaders’ views on homosexuality is revealing of their abhorrence of this act. President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe compared homosexuality to bestiality and ordered the Police to raid the offices of gays and lesbians and claimed that homosexuals were worse than pigs and dogs (Obasola, 2013). Namibian founding President, Sam Nujoma, was vitriolic in his attack of the homosexuals. The founding president declared that the Republic of Namibia does not allow homosexuality or lesbianism. Police were ordered to arrest, deport and imprison anyone engaging in such acts (Boykin, 2001). During

the US President, Barack Obama's visit to Kenya in 2015, President Obama addressed legal discrimination against Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) individuals. Meeting the Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta, President Obama pronounced that "When you start treating people differently not because of any harm they are doing to anybody, but because they are different, that's the path whereby freedoms begin to erode" (The Guardian, 09 Sep. 2015). The response from President Kenyatta was that there were some things that they must admit they do not share with the US which are not part of the African culture such as homosexuality.

This is the same argument that the former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, used when he signed the dangerous law of death penalty against LGBT people in Nigeria, and that President Yoweri Museveni used in a ceremonial signing of an anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda. In 2015, Gambia's president Yahya Jammeh called for homosexual citizen's throats to be slit (The Guardian, 09 Sep. 2015) and the Malawian former President Bingu wa Mutharika had shared the same sentiment with many other African leaders, avowing that homosexuality is against Malawian and African cultural values (Chinoko, 2012). Most African leaders therefore feel that homosexuality is not part of the African traditional culture, that it represents a foreign threat and negates all the precious ethics of a typical African people. This aspect is represented in the *oeuvre* as shall be discussed in the study.

Culture is one of the major reasons why African governments reject homosexuality. Lamb (1982) asserts that homosexuality in Africa is virtually unknown and contends that Africa is rigidly heterosexual. To which Lopang (2014) counters that the heterosexual image created about Africa is a misinformed image of Africa and further argues that homosexuality is an issue avoided in most African literature. Over the years Lamb's (1982) idea has been

challenged by many scholars. Scholars reject the claim that homosexuality is western culture but however attributes its current prejudice and marginalisation to the missionaries' outright condemnation of the practice (Malamba, 2012). Malamba (2012) asserts that when missionaries came to Africa to spread Christianity, they preached against homosexuality hence the existence of homophobia today in Africa. Lopang (2014) also seeks to dispel the myth of African homosexuality being a culture from the west, arguing that colonialism transported Europe's concept of homosexuality to Africa, but it did not introduce Africa to same-sex eroticism. Obviously, Africa wants to be in the clear on the issue of homosexuality due to the African values held, however choosing to bury it does not erase it. By authoring it, Nyathi provides a platform to openly discuss the issue hence educating the public sphere.

The African tradition perceives homosexuality to be unnatural. Traditionally, Africans place a high premium on procreation (Obasola, 2013). One is expected to get a husband or a wife first and then expected to fulfil the divine directive to replenish the earth. Homosexuality is a direct antithesis of this divine imperative, hence, the homosexual preference is considered unnatural and goes against traditional African culture. . Lopang (2014) argues that, an ideal African man is mapped out in African literature to have strong physical and spiritual characteristics to the effect that notions of homosexuality are seen as improbable or alien which might not necessarily be the case. Sex is seen in the context of reproduction in a heterosexual framework. Due to this fixed picture created and engraved in most African's minds, the opposite of what they believe becomes impossible and in cases where it emerges, it is viewed as taboo and unspeakable.

## 2.12 The “unspeakables” of land

In most African communities, the common belief is that land is sacred. Land is highly sacred because it bears the remains of the ancestors particularly in the form of the graves of chiefs (Taringa, 2006). In the African view, land is ancestral. In most cultures, the umbilical cord of the people born on that land was and in some cultures, is still buried in specific places of the land as it is seen as a connection between ancestral land and people. The issue of land is relevant to this study in that, it is a subject that fuels strong emotions in Namibia. Frequent newspapers report on the issue of land grabbing and individual groups claiming back their ancestral land, involving certain groups like the Landless People’s Movement and Affirmative Repositioning. The subject of land is presented in the *oeuvre* creating a stage to probe into the issue in pursuit of a moralistic inquiry into this sensitive, controversial and crucial issue. For the purpose of this study, the subject of land will be discussed from an African perspective.

Land, including all its natural resources is believed to be owned by the ancestral guardians. According to Taringa (2006), there are strong attitudes attached to ancestral ownership of land and the belief in sacredness of the land serves as a common history that unite all generations of a specific tribe. Most African communities are of the creed that if an individual does not comply to the sacred aspects of nature according to prescribed taboos and restrictions, the ancestors will be angered. This may cause bad luck and calamities such as drought and epidemics to befall the community. This is one of the significant aspects of this paper highlighted in *The oracle of Cidino*, as is discussed in the study.

Apart from the sacred significance, land is valued for other reasons. The land subject cannot be discussed without touching on the notions of identity and belonging. As Mangena (2014)

puts it, people need space or territory to form ideas of who they are or who they were in the past and who they want to become. This could be interpreted to mean that people need an area or terrain in order for them to be able to formulate ideas about who they are and where they belong. Mangena (2014) further asserts that belonging is a rational concept which entails among other things, attachment to a group, place or category. A common notion attributed to belonging is mainly connected to among others religion, tradition or culture and ownership of land.

Another importance of land is sustenance. People's livelihood depends on land as it is the source of water and food which are responsible for life. In Africa, land is an important source of food. Individuals use land for hunting as well as a grazing ground for their livestock through which essential skills are passed from one generation to another. Land is also a source of shelter and tools (Adamu & Yahaya, 2016). Women and young girls would work in the fields and men and young boys would look after livestock with the sole aim of providing food for the family. Land is the epicentre of human existence on earth.

Traditionally in Africa, communal land is under the jurisdiction of traditional authority under the leadership of the tribal chief. Communal land is rural territory in possession of a community and not of an individual or a company. In Namibia, as is the case elsewhere on the African continent, traditional leaders' relevance for the postcolonial political order and state-craft stems from their control over predominantly rural communities. Traditional leaders continue to control most of the important rural survival strategies (Keulder, 2010). Hence land allocation is among the most significant matters under the control of traditional leaders. Adama and Yahaya (2016) concur that a traditional leader from an African point of view is

seen as a steward with divine authority over land. The fate and status of the land for a specific community is thus in the hands of the traditional leader as denoted in the *oeuvre*.

In order to understand the current land controversies, a brief comprehension of earlier periods is indispensable. The earlier periods form the basis upon which current periods are construed. The chiefs who were the ones in charge of land were successors of the former chiefs, who though no longer alive, were regarded as the owners of the land (Manungo, 2014). The credence is that individuals alive at that particular time will have access to the land which they will use until they pass on, leaving it to the future generation. Therefore no one had ownership of the land, the land belonged to all. After the arrival of the Europeans however, this order was disrupted. Most of the ancestral land was lost to the whites. The colonial governments implemented discriminatory laws and policies that demarcated the countries along ethnic and racial lines. The current land status in most African countries is hence deeply rooted in the political, social and economic discriminatory past.

The loss of ancestral land caused disempowerment and changed the lives of Africans. A good example is the South African Natives Land Act (No. 27 of 1913). According to Manungo (2014), this law was passed by an all-white parliament in 1913, it allocated about 7% of arable land to Africans who then made up 80% of the population. The law went further to allocate 80% of the more fertile land to the whites who were about 20% of the population. This law was the highlight in the disempowerment of the blacks in South Africa. Similar laws were passed in various African countries where most of the fertile land was allocated to white farmers and the remaining arable land was shared among the larger population of Africans. All avenues of livelihood for African were closed, leaving them with no choice but to work for white farmers and industries. After independence, Africa is faced with the challenge of

redressing the colonial legacy of skewed distribution. Furthermore, the commercialisation of land by colonial masters and inflation of land price left many Africans without land to call their own.

Land ought to be an entitlement. Maraike (2014) maintains that land is a God-given right. Ideally, it is something that nobody can take away from another; people walk on it, build houses on the land and are buried in the land. It is thus sad for people to live without owning any piece of land as is the case nowadays. Maraike (2014) further identifies three types of land ownership models. First, state ownership, under this ownership land belongs to the state in terms of use. Second, personal ownership whereby the land belongs to an individual which might have been acquired through inheritance, trade or one's labour. Lastly is the collective ownership in which land belongs to a collective body of people who control its use. It is in the last land ownership model in which most disagreements and clashes in most parts of Africa occur and it is this land ownership model which is emphasised on in the *oeuvre*.

After independence, urbanisation disconnected people from their traditional land. Most young people migrate from rural areas to urban areas in search of employment, better social amenities and accessing good education especially tertiary education (Indongo, 2015). The migration of people from their communal lands to towns exposed them to great changes caused by ethnic pluralism. According to Gumo, Simon, Evans and Collin (2012) pluralism affects the young people's culture and gradually detaches them from their traditional roots, distorting their language and causing them to forget their African beliefs and practices. Certain characters in the *oeuvre* epitomise this aspect as shall be discussed in chapter 4.

The growing urban population causes setbacks for local authorities. An alarming finding by Nigusie (2011) is that the world reached a turning point in 2008, for the first time in history that more than half of its human population, 3.3 billion people, live in urban areas. This

means that more land is required for urban development. As the urban population grows, the housing needs will increase, forcing more communal, agricultural land to be converted into human settlements (Indongo, 2015). Governments are therefore forced to acquire land from the areas close to developing towns to accommodate the urban expansion process, at the expense of the individuals residing on communal land causing an alteration in their livelihoods.

### **2.13 Polygamy**

Polygamy has been very popular over the years in Africa and other parts of the world. Generally, polygamy is defined as a simultaneous union of a husband to multiple spouses or a practice or custom of having more than one wife at the same time Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2011, p.1123). Practically, this definition is unsuitable. In its generic sense, polygamy is any individual be it male or female who has more than one spouse. In some parts of the world women can have more than one husband, which is referred to as polyandry. But the common practice is that of one man having more than one wife which is referred to as polygyny. For the purpose of this study, the term polygamy will be used as synonymous to polygyny. With gender equality, stable economic status for women as well as increased comprehensive human rights education, the practice is gradually losing momentum and some practices within it are being viewed as taboo and unspeakable in the modern era.

Polygamy has been practiced since time immemorial, accepted and practiced over centuries and millenniums. It traces back to biblical times. Several renowned men in the Old Testament highly practiced polygamy. Abraham, Jacob, David and King Solomon, recognised as the wisest king had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 5:1 King James Version). The Quran encourages polygamy for “restorative function”

(Obonye, 2015, p. 142), with the purpose of protecting orphans and widows during a post-war context when a substantial number of male populations has been wiped out during warfare. In connection with the afore mentioned notion the Quran states: “And if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three, or four...” (Sura, 4:3 Oxford Word’s Classic Edition). Culturally, previous kings in Africa were also known to have many wives. Polygamy has therefore both culture and religion as its basis.

Polygamy is viewed by some as an integral feature of family. In a study, Anyolo’s (2014) findings reveal that some members of society find polygamy to be a positive practice in that it dignifies women. Anyolo (2014) further reveals that polygamy ensures that almost all women are married. In African cultures, the expectation is that a woman gets married before giving birth, polygamy therefore reduces the number of eligible but unmarried women who may end up giving birth to children out of wedlock which is taboo. For the men, among other reasons, polygamy is for economic growth and status. Thobejane (2014) maintains that conceptualisation of wealth is the heart of this practice. Women and children in a traditional polygamous set up are viewed largely as labourers and producers. Women reproduce and work in the fields, girl children generate income for the father from lobola, children help in the fields and looking after cattle therefore increasing production.

Polygamy has its detriments. There are high chances of rivalries in a polygamous home set up. Regardless of the fact that co-wives depend on each other to be able to handle the burden of the work load and bearing of children, unavoidable conflicts are bound to arise. In a polygamous set up where rivalry prevails, issues such as fighting, food poisoning and witchcraft are probable (Indongo & Pazvakawambwa, 2015). These conflicts may be caused

by jealousy, where for instance the husband favours a certain co-wife or a co-wife's children more than other wives or their children. Thobejane (2014) proclaims that some families in polygamous marriages may experience psychological problems resulting from favouring of some children over others, causing siblings to show signs of low self-esteem and rejection. Wives and their children thus compete with each other to be productive in order to gain the husband's favour.

Polygamy has started falling out favour in some African societies. The practice is becoming less common due to economic reasons. Seeing that its extent has largely depended on the status and wealth of the husbands, perhaps the decline in the practice can be attributed to the joining of the economy by women in recent years (Obonye, 2015). Economic independence for women has enabled most women to take care of themselves and their children escaping the inevitable wrath of polygamy. Also, polygamy is a fossil of a bygone dispensation that has no place in the new era, the era of human rights (Obonye, 2015). There is no doubt that polygamy is antithetical to women's rights, seeing that the practice vanquishes women to men. Often, the practice is arranged and not by the woman's choice and in some instances very young girls join polygamous marriages when the prior wives begin to grow older. Clearly, the above is in favour of the men, leaving the women's rights unconsidered. However, due to comprehensive women rights education, most women are now understanding their rights and distancing themselves from the practice.

#### **2.14 Churches and prophets of profit**

Over the past centuries, churches have been sprouting up across Africa. These different churches are under various church leaders and have varied doctrines. Areas of baptism, polity and spiritual gifts have greatly accounted for variations among denominations. Some

churches insist on the rule of bishops, others only of elders and pastors while some opt for prophets. These differences have led to divisions between churches and community members. A current unfortunate phenomenon accompanying the wildfire of diversity in churches are individuals working on the false pretence of delivering the word of God and then prey on the vulnerability of the churchgoers. This harmonises with Deke's (2014) postulation that there are true and false prophets. Because the act of criticising a man of God is viewed 'unspeakable', this makes the facet of churches a crucial point of discussion for this study. For the purpose of this study, the aspect of churches will only be confined to Christian denominations.

Generally speaking, the different churches can be categorised in various groups. A brief overview of the different denominations will help in understanding the current sprouting of new churches. Rhodes (2015) identifies three main branches within Christianity. Firstly, the Eastern Orthodox which is mainly practiced in Russia and Eastern European countries. Secondly, Roman Catholic which accepts church tradition as equal or even greater than the scripture and lastly the Protestants who detached themselves from Roman Catholic.

Additionally, the protestant church has many other sub denominations. The sub denominations under the protestant church are due to distinctive beliefs and histories. These sub denominations include Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Pentecostals, and numerous other groups. According to Rhodes (2015), if the church one is sitting in not Orthodox or Catholic, then one is in a Protestant church of one variety or another. Christianity was brought from Europe to Africa by missionaries around the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the concentration of specific denominations will depend on where the missionaries settled and established churches to convert Africans to Christianity upon their arrival. The missionary churches had fixed leadership structures and the focus was on

salvation. Today, many other new religious movements under various sub denominations continue to form.

With the formation of new religious movements comes a different focus and a different approach to Christianity. The leadership of the new churches is based on personal vocation, the spiritual gifts and most importantly, the charisma of the pastor, preacher or prophet (Zimunya & Gwara, 2013). The personality of the leader is overpowering, as the impression created sometimes is that the leader serves as the link between God and the people. To the extreme, the leader is seen as an incarnation of Jesus or God himself. Their words are God's words and therefore to give this preacher any type of contribution is to give to God. Hence, whatever request or command is given by a leader of this kind is carried out by the followers without any query.

Some leaders of some of the new mushrooming churches work on the false pretence of preaching the word of God for profit. In this thesis, the leaders with this character will be referred to as white collar prophets explained as prophets who are motivated by the desire to professionalise the word Of God by monetising it. The emphasis of the white-collar prophets is more on the prosperity gospel than on the second coming of Christ. Mangena and Mhiza (2013) contend that these prophets put emphasis on money and prosperity as pillars of deliverance and salvation. Hence the belief is that poverty, catastrophe and sickness are caused by the demon and that God wants people to be flourishing. Biri (2013) concurs that the message of prosperity betrays the interpretation of the bible, with the gospel of prosperity seemingly being overemphasised at the detriment of spiritual matters. This type of gospel emphasises material wealth and prosperity over holiness, any chance the preacher gets as represented in *The other presence*.

The sprouting up of new churches is mostly in big cities and towns. Being a massive phenomenon, new religious movements operate where the masses of rich people live, and that is in the urban areas (Zimunya & Gwara, 2013). Many urban locations are densely populated and therefore provide instant crowds. This is contrary to the operations of earlier missionary churches which came into existence mostly in the rural areas. Mangena and Mhiza (2013) posit that there are reports of some white-collar prophets masquerading as men of God are leaving their churches after being deployed in poor communities or in rural areas because they cannot make more money. For this reason, some Pentecostal churches have been portrayed as detached from the cross and as such scanty, impure and greedy.

Some white-collar prophets target their followers' possessions through the gospel of giving. Most Pentecostal white-collar prophets equate the gospel of giving in terms of seeding or sowing Mangena and Mhiza (2013). Seeding can come in various forms such as funding church activities or giving money or donation of any type directly to the man of God to get more blessings. Additionally, Zimunya and Gwara (2013) contend that one has to have faith and give to God through tithes and serving God in order to get richer. This generosity giving enables some church leaders to drive luxurious cars, wear the latest clothing styles and live in expensive houses.

Community members' predicaments are viewed as an opportunity to make money. White-collar prophets seize every opportunity they get to prey on peoples' sicknesses, vulnerabilities and desperations to make a profit. The churches create an impression that their religion is solving problems since perfect physical and spiritual health is promised to those who believe through miracles. Zimunya and Gwara (2013) illuminate that miracles include deliverance from evil spirits, prosperity and success in all financial dealings and an

everlasting good life. Seeing that nowadays people are faced with so many social stresses caused by poverty, sicknesses, violence and may more, people flock to deliverance crusades and pay any sum required at the entrance in hope of getting their problems solved.

Tjihenuna and Haidula (2016, p. 3) report in *The Namibia newspaper* of prophet Bushiri, a Malawian born prophet who held a crusade in Windhoek, Namibia. The day before the crusade, the prophet had a gala dinner hosted for him where more than three thousand people paid N\$1000.00 each to attend. Sixteen people paid amounts ranging between N\$10 000.00 to N\$ 110 000.00 just to sit close to the prophet during the gala dinner. This clearly shows how much veneration people have for the men of God, it also shows how desperate people are and how much they are willing to receive healing and prosperity at any cost.

The above scenario goes hand in hand with that of a Zimbabwean prophet Makandiwa. Chitando, Gunda and Kugler (2013) postulate that in Zimbabwe, due to the huge sums of money they collect from followers every time they meet, Makandiwa among other prophets are accused of being professional prophets. It is estimated that Makandiwa collects more than US\$100 000.00 per service, of which he conducts more than five services a week. White collar prophets therefore take the gospel as a profession from which they receive remuneration from their followers as shall be discussed in chapter 5.

## **2.15 The “unspeakable” patriarchal treatment of women**

For far too long, women have been disrespected, devalued, suppressed and their dignity has been ruined. The *oeuvre* clearly projects the oppression of women, which they themselves have no choice but to accept as normal due to societal constructs engraved in the minds of both men and women normalising this inhumane and despicable practice. The subjugation of

women is attributed to many aspects ranging from tradition, stereotypes, deluded gender roles and patriarchy, which all consequently bring about female oppression, subordination and gender-based violence amongst other things. A platform is created by the *oeuvre* to openly discuss this commonly tacit practice, subsequently moralising the public sphere.

Culture is one major factor which contributes to female oppression. Culture is defined as the complex pattern of human behaviour that includes; thought, speech, action and artefacts, and is transmitted from generation to generation through learning (Webster's New Word College Dictionary, 2008). This includes the customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of an ethnic, religious or social group. Almost every African culture has carved out some cultural practices which are retained as tradition for they continue to be handed on, thought about, preserved and are not lost. However, some cultural ways are harmful as they only recognise the rights of men at the expense of the rights of women. As Okojie (2013) asserts, African women are denied the basic socio-cultural rights enjoyed by men, therefore, making homes as social institutions, the manufacturers of patriarchal practices.

The portrayal of men and women in most African cultures is comparable. Culturally, from a tender age, the socialisation process differentiates the girl child from the boy child. In the Shona culture, boys are socialised to view themselves as bread winners and heads of households whilst girls are taught to be obedient and submissive housekeepers (Kambarami, 2006). These submissive qualities include kindness, compliance, and striving to please men always. This is not farfetched from how masculinity and femininity are portrayed in various Namibian cultures. In the Oshiwambo speaking communities, a boy child is symbolised as an axe which is derived from the strong credence in the Aawambo community that an axe is a strong, valuable and indispensable tool, which makes it an ideal gift to give to a young man

when he is getting married. A woman on the other hand, is portrayed as a clay pot, fragile and requiring help and care from her male counterpart. Thus, a man is the head of the house and the woman is to be provided for by the man. The woman's duties involve taking care of the house in aspects regarding house-keeping and child rearing.

Similarly, in the Nama culture, a woman is referred to as mother or creator due to her reproductive role, while a man is referred to as father and head of the family. In his role, the man provides for all the physical needs of the family (Ambunda & De Klerk, 2008). In many African cultures, the reproductive role of a woman places her in a pessimistic position whereby, childlessness is seen as a curse and the failure to give birth to male children is blamed on the woman since it is believed that she determines the sex of the child (Indang, 2015). Clearly, there is commonness in stereotyping of the portrayal of both men and women in various African cultures which contributes to the patriarchal marginalisation of women which continues till the present day.

The oppression of women due to culture and tradition is mainly caused by patriarchy. Sultana (2012) defines patriarchy as a set of social relations between men and women. Patriarchy has a material base which through hierarchy, establishes or creates independence and solidarity among men that enables them to dominate women. Generally speaking, it is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. African societies like many other societies in the world are essentially patriarchal. Men are understood to be more privileged than women and the society is characterised by male superordination and female subordination (Okojie, 2013). This type of society implies the natural superiority of men over women and blatantly advocates for women's reliance on, as well as subordination to men in all aspects of life. Subsequently, all power is placed in the hands of

men, leading to the deprivation of women's rights and opportunities as well as restricting and disregarding women's freedom over themselves and placing women in the ownership of men.

There have been theories propounded in the past attempting to justify patriarchy. Aristotle referred to men as active and women as passive (Sultana, 2012). In this view, the biological inferiority of a woman makes her inferior also in her capacities, her ability to reason and therefore her ability to make decisions. Biologically, men are more muscular and have more physical strength compared to women. Hence, man in this view is seen as superior and woman is inferior, he is born to rule and the woman is born to be ruled. Concurring with this strong patriarchal view is the notion by Freud of "anatomy is destiny" (Islam, Barjee & Khatun, 2014, p. 3). In this view, masculine beings possessed the anatomical sign of maleness, therefore the belief that the normal human was male logically giving him the right to rule his mediocre version, the woman.

The theories of male supremacy have however been challenged. According to Sultana (2012) it has been proven that there is no scientific evidence for male supremacy and their rule over women. There is no denying that there are biological differences between men and women, this however does not provide basis for a sexual hierarchy in which one sex rules over the other, in this case men being dominant over women. This scrutiny allows us to explore other social processes which might have contributed to patriarchy.

Gender stereotypes contribute to patriarchy. Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and the relationship between women and men, and girls and boys (Ambunda & De Klerk, 2008). Specific gender roles and constructions are reserved for a specific sex. These attributes are not fixed and therefore are

changeable depending on the context and time because they are socially constructed. Nombela (2014) affirms that gender is socially constructed and diverse and it varies historically and cross-culturally. The cultural construction of these social attributes is prone to gender stereotypes which ascribe specific attributes and characteristics to an individual man or woman. These gender stereotypes are then passed down from one generation through intergenerational transmission from father to son, mother to daughter, mother to son, or father to daughter. Most gender stereotypes are women discriminatory and they fuel patriarchy. This is a crucial point of discussion for this study, as shall be revealed in the discussion.

Most gender roles place women in a subordinate position. The showing of male superiority in most African cultures stems back to birth. According to Familusi (2012), in some homes, the birth of a baby girl does not receive the kind of enthusiastic reception as the birth of a boy. Women are therefore treated with inferiority right from birth. Familusi (2012) further postulates that no matter how young a male child is, he is superior to the female child and at times to the mother no matter how old they may be. In the Oshiwambo tradition for example, in the case where there is no husband in the house, the eldest son will make the major decisions in the house due to his culturally elevated position in the family.

As patriarchy empowers men, it leaves women powerless. Women are demoted to the level of the children and therefore excluded from major decisions (Andima & Tjimaranga, 2014). Men are therefore entrusted with the crucial tasks of making “masculine” decisions while the women are assigned to take care of less crucial “feminine tasks” which involve day to day administration of the household. Should there be need for any decision to be made, permission has to be sought from the men. Men then tend to believe that there are certain

roles that men alone are obliged to perform and by so doing men dominate women in most cases.

Because of the women's inferior position, decisions regarding marriage and sexuality are largely in the hands of men. Due to male dominance and the subordination of women, daughters may be seen as properties of their fathers. Marriages may be finalised and arranged without the woman's consent and the father only brings the news to the daughter and his wife regarding the outcome (Andima & Tjimaranga, 2014). Also, practices such as bride-price or *lobola* place women in a position where men may easily claim ownership of them. *Lobola* is seen by some as an oppressive practice which commercialises women and enhances their abuse both physically and sexually by their husbands Mwamanda (2016). After *lobola*, a woman is seen to belong to her husband and lacks control over her sexuality. She is expected to perform certain tasks such as satisfying her husband sexually and bearing children without any say.

Furthermore, there is a cultural leniency on male sexual behaviour. Males are free to experiment sexually at will before marriage whilst females have to preserve their virginity for marriage or they risk ineligibility for marriage and could bring dishonour to their families (Mbulu, 2016). As good as the practice is in respect of ensuring chastity, women are at the receiving end. Due to gender inequality, the woman is viewed to be more at fault and is labelled as loose, although the act involves her male counterpart. The man can practice polygamy and the wives are expected to share this man and submit to him. Although polygamy is fading from view in some societies, its effects can still be felt as it still presents itself in our societies today in the form of extra-marital affairs which are acceptable in the minds of many, as long as it is the married man who is cheating.

The unequal distribution of power in favour of men culminates into gender-based violence against women. Any act of violence to which girls and women are subjugated primarily because of their female gender identity and perpetuates female subordination is referred to as violence against women (Katembo, 2015). Females encounter systematic prejudice embedded and justified by strong patriarchal norms, beliefs and practices which accord men power over women, leaving girls and women highly vulnerable to acts of physical, sexual or psychological harm from their male counterparts. Various male characters in the *oeuvre* inflict various types of violence against women as shall be discussed. Mashiri (2013) argues that;

Gender based violence against women encompasses a wide range of abuses that range from; sexual threats, sexual harassment, exploitation, humiliation, assaults, molestation, domestic violence, torture, harmful traditional practices, including early marriage, which substantially increases maternal morbidity and mortality. These are forms of gender-based violence against women that cannot be overlooked nor justified on the grounds of tradition, culture or social conformity. (p. 18)

These types of violence against women involve power imbalances where men believe they are superior and are protected by culture. Also, men's superior physical strength leads to the conclusion that men are inherently violent and aggressive, making their violent behaviour a culturally acceptable correctional measure. Katembo (2015) however dismisses the fact that men are born violent but the socialisation they grow up in makes them violent. The *oeuvre* clearly depicts that men's use of violence is generally a learned behaviour, rooted in the ways that boys and men are socialised as shall be discussed in chapter 5.

## **2.16 The “unspeakables” of war**

Africans take pride in their mother land for many cultural reasons, hence anything threatening their land in any way is an abomination. Assessing it from the African worldview makes it easier to understand why most African leaders long ago resisted the occupation of their countries by members of the white community, which was followed by chains of horrific wars in most African countries. These wars were strewn with so many abominable and brutal acts against humanity, particularly the black community. This study analyses the “unspeakables” of war paying particular attention to the Namibian liberation struggle under the South African regime as presented in the *oeuvre*.

A brief history of the events leading to the liberation struggle is imperative to clearly understand why the country opted to take up arms against the enemy and why brutality was perpetrated on the black Namibian community. Following the partitioning of African countries among the European powers at the Berlin conference of 1884, Namibia was given to Germany and became known as German South West Africa (Mushelenga, 2014). Mushelenga (2014) further narrates that following the outbreak of the First World War, Germany was defeated by the allied powers and subsequently lost her colonies including Namibia. In 1919, after the First World War, South Africa was mandated by the League of Nations to administer the territory (Namibia) changing its name to South West Africa. South Africa violated the terms of the mandate by introducing discriminatory and oppressive laws in the territory.

Following World War II, the League of Nations was dissolved and replaced by the United Nations (UN). In 1966, the United Nations General Assembly decided to bring all the former German colonies, in which Namibia was included under the UN control which South Africa

objected. Hence, the regime of South Africa in Namibia was declared illegal. South Africa had persistently defied the people of Namibia and the international community by refusing to withdraw from Namibia. The Namibian nation reviled and did not accept this foreign domination and decided to launch the armed struggle on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1966, which became the main form of Namibian resistance against the South African Regime. The armed struggle was spearheaded by the Owambo People's Organisation (OPO) founded in 1959 by Sam Nujoma and Andimba Toivo ya Toivo later renamed SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) in 1960, with Sam Nujoma becoming the first SWAPO president.

The oppressors entirely deviated from the African belief in kinship. The African culture, like most other cultures has a strong sense of cultural constants. Cultural constants refer to those elements in cultures that help to establish the universal brotherhood and kinship of all human beings (Agulama, 2011). Most actions of the South African regime created division among people and promoted racism. It divided the people into segregated native reserves and bound the men as contract labourers to work in the mines, in the factories and on the farms, systematically exploiting the Namibian people and their resources. This subsequently drove the people into subjection under a battery of repressive apartheid legislation and organised brutality.

The war atrocities afflicted on the Namibian people were mainly by the Koevoet unit. Koevoet, which is an Afrikaans word for 'crowbar' was a South African paramilitary force which was stationed and operated in the northern part of Namibia. What was notable about this force is the fact that it was predominantly made up of black soldiers under the leadership of white commanders. These soldiers had been part of the SWAPO insurgency force who were referred to as the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) or they were locals

who chose to defect, generally because the SADF coerced them (Vale, 2014). As a result, they were now fighting their former comrades or fellow Namibians. Most violence was carried out by the black Koevoet members against their own people. Onyedinma and Kanayo (2013) concur that living together, and the sense of community of brothers and sisters are the basis of, and the expression of the family system in Africa. However, the black Koevoet soldiers were well-known for their excessive ill treatment and disruption of the PLAN fighters and members of the communities to which they once belonged. The atrocities of war during the time completely destroyed relations by turning black people against their own race, brothers against sisters and husbands against wives.

The colonial era saw various forms of violence legitimised. Colonialism made violence an integral part of the lives of the dominant and subjugated groups. The notorious counter insurgency unit, Koevoet, committed many atrocities against the civilian population especially those who were accused of aiding guerrillas. Some of the atrocities included; assaults, torture, routine whipping of women and children, electric shock treatment, water boarding, being buried alive, burnings and rapes (Edwards-Jauch, 2016). Violence stirred so much resentment between Koevet and SWAPO followers and those who assisted the PLAN fighters. The South African soldiers would occasionally dress as SWAPO agents and then patrol and intimidate local civilians, with tactics ranging from beatings to killings of the civilians (Vale, 2014). Dressing in PLAN uniforms allowed them to exploit the unsuspecting community members. They would for example offer money to children to try and get information from them regarding the whereabouts of the PLAN soldiers and whether their parents were assisting the PLAN soldiers.

The war situation forced some Namibians to leave the land of their ancestors and cross the border to go into exile in neighbouring countries. In these neighbouring countries, the Namibians were accommodated in camps. Williams (2012) emphasises that in exile, although some remained in camps, some eventually made their way to other places, receiving scholarships or representing their liberation movements across the globe. Some camps however were unfortunately targeted by the enemy. The South African Defence Force made incursions into neighbouring states to attack refugee camps. The most well-known of these was the operation which resulted in the Cassinga Massacre in southern Angola in May 1978. In the African values, the shedding of blood is abhorred (Indang, 2015). What was “unspeakable” about this massacre is the fact that it was mainly women, children and unarmed refugees who were targeted and killed. Although culturally, murder was officially accepted when committed during war (Indang, 2015), in the case of this massacre, the victims were defenceless. Cassinga is described as the worst single day of loss of Namibian lives under anti-colonial rule, since the launch of the armed struggle. Cassinga survivors are mentally traumatised by the gruesome events they witnessed (Shigwedha, 2011). The manner in which the killings took place was horrific, involving heavy bombing and then stabbing of some of those who survived the bombing.

The Koeveot viciousness went beyond the living. The bodies of the people they killed had their share of callousness. Some of the dead bodies were dragged through Owamboland for the locals to see. Recorded accounts indicate that thirty PLAN fighters’ bodies had been tied to bumpers, and the driving ripped those bodies to pieces over a span of several days (Vale, 2014). The main message behind this vicious act was to intimidate community members from joining or even assisting the PLAN fighters. Most cultures have prescribed bereavement and mourning rituals to facilitate the adjustment of the bereaved (Setsiba, 2015). However, this

too was disregarded due to the atrocities of war. As devastating as the manner of the deaths were, community members were subjected to further torture of seeing the bodies of the people they once knew being dragged tactlessly.

The liberation struggle atrocities were brought to an end by a cease fire agreement. On 08<sup>th</sup> August 1988, a cease fire was agreed and signed in Geneva, Switzerland. The UN then sent a peacekeeping force to monitor the agreement and to help conduct and manage fair democratic elections. A blanket amnesty was announced with the public being encouraged to forget about the past, not to open old wounds and to move forward as a new unified nation (Akawa, 2012). This implies that the nation was to forgive and try to forget all the outrages experienced during the liberation struggle.

## **2.17 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the theoretical framework and reviewed the literature related to the topic under study. Various themes on the “unspeakables” were identified and dissected. Different authors have discussed the “unspeakables” from different angles of the African perspective. The next chapter will present the research methodology. The chapter is outlined as follows: the research design, population, sample, procedure, data analysis and finally the research ethics. The chapter outlines the methods of collecting and analysing data.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The methodology used to conduct this research is described in this chapter. The chapter gives a thorough explanation of why specific methods are used in this study. To address the purpose of the study a qualitative design is described. The population and sample used in this study are described. The procedure and data analysis are also described. Ethical considerations that were followed in this study are also outlined in this chapter.

#### **3.2 Research approach and design**

This study employs the qualitative approach in interrogating how Nyathi commits socially to moralise the public sphere through authoring the “unspeakables”, as it is a qualitative, non-numerical and non-quantifiable phenomenon. The social sciences and literary studies, in the development of a qualitative approach to inquiry, has pointed to the crucial need to deal with the ways in which people relate and give meaning to their social, cultural, and material environments (Given, 2008). Hence, the qualitative approach is best suited to explore this research because it will allow the researcher to utilise texts as primary data to analyse critically how the “unspeakable” attitudes, behaviour and opinions are authored in the quest to moralise society. Given the qualitative nature of the study, the study does not require fieldwork but is restricted to a desktop design.

#### **3.3 Population and sample**

The population of this study is all of Nyathi’s literary work. The study has employed purposive sampling, as Nyathi’s *oeuvre* was deliberately selected because each text in the selected author’s *oeuvre* deals with a kind of “silent” and “unspeakable” aspect in society. Therefore, when one considers the objectives of this study, it is clear that the *oeuvre* has been

chosen thematically and purposively as it presents various themes with “unspeakable” elements to be explored in pursuit of meeting the study’s objectives.

### **3.4 Procedure**

The researcher acquired the five texts. The reading of the selected primary texts was done through the critical lens of the overarching illocutionary approach and the Africa worldview theory as well as the specified supporting theory, ecocriticism. According to Kothari (2004), students of literature present the critical analysis of some writer with a liberal use of quotations from the works of the author under discussion. Hence, this study employs critical analysis by substantiating with evidence from the texts the presentation of the “unspeakables” through the characters. Secondary sources such as journals, related literary works and research papers were consulted and governed by the three selected theories, ensuring a broadened insight of the study so as to meet the study’s objectives.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

Data of this qualitative study has been analysed using content analysis. Content analysis is defined by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) as a multipurpose research method developed specifically for investigating a broad spectrum of problems in which the content of communication serves as a basis of inference. The data of the proposed research is presented in emerging themes and subthemes informed by the literature review, as according to Bhattacharjee (2012), each text should be divided into segments or “chunks” that can be treated as separate units of analysis. The data was then translated through the lenses of the overarching illocutionary and the African worldview approaches as well as ecocriticism as a supporting theory. The findings were presented with textual substantiation in themes, therefore, informing discussions and conclusions related to the study objectives.

### **3.6 Research ethics**

The study did not involve any human participants but made use of printed materials already in the public domain. The researcher was objective in analysing the texts by expressing the analysis of the *oeuvre* impartially within the boundaries of the selected illocutionary, African worldview and ecocriticism theories.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher gave an overview of the research methodology used in this study, by beginning with the research design. The population of the study was defined as consisting of five texts of Nyathi's *oeuvre*. In addition, sample and sampling procedures were outlined. Comprehensive data collection and data analysis details were also discussed in this chapter, and finally the research ethics considered in this study were also addressed. In the next chapter the researcher will present data analysis from the five texts of Nyathi's *oeuvre*; three plays, *God of women*, *The oracle of Cidino* and *Tears of fears in the era of terror*, a novel; *The other presence* and a poetry book; *Ballads of insomnia*.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the quest to moralise the public sphere, this chapter explores the literary representation of the “unspeakables” from an African perspective as presented in the *oeuvre*. The *oeuvre* is made up of the following texts; *The other presence*, *The oracle of Cidino*, *God of women*, *The ballads of insomnia* and *Tears of fears in the era of terror* all by Francis Sifiso Nyathi. The chapter presents the fictional representation of the “unspeakables” in context, employing the main lens of the illocutionary approach and the African worldview theory as well as the supporting theory ecocriticism. These theories help in retaining the focus of the study. In this chapter, the research attempts to meet the following objectives which are to;

- (i) Critically analyse the presentation of the various “unspeakables” in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*;
- (ii) Examine how the public sphere is moralised through the articulation of the “unspeakables” as evidenced in the author’s *oeuvre*; and
- (iii) Explore how the various artistic visions employed in the three different genres of Nyathi’s *oeuvre* to bring to the fore the “unspeakables”.

The chapter is divided into subsections which discuss the emerging themes in the *oeuvre*. First, a brief summary of the texts is given, followed by an analysis of the “unspeakable” themes presented in the *oeuvre*.

#### 4.2 Summary of the texts

*The other presence* is a novel that explores the misery of superstition. It centres on a society that is immersed in superstition and sees witchcraft as a natural phenomenon, such that

witchcraft is seen as the harbinger of death and calamities even in cases where a cause is obvious. A young man, Akapelwa dies of HIV/AIDS related illnesses however, society views the death as unnatural and linked to witchcraft. His death is blamed on elder Sinvula who is believed to have witched Akapelwa. In most cases, superstition defeats reason in the novel.

The play *The oracle of Cidino* confronts western ways of life at the expense of African cultures. The play highlights tendencies which are seen as un-African and therefore anti-establishment. The play examines homosexuality in a strictly conservative African traditional set-up. It creates a sense alienation in some African traditional institutions through its creation of social distances caused by the differences in the understanding of the world. The play is a reflection of political, cultural and social issues of the modern world.

The play *God of women* is centred on a polygamous king who is married to four women and does not have a son for an heir. The king is portrayed as verbally and physically abusive. When the seer prophesies that his son was going to share a woman with the king, he goes on a mission to find out whether any of his wives had a child before he married them. It was later revealed that Ma Inonge, had a son fathered by the king before they got married but the king was not aware. This is the son who ended up impregnating the king's youngest wife Joyce. The play portrays a typical patriarchal society where women are expected to be submissive to their male counterparts.

*Tears of fear in the era of terror* is a play depicting the atrocities of war. It is centred on the road to freedom during the liberation struggle of Namibia. It tells a story of a war mainly involving Oshiwambo speaking communities in Namibia and Angola between Koevoet soldiers and PLAN soldiers. Koevoet was part of the South African Defence Force and the SWAPO/PLAN soldiers were fighting for the independence of Namibia. The play portrays

the suffering endured by the Namibian people leading to some of the Namibian people crossing the border to go into exile in Angola, to fight the enemy from outside.

Lastly, *Ballads of insomnia*, is an anthology of poems. The poems cover themes such as war, friendship, being African in the diaspora, history and religion. Some of the poems present a strong satire of delusional Africans who are entangled in artificial cultures acquired through Western influences. Overall, the poems are a depiction of Africa as it is today.

### **4.3 Nyathi's artistic vision**

Nyathi's artistic vision is engrossed in day to day life matters in the life of a typical African community. It encompasses ways in which the author artistically creates typical experiences from an African worldview. It is noticeable from the different themes in the texts that Nyathi's literature is not 'art for art's sake' but the author endeavours to bring to the fore what concerns society therefore moralising it. According to Lara (1999), narratives acquire normative legitimacy because they are filtered through the public sphere where actors create fragile and falsifiable agreements about what needs to be done in the social world. Nyathi's artistic vision creates work that has a purpose and that has responsibility towards moralising society. It can be argued that Nyathi's artistic vision cannot be divorced from the notion that literary works are complex means of communicating difference and alternative subjectivities in the creation of a new public by influencing societies' views about certain matters.

Nyathi's vision is centred on veiled societal matters, which the author brings to the fore through various literary devices such as imagery. In the *oeuvre*, Nyathi appeals to the readers in various ways. The *oeuvre* incorporates visuals through light or lack thereof. Light is used in the *oeuvre* to create the mood in the texts. According to Nulph (2014) light is a powerful tool that can communicate different moods of the same scene. In all the three plays of the *oeuvre* mostly dim and fading light is used. All the three plays; *God of women*, *Oracle of the*

*Cidino* and *Tears of fears in the era of terror* end with fading lights. The fading lights at the closing of the play gives an air of closure for the reader. The lights dim and fade to create and reinforce the mainly sad mood of the culminating scene. The visual of light is also presented in the other parts of the scenes within the plays. In *God of women*, (Act II Scene III) the four women who were married to a patriarchal king come to the realisation that the polygamous marriage was detrimental to them. After all the rivalries and fights in the preceding acts, these women unite and embrace each other with a sentimental statement from all the women to Ma Inonge the eldest wife “We love you Ma Inonge” (p. 29). As they embrace and comfort each other, the lights fade out. The fading out of light gives an impression that there was bright light throughout the scene, but light began to fade at the climax of the play, the big realisation and the reconciliation of these four women, concluding the scene. The fading of lights in this case intensifies emotions causing the reader to sympathise with the four women.

Foreshadowing is employed in the opening scene of *God of women*, the seer prophesies;

...father shall eat with son. Eating the abominable fruit of the son...your very unknown and yet known son shall rival you for one of your spouses. (p. 2)

Lewanika’s son, whom he did not know did indeed end up impregnating one of Lewanika’s wives just as the seer prophesied. The use of this literary device foreshadows what later transpired in the play, fortifying and fulfilling the words of the seer. Also, in *The oracle of Cidino*, the prophecy of the oracle foreshadows the fate of the king. Due to the king’s failure to appease the ancestors, the oracle reveals to the king that the spirits of the ancestors were disappointed in him and further prophesise that the king would be “expunged” of his “lenses” (p. 54) to mean that the king would lose his sight and indeed this too came to pass in the course of the play. By artistically and creatively incorporating foreshadowing in plays, Nyathi creates suspense and adds dramatic tension to a story by building anticipation about what

might happen in the texts and further conveys information that helps readers understand what comes later.

Figurative language used in the *oeuvre* is mostly metaphoric in nature. Nyathi makes use of figurative language in the quest of bringing to the fore the “unspeakables”. Metaphors especially are heavily embedded in the texts. A good example is in *God of women* when Lewanika attempts to find out whether all his wives were virgins before he married them. In the quote below, Lewanika metaphorically addresses his wives;

...Ma Inonge, your granary has been depleted, Ma Ilenge, your traditional dish has lost its delicacy; and you Ntsala, all my hopes lay on you until you proved yourself barren beyond an ordinary desert. (p. 5)

Lewanika uses metaphors to describe Ma Inonge’s condition of being above the age of child bearing by referring to her ovaries being unable to produce eggs any more as a depleted granary. While, Ma Ilenge’s inability to sexually satisfy the king is compared to a dish that has lost its taste. Also, a metaphoric comparison is made between Ntsala’s barrenness and a desert to indicate that she is unable to fall pregnant. In using these extreme metaphors, the author through Lewanika figuratively compares the three women’s situations to contexts that the readers are familiar with, producing the desired effect of portraying Lewanika as a verbally abusive and patriarchal husband.

#### **4.4 The spiritual world**

The *oeuvre* is strewn with spiritual encounters. In *The other presence*, the play sets off with a spiritual encounter. The mourners are gathered at Ma Simanga’s compound to mourn the death of her son Akapelwa, when the peculiar whirlwind occurs. The reaction of the mourners is a clear indication that various negative spiritual connotations were attached to the

whirl wind. Everyone starts “panicking” (p. 1) as they wondered what the whirl wind might be denoting, given the nature of their gathering. In most African cultures, death is considered as something that always happens due to the existence of another presence and not just mortality itself (Ziwara, 2015). As feared as death is in African societies, the whirlwind exacerbated these fears. Elder Neo advanced to stop the whirlwind in its tracks by chanting some words “Find your path to your haven of peace and leave the children of life...” (p. 2), which designates that the whirlwind was connected to another world unknown to humans. Also, while mourners were on their way from the hospital to the cemetery for the burial of Akapelwa, another whirlwind erupted to which Elder Neo enquired “What is the matter with the other world today?” (p. 87). This affirms the strong belief in the existence of an “unknowable world” (p.3) by this community.

All the texts of the *oeuvre* acknowledge the reverence accorded to the ancestors. The spiritual protection by ancestors is heavily relied upon by characters in the *oeuvre*. As alluded to by Rabaka (2017), the African view of their world includes among other things, the belief in ancestors. This fact is denoted in the way the characters in the *oeuvre* speak about the ancestors, their action as well as the fate suffered by some of the characters brought about by their disrespect in one way or another of the ancestors. The characters would acknowledge the presence of ancestors in their midst by offering them what they were drinking at that moment before the characters themselves take a single sip from the brew. In *The oracle of Cidino* Ma Inonge through the messenger reminds the king to feed his ancestors with the brew before he tastes its potency (p. 8). Similarly, in *God of women*, Neo, who is king Lewanika’s friend requests the king to first render homage to the “invisible ones” with them, before he sends the calabash with the traditional brew around for everyone to consume the brew (p. 6). The invisible ones Lewanika is referring to are the ancestors. By offering the ancestors to take the first sip of the brew is a clear depiction of the respect the characters have

of their ancestors and the fact that they acknowledge their presence, though invisible. Concurring with Acquah's (2011) assertion that although the dead were in the unseen world, they still continued to be part of the living community spiritually and were acknowledged.

Disrespecting of ancestors has detrimental consequences. In the *oeuvre*, disrespecting of the ancestors ranged from the destruction of the ancestral shrines or refusal to abide to their message. In *Tears of fears in the era of terror*, the guerrilla fighter expresses dismay on the destruction of the ancestral shrines by the enemy when he laments "...you have insulted our ancestors by destroying their graves, their oracles, their caves..." (p. 95). By equating the act of destroying the shrines to insulting the ancestors one may deduce that, the ancestors ought to retaliate. Also, the poem *Ancestral rage* in *Ballads of insomnia* makes use of an imagery of a calabash to express the destruction of morals and values which were once put in place by the ancestors. Stanza one, lines one to three read; "This moral calabash you have broken; This sacred token descended to you by our brave; ancestors" (p. 2). The last line of the poem offers the consequence of this destruction "Now the curse is upon you" (p. 2).

Furthermore, in *The oracle of Cidino*, Neo narrates to the king peculiar happenings in the village recently. He narrates a story of a small cloud gathering in the sky, but the rain drops it produced were comparable to disastrous hail; He also talks of a strange sight which he observed of a dozen of crocodile eggs hatching at once in a dry crop field (p. 40). The king's granary also burnt down due to a mysterious fire. All these happenings came after the Town Clerk, who is a son to the king began to threaten the villagers to move from their village and make way for the building of a new town or they would be forcefully removed without compensation. This would mean that the graves and shrines of their ancestors will be destroyed. Mbeha, who is a member of the village heralds the Town Clerk in his statement "Ancestors have cast a spell on the innocent because of your deeds" (p. 44).

In the same play, *The oracle of Cidino* the king's granary is engulfed by a mysterious fire. The king naturally blames it on the children, however, the Messenger makes it very clear to the king that "It is not the child that set the granary on fire" (p. 32). The messenger was very sure that it was the "natural light" (p. 32). The king was faced with unknown spells which were unclear to him until he was advised by his friend Neo to visit the oracle, a place where his ancestors were buried. The oracle made it very clear to the king that he had violated and angered the spirits of the ancestors for agreeing that the village be destroyed to be replaced by the modern town (p. 52). The king was also blamed for not giving sacrifices to the ancestors in time and for the abominable act allowing cowardice to force him to resign before his time (p. 54). All these acts of not appeasing and violating the ancestral spirits led to the detrimental consequence of the king losing his sight and eventually his death. Clearly, from the *oeuvre*, when characters disrespect ancestors in any way, they face ancestral rage. This affirms what Gumo, Simon, Evan and Collins, (2012) postulate that if community members allow the destruction of sacred spaces, it is believed that ancestors would punish the offender with misfortune or even death.

#### **4.5 Witchcraft**

The African worldview also encompasses the belief in witchcraft which is one of the facets prominently depicted in the *oeuvre*. Mbiti (2014) asserts that there are good witches and wizards who are able to utilize their witchcraft power to assist people. In some instances, seers and witchdoctors were able to foretell the calamities which may befall characters. A good example is from the play *God of women*. The play depicts mystical powers possessed by seers and witchdoctors which were able to predict the fate of the king and those in his household. The play opened with a seer who predicts "lust" (p. 2) in King Lewanika's compound. The seer makes it very clear to the king in his statement, "your very unknown and yet known son shall rival with you for one of your spouses" (p. 2). The king could not

understand this prediction because he did not have a boy child by that time and if he was to have one in the future, by the time the son would be old enough to court women, the king would be dead by then, as he was already old. Little did the king know that he had a son out there whom his first wife had kept secret because they were not married when he was born and the king had instructed Ma Inonge to have an abortion. Ma Inonge had not gone through with the abortion but she did not inform the king. The king therefore doubted this revelation.

In one of the King's visits to a witchdoctor, it was revealed to him that there was "an infant on its passage due to incest and that death awaits the compound" (p. 23). All these predictions eventually came to pass as the King's youngest wife in the play is impregnated by the King's own son whom the king didn't know. Also, the king and his eldest wife Ma Inonge both die at the close of the play. According to Kagema (2014) witch doctors possess mystical powers and are able to reveal hidden information or reveal the future. Before the witch doctor's revelation, no one in the king's house detected that any one of the king's wives was sleeping with another man, let alone pregnant. However, after the revelation everyone became skeptical and the truth was later confirmed when John, the king's unknown son impregnated Joyce, the king's youngest wife. Also, the predicted deaths in the compound came to pass. This scenario confirms the mystical powers as being part and parcel of the African traditional religion.

Whenever unexplainable events happened in the *oeuvre* the characters sought assistance from diviners, witchdoctors or seers. In *The other presence*, a diviner is called to investigate the death of Akapelwa. Akapelwa's mother and the mourners wanted to know from the seer, who the culprit was. The whole village was caught up in a euphoric fit in anticipation of the drama about to unfold (p. 64). The drama is the anticipated seer's revelation of the name of the person responsible for Akapelwa's death. In the same novel *The other presence*, Ma Simanga plans that after Akapelwa's burial, she will travel as far as Malawi in order to get

answers to the many deaths in her household from witch doctors. In *God of women*, in the opening scene, a seer cleanses the kraal from “an evil curse” (p. 1). The act of seeking spiritual protection affirms that mystical powers did exist. In the African worldview, no calamity happens by chance. The seeking of spiritual protection however came at a price. In *The other presence*, Ma Simanga’s resolution is to use a large chunk of Akapelwa’s savings on tracing his death by visiting witchdoctors. While in *God of women*, the king enquires what the seer’s payment would be after the cleansing, to which the seer responded, “A goat, and a white chicken” (p. 3) which the king did not hesitate to pay. When the characters encountered unexplainable calamities, they seek out to witchdoctors and seers for assistance at any cost.

The facet of witchcraft accusations came out strongly in the novel *The other presence*. Although Adhikari (2014) posits that the vast majority of people accused of witchcraft are women, the opposite was true in *The other presence*. Elder Sinvula, a man was being accused of using witchcraft to cause the death of Akapelwa. During the mourning of Akapelwa’s death, Neo and Dube, both elderly men of the village refuse to walk with elder Sinvula due to the fear of being accused of witchcraft. Dube expresses that a simple walk with Sinvula will be tantamount to people thinking that they (Dube and Neo) work with him (Sinvula) in his activities of the night (p. 19). According to Dahal (2013) the accusations of witchcraft lead to psychological abuse meant to shame the victim. These accusations psychologically affected Elder Sinvula and he decides to go to the hospital where Akapelwa succumbed to an illness to find out the exact cause of Akapelwa’s death which he was being accused of. It was revealed later in the play that Akapelwa had succumbed to HIV/AIDS however, due to limited knowledge on the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS, the community does not want to believe. Clearly, elder Sinvula’s accusation of Akapelwa’s death was due to an underlying social tension, in this case caused by the devastating illness which was causing so many deaths in society and elder Sinvula is used as a scapegoat.

#### 4.6 The physical environment

Certain disruptions in the spiritual world of ancestors are imparted through certain animal behaviour and certain natural entities. In *The other presence*, the ancestral world was not at peace due the king's failure to appease the ancestors. Peculiar animal behaviour was observed by some villagers. Mwiya narrates to the king the content of a peculiar dream he had which he believes is causing misfortune to his compound. A new calf is about to be born but it was delivered in the woods. The calf finds refuge in the wilderness and to make it worse, when the shepherds try to bring it home with its mother, Mwiya states that "it sinks into the darkness..." (p. 31). This is strange animal behaviour as the calf is supposed to be born in the kraal and it is not supposed to refuse to return back to the kraal. Immediately after Mwiya finishes narrating his dream to the king, lightning strikes and Kahimbi, the King's youngest child, rushes in to inform the king that the granary was on fire. This affirms Tosic's (2009) postulation that there is a relationship between man, the spiritual world and the environment. Neo, one of the King's closest friends views these strange ordeals as a "spell" (p. 36). By viewing these happenings as a spell, Nyathi through Neo acknowledges that the spell is communicated through the environment and natural entities.

Relatedly, after the engulfment of the King's granary by fire, Neo describes the misfortune which took place in his compound. A whirlwind from afar blew away the roof of his first wife's roof and a fragment from the wreckage knocked down his only animal, a he-goat. After all the above and many peculiar happenings in the physical world, the king and his friend Neo decide to seek explanations for all these ordeals from the oracle. Upon enquiry on what they were doing in the land of the dead, the king responds "...my clay carcass mourns and fears the horror of the unknowable spells that haunt your children" (p. 52). The king indicates that he was worried about the peculiar happenings in the community. Only then

were their worst fears confirmed, the oracle pronounced that the king had “violated the spirits” (p. 53) and the ancestors had sent “signs” (p. 53) to warn him against his “abominations” (p. 53). The signs that were sent to the king were communicated through various natural entities.

Certain animals and animal behaviour were seen as bad omens in the *oeuvre*. The attack of Chuma by a python in *The other presence*, was a fateful ordeal which was preceded by two heavy whirlwinds. Whirlwinds are described in *Oracle of Cidino* as a moving spirit of the dead (p. 18), hence when the convoy in *The other presence* saw the whirlwinds, two for that matter, they knew right away it was not a good sign. The two whirlwinds made their way to the direction which Chuma went to relieve herself. This is where the fateful sight of a python wrapped around Chuma was found. A number of African societies relate snakes with the living dead or other human spirits and their appearance represents bad omen. Gumo et al. (2012) contend that the snake is thought by many African societies as sacred, especially the python which may not be killed. The killing of the python by Elder Sinvula to save Chuma was therefore received with mixed feelings. It was received by some as heroic however by others, it exacerbated the belief that he was a wizard and had a hand in Akapelwa’s death. This is evidenced by his fears when he got back in the car and the convoy resumed the journey to the cemetery. Elder Sinvula feared being ostracised for his skill in being “heeded” by the wild reptile and being able to “handle” the reptile (p. 96). Traditionally speaking, this was totally incomprehensible to the locals, in their minds, no ordinary human being would be capable of such.

Comparably, in *The oracle of Cidino*, during a conversation between the king and his friend Neo, the king mentioned that he has had a bad dream. The first thing that came to Neo’s mind on what the dream was about indicates how superstitious the snakes were believed to be. Neo’s first question was “Was it about the snake...” (p. 16). However, the dream was far

from snakes. This is a clear indication that even dreaming about snakes was seen as a bad omen. In the same play *The oracle of Cidino*, the day the king woke up blind, the queen, in panic asks her husband what could be the possible cause of the blindness. In her question “What serpent spit its venom in your sleep” (p. 61), one can denote that the queen has concluded that her husband was bewitched and she used the imagery of the snake to denote the mystical power which caused the king’s blindness, which is a superstitious representation of snakes.

Black cats and certain birds in the *oeuvre* are also regarded as bad omen. During elder Sinvula’s journey to the hospital to find out the cause of Akapelwa’s death in *The other presence*, elder Sinvula came across “strange happenings” (p. 32). He saw two black cats mating, immediately after this encounter he saw a huge owl, taking off from the branch. Elder Sinvula’s fear of these strange happenings one after the other changed to anger. He was frustrated by failure to understand what was actually happening to him, seeing all these strange creatures which were “traditional omens of witchcraft” (p.32). Black cats hold a place on the list of bad omens as they are considered foreboding of ill luck (Bilauca, 2016). Equally, in the folklore of many African cultures owls are also considered as a sign of bad things to come (O’Connor, 2012). It is therefore clear why Sinvula sank into an ocean of unanswered questions tormenting him, as he was unsure of the fate of his planned journey due to the sequence of bad omens presented to him along the way. The author chooses to use animals to represent bad spiritual omens.

Furthermore, in *The other presence*, during Akapelwa’s funeral, a dead vulture strangely fell from the skies onto the casket, it looked like something that had died a long time ago. Following this frightening fall of a vulture from the skies, an owl landed on a huge tree just above the casket. It was described to have “hooted” and “ran its eyes energetically around the gathering” (p. 103). Every mourner was embraced with fear to see such strange events

unfold. Elder Neo however served as a medium to communicate to the supposed “man” (p. 103) inside the vulture by ordering the vulture to leave at once. The vulture which once looked dead blinked its eyes and lifted itself, pranced a bit on the casket and flew away. The owl also hooted again and followed the vulture to the forest. Those strange and ominous bird behaviour was unquestionably viewed as a bad omen, as these birds are not known to live freely around people and also, owls normally fly at night, not in broad day light. After a short moment, Neo explained that what just happened was a testimony to what he calls “dances of the collected bones and eccentric roots during the gloomy shadows of the night” (p. 104) by Ma Simanga. This cleared elder Sinvula of the accusations of mystical powers as it appeared Ma Simanga was the cause of her own mystical torment, embodied in these infamous birds. Yet again, nature is incorporated to communicate spiritual activities.

The *oeuvre* presents some natural entities as bearing healing powers. In most of the healings and cleansings presented in the *oeuvre*, some plants and animals are used for medicinal and cleansing purposes. In the opening scene of *God of women*, the seer sprinkles medicine on the chief with an oxtail. The seer also throws bones to make a diagnosis of what could be causing Lewanika’s calamities. Both the oxtail and bones used in the ritual are objects obtained from natural entities. Neo, in *The oracle of Cidino*, informs the king about a certain tree called Libombozo. Neo explains to the king that the potency of this tree’s roots can provide the spiritual healing which the king yearns (p. 9). The king applies the pounded powder of the roots of the tree for protection as evidenced from the text;

Libombozo my elixir, you are the cleanser of all evil spells. You also bear remedy for all known and unknown infirmities. I apply you into my royal veins. Protect me and my palace from the spells of my enemies, protect me from the venom of unstable features, waters and air. (p. 30)

Libombozo is a tree occurring naturally which it is believed to cure various ailments. The king applies it to protect himself and his compound from various evil spells and unknown sicknesses.

A striking relationship is observed between the environment and man. This is because all materials used in the spiritual healing and cleansing above are directly from the environment. All the above also cement Schroeder's (2015) assertion that natural environments seem to be the primary setting for spiritual experiences. This aspect of the African worldview which includes belief in traditional healing and mainly includes medicine derived from the surrounding natural environment expresses how African culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and being affected by it.

#### **4.7 Superstition**

The superstition facet is prominently presented in the novel, *The other presence*. The novel presents some characters who are ignorant to the truth no matter how irrational their reasoning may be. This fact is evidenced in the following excerpt from the novel;

There was always a terrible misconception about death. Death was always associated with some kind of spiritual mischief by somebody. There was always a scapegoat. (p. 44)

Death is one of the major events of life which the African society avoids knowing true facts about and chooses to lean against superstition. As frightening as death already is, the situation in *The other presence* was made worse by the fact that Akapelwa's death was the fifth death in Ma Simanga's compound. Ma Simanga had already lost her husband in a car accident. She had also lost four of her children just few months between each other's deaths. They all had similar symptoms before their death. Their symptoms were described to include; strange rashes, weight loss, severe coughing and severe weight loss (p. 68). These repeated events

have created fear in the mind of Ma Masimanga and fellow villagers alike and they begin to estimate this misery by another misery of superstition. In an outrage caused by the shocking death of yet another one of Ma Simanga's children, Kachana asks rhetorical questions "Why is he dead? Why did they kill him?" (p. 6). An indication that there is a general belief that someone is responsible for Akapelwa's death which expresses that in this society, death was a kind of spiritual mischief by somebody and not just mortality.

The characters were ignorant to the true cause of Akapelwa's death. Aggarwal (2012) attributes ignorance to the truth as having to do with being uninformed, lacking knowledge and having an irrational fear of something. This ignorance leads to illogical belief. Undoubtedly, most characters were ignorant of the fact that Akapelwa died of an HIV/AIDS related illnesses. The disease was so feared that the characters are even "afraid of mentioning it by name" (p. 45). Thomas on the other hand, who had just returned from his studies in America, is open-minded about the realities of HIV/AIDS. Torgler (2003) posits that the social status of people plays an important role in the tendency to superstition, such that people with low social status have more tendencies to superstition. Compared to the other villagers, Thomas can openly talk about HIV/AIDS. Thomas openly probes Nico why he accuses people of having died of witchcraft while they know that they died of HIV/AIDS. This question stunned Nico and Kajaha as they look at each other in "shock" (p. 24). Nico and Kajaha were not as exposed to the information regarding HIV/AIDS as Thomas was, hence their surprised reaction.

This society was so superstitious such that everything in everyone's mind happened for a reason. As elder Sinvula laments;

There was an explanation for every wind that blew off the thatched roof that was not tightly fastened down. There was an explanation for every cow or goat or even a

chicken that died without any human involvement. There was even an explanation for any young girl who slipped and fell on those muddy soils next to the well. In all these, something closely observing man's activity was in charge. Something so divine was accountable. The irrational, or rather non-rational happenings, everyone had to accept, were due to the works of the other presence. (p. 95)

In this rather seemingly exaggerated lament, elder Sinvula plainly brings forth the high level of superstition in his society. There always had to be a scapegoat for any unfortunate happening as it is believed that no unfortunate event happens naturally. This theme of superstition elucidates the leitmotif of the author committing himself to socially moralise the public sphere on superstition.

#### **4.8 The “unspeakables” of homosexuality**

Nyathi commits to moralise society by incorporating the controversial theme of homosexuality in the *oeuvre*. This theme is notably presented in *The oracle of Cidino* as well as in *God of women* and *Ballads of insomnia*. The commonly discussed type of homosexual behaviour is that between a man and another man. In *The Oracle of Cidino* however, the author chooses to present a woman to woman lesbian relationship. Act I, Scene II of the play presents the two girls, Thelma and Peggy who are portrayed to be looking “Western in dress” (p. 11) compared to the general dress of the other women. Already, this description sets them apart from the other characters. The description of how they are dressed foreshadows the believed not so African homosexual behaviour in which they later in the play engage in.

The two girls profess their love for each other. Peggy begins with what at first sounded like a description of the traditional brew which they were consuming. However, as the conversation progresses it is clear from the artistic integration of their body language; “inspecting her friend” (p. 11) with her eyes, that the sweet words chanted were towards each other. The girls

strategically employ the Songs of songs chants of King Solomon in the bible to express their feelings. Thelma utters;

How beautiful you are, my love, how very beautiful! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats, moving down the slopes of the burning mountains. (p. 11)

To which Peggy responds;

Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come out from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them bereaved. (p. 11)

These words, one would expect to be shared between a boy and a girl. From its origin, the poetic words are a testament to the beauty of the marital relationship in its fullness and they come from a man and are meant for his bride. However, in this case, the words are from a girl and meant for another girl. This exchange of rather intimate intones marks the start of the homosexual relationship between Thelma and Peggy in the play.

As relationship between Peggy and Thelma advances, it becomes public knowledge. Other characters in the play do not approve of the homosexual relationship and see it as unnatural. This is evidenced in more than one instance when other characters try to clarify the unnaturalness of the relationship between same-sex species. The king uses imagery of crocodiles and crabs to detest the same-sex relationship between Thelma and Peggy, he states; "If crabs and crocodiles can see those of their other mate through the muddy waters of the river what blindness has befallen my own flesh and blood?" (p.47). Similarly, Neo makes a comparison of the fowls in the air in his loathe for the homosexual behaviour. According to Neo, even fowls which are of lesser intelligence compared to human beings know how to play "mother and father" matters (p. 27). Clearly, the king and Neo see this behaviour as abnormal and unacceptable. From an African overview, homosexuality is viewed as

abominable and un-African. It is denounced as evil, unnatural and incongruent to African culture and psyche (Obasola, 2013).

In an unexpected turn of events, Peggy breaks up with Thelma and runs off with the young lad Akapelwa. An opinion maintained by Bailey (1955) is of two types of homosexuality namely; condition and pervert. It appears Peggy was the former type because, the pervert homosexual engages in homosexual activities casually because of curiosity. This is confirmed when Peggy ends the relationship with Thelma. In trying to save the relationship, the heartbroken Thelma appeals to Peggy not to leave, however Peggy made it clear that she was not sure about the relationship and that she was just curious. This, she says before picking up her bags and leaving with Akapelwa. Evidently, their intentions for the relationship were not the same.

In *God of women*, the ‘unAfricanness’ of the homosexual behaviour is denoted. John who just returned from his studies abroad is seated with Joyce. In a conversation, Joyce asks John to confirm a rumour, whether in the Western world white men marry each other, to which John replies “yes, even women marry each other” (p. 19). Joyce finds this “outrageous” (p. 19) and juxtaposes the behaviour with an axe being meant for cutting wood, not another axe. Joyce believes that this behaviour is Western because obviously where she comes from, the assertion is that the African culture is rigidly heterosexual. However, Anderson (as cited in Lopang 2014), dispels the myth of African homosexuality being a culture from the west, arguing that a European concept of homosexuality may have been brought to Africa but homosexuality was not introduced to Africa, it existed. Similarly, In *Ballads of insomnia*, the poem *Letter to Grandma*, the poet narrates to the late grandmother of how things have changed due to modernity since she left decades ago. The first two lines of stanza 10 reads; Namasiku just got wedded to her girlfriend; Simataa just got courted by his boyfriend (p. 33). Namasiku is a female name, while Simataa is a male name hence the two lines depict

homosexual unions. The poem suggests that modernity has made homosexuality acceptable in Africa. By authoring homosexuality, a platform is created to openly scrutinise the theme, hence educating the public sphere.

#### **4.9 The “unspeakables” of land**

In the opening of the play *The oracle of Cidino*, the Kwena community members are gathered in the king’s palace engaged in a heated debate. The community would like to beseech the king’s intervention in the land matter, following a letter from the Town Clerk bearing terrifying news. The letter reads;

...you and your subjects are hereby ordered to leave your village for the expansion of our city. If you do not leave from there, we will have no choice but to forcefully remove you or evict you from there... (p. 4)

The news is not received well by the community. Mbeha, a concerned Kwena community member is dismayed by the request in the letter emphasising that the letter seeks to remove them from “the heaven of their ancestors” (p. 6). Mbeha further reasons that their umbilical cords laid in the gardens of their forefathers and hence there was no way they could move from there. In most African cultures, the umbilical cord was buried in specific places of the land, symbolising a connection between ancestral land and the people. From an African worldview, land is highly sacred as it bears the remains of the ancestors particularly in the form of graves of chiefs (Taringa, 2016). The king however is between a rock and a hard place. While he admits that his heart ached, and his body trembled at the content of the letter, he also acknowledges that the author of the letter is his own son whom he had sent to school and had now “mastered the language and knowledge of modernity” (p. 6) and is now the Town Clerk. The king is compelled by this fact to support the content of the letter evidenced in his statement to the gathered community members “I cannot bear your obnoxious attitude

towards the noble cause of modernity” (p. 7). The king is clearly frustrated by the community members’ complaints which were genuine; however he had to defy the ancestors to support his son whom he had sent to school.

Although the king’s decision is not in favour of the community, he has the last say in the land matter. A traditional leader in this case, the king, is the steward with divine authority over land (Adama and Yahaya, 2016). The king’s decision however angers the ancestors. This anger is revealed in the king and the Neo’s visit to the oracle. The oracle divulges with dismay the “unspeakable” which the king has committed;

...We gave you a rod of correction, which you have traded for the taste of modernity...you have violated the spirits of our subjects whose souls rest behind their homesteads. The splinters of their bodies displaced by the conquest of aliens haunt your palace. (p. 53)

The oracle illuminates to the king of the abomination he had committed. The oracle explains that the king was given the authority to take care of the land but traded it in excitement over modernity. The king is also blamed for the violation of the ancestral spirits whose bodies are buried in the land which is now conquered by the Western institutions. As a result, the oracle casts a spell on the king as evidenced in the utterance; “...the might of your Royal Lord’s sight shall expunge you of your lenses” (p. 54). A curse which meant that the king would lose his sight and that is exactly what happened to him for disregarding the ancestors.

The premise under discussion aims at depicting the momentousness of the sacredness of the land which serves as a common history to unite generations of a specific clan and creates a stage for a moralistic inquiry into the sensitive, controversial yet crucial issue of land.

#### 4.10 Polygamy

The play *God of women* prominently depicts the theme of polygamy. King Lewanika has four wives staying in his compound. In the African traditional polygamous set up, conceptualisation of wealth was the heart of this practice (Thobejane, 2014). Women were largely depicted as labourers and producers. In one instance, the king calls his wife and wanted to know the whereabouts of the other wives, he asks; “Where are your counterparts?” (p. 3). By referring to his wives as counterparts, one may conclude that the king views his wives as each other’s co-workers and not his partners. Polygamy is also dependent on the economic status of the man. There is a great deal of respect for a man who is able to provide for his many children and wives. This assigns power to the man over the wives to treat them the way he sees fit as they are all dependent on him. This aspect is evidenced in the following excerpt by the king;

You all crept here as destitutes. I sliced my land for you. I traded you for half my stock. I fed you. None of you standing here can claim hunger. (p.17)

In the excerpt, the king boasts and claims ownership of the four women through a form of transaction. It is clear that the women depend on the king for survival as they came to his compound impoverished. The king asserts that he is the one that provided them with land and food to eat. Seeing that women largely depended on the wealth of their husbands, the joining of economy by many women in recent years might have contributed to the decline in polygamy.

Polygamy has its roots in culture and the bible. It was traditionally unacceptable for one to fall pregnant before marriage. Polygamy ensured that all women were married and are therefore dignified (Anyolo, 2014). This fact is represented in the play when Ma Inonge, the king’s first wife confided in Joyce, the youngest wife that the king had impregnated her

during their youth. The king had requested Ma Inonge to have an abortion, but she did not go through with it. She took refuge in her uncle's compound and gave birth to a baby boy which the king did not know about. To Joyce's question as to why she kept it a secret, Ma Inonge's response was; "We were not married then" (p. 15). It would have been an abomination if it were known that they had a son before marriage and the king would have lost his chieftaincy. Also, traditionally, previous African kings were known to have a large number of wives, hence King Lewanika did not deviate from this tradition.

Furthermore, in a conversation, Neo is surprised to hear about the king's addition of a fourth wife in his compound and asks the king about it. The king excitedly answers Neo that even the white man's doctrine teaches of his ancestors with more than thousand wives. The king refers to the bible to advocate for the addition of a new wife to his compound. Several renowned men in the Old Testament practiced polygamy. Therefore, polygamy has both culture and religion as its basis.

The play reveals unavoidable conflict rivalry among the wives. The play depicts a vicious verbal and physical fight which erupts between three of the king's wives. The apparent cause of the fight according to Ma Inonge was because Ma Ilenge had fed Ma Inonge's child a "disastrous meal" (p. 7). This resulted in an exchange of insulting words between the two ladies. What fuelled the fight even more was the fact that the king did not side with the lady who felt she was wronged, Ma Inonge, leading to her feeling unfairly treated. In anger, she laments; "If my little Inonge was the child of your beloved Nsala, you wouldn't have said I should shut my mouth" (p. 7). This statement by Ma Inonge drew Nsala in the fight upon hearing her name, further exacerbating the fight. Clearly, Ma Inonge feels that Nsala is the favoured one among the four wives in the compound. In a polygamous set up where rivalries prevail, issues such as fights, and food poisoning are probable (Indongo and Pazvakawambwa, 2015). In the case above, Ma Inonge feels that a fellow wife in the same

shoes in which she was, ought to be defended by the husband. This depicts that the polygamous set up is susceptible to jealousy further leading to conflicts and violence.

#### **4.11 The “unspeakable” patriarchal treatment of women**

The *oeuvre* presents the unspeakable facet of disrespecting, suppressing and devaluing of women in various texts. Women in the *oeuvre* are presented in the text as highly oppressed and subordinate to men. It appears in the *oeuvre* that patriarchal treatment of women is rooted in culture as it is passed on through the gender socialisation of young boys and girls. In the play *Tears of fear in the era of terror*, a young boy has sustained a fracture on the arm. The mother consoles his son by telling him to dry his tears and to “show some manliness” (p. 85). In telling the boy to stop crying as ‘crying is not for boys; The mother teaches the boy to keep his emotions bottled up inside as showing emotions is implied as effeminate and a sign of weakness. Therefore homes, as social institutions are the manufactures of negative gender practices which are then passed on from generation to generation.

There are specific places in the *oeuvre* where women are not expected to be, especially where men are gathered. In *The other presence*, Kachana hears of squabbles in the compound where the mourners were gathered. Kachana tried to intervene to which Nico exclaimed “Woman, go back to your friends, what concern is this to your kitchen matters?” (p. 27). The woman’s place is viewed to be in the kitchen and Nico telling Kachana that she does not belong there shows that he doesn’t view her to be of any assistance in the ‘manly’ conflict which was taking place. Similarly, in *The oracle of Cidino*, the queen finds her husband seated with his best friend Neo. Upon greeting them the first question the king asks was what had brought her to the terrain of men. Just when the queen was about to sit on the chair to explain herself, the king bellows; “Since when has a woman claimed a man’s height” (p. 17). In this scenario, yet again a woman is reminded that there are specific places where she does not get to be,

reserved for men only. In stopping the queen from sitting on the chair the king implies that if she sits on the chair, she will be at the same height with men, hence she has to sit on the floor, below the men. This scenario depicts subjugation of women to a position below that of men in various aspects in society.

In the *oeuvre*, women are assigned specific roles to carry out in the house. These roles mostly involve taking care of the house in aspects regarding housekeeping and rearing of children. Major tasks which involve decision making are left to men. Big decisions such as marriages are made on behalf of the whole family, including the bride to be herself. This is evidenced in the king's statement, informing the queen; "Bo Neo has extended a hand of marriage on behalf of his son and I have agreed, Lobola is ready too" (p. 38). The king makes a huge decision by himself of marrying off their daughter and agreed on what should be paid as Lobola without consulting his wife and daughter. The king, only informs the queen when all the arrangements were done. Andima and Tjimaranga (2014) posit that in set ups with rigid gender roles, women are demoted to the level of children and therefore excluded from major decisions. The queen's opinion in the matter is evidently not sought as it is viewed as unnecessary.

Girls are treated as properties of their fathers. Practices such as Lobola are depicted in the *oeuvre* as a practice that places women in positions where men may easily claim ownership. Neo and the king in *The oracle of Cidino* are arranging their children's marriage. After the Lobola negotiation were done, the king in excitement informed his son, Akapelwa, that "The king is ready to surrender his daughter" (p. 27). The king's daughter is depicted as a possession which the king is ready to pass on to someone else in this case, her husband to be Akapelwa. Neo presents the "twenty-fold cattle" much to the excitement of the king. When this was done Akapelwa would be able to take the king's daughter as a wife. This scenario paints a picture of a transaction where the king trades his daughter for twenty-fold cattle.

In addition, in *God of women*, Joyce, the king's youngest wife narrates to John whom she is in love with that although the king already had three wives and was old enough to be her grandfather, she had to marry him. Joyce states "...he has paid my family fifteen cattle in exchange for me...but still I don't love him" (p. 11). Although Joyce clearly states that she does not love the king, she feels obliged to stay with him because he had 'bought' her from her family. Mwamanda (2016) views Lobola as an oppressive practice which commodifies women.

After Lobola is paid, a woman is seen to belong to her husband and lacks control over her sexuality. Women are treated as sex objects to satisfy male sexual desires. In *The oracle of Cidino*, When the Lobola negotiations were underway for Akapelwa to marry the king's daughter, Neo eagerly informed his son "you are about to dine on royal flesh" (p. 27). Neo views the marriage arrangement to be to the advantage of his son. His emphasis is that his son was going to have his sexual needs met, and more excitingly he was going to be having his sexual needs met by the daughter of the king. Depicting the king's daughter as food to be consumed by his son, demeans and reduces this woman to a mere sex object. In *God of women*, the king informs his wives that he was going to continue "feasting" in their huts (p. 5). The king implies that he was going to continue sleeping with them however he chooses to use the word feasting to denote that to him, his wives were like food for his satisfaction which objectifies and reduces women.

Violence against women is common in the *oeuvre*. There are various forms of violence against women depicted in the *oeuvre*, ranging from sexual harassment to beating. A young girl in *Oracle of Cidino* runs into the chamber where men were seated to discuss the issue of land. The little girl looked terrified and upon inquiry by the king as to why she was running, she replies "He-he seeks to deflower me without my wish" (p. 5). The girl reports of an incident where a boy was making sexual advances on her which she does not approve of. The

girl was seeking protection from the men in the chamber. Surprisingly, the men did not see anything wrong with the boy's behaviour; instead the king blames the girl, claiming that she wore a rag to expose the parts of her body which were not meant to be seen. The king stresses "That is seduction, which is worse a crime than the reaction of the young man" (p. 5). The boy gets away with this act of sexual harassment due to the defence he receives from authority. This inherently abusive behaviour ought to become culturally acceptable, making women vulnerable to sexual abuse by their male counterparts and making immoral sexual behaviour conducted by men acceptable.

The *oeuvre* presents men as superior in society, exerting full power and control over women. Physical abuse is among some of the methods employed in the *oeuvre* viewed to ensure that the women do not commit faults. In *God of women*, the king opts to correct his wives with physical punishment when they err. In one instance, the king threatens to use a rod on his eldest wife for failing to understand simple instructions given to her by the king. Although he did not beat her, the threat indicates in his mind, beating her would be the best remedy for the situation. In another instance however, the king actually beats one of his wives. Ma Ilenge refuses to keep quiet when ordered by the king to do so, the king resorts to beating her in order to get her to keep quiet. King Lewanika slaps the woman and continues pounding her with his fists (p.7). The abusive behaviour of the king will become accepted as normal leading to its socialisation whereby the children growing up in this household will view it as normal and therefore continuing the cycle.

#### **4. 12 The prophets of profit**

Reverend Guiseb in *The other presence* is a true epitome of a white-collar prophet. He was visiting the village as part of a Christian mission when he heard about the death of a relative

of one of the members of his congregation. He thought about how he could supplement the small pennies he was left with, in order to be able to buy the fresh fish of the great Zambezi River (p. 49). Reverent Guiseb ceased the chance to prey on the unsuspecting mourners when he was requested to deliver a sermon. The reverend uses various strategies to extract money from the mourners. He is described to have “scanned his audience thoroughly” (p. 50) before saying any word. He does this as if to assess their economic status to be able to fashion out the best strategy which he may use to get them to give offerings.

Even before delivering the sermon, the reverend requested for offerings. A common practice of some of the white-collar pastors is the equating of the gospel of giving in terms of seeding or sowing (Mhiza, 2013). The reverend convinces the mourners to give offerings by assuring them that “The Lord could only listen to the prayers of those that recognised his work through offering” (p. 50). In this type of gospel, one is expected to give offerings in exchange for blessings. The reverend manipulated this gospel because of greediness for material gain.

Seeding or sowing can be in various forms. Seeing that the mourners were not giving offerings as per the reverend’s expectations, the reverend heightens his strategy in requesting the mourners to give offerings. The reverend avows “If you give more, God will multiply your wealth” (p. 50). The reverend emphasises on giving offerings unto God for more money and prosperity. Seeing that this was not helping either, he diverted from asking the mourners from giving money to offering chickens, goats and cattle.

Not once in his preaching did the reverend preach on the second coming of Christ or salvation, let alone console the mourners. His gospel was solely on money and prosperity. This affirms Biri’s (2013) notion of the gospel of white-collar prophets asserting that their message of prosperity is seemingly over emphasised at the detriment of spiritual matters. This reverend however fails in his attempt to collect huge amounts of money from the mourners

and in huge disappointment and embarrassment drives off into the night in his Jeep. By indicating that the reverend drove off in a Jeep, the author reveals the economic status of the reverend to be high. The type of vehicle depicted is not cheap and the fact that the reverend owns such a vehicle portrays him to be making a lot of money presumably from people's offerings through his false misinterpreted teachings of the gospel of prosperity.

#### **4.13 The “unspeakables” of war**

The subject of war is vividly portrayed in the play *Tears of fears in the era of terror*. The overarching theme in the play is the disrepute of the facet of kinship which is a crucial African cultural constant and a feature of the African worldview. The war situation caused stern revulsion between people of the then South West Africa, now Namibia and the South African Apartheid government. The people were divided due to their support for either the South African Defence Force (SADF) or the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) also known as the SWAPO Guerrillas. This division among the Namibians promoted revulsion. Those who were in support of the PLAN fighters however still observed kinship and brotherhood. This is evidenced in the support which they rendered to the Guerrillas. In the play, community members do not divulge any information to the 'enemy' regarding the whereabouts of the freedom fighters. A boy is commanded by a Guerrilla in these instructive words “Remember, you have not seen us” (p. 75). The whole community fights together in the spirit of brotherhood to bring the enemy down, by not revealing any information to the Koevoet, although this came with detrimental consequences.

Koevoet tried all avenues to break this kinship. Koevoet attempts to bring confusion in the communities by turning community members against each other and causing them to fight each other. Koevoet would dress in SWAPO outfits to try and retrieve information on the whereabouts of the liberation fighters which they knew they would not get if dressed in

Koevoet uniforms. Koevoet recruited soldiers who were part of the SWAPO insurgency or locals who chose to defect because SADF coerced them (Vale, 2014). In the play, individuals are offered high ranking positions, money and start-up capital to start businesses in exchange of joining Koevoet and when they did, they would turn against a society which they were once a part of exacerbating brutalities and hatred.

When kinship was disregarded, various atrocities occurred in communities. In the play, a man who is a member of Koevoet is reported to have killed his nephew for harbouring PLAN fighters (p. 78). Racial discriminatory words such as “kaffir” and “baboon” (p. 77), are also used toward the black members of society by the Koevoet members. In an extreme case, a husband who has joined Koevoet commands a soldier to kill his own wife and son because they were rumoured to be harbouring the PLAN fighters. In aggravate, the husband and father, who is now a Major in Koevoet, commands; “Kill them, I say kill them both!” (p. 108) referring to his own son and wife. Clearly the hatred had no border, as long as one is supporting the wrong ‘camp’ he/she ought to face the consequences. The atrocities completely destroyed relations by turning Namibians against their own kind and families.

The war situation caused some individuals to seek exile in neighbouring Angola. Williams (2012) asserts that in exile, although some remained in camps, some made their way to other places representing their liberation movement and studying. In frustration due to all the mayhem, a boy expresses to his aunt “I want to leave this place; I want to fight the soldiers. How far is the border?” (p. 89). The boy decides he will go in exile to fight the enemy from there. The journey to the border was however not easy. He dies while trying to cross the border. In tears the boy’s cousin laments “Cousin is dead, he did not reach the home of the comrades” (p. 104). The instability in the country forces individuals to leave the land of their ancestors with the common aim of liberating their motherland however, this too was not without predicaments.

The community was targeted with various forms of despicable violence. A boy narrates the burning down of a clinic to his mother (p. 77) and a mother describes the burning down of granaries and homes and some homes being run down by Capers (p. 79). Violence against the defenceless is depicted in the play. A woman who is suspected of assisting the liberation fighters is at home with her son, the PLAN fighter's footprints were followed into the house. Both mother and son deny any knowledge of the footprints which provokes the Koevoet soldiers into beating the mother and son. The main aim of all these devastations was to intimidate the community members to stop supporting the PLAN insurgents and to completely uproot the strands of kinship which still existed among some of the community members towards the PLAN fighters.

The bodies of those killed by the soldiers were not spared from torture. Vale (2014) accounts that bodies of killed SWAPO had been tied to bumpers of cars and were dragged through Ovamboland for local display. This facet is also evidenced in the play when the son updates a Guerrilla of the recent happenings in the village;

He tied him on the back of his bakkie [pick-up] and drove him dead around the market and told people that was a good example of what would happen to them if they committed a similar crime. (p. 78)

Knowing that a dead body is sacred in African culture, the soldiers employed the abomination of tearing up a dead body instead of allowing the bereaved to use the prescribed mourning rituals. All this callousness was utilised to threaten members of the community to deviate from assisting the PLAN fighters.

The people of Namibia were saved from further atrocities when a cease fire agreement was announced. The public was encouraged to forget about the past and move forward as a new nation (Akawa, 2012). The Major in the play is in a state of shock as just before the cease fire

announcement, he was ordering for the killing of his son and wife who were arrested for harbouring the liberation fighters. Since all amnesty has been lifted, all prisoners of war were to be released. The major cries “uncontrollably” (p. 111). Undoubtedly, the Major is traumatised and regrets his actions during the war which cannot be undone. Although all have to start afresh, the abominable atrocities of war will remain engraved in the minds of all.

In this play, Nyathi paints a clear picture of the severity of the war situation in Namibia. From an African perspective, kinship is valued. Nevertheless, due to atrocities of war, people were turned against each other. By authoring these despicable acts, Nyathi offers an approach of addressing, interrogating and thinking through some of the most difficult challenges encountered by the Namibian society during the liberation struggle.

#### **4. 14 Conclusion**

There are certain issues in society which are not openly discussed, issues which are commonly controversial or issues that are aggressive towards accepted knowledge as depicted in the *oeuvre*. Nyathi, through the *oeuvre* and his artistic vision manages to bring to the fore these veiled and silent societal matters. Nyathi unveils issues which are commonly concealed, mirroring them in the *oeuvre* and reflecting their existence. In so doing, an opportunity is created for society to reflect on its dispositions, allowing imagined alternatives and wide-ranging shades of opinions to be explored. Since literature provides a platform to speak about the “unspeakables” and the “unsayables” (Mlambo & Kandemiri, 2015), through the *oeuvre*, Nyathi manages to author the “unspeakables”, subsequently moralising the public sphere. If these “unsayable” issues are left as such, they will remain obscured rendering them misrepresented, misinterpreted and unrepresented in the Namibian society. How will society re-assess its body of knowledge, accede its limitations and shift away from veiling the unsayable? It was thus the precedence of this study to examine and analyse how the

“unspeakables” are authored in the *oeuvre* due to the social commitment of the author to moralise the public sphere.

According to Lara (1999), narratives are filtered through the public sphere where actors create fragile and falsifiable agreements about what needs to be done in the social world. Nyathi embarks on the quest of moralising the public sphere thus, Maria Pia Lara’s notion of the illocutionary theory is one of the best lens through which the *oeuvre* should be viewed. The other theory of equal magnitude through which the *oeuvre* should be analysed is the African overview theory. The texts of the *oeuvre* are set in Africa and all depict the African day-to-day view of life and phenomena. Also, because the *oeuvre* depicts that literature and nature share a close relationship, it renders ecocriticism to be the appropriate supporting theory.

From Nyathi’s *oeuvre*, one senses the earnest need not only to inform and uncover taboos, but to moralise society in the process. This responsibility is plainly observable. Nyathi’s work, while emanating essentially from a Silozi background, assumes this responsibility and transcends the country Namibia to the African continent at large, since at the centre of the *oeuvre* is the African social, traditional and cultural ethos. Thus, an exploration of African cultural themes such as the spiritual vision, superstition, witchcraft, polygamy and the patriarchal treatment of women have been expressed through the cultural forms of fiction.

This chapter analysed how Nyathi authors the “unspeakables” in the *oeuvre*, subsequently moralising the public sphere in the texts; *The other presence*, *God of Women*, *The oracle of Cidino*, *Tears of fears in the era of terror* and *Ballads of insomnia*. Each of Nyathi’s text deals with an overarching ‘silence’ in society. The “unspeakables” were extracted from the varied genres of the *oeuvre* and Nyathi appeals to the readers in various ways through the artistic visions created via various literary devices such as imagery.

The results of the study were also presented in this chapter by examining how Nyathi prominently incorporates imagery of visualising, foreshadowing and figurative language to bring to the fore the “unspeakables”. The results also reveal the strong African belief in the spiritual world and superstition such about unfortunate events not occurring naturally. Death especially is not viewed as mortality itself but it is portrayed to happen due to a spiritual mischief by somebody. A close relationship between the physical environment and the spiritual world is also revealed, whereby spiritual phenomena are communicated through the natural environment. Lastly, the results show that the liberation struggle in Namibia disrupted the African constant of kinship because people from the same society and at times from the same family were turned against each other due to the atrocities of war, those who were lured to join Koevoet did not see eye to eye with those who were members of the PLAN army and who supported the PLAN army. There is need to voice the realities of the various “unspeakables” in society, so as to bridge the gap between literature and social reality, which Nyathi accomplished through a variety of artistic visions. The final chapter will provide the conclusions and recommendations, as well as the indication of how the study has contributed to the body of knowledge.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study that was conducted to analyse the authoring of “unspeakables” and the moralising of the public sphere and to examine the social commitment and the artistic vision in Sifiso Nyathi’s *oeuvre*. The study developed due to the observation that there are certain controversial issues or issues that are aggressive toward accepted knowledge in our society. Since modernity provides a way of dealing with these taboos (Oosrsterling, 1999), Nyathi’s literature is one of the potential and subtle sites for achieving some major temporal realities hence a transformed line of thinking and a fresh way of looking at matters which are seen as taboo. The study was conducted by examining the “unspeakables” presented in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*, seeking to analyse Nyathi’s social commitment to society in the quest to moralise the public sphere. This, the author does, by unearthing the “unspeakable” subjects, therefore allowing imagined alternatives and wide-ranging shades of opinion to be explored, as opposed to concealing taboos rendering them unrepresented and misinterpreted.

Since taboos vary from society to society. This study sought to elucidate the “unspeakables” in a typical African society. Each of Nyathi’s text deals with an overarching silence in society and all texts depict the African day to day view of life and phenomena, revealing the characters beliefs and interpretation of the world around them. The study therefore intended to bring to the fore the “unspeakables” as presented in the various genres of Nyathi’s *oeuvre* which is comprised of: three plays *God of women*, *The oracle of Cidino* and *Tears of fears in the era of terror*, a novel; *The other presence* and an anthropology of poems; *Ballads of insomnia*.

The major objectives of the study were to critically analyse the presentation of the various “unspeakables” in Nyathi’s *oeuvre*; to examine how the public sphere is moralised through the articulation of the “unspeakables” and to explore how the various artistic visions are employed in the three different genres of Nyathi’s *oeuvre* to bring to the fore the “unspeakables”. The study employed two main theories; Maria Pia Lara’s notion of the illocutionary approach and the African worldview theory, with ecocriticism as the supporting theory.

## **5.2 Conclusion and findings**

The conclusions and findings of this study are presented in this section. There are certain issues in society which are not openly discussed, issues which are commonly controversial or issues that are aggressive towards accepted knowledge. Nyathi, through the *oeuvre* creatively brings to the fore these taboos in the quest to moralise the public sphere. The aspect of moralising the public sphere cannot be divorced from Nyathi’s *oeuvre* because the *oeuvre* addresses and interrogates some of the most difficult and complex societal issues therefore creating a platform which allows imagined alternatives and wide-ranging shades of opinion to be explored as well as a transformed line of thinking and a fresh way of looking at matters which are seen as taboo. Hence, reminding the reader that the author’s multiple roles cannot be dismissed.

The study revealed that Nyathi’s artistic vision is engrossed in day-to-day life matters in the life of a typical African community. In unveiling the “unspeakables”, the author creates his artistic vision through various literary devices such as visuals through light or lack thereof. Dim light is commonly used in the plays to reinforce mainly the sombre mood at the end of the tragic plays. Figurative language as well as fore shadowing is also incorporated by the

author to add effect while unearthing the taboos in the plays. All these literary devices were all effectively incorporated in the *oeuvre* to appeal to the readers in various ways.

Nyathi's pre-occupation with a myriad of unspeakable issues is apparent in the *oeuvre*. The study reveals that Africans are highly spiritual, superstitious and their belief in another presence is undisputable. Death especially is feared and cannot just happen naturally. Society avoids knowing true facts about it and leans towards superstition. Akapelwa in *The other presence* dies of HIV/AIDS related illnesses however society chooses to blame it on a kind of spiritual mischief by elder Sinvula. The results also indicate that there is great veneration for ancestors. The presence of ancestors is acknowledged in the characters' tendencies of offering the first taste of a traditional brew to the ancestors by pouring some of the brew to the ground. When characters do not appease the ancestral spirits, the ancestral spirits wrath is detrimental. Due to the close relationship revealed between the environment and the spiritual world, the ancestral wrath is portrayed to be communicated through the physical environment such as strange animal behaviour. Certain animals such as owls, cats and snakes are depicted to represent bad omens. A spell of blindness is cast on the king in *The other presence* for failing to appease the ancestors and for allowing the destruction of the graves of the ancestors to expand a town. The study reveals that the presence of a spiritual world is feared such that anyone suspected of the 'activities of the night' is ostracised by the community.

Apart from that, when characters are faced with spiritually related troubles, they sought assistance from witchdoctors and seers. Witchdoctors are presented as able to foretell the future. King Lewanika in *God of women* is prophesied by the seer to share a wife with his son. This eventually ensued when a son whom he did not know impregnates his youngest wife. Also, in *The other presence*, Ma Inonge plans to visit witchdoctors after Akapelwa's

burial to find out who is responsible for his death. Nyathi manages to creatively present this dreaded leitmotif allowing extensive outlooks to be explored.

The results reveal that homosexuality is portrayed as unnatural and un-African. The homosexual relationship between Peggy and Thelma is disapproved by fellow characters terming it as unnatural. To justify this disapproval, the characters exemplify using animals to prove that the behaviour is not natural. The king in *The oracle of Cidino* alludes to crocodiles and crabs, indicating that even if they live in muddy waters, they are able to identify their other mate, unlike Peggy and Thelma who are clearly blind to see the unnaturalness of their homosexual relationship. The homosexual behaviour being portrayed as un-African is revealed when John in *God of women* confirms that in America, where he had gone for studies, homosexual behaviour is acceptable. Thelma finds it outrageous because the conduct is unheard of in the society in which she lives. A stage is set by the author to openly scrutinise the theme, hence educating the public sphere.

A patriarchal treatment of women is also bared in the *oeuvre*. The practice of polygamy is portrayed to depict women as properties of their husband. Since the man is the provider for his many wives and children, this assigns power to the men over the wives. King Lewanika in *God of women* is abusive of his wives and boasts about providing land and feeding them. He is on several occasions reported to abuse his wives both verbally and physically by hurling insults at them and beating them. Furthermore, the practice of lobola depicts women as objects of their fathers and husbands. The king in *The oracle of Cidino* is presented to have surrendered his daughter in exchange of twenty-fold cattle. The daughter is hence depicted as a possession which the king is ready to sell to a family for twenty-fold cattle. This practice paints a picture of a transaction in which the oppressive practice commodifies women and

compels them to endure any suffering at the hands of their husbands because they were ‘bought’ from their fathers and now belong to their husbands.

The study further depicts men as superior in society compared to their female counterparts. This is evidenced in the way women are expected to conduct themselves when their male counterparts are present. In *God of women* for example, the king’s eldest wife is forbidden from sitting on a chair around the king as his friend because it would place her at the same height as the men hence she had to sit on the floor. Also, women are frequently reminded that their place is in the kitchen and are excluded from major decisions. Negotiations of for example lobola and marriage arrangements are left solely to men, women and their daughters are only informed of the outcome. This demotes women to the level of children and therefore excludes them from major decisions.

The results of the study further expose the white-collar prophets. A Reverend in *The other presence* is depicted to be an epitome of fake pastors and prophets. The reverend employs various strategies to extract money from the mourners. The white-collar prophet is depicted to equate the gospel of giving in terms of seeding and sowing. This, the Reverend does by convincing his audience that God only listens to prayers of those give offerings. The study reveals that the gospel of white-collar prophets overemphasises the message of prosperity at the detriment of spiritual matter.

Lastly, the “unspeakables” of war are also revealed in the study. The *oeuvre* vividly portrays the subject of war in the play *Tears of fear in the era of terror*. A revered constant of kinship, which is a crucial feature of the African worldview is disregarded. The liberation struggle saw community members turning against each other due to the war situation. The people

were divided due to their support for either Koevoet or the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). Various despicable atrocities were experienced by the citizens at the hands of Koevoet. In the quest to uproot the remaining strands of kinship which existed among some of the community members towards the PLAN fighters, the Koevoet soldier exacerbated the atrocities to the dead bodies of the of the PLAN soldiers. Bodies of plan soldiers were tied to bumpers of cars and were dragged for local display. This, the study reveals, was done to intimidate the community members who offered assistance in any way to the PLAN soldiers.

Evidently, in Nyathi's mission to moralise the public sphere, various artistic visions are incorporated. Texts are very rich in historical and cultural manifestations, which the reader can relate to. The *oeuvre* is also set in familiar everyday life and is characterised by recognisable people, unfolding in everyday logic of cause and effect, making it possible for the reader to relate and the author to achieve the purpose of moralising the public sphere through the authoring of "unspeakables".

### **5.3 Contribution to knowledge**

The researcher noticed that there are certain issues in society which are not openly discussed, issues which are commonly controversial or issues that are aggressive towards accepted knowledge. The study unveils these issues which are commonly masked, representing them and reflecting their existence. In so doing, an opportunity is created for society to reflect on its dispositions, allowing imagined alternatives and wide-ranging shades of opinions to be explored. The study serves as a stage to openly interrogate issues which are viewed as taboo, unsayable and commonly concealed therefore offering a platform to further interrogate the notion of "unspeakables" in various societies. Secondly, the study offers renewed insights

into Nyathi's works and African literature in general. The unique approach of blending different genres of literature; plays, a novel and poetry bring novelty to Nyathi's work. The new insight adds to the body of existing literature by going beyond isolated texts of a single author (Nyathi), offering an analysis of the whole *oeuvre* therefore using a critical angle which has not been investigated before. The study maintains that, Nyathi's work has a purpose, which is a responsibility towards society as it is noticeable from the unspeakable themes presented in the *oeuvre* that Nyathi's literature is not 'art for art's sake' but the author endeavours to unveil what concerns of society which are subdued therefore moralising society. It might be that certain uncomprehensive "despicable" in society transpire due to lack of acquaintance with certain subdued phenomenon.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

The study revealed various "unspeakables" presented in Nyathi's *oeuvre* which society shies away from deliberating. It brings out Nyathi's social commitment to unearth these "unspeakables" in the quest of moralising the public sphere. Given the above, the author deems it imperative to interrogate the "unspeakables" further. Hence, further research in the following areas is recommended:

- To analyse how other Namibian writers have portrayed the same "unspeakables" in their different genres of literature
- Analyse how other writers have portrayed other "unspeakables" not represented in Nyathi's *oeuvre*
- To analyse how other Namibian writers socially commit themselves in the quest of moralising the public sphere
- Examine how other authors employ various artistic visions to moralise the public sphere

- Compare the representation of “unspeakables” by non-African writers in non-African societies with “unspeakables” authored by African writers in African societies
- Lastly, further research on “unspeakables” in different genres of African literature to explore the extent of similarities or differences in “unspeakables” in other African societies

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