SEXUALITY IN FICTION: EXPLORING THE LITERARY PORTRAYAL OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUEER AND INTERSEX (LGBTQI) CHARACTERS IN SELECTED AFRICAN TEXTS: *SPEAK NO EVIL*, *THE INTERPRETERS*, *FAIRY TALES FOR LOST CHILDREN*, *I AM A HOMOSEXUAL MUM*, *THE HAIRDRESSER OF HARARE* AND *THE ORACLE OF CIDINO*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the literary portrayal of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) characters in selected African texts. The study is based on the following literary works: *Speak no Evil* by Uzondinma Iweala, *The interpreters* by Wole Soyinka, *Fairy tales for Lost Children* by Diriye Osman, *I am a Homosexual, Mum* by Binyavanga Wainaina, *The Hairdresser of Harare* by Tendai Huchu, and *The Oracle of Cidino* by Sifiso Nyathi. The focus of this study was to examine how LGBTQI characters are depicted in the selected literary works as well as explore the sociocultural challenges experienced by LGBTQI people. This is a qualitative, desktop study that focused on six African literary texts which were purposively selected and analysed. Queer theory was used to analyse the literary works. In literary context Queer theory focuses on eradicating the binary oppositions and stereotypes of sexuality and gender within a body of text as well as to break down the use of categories and labels that stereotype and harm those who are in marginalised positions such as the LGBTQI people.

The findings of this study reveal that, although literature from different scholars has painted Africa as a homophobic block, this study realises that African people have varying views towards the concept of LGBTQI. Some react with revulsion, vigilantism, extortion, blackmail, hostility and negative stereotypical behaviour, while others react with a sense of empathy, pity, understanding and support. Nonetheless, it is clear that negative reaction amongst others overpowers positivity. This study has also noted with concern that there is no successful story about coming out of the closet, all literary works under study paint the concept of coming out as a devastating and regrettable choice by those who opted for it. Although they have plenty of survival and coping strategies, LGBTQI people are faced with several social challenges and therefore live a burdened life full of pretentiousness in order to fit the 'norm'. The study recommends universities to consider teaching queer inclusive literature in their courses to enhance understanding regarding LGBTQI matters. Finally, researchers should consider engaging in social justice research, as this may help to sensitise the public on the danger of homophobia.

Key words: homosexuality, heteronormativity, homophobia, sexuality, LGBTQI

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to all LGBTQI people and to any other person who

feels marginalised because of her or his sexual practices, or who resists the

heteronormative sex/gender/sexual identity system.

DECLARATION

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1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study. Firstly, the chapter provides a contextual background of the study, followed by a presentation of the problem statement of the study. The research objectives on which the study is aligned as well as the significance of the study are also outlined. The chapter also explains the limitations and delimitations of the study. In other words, the chapter orients the study by providing its preface.

1.1 Background of the study

This study is an exploration of the literary portrayal of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) characters in the literary works, *Speak no Evil* by Uzodinma Iweala, *The Interpreters* by Wole Soyinka, *Fairy tales for Lost Children* by Diriye Osman, *I am a Homosexual, Mum* by Binyavanga Wainaina, *The Hairdresser of Harare* by Tendai Huchu and *The Oracle of Cidino* by Sifiso Nyathi. Since Namibia's independence in 1990, there has been various campaigns from women's rights, LGBTQI, and other marginalised groups (Nthunya, 2018). Nthunya (2018) further notes that, while women's rights groups have been more successful in fighting for inclusion and recognition, this has not been the case for LGBTQI groups; there has instead been an attempt to delegitimise these groups both in Namibia and in other African countries.

There is a proliferation in research of gender issues and sexuality diversity in Africa and Namibia in particular (Ifeoma, 2015; Shigwedha, 2018; Tshivoro, 2018). Some of the Namibian fiction writers such as Andreas (2001) in her literary work *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* and Nyathi (2003) in his literary work *The Oracle of Cidino* have

foregrounded or partially alluded to the themes of gender and sexuality in their literary works. In addition, published academic studies as well as contemporary discussions on LGBTQI matters have proven that LGBTQI people exist and have been existing from time immemorial, even in Namibia. The references below explore some of the known same sex practices in some African countries including Namibia.

According to Murray, Roscoe, Epprecht (1998) historians, anthropologists, and many contemporary Africans alike have denied or overlooked African same-sex patterns or claimed that homosexuality was introduced by Europeans or Arabs, however evidence has it that same-sex love and non-binary genders were and are widespread in Africa. For instance, Murray *at al*., (1998) in their book *Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexuality* have documented the presence of a diversity of sexualities in some parts of Africa. Ambrogetty (1900, as cited in Murray, Roscoe & Epprecht, 1998) reported age-based homosexual relations around the Horn of Africa between the Eritrean men and what he called *diavoletti* (little devils). According to Murray *et al*., (1998) these relationships are said to exist openly and tolerated by boy's fathers, since it was a source of income. Equally, Bieber (1910, as cited in Murray, Roscoe & Epprecht, 1998) also recorded homosexuality known as *Uranism* amongst the Islamic Harari Semitic-speaking agriculturalists near Ethiopian city of Harar (Harer), as well as amongst shepherd boys of the Cushitic-speaking Quemant (Kemant) of central Ethiopia.

Moreover, LGBTQI traces were recorded amongst the Otoro, Moro and Tira, as well as the Nubian Nyima of Northern Sudan and by Sigfried Nadel. Nadel (1955), as cited in Murray *at al*., (1998) noted that there were males who dressed and lived like women; as well as men who married other men. Similarly, in the Coastal East Africa Gill Sheperd reported traces of same sex patterns that dated to the 19th century amongst the

Swahili speaking people on the Kenyan coast as well as in the Mombasa and Zanzibar. While, amongst the Comorian community (from Comoros Island) Sigfried Nadel reported instances of homosexuality which is largely a matter of prostitution where by the Mombasa's *mashoga* [shoga] are passive male homosexuals offering their persons for money (Nadel,1955, as cited in Murray *at al*., 1998).

Other instances of same sex sexuality in Africa were also recorded in the 20th century in Sudanic, West Africa. According to Murray *at al*., (1998) relationships organised by both genders and age were observed in Mossi (Moose) royal court in what is now Burkina Faso. In these relationships, *Sorones* or pages were chosen from among the handsome boys aged 7 to 15 years old. They dressed as women and assumed other feminine attributes including women's sexual roles with the chief especially on Fridays, when sexual intercourse with women was prohibited (Tauxier, 1912, as cited in Murray *at al*., 1998). Same sex sexualities were also recorded by Tauxier in Senegal in the 1890's, whereby black men with feminine dress and demeanour made their living from prostitution.

The German anthropologist Kurt Falk also documented same sex sexualities among the natives of South West Africa (today know as Namibia) around the years of 1925-1926 (Murray *et al*., 1998). According to Murray *et al*., (1998) amongst the people of the Ovambo tribe, same sex relationships were practiced by the Ovambo men who worked in the diamond fields at Luideritzbucht. The Ovashengi (sing.: eshengi) effeminate men who submit to passive *coitus in anum* for income, would go about in women's clothes and bedeck themselves with female jewellery and try to arouse the attention of men through flirting (Murray *et al*., 1998). Similarly, same sex relations known as *koetsire* and *soregus* were also recorded the 18th century amongst the Khoikhoi people, amongst the Herero known as *oupanga* as well as amongst the

Ovahimba people of Namibia (Murray *et al*., 1998). The above examples speak for the existence of same sex sexualities in Africa.

According to Mathews, Clemons and Avery (2017) in some African countries, LGBTQI people are subjected to abuse and harassment based on their sexual orientation. For instance, Rice (2011), as cited in Mathews, Clemons and Avery (2017), notes that in Uganda, the names of 100 'suspected homosexuals' were published in a national newspaper in 2011, with the tagline 'Hang them'. Just two months later, a prominent LGBT activist was found murdered in his home. In Senegal, it was reported that bodies of suspected gay men have been dug up and dumped at the front door of their family homes (Associated Press, 2010). Furthermore, in 2010 in Malawi, the police arrested and imprisoned two gay men who held a private engagement ceremony symbolising their commitment to one another (Bearak, 2010). Similarly, in Namibia, Mr Gay Namibia Wendelinus Hamutenya was assaulted by a mob, after his return from South Africa where he had been crowned the winner of Mr Gay Namibia (Mpuka, 2017). According to Mpuka (2017) Mr Hamutenya sought to press charges against his assailants at Wanaheda Police Station in Katutura, however it was noted later that his dockets had vanished from the police station and the police officers could not do anything as far as his case was concerned. This demonstrates some of the socio-political challenges that LGBTQI people experience in their everyday lives, hence the topic of LGBTQI needs interrogation.

In the present-day Namibia, LGBTQI people still continue to battle for their rights and recognition through different organisations (LaFont & Hubbard, 2015; Currier, 201; Currier, 2012). The article *Namibia's compliance with the UN convention against torture: LGBTI rights* (2016) has documented some of the LGBTQI organisations in Namibia that fight for the rights of recognition for the LGBTQI people. Among others

is the 'Namibian Rainbow Project' which is aimed at removing negative stereotypes in the community and it was formed in response to what was seen as SWAPO's political homophobia, LGBTQI advocacy group 'OutRight Namibia' which was formed in 2010 to act as a voice for LGBTQI people in Namibia, 'Mpower Community Trust' which provides awareness of sexual health to Gay and Bisexual men, 'The Namibian Gay and Lesbian movement' which provides counselling and advice to LGBT people and organise educational programs to raise awareness of LGBTQI Namibians, and 'Wings to Transcend Namibia' which is an organisation for the transgender people (*Namibia's compliance with the UN convention against torture: LGBTI rights*, 2016; *OutRight Namibia*, 2017; Currier, 2010).

These different organisations were established in order to fight for the protection, rights and recognition of the LGBTQI people in Namibia.

According to Obasola (2013) the discussions surrounding the topic of LGBTQI in Africa has been viewed and received with mixed feelings, tension and vilification. Homophobia, which is the fear or dislike of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex people, has been the main challenge in contemporary Africa (De Souza, 2016). A number of African leaders has characterised the concept of LGBTQI as un-African and that it represents a foreign threat and negates all the precious ethics of typical African people (Iitula 2018, p.32). For example, the Namibian Founding President, Dr Sam Nujoma, at a rally of the ruling SWAPO party in 2011, declared that the Republic of Namibia did not allow homosexuality or lesbianism. "Lesbian and homosexualism, those we condemn and reject them. In Namibia, there will be no lesbian, no homosexualism" (Journeyman Picture, 2015). Police were ordered to arrest, deport and imprison anyone engaging in such acts, (Iitula 2018, p.32). Also, in 2005, on Heroes Day, Namibia Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration,

Theopolina Mushelenga, gave a speech blaming gays for the HIV/AIDS pandemic (LaFont & Hubbard, 2015).

Similarly, the late President, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, compared homosexuality to bestiality and claimed "If dogs and pigs know their mates can human beings remain human beings if they do worse than pigs" (AP Archives, 1995). President Mugabe further argued that "If we accept homosexuality as a right as it is being argued by the Associations of Sodomites and Sexual Perverts, what moral fibre shall our society ever have to deny organised drug addicts or even those given to bestiality the rights they might claim under the rubrics of individual freedom and human rights (AP Archives, 1995)?"

Moreover, in response to Barack Obama's call for African states to abandon anti-gay discrimination, the Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta publicly disagreed with Obama and opinionated that "The fact of the matter is Kenya and the United States share so many values, but, there are some things that we must admit we don't share; our culture, our society don't accept. It is very difficult for us to be able to impose on people that which they themselves do not accept. This issue is not really an issue that is on the foremost mind of Kenyans (The Guardian, 09 Sep. 2015)".

On the same note, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda also had similar opinions as other African presidents. Speaking at Rwanda Cultural Day convened in San Francisco, California, president Kagame was asked about the possibility of living in Rwanda as LGBT and his response was similar to that of President Kenyatta: "LGBT (homosexuality) hasn't been our problem; And we don't intend to make it a problem." (Kigali Today, 2016). In his speech Kagame further emphasised that Rwanda was

struggling with all kinds of problems that demanded collective efforts, however sexual orientation was a private matter, not a state business (Kigali Today, 2016).

The then Zambian president, Edgar Lungu also shared a similar view with other African leaders on his stance on homosexuality in an exclusive interview with Alex Crawford about the US ambassador's remark on a gay couple who had been imprisoned in Lusaka, Zambia:

> We are saying no to homosexuality, why should you say we are going to be civilised when we allow it? Are you saying we are primitive now that we are frowning upon homosexuality? Even animals don't do it, why should we be forced to do it so that we want to be seen to be smart, to be civilised and advanced and so forth? They (homosexuals) need help, for me I think they are sick, that it how I see it, but they need help, going to jail could be one thing but they require help…A pardon could be considered but not in the manner that the ambassador is coming out, insulting the collective wisdom of the Zambian people… (Sky News, 2019).

In 2014, the Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan signed the *Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act* that made it illegal for gay people to hold meetings and also criminalised homosexual clubs, associations and organisations, with penalties of up to 14 years in jail (Alamba, 2014). In *The Guardian* (9 September 2015) it was noted that the said Act had drawn international condemnation from United states, Canada and Britain, with the British government threatening to cut aid to African countries that violate the rights of gay and lesbian citizens. The Nigerian president spokesperson Reuben Abati emphasised that: "This is a law that is in line with the people's cultural and religious inclination; and Nigerians are pleased with it" (Alamba, 2014). Other

African leaders also responded equally to the issue, for instance President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda signed the *Anti-Homosexuality* bill in 2009, president Yahya Jammeh of Gambia called for the "throats of homosexuals to be slit" (The Guardian, 09 September 2015), while president Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi declared that homosexuality is against Malawian and African culture (Chinoko, 2012). According to Mwikya (2014) in Uganda, as in Nigeria and Kenya, African culture and African morals as well as religious beliefs are used to justify broad and sweeping legislation and continued criminalisation of LGBTQI people.

From time to time, the political rhetoric has been accompanied by statements made by religious institutions. For instance, in 1998 the Christian Ecumenical Fellowship of Gobabis which represents several churches of various denominations submitted a statement formally rejecting gay rights. A portion of it read: "Not only is homosexuality un-biblical, it is also in direct opposition to our Namibian culture, indeed all cultures represented in our society. We fail to see why Namibia should be intimidated into accepting it as part of democracy" (La Font and Hubbard, 2003).

These African political and church leaders have not only deployed their power to pass homophobic laws against LGBTQI people, but through their denigrating and dehumanising rhetoric have created a climate of intolerance towards the LGBTQI individuals (LaFont, 2015). The African leaders' argument of rejecting same-sex sexuality is based on the argument that the African way of life rejects completely the notion of non-heteronormative relationships, sexual expression and non-binary gender identity (Mwikya, 2014). This study therefore, is an attempt to re/vision and redirect the societal thinking towards the LGBTQI community.

In his study, Mufune (2012) explored the legal status of sodomy laws in three African countries namely South Africa, Zambia, and Namibia from a human rights perspective. Mufune (2012)'s argument is that sodomy laws violate a number of international human rights, most notably the right to equality or non-discrimination and right to privacy.

Mufune (2012) further noted that although many African countries subscribe to various international human rights instruments, it is evident that sodomy laws have never been abolished and are still in effect in almost all of the common law countries in Africa. For instance, Namibia and Zambia are all committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; however, Zambia, a former British colony, still criminalises consensual same sex activity under the law it inherited from Britain (Jordans, 2012). Furthermore, Jordans (2012) declares that Namibia still criminalises consensual same sex conduct under Roman-Dutch common law inherited from South Africa. Ironically, both England and South Africa have done away with these laws (Jordans, 2012). While according to La Font and Hubbard (2003), in 2014, thirty-six (36) African countries criminalised same-sex sexual acts, mainly through sodomy laws that were introduced during British colonial rule and survived independence. Similarly, Izugbara *at al*. (2020) also noted that homosexual activity among men attracts the death penalty in Sudan, Mauritania, Somali, and parts of northern Nigeria; life imprisonment in Uganda, Tanzania, and Sierra Leone; and long jail terms in Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, and Gambia. In Nigeria, heterosexual family members, allies, and friends who support or aid gay and lesbian men and women risk a 10-year jail sentence. In his article '*UN Gay Rights Protection Resolution Passes, Hailed as Historic Moment*', Jordans (2012) noted that unlike some African countries that criminalised homosexuality, South Africa repealed the common law criminalising

sodomy, thereby making the first step towards the decriminalisation of homosexuality and towards recognising sexual orientation as a right in South Africa.

According to Schafer and Range (2014) in 1997, the South African new constitution in its equality clause (*Article 9* of the South African constitution) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. However, Schafer and Range (2014) further notes that even in South Africa where the legalisation of homosexuality and the development of equality legislation is emphasised, LGBTI people are not necessarily socially accepted by all. Therefore, the higher visibility of LGBTI people often generates more violence against them (Schafer & Range, 2014). Cases of corrective rape, where a woman who is perceived as being a lesbian, is raped, in order to change her sexual orientation, are still visible in South Africa (Middleton 2011; Smith 2011). It is therefore pertinent that the topic of LGBTQI is explored in order to sensitise and educate people on the different types of sexualities. This study thus interrogates the duality of heteronormativity as the only existing sexuality as expressed by some scholars and bring to light alternative sexualities (LGBTQI) through the lens of Queer theory.

In his study on 'Gender norms, LGBTQI issues and development' Browne (2019) notes that norm change toward LGBTQI people has been observed in recent years, especially in the area of promoting an LGBTQI-inclusive approach. Browne (2019) emphasises that norm change has largely been the result of long-term and increasingly visible and vibrant activist engagement, drawing on strategies such as media coverage, peer interventions, ally-building and institutional training. Nevertheless, Currier (2012) emphasises that the climate of opinion fostered by the different governments through various African leaders means that everyday discrimination and violent assaults on LGBTQI people continue. Equally, according to a report on "Data

collection and reporting on violence perpetrated against LGBTQI persons in Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa and Uganda" (2019) the public expressions by political leaders can be understood as fuelling an environment of hostility towards LGBTI(QI) people.

According to Mulaudzi (2018), Africa as a continent generally continues to have slow or stagnant development when it comes to the recognition of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. With this slow development, there is also a continuous pushback from African leaders, politicians and parts of society (Mulaudzi, 2018). In Mulaudzi's view the attitudes of African leaders are reflective of the feelings of a number of individuals in the African society. These attitudes have now become formed and resulted in an increased belief that "homosexuality is un-African rhetoric" that has made its way into the minds and belief systems of communities – a dangerous rhetoric that gives a voice to homophobia.

1.2 Statement of the problem

According to Lompang (2014) the concept of LGBQTI in African literature is not a new phenomenon. The issue has become a topical one across the countries of the world and is gradually asserting itself in the literary terrain as visible in these studies; (Wickens, 2014; Pucherova, 2014; Ncube, 2016; Lompang, 2014; Hawley 2017); hence, it deserves interrogation. Hitherto, Namibian literary studies have kept the subject of LGBTQI to the periphery. For instance, in Namibian literary studies and fiction, attention has been given to social issues such as gender roles, gender-based violence, masculinities and patriarchal violence and the subjugation of women (Mwetulundila, 2019; Iitula, 2019; Nashongo, 2019, Andreas, 2011; Namhila, 1997). While this study acknowledges such efforts, the vast majority of scholarship privileges the concept of heteronormativity. Some studies in Namibia such as that by (Lukolo &

van Dyk, 2015; Brown, Sorrell, & Raffaelli, 2005; Mufune, 2003) have shown little interest in LGBTQI matters; and some that examined sexuality, have not explored it from the literary perspective, nor did they employ Queer theory in their analysis. This study therefore realises a gap in these areas and has also noted that Queer theory can be a tool to unravel sexuality differences and imposition of LGBTQI groups by the heterosexual majority. Literature is a product of the society and fiction writers reflect on what is happening in their society as they craft the themes for their literary works. This is to say; fiction writers use literary forms of communication as a means to communicate the unspeakable and to accord agency and audible voice to those oppressed by the norm such as the LGBTQI people.

A Namibian writer Sifiso Nyathi (2003) in the play *The Oracle of Cidino* makes slight hints on the theme of lesbianism but however, avoids the usage of the term lesbianism or homosexuality. Nyathi (2003) through the characters rather alludes to the act of lesbianism through character actions. This has prompted the need to investigate this critical concern in this study. According to Tamale (2011) considering that sexuality is an intensely complex phenomenon, studies around it must be exacting to reflect its nuances, and its contextual and multi-layered nature. Tamale (2011) further states that since the topic of sexualities is often enveloped in silence, taboos and privacies, researchers need to inculcate specific techniques and methods to reveal invisible, silenced and repressed knowledge, as employed by Nyathi (2003) in his play *The Oracle of Cidino*. Tamale therefore advises that since in Africa many acts associated with sexualities are criminalised or highly stigmatised, analysts and researchers need to tread the territory with care and sensitivity. This study therefore explores the literary representation of LGBTQI characters as portrayed in selected African literary works:

Speak no Evil, *The Interpreters*, *Fairy tales for Lost Children*, *I am a Homosexual, Mum*, *The Hairdresser of Harare* and *The Oracle of Cidino*.

Once more, African fiction under study demonstrate that naked hostility towards the LGBTQI people remains prevalent in Africa, and deliberate sustained stigmatisation and prejudice are evident realities for the majority of African LGBTQI people. According to Matebeni (2018) African sexualities are dynamic, multifaceted, and resilient, however, people with non-heterosexual sexualities and gender variant identities are frequently involved in struggles for survival, self-definition, and erotic rights. Queer African literature serves as a starting point for understanding the vulnerabilities of Queer Africans as they are shaped by social, cultural, and political processes, with the aim of providing innovative solutions to their day-to-day challenges.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

1.3.1 To examine the portrayal of LGBTQI characters as depicted in the literary work *Speak no Evil*, *The Interpreters*, *Fairy tales for Lost Children*, *I am a Homosexual, Mum*, *The Hairdresser of Harare* and *The Oracle of Cidino,*

1.3.2 To explore sociocultural challenges that LGBTQI people may be experiencing in their day- to-day lives as evinced in the selected novels.

1.3.3 To examine cultural views and understanding of the characters in the literary work towards the LGBTQI community as re/presented in the literary works *Speak no Evil*, *The Interpreters*, *Fairy tales for Lost Children*, *I'm a Homosexual, Mum*, *The Hairdresser of Harare* and *The Oracle of Cidino*

1.3.4 To explore the evolution of the representation of LGBTQI themes in African literature

1.4 Significance of the study

While the issue of LGBTQI has gained momentum for a while in the Western world, there has been a paucity of literature in the social and political discourse in Africa at the onset, resulting in lack of historical records on African sexuality. Ifeoma (2015) observes that, one of the difficulties in carrying out a study of LGBTQI in African literature is the total absence of investigations of the African historical record by practitioners of the emerging discipline of sexuality studies. Moreover, Norton (2005), as cited in Ifeoma, (2015) adds that the scarcity of such works could easily be attributed to the suppression, scarcity or non-existence of documented history of the phenomenon in Africa and this poses a great challenge to scholars who might wish to explore the theme, relevance and depictions of LGBTQI in African literature. Hence the need to carry out this study in order to contribute to knowledge in the area of LGBTQI matters. The study adds to the corpus of knowledge on the aspect of LGBTQI, which is crucial yet peripherally hinted at both in Namibian literary studies and African fictional imageries. The study may further help researchers to appreciate various topical issues in African fictions as well as help develop an appreciation of the pleasures and frustrations of social research. Finally, researchers may tap knowledge from this study as it attempts to mitigate the present social debate regarding the understanding of LGBTQI people and homosexuality as a practice.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Limitations are intended to recognise potential weaknesses of the study. Research strategies and procedures have got their limitations. Firstly, the qualitative approach used in this study sets a limitation to this study, as it could not allow the researcher to

focus on numerical figures and statistics. More could be done if the quantitative or mixed method approach could have been used in this study. However, due to the nature of the topic of this study, the qualitative approach was deemed fit for this type of literary study. Secondly, there were limited literary texts and literary research done on the area of LGBTQI in Namibia. This in itself acts as a limitation especially for the researchers who have interest to conduct research in such an area, as there is a scarcity of literature to rely on. Finally, the Queer theory used in this study, could be a limitation on its own as it is Eurocentric, however used to examine social issues from the African point of view.

1.6 Delimitation

Delimitation is intended to reduce and narrow the scope of the study. There is a variety of fiction stories from different continents that address the topic of LGBTQI, but the fact that this study only focused on African literary works delimits this study. Moreover, this study was restricted to the theoretical framework of "Queer theory'', and to the exploration of the theme LGBTQI only. For the purposes of narrowing the scope of the study, this research did not explore other African fiction; but was rather restricted to the six African literary works namely: *Speak no Evil* by Uzondinma Iweala, *The Interpreter* by Wole Soyinka, *Fairy tales for lost children* by Diriye Osman, *I am a Homosexual, Mum* by Binyavanga Wainaina, *The Hairdresser of Harare* by Tendai Huchu and *The Oracle of Cidino* by Sifiso Nyathi. As such, generalising the findings to global audience may be challenging as the six literary works are only a representation of many different fiction stories which may possess their unique narrative features and styles. This study only focused on the thematic areas as outlined by the objectives of the study, and the fact that not all themes related to the topic of LGBTQI could be studied in depth in the present study, delimits this study.

These delimitations thus restricted the researcher from exploring any other equally critical thematic areas around the topic of LGBTQI, however, it allowed the researcher to carry out an in-depth exploration of the selected themes in the selected fiction stories.

1.7 Methodology

This section presents the method that was used to conduct this research and also presents the chapter outline of the study. Creswell (2009) notes that "research methods involve the forms of data collection, analysis and interpretation that the researcher employs in their study" (p. 233). This chapter therefore provides an overview of research methodology used in this study.

1.7.1   Research design

Research designs are plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative research design was used in this study, with textual analysis as a method to analyse the text. Qualitative data analysis methods are based on arguments and explanations aimed at understanding the complex and detailed nature of the social world, and human lived experiences within a given context (Creswell, 2009). According to Crossman (2017) "qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that helps us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places" (p. 1). Qualitative approach is interpretive in nature and aspires at understanding the qualities of social life, hence, it was selected for this study.

Kothari (2004, p. 5) contends that the "qualitative approach to research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour." In this study the researcher explored the given themes from the six fictional writings. This helped to

balance the gap of what was happening in literary world and literature as well as what people believe is or should be happening.

Gopaldas (2016) explains that qualitative research refers to a range of data collection and analysis technique that uses purposive sampling and semi structured, open-ended interviews. In addition, it is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help to understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Punch, 2013). According to Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbon (2015) it is the observations and interpretations of people's perceptions of different events, and it takes the snapshot of people's perceptions in a natural setting. Through the analysis of different themes extracted from the chosen literary works, the researcher was able to interpret meaning from these themes and construct meaning from them.

Creswell (2013, p.6) outlines the advantages of using qualitative research. One of the benefits of qualitative research is that through both verbal and non-verbal communication, the researcher is likely to expand his or her understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, without being subjective the researcher was in better position to understand how people made sense of their world and their experiences in the world. However, Bryman (2012) criticises qualitative research for its imprecise and personal nature of enquiry

Finally, qualitative research is described as a form of social action that stresses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals (Haradhan, 2018; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). Qualitative research aims to provide detailed understanding into human behaviour, emotions, attitudes, and experiences (Tong, Fleming, Mc Innes, Oliver & Craig, 2012).

In this study, qualitative research was used to explore the representation of LGBTQI characters, to explore their socio-cultural, and religious experiences as exposed in the chosen literary works.

1.7.2   Sample

The study explored six African literary works: *Speak no Evil* by Uzondinma Iweala, *The Interpreter* by Wole Soyinka, *Fairy tales for lost children* by Diriye Osman, *I am a Homosexual, Mum* by Binyavanga Wainaina, *The hairdresser of Harare* by Tendai Huchu and *The Oracle of Cidino* by Sifiso Nyathi. These texts formed the sample of this study. Purposive, thematic sampling was chosen because it allows the researcher to closely examine the data to identify common themes from the selected texts. According to Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim (2016) purposive sampling is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities that the participant possesses.

1.7.3   Procedure

The six African fictional literary works were acquired, and an in-depth reading and critical analysis of the texts was done. The researcher explored the literary portrayal of homosexual characters in the selected African literary works, explored the sociocultural challenges experienced by LGBTQI characters as well as examined cultural views and understanding of the characters towards LGBTQI as it is presented in the selected literary works. The researcher then compared the representation of homosexuality in pre and post-independence, as well as explored the indigenous knowledge system contribution on African sexuality. The primary data was collected through a thorough reading and critical analysis of the selected texts. Lastly, the study used secondary sources such as journals to obtain more information on homosexuality and link the literary world to reality, hence derive more informed findings and evaluations which was presented in narrative form.

1.7.4   Data analysis

Textual content analysis was used to critically analyse the six fictional literary works. Content analysis as explained by Leedy and Ormrod (2001), is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages. It is thus, a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of materials for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes or biases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). This study was a desktop study; hence no field work was involved, but the study relied on primary and secondary data.

The literary analysis was based on the Queer Theory. Data from the six fictional literary works chosen was categorised into themes such as the literary representation of LGBTQIs in African literature, socio-political and religious views on LGBTQI, the socio-cultural challenges experienced by non-heteronormative individuals, cultural views and understanding on LGBTQI and African indigenous knowledge systems, the representation of LGBTQI characters in pre-independence and post-independence African friction, just to mention but a few. The data was then summarised to extract meaning from the text and conclusions were drawn depending on and as guided by the analysis made.   Finally, findings were extracted from the interpretation and analysis to formulate discussions and conclusions.

1.8 Research ethics

In order to ensure the objectivity and integrity of the research study, the researcher aimed at reporting the findings fully and not to misinterpret the results in any manner. Although the study was based on fictional literary works and imaginary characters, when analysing the results, the researcher tried to avoid words that could degrade and dehumanise LGBTQI people. The researcher also applied for and was granted the Ethical Clearance from the UNAM Research Ethics Committee. The researcher

endeavoured to be objective in the interpretation of data in order to avoid misinterpretation of the selected works. The researcher also strived to be impartial in order to uphold honesty in both interpretation and presentation data.

1.9 Definition of critical terms

Firstly, given the widespread use of the term '*homosexuality*' this study chose to employ the term "*homosexuality*" to describe same sex relations. The study also used the abbreviation '*LGBTQI*' when it was deemed more explanatory for the context. The researcher was however aware of the connotation attached to the term '*homosexuality*'; the fact that the term is often associated with the idea that same sex attractions are a mental disorder, and the term is often offensive. Nevertheless, for clarity, the researcher used the term '*homosexuality*' or '*gayness*' to refer to same sex relations, because many sources acknowledged have also used the same term to refer to especially '*gayness*' or '*lesbianism*'. This is what Sivertsen (2016) confesses that the representation of African sexualities may lose meaning when explained by way of the distinct terminology such as "LGBTQI" used in western discourse.

Although commonly used in the field of gender studies, the abbreviation 'LGBTQI' might sound strange to many Africans when confronted with having to explain same sex identities or practices (Sivertsen, 2016). Sivertsen further notes that a more recognisable term for many Africans when describing non-heterosexuality is homosexuality, as this term is commonly used in Africa.

The second point that this study wished to underscore was that, the term '*homosexuality*' is not equivalent to LGBTQI, as the former does not accurately represent all sexual identities housed by the abbreviation LGBTQI respectively. In this chapter, it is necessary to begin by defining the terminologies contained in the abbreviation LGBTQI as defined in the American Psychological Association (2015).

LGBTQI is an abbreviation referring to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex persons. According to American Psychological Association (2015) "LGB" are sexual orientations, while "T" is a gender identity and "I" is a biological variant. They are clustered together in one abbreviation due to similarities in experiences of marginalisation, exclusion, discrimination and victimisation in a heteronormative and heterosexist society, in an effort to ensure equality before the law and equal protection by the law (American Psychological Association, 2015). This study used the term LGBQI because this term is frequently used in laws, regulations, and research. This term was used with the understanding that it incorporates intersexuality and any other gender identities outside of the perceived societal "norm" of heterosexual males and females.

The American Psychological Association (2015) defines '**lesbian**' as a person who identifies as a woman and is attracted to and/or has romantic relationships with people who identify as women, while **gay** person is a person who identifies as a man and is attracted to and/or has romantic relationships with people who identify as men. Once more, the term Gay is often used to describe a man whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other men, although the term can be used to describe both gay men and lesbians.

The American Psychological Association (2015) defines a **bisexual** as a person who is attracted to and has romantic relationships with people who identify as men and women. A lesbian is further defined as a person who is capable of having sexual, romantic and intimate feelings for or a love relationship with someone of the same gender and/or with someone of other genders. Such an attraction to different genders is not necessarily simultaneous or equal in intensity.

Transgender has been defined by Mufune (2012) as an umbrella term that incorporates differences in gender identity wherein one's assigned biological sex doesn't match their felt identity. This term includes persons who do not feel that they fit into a dichotomous sex structure through which they are identified as males or female.

According to Martos, Wilson and Meyer (2017), '**Queer**' is an umbrella term that individuals may use to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms. Historically, the term queer has been considered a derogatory or pejorative term and the term may continue to be used by some individuals with negative intention. Queer is an inclusive term that refers not only to lesbian and gay persons, but also to any person who feels marginalised because of her or his sexual practices, or who resists the heteronormative sex/gender/sexual identity system.

Intersex on the other hand, is a term referring to a variety of conditions (genetic, physiological or anatomical) in which a person's sexual and/or reproductive features and organs do not conform to dominant and typical definitions of 'female' or 'male' (Martos, Wilson and Meyer, 2017).

Blackburn and Miller (2017) explain that while **sex** is a biological differentiation of being male or female, **gender** is the social and cultural presentation of how an individual self-identifies as masculine feminine or within a rich spectrum of identities between the two. Furthermore, in the Namibia Law on LGBT(QI) issues report Hubbard (2015, p.2) defines **sex** as a person's biological sex which results from factors including chromosomes, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia, while, **gende**r refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviours that a given culture associates

with a person's biological sex. According to Blackburn and Miller (2017) gender is socially constructed, and typically reinforced in a gender binary that places masculine and feminine roles in opposition to each other.

While **heteronormativity** is a set of practices and cultural institutions that positions heterosexuality as "normal", privileging heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships while also positioning LGBTQI identities and relationships as abnormal (Blackburn & Smith, 2010; Sanders & Mathias, 2013). Heteronormativity reinforces rigid gender roles and is overwhelmingly present in Africa as the society has prescribed expectations of how people must present themselves sexually, as it is represented in the literary works under study.

1.10   Organisation of the study

This study consists of five chapters which are divided into titles and subtitles. Chapter one introduces the study "Sexuality in fiction: exploring the literary portrayal of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex characters in selected African literary works". Firstly, the background of the study is brought forward, and the problem statement of the study was clarified. The research objectives on which the study was aligned were also outlined as well as the significance of the study. The chapter also tackles the limitations and delimitations of the study. The methodology used in the study which entails the research design, population, sample, procedures, data analysis and research ethics was also outlined in this chapter. Basically, the chapter orients the study by providing its preface.

Secondly, in Chapter two the literature related to portrayal of LGBTQI was reviewed. These literatures are based on the thematic areas as outlined in the research objectives. The chapter also incorporates the theoretical framework used in the study. Additionally, Chapter three examines the representation of queer African identities as

presented in different literary works under study. The chapter looks at how individual characters are developed within the selected literary works under study.

Chapter four deliberates on the socio-cultural challenges experienced by LGBTQI people portrayed in the fictional literary works chosen and also looks at the cultural views on LGBTQI as well as propose possible ways to mitigate homophobic attitudes towards LGBTQI people. This chapter also proposes a model that can be used in understanding different virtual spaces that are likely to be stumbling blocks toward achieving a homophobic free society. Lastly, Chapter five is the last chapter of this study and it presents the conclusion and recommendations of this study.

1.11   Chapter summary

This is the introductory chapter of this study and it hinted, firstly, on the background of the study which guides the readers on how the problem statement came about. Moreover, the chapter discussed the problem statement of the study, as well as the research objectives on which the study was aligned. Lastly, the limitations and delimitations of this study have also been highlighted. The next chapter presents the literature that was reviewed for this study based on the research objectives as outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The context of literature review allows for the identification of gaps in the examined literatures and establishes a relationship between the prior research and the current inquiry. In its exploration of sexuality in fiction, this study explores the literary portrayal of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex characters in six selected African literary works namely *Speak no Evil* by Uzodinma Iweala, *The Interpreter* by Wole Soyinka, *Fairy tales for lost children* by Diriye Osman, *I am a Homosexual, Mum* by Binyavanga Wainaina, *The hairdresser of Harare* by Tendai Huchu and *The Oracle of Cidino* by Sifiso Nyathi to examine how LGBTQI characters are portrayed in the selected literary works. In addition, the study explores sociocultural challenges that LGBTQI people may be experiencing in their day- to-day lives as well as examining cultural views and understanding of the characters in the selected literary works towards LGBTQI minorities.

The study further seeks to compare the representation of LGBTQI characters in pre-independent and post-independent African fiction as evinced in the literary works *Speak no Evil*, *The Interpreters*, *Fairy tales for Lost Children*, *I am a Homosexual, Mum*, *The Hairdresser of Harare* and *The Oracle of Cidino*. Furthermore, the intention of this study was to understand how LGBTQI characters are developed in order to challenge the homophobic attitudes imposed on them by the heteronormative group. The study was thus at ascertaining the portrayal of LGBTQI identity in selected African literary works through exploring their literary themes. This study touches very little on the portrayal of bisexuals, transgender, and intersex as these elements are not largely developed in the selected novels.

2.1 Pre-colonial views of the African's sexual identity

Queer narratives of Africa tend to be limited to two main opinions, one emphasising how homosexuality is un-African and another representing Africa as one homophobic bloc (Awondo, Geschiere & Reid, 2012; Ekine, 2013). According to Ifeoma (2015) homosexuality in African literature is depicted in a negative light. Ifeoma (2015) opines thus, "The colonial master and a host of other foreigners were portrayed as having initiated, practiced and promoted same sex relationships" (p.1). Ifeoma (2015) notes an example of this portrayal in Mariama Ba's *Scarlet song*, Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two thousand seasons* and Kofi Awoonor's *This earth, My brother* and concludes that some African writers as in the above references present LGBTQI as a behaviour that has been foisted on Africans by the West, while some argue that it has always been in Africa even before colonialism.

Crouse (2016) theorises that homosexuality is determined by biological or genetic factors, implying that people are born gay. Regrettably, Crouse (2016) also notes that all studies trying to prove that homosexuality is biological have 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 appears to be gaining favour and the former theory has been declining in recent years.

Another study by Jebeli (2020) deliberated on finding out whether homosexuality is nature or nurture, reveals that genetic factors such as brain, anatomy, hormonal, environmental, educational and psychological factors are amongst some of the etiological factors of homosexuality. The study also reveals that homosexuality is more natural and also more nurture. The study then concludes that natural orientation cannot

be prevented, however LGBTQI people must control their sexual behaviour as they have the power of authority to perform or not perform such behaviour.

The origin of homosexuality in Africa seems not to be known, as there appears to be an unsettling debate on where homosexuality hails from. Nevertheless, writers such as Mersman (2012) argue strongly, though without ample proof or evidence of any historical backing, that homosexuality originated from Africa. For instance, in his paper "*Homosexuality is African*" Mersman (2012) insists that possibly the oldest evidence of homosexuality is in Africa, but Africa through academic and fiction writers vehemently denies its existence by arguing that the presence of homosexuality or gayness might be visible but not acceptable.

According to Ifeoma (2015) some earlier African writers depicted LGBTQI in a negative light, as a taboo, moral depravity, anomaly, un-African and a Western construct. Examples of such depictions include Stanley's book *My Kalulu: Prince, King and Slave* (1873) as well as Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973).

However, according to Lopang (2014) other African writers such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) as well as Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966) depict an African society that is exclusively heterosexual. Lopang (2014) however provides a counter argument 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. Lopang (2014) pushes his argument further by observing that there has been a sense of denial of homosexuality amongst Africans; having writers attributing it to colonialism.

According to Lopang (2014) perhaps, this denial could be a result of external pressure or the desire to project an image that is idealised; an image that is sexually "correct".

Thus, for instance, heterosexual relationships were considered to be normal as they have procreative and reproductive value, as it is depicted in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Lopang, 2014). The claim that homosexuality is un-African has been concretised by Oppong (2018), Gedzi, Dumbe and Ahenkora (2017), and Dai-Kosi and Asamani (2016) as they assert that the 'un-African' argument is premised on the belief that, by definition and African tradition, marriage is a union between a man and a woman, purposely designed as a framework for procreation and perpetuation of the human race; and the need to project a strong, masculine image of an African male overrode the need to depict an alternative sexuality.

Epprecht (2013) also states that sexuality is obviously one of those very powerful forces that affects people's ability to survive, and in Africa the need to channel sexuality towards reproduction was very strong. The statement by former president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, when he ranted, "homosexuals will have their heads chopped off should they fail to produce children if they are locked up in a house for five years" (Mtenje, 2019, p.5) is also evidence to prove that in the African set-up, sexuality is closely knitted with procreation.

Despite all the above contradicting views on homosexuality, Soyinka's (1965) *The Interpreters* is one of the inaugural literary works from west Africa to somewhat propose that homosexuality is not a colonial burden that hails from across the Atlantic; and that homosexuality did not need to be quarantined in a European framework for it to be condemned and shunned without fear of shame (Lopang, 2014). Basically, in Lompang (2014)'s view, Soyinka raises awareness that African cultures are not exclusively heterosexual as other writers make them out to be. As such, one gets the impression that there exist some inconsistencies between the LGBTQI representation in the novel and what might be happening in Africa. It is needful therefore to explore

the representation, and contestations of the representation of the LGBTQI community in the African literary world.

Luttig (2014) believes that besides being a problematically simplistic statement, if the claim that homosexuality is un-African is understood to mean that homosexuality is entirely alien to indigenous African cultures and never occurred before the advent of colonialism, the claim turns out to be unrealistic. This is because, numerous academics and authors such as Epprecht (2013); Roscoe (2001); Beltolt (2019) and Murray and Roscoe (1998) have published examples of specific same-sex practices among various African cultures dating back to time immemorial.

Studies by various scholars such as Bertolt (2019); Roscoe (2001); Murray, Roscoe, Epprecht (1998) and Epprecht (2013) have revealed that before colonialism same sex sexual relationships were perceived as one of the essential strategies to become wealthy. The wealth is transmitted from the receptive partner (the pedicist) to the insertive receptive partner (the pedicon) (Epprecht, 2013). Epprecht has also noted that some same-sex practices were also used during initiatory rituals, as well as in the process of helping men to be more vigorous.

Another element to attest the presence of same-sexual practices in Africa before the colonial period is also the vocabulary used to address them. Bertolt (2017) reveals the use of words such as *inkotshane* among the Shangaan of Southern Africa, and *motsoale*; to describe relationships among Basotho women, and *gorjiggen* among the Wolof in Senegal are just three examples. *The hairdresser of Harare* also makes use of the Shona word *ngochani* which discretely reminds us that African cultures had terminologies to refer to same sex sexuality practices. Murray, Roscoe, Epprecht

(1998) also emphasise that the first Swahili –English dictionary was noted to have vocabularies referring to same sex relations:

> European reports of homosexuality in Mombasa and Zanzibar date to the 19th century. The first Swahili-English dictionary, published in 1882, included the term *mumémke* (*mume*, "man"; *mke*, "woman") along with *hánithi*, defined as "*catamite*," which is clearly related to khanith, the term for an alternative gender status in Oman (Krapf 1882, p. 891). The latter also has been transcribed as *hanisi* and defined as "effeminate" (Madan, 1902, p. 92). At the beginning of the 20th century, Michael Haberlandt reported that on Zanzibar "homosexuals of both sexes are designated in the Swahili language as *mke-si-mume* ('woman, not man'). (p.28)

The existing words are also said to have historical traces of some of the African languages, that proves that these may not be borrowed words. Thus, Bertolt (2017) presents the arguments that even if heterosexuality was a dominant sexual norm in pre-colonial Africa, there is no doubt same-sex sexual practices were present on the continent and in some cases were features of social organisation. It doesn't mean that they were accepted anywhere, but were more or less tolerated. Nonetheless, Bertolt (2017) also emphasises that same sex sexuality (homosexuality) in Africa didn't imply the same meaning as Western understanding of the term LGBTQI.

Bertolt (2017) further notes that it is noteworthy to understand that the invisibility of same-sex sexuality relation in Africa's early sexual discourse is exotic and based on a desire to remove it from perversions which occurred in European societies. Bertolt (2017) further argues that the hegemonic discourse that tends to make Africa a monolithic block doesn't account for the multiple forms that surround sexual practises

on the continent since the pre-colonial period; since the pre-colonial period, same sex sexual practices have not been foreign to African societies.

Lompang (2014) also emphasises that, African writers failed to understand that situations existed in Africa where gay and lesbian relationships occurred prior to colonialism and which could not be explained as imported taboos. Furthermore, such practices were understood as an intrinsic part of tradition; in that they formed important checks and balances within heterosexual marriages (Lompang, 2014). It is thus pertinent to note that "Africa long before the West came around, had a policy in place to tolerate homosexual activity so long as it was kept behind closed doors" (Clarke, 2013, p. 175). This idea thus attests to the existence of homosexual practices in Africa.

According to Epprecht (2013) the idea that homosexuality has been a fundamental human practice among the earliest human beings is disputed. However, some of the oldest known depictions of or references to same-sex sexuality in the world come from Africa, including cave paintings dating back at least two thousand years in Zimbabwe, and in Egyptian myths and written histories (Epprecht, 2013). Epprecht (2013, p.51) therefore concludes that, as such, "for sexual rights activists in Africa, the question where does homosexuality in Africa really come from can be maddening". For this study, it was important to note that same sex sexuality (LGBTQI) and problems that accompany it, including homophobia, are now clear and present in Africa in general and Namibia in particular; and that they have become a national and political concern, no matter when or where they hail from. It is therefore crucial that they are dealt with. Epprecht (2013) therefore suggests that, homosexuality needs to be understood without a sense of denial and without a reference to cultural stereotypes as 'alien' but

rather simply as erotic desire and practices between people of same sex and therefore part of human nature.

The foremost research work done on the representation of gayness/homosexuality in the literature from Africa is that which was carried out by Daniel Vignal in 1983. Vignal examined twenty-three African novels and one short story with homosexual themes between 1960 and 1980 in English and French languages. Among the works he analysed are Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1965), Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* (1971), Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), and Yulisa Amadu Maddy's *No Past, No Present, No Future* (1973). Vignal (1983), as cited in Ifeoma (2015) explores the different portrayals and representations of gayness in the various texts and concludes that a great number of the works depict homosexuality solely as Western influence on Africa or attribute it to colonialists, their descendants and all kinds of outsiders but certainly not a black African.

Not much is known about the incidence or origins of gayness in Africa but the majority of Africans agree that it is un-African, alien to their way of life, was introduced by the white men when they colonised parts of Africa or the Arab slave masters who sold African slaves and could happen anywhere but in Africa. Nesbitt-Ahmed (2012) concurs with the above, saying that homosexuality in African literature was stigmatised by earlier writers as either an un-African activity or attributed solely to Western influences in Africa.

2.2 The literary representation of LGBTQIs in African literature

The literary representation of homosexuality in African literature is two pronged whereby, some novelists and writers tend to ally with LGBTQIs while others condone homophobia, therefore the representation appears to be sympathetic in some fictions and unsympathetic in others. For instance, the Malawian oral poet Robert Chiwamba

composed two poems titled - *You will die a Painful Death* and *We Reject Homosexuality,* that condemn homosexuality (Mathews, Clemons & Avery, 2017). The latter poems challenge homophobia by intimidating both the advocates and practitioners of homosexuality whilst writers such as Zimbabwean Tendai Huchu in *The hairdresser of Harare* portrays sympathetic representation of LGBTQI characters.

Wright (2017) confirms that with the fear of social expulsion, a culture of silence about gay's real identity has been refined. In a study of the experiences of Christian homosexual university students in South Africa, Waidzunas (2015, p.171) explains that often Christian gays live painful lives in the 'toxic closet', as a result of the fear of condemnation. Religion is one of the aspects addressed in this study that is used by the society to justify homophobia, by claiming that the homosexuality is satanic and sinful. This literary study may expose readers to different types of sexualities and in a way accord a voice to the LGBTQI people who are in some ways threatened by the general society.

The phenomena of hiding and living in the closet do not only happen in real life, but also in literature as revealed by the narratives of the African authors under study. Nevertheless, Ncube (2016) has noted that it is becoming clear that more and more Africans are accepting the need to actively engage in debate and come out from behind the veils of secrecy and denial. The basic argument is that, homophobic laws and social stigma seem to drive people to hide sexual feelings and choices that do not conform to heterosexual norms (Ncube, 2016). For instance, in *The hairdresser of Harare* stigmatisation makes it difficult for Dumisani to come out of the closet. Ncube (2016) declares that this cloistering attests to the hegemony of heteronormativity and political, religious, cultural fiat which condemn, pathologies and vilify alternative expression of sexuality.

33

Msibi (2011) notes that in fifty-three African states, it is illegal to engage in consensual 'gay' sex. It has also been noted that countries such as Nigeria, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda have imposed harsh punishments against individuals convicted of engaging in same sex relations (Blandy, 2010) as cited in Msibi, (2011). Msibi (2011) concludes that the punishment used to discriminate against those who engage in same sex relations in Africa largely emanates from anti-sodomy laws inherited from the colonial era when the colonial authorities were keen on regulating sexuality. Such laws remain unchanged in the present Africa. Below are the extracts of the three African countries namely Malawi, Uganda and Nigeria taken from Msibi (2011) that demonstrate and outlines the different homophobic laws as proposed in such African countries.

Malawi

In 2010 in Malawi, Tiwonge Chimbalanga and his partner, Steven Monjeza, were arrested and sentenced for publicly celebrating their engagement—a locally illegal action (The Times 2010). The magistrate, Nyakwawa Usiwa, when handing down the sentence, believed that his actions would deter other people from claiming or publicly demonstrating a homosexual identity. He declared "I will give you a scaring sentence so that the public [will] be protected from people like you, so that we are not tempted to emulate this horrendous example" (Mail and Guardian 2010b). After saying this, he imposed on the couple a fourteen-year term of imprisonment at hard labour, the maximum sentence allowed. It is clear from the magistrate's sentence that, for him, same-sex desire was a gross immoral act, worthy of the worst punishment available.

Uganda

The second case explored is that of Uganda as it concerns the proposed Anti-Homosexuality Bill. Under the bill, homosexuality would become punishable even by death, and neighbours and friends would have the responsibility to report individuals suspected of engaging in same-sex relations (Bunting 2010; Ewins 2011). In addition, the bill would see Ugandans outside the country being extradited back to Uganda for engaging in same-sex relations. Although the bill could not be passed, it has nevertheless presented significant challenges to individuals engaging in same-sex relations in Uganda: they have been forced into hiding for fear of victimisation, personal harm, and even murder (Wilkerson 2009). The bill notes that "same-sex attraction is not an innate and immutable characteristic," and it wishes to "protect the cherished culture of the people of Uganda, legal, religious, and traditional family values of the people of Uganda against the attempts of sexual rights activists seeking to impose their values of sexual promiscuity on the people of Uganda."

Nigeria

As with Uganda and Malawi, homophobia in Nigeria is directly supported by the laws, culture, and religion. In the twelve states of the Islamic North that practice Sharia law, engagement in same-sex activity is punishable by death, while in the rest of the country the punishment is fourteen years of imprisonment (Aken'Ova 2010). In 2006, a piece of legislation known as the "Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act" was proposed with full support of religious—Islamic and Christian—leaders. The legislation was meant to "impose five-year sentences on same-sex couples who have wedding

ceremonies, as well as on those who perform such services and on all who attend" (New York Times 2007). The introduction of this bill caused similar problems for same-sex desiring individuals in Nigeria as did the Uganda bill. Individuals who engage in same-sex relations were attacked, and their lives were threatened. The bill did not come to a vote, but a similar bill was passed in the lower house in 2009 and then referred to parliamentary committees for study and public consultation (Human Rights Watch 2009). The public reacted strongly in support of the bill, with many religious leaders even questioning the reasons behind giving individuals who engage in same-sex relations an opportunity to comment. (Msibi, 2011)

The above extracts demonstrate the state of some African countries in relation to LGBTQI issues. This also demonstrates how homophobia is a state sponsored phenomenon. It therefore requires a change in the mind-set of African leaders in order to find solutions to homophobic violence and attacks against LGBTQI in Africa.

Sonneveld (2016) observes that most LGBTQI people are reluctant to come out of the closet, and one of the challenges with the coming out process is that it has to be safe to come out. Sonneveld (2016, p.11) further argues that, there are many LGBTQI people that would love to tell their stories and engage, but if you risk being thrown in jail or even being killed, which is what happens in a number of countries in Africa, it is very difficult to go up and tell your story. It is therefore a balance between personal safety and changing the system.

Some literary works under study (Iweala, 2018; Soyinka, 1965) show that homosexuality is not seen as genetic as expressed by Jebeli (2020), but as something that one catches through associating with certain races. However, the peer reviewed

scientific literature including recent research such as that by Cook (2018) clearly shows that a combination of genetic and environmental factors contributes to sexual orientation.

Generally, since quite a sizable number of African literary works depict the colonial masters and other continents as projecting and promoting homosexual behaviour, it could be observed that the portrayal of LGBTQI by various African writers takes a very extreme Afrocentric view of homosexuality as expressed by Lamb (1982). Since same-sex relationships are portrayed by some African writers as cultural imports of colonialism and not practices that were inherently part of Africa (Lamb, 1982), the current study shows how some of the African writers either depicted the aspect of LGBTQI as evil or how some writers have ignored it all together despite the reality of what is happening in Africa.

LGBTQI characters are portrayed as individual beings who have limited freedom of expression Nyathi (2003). As Wickens (2011) puts it, "communities often used metaphors or roundabout to discuss themselves" (p.155), and protect themselves from harmful outsiders. They use certain kinds of coded language in order to protect themselves from the homophobic heterosexual community (Wickens, 2011). Wickens (2011) further states that this kind of coded language whether single word or a seemingly normal phrase allows for feelings of safety and secrecy, as it assures that people's identity will not be "found-out" by friends, family or those who could harm them.

Although this kind of language does provide a safety net for the characters in the literary works, the coded language inadvertently becomes a double-edge sword that isolates the people it tries to protect (Wickens, 2011). As used in Nyathi (2003) the

coded language at work in these pieces of works reinforces the necessity for the secrecy of queer identities. This type of language is visible in Nyathi (2003) as well as in Iweala (2018) and will be discussed later in this study.

Another case that indicates restricted freedom of expression occurs in a research done by Chinangure and Mutekwe (2014). In their study examining toilet graffiti in Park station in Johannesburg and surrounding area, Chinangure and Mutekwe (2014) note that some LGBT individuals from Zimbabwe were communicating and advertising the homosexual practice in public toilet walls. Messages were written in Shona and individuals left their phone numbers there to be reached by interested partners. This act attests to lack of freedom of expression of LGBTQI while living in homophobic environments. Correspondingly, Chinangure (2018) emphasises that regardless of some important changes brought about by nature, technology, and other forces, some human beings have continued to hold beliefs that affect other people's right to co-exist freely with them in the same social space.

McInroy and Craig (2015) carried out a study on 'Transgender representation in offline and online media' and submit that "LGBTQI people have consistently been stereotyped as comic relief, villains, criminals, mentally and/or physically ill and victims of violence" (p.34). Similarly, Rigney (2003) cements the argument by stating that "cinematic representations of transgender characters have especially been notorious for their portrayals of the transgendered as psychotic serial killers or as figures of fun and comic relief" (p.4). Representation in general can be a learning tool that reinforces cultural beliefs and norms or challenges them.

Mtenje (2019) observes that, in their representation, LGBTQI people are portrayed as an inconvenience which disturbs national purity as well as amoral, criminal

exhibitionist who should be exterminated. Similarly, in the qualitative essays that provide context for the circumstance of intersex people in South Africa, Magubane (2014) uses controversy around athlete Caster Semenya to discuss the historical role of race and nationalism in defining intersex bodies and determining their treatment, pathologisation of black bodies. Furthermore, Mokoena (2015) reflecting on the intersex movement in South Africa and on her own experiences as being intersex also reveals problems in accessing healthcare and the social stigma around being intersex, as well as the marginality and limited resources for intersex issues. Both Magubane (2014) and Mokoena (2015) conclude that intersex people face equal marginalisation like any other sexual minority groups.

The results of the above studies resonate with that from the Legal Resource Centre Iranti-Org and Gender dynamix (2016) which describes an intersex person as a subject to intersex-phobia, including verbal and physical violence, as well as violation in medical sector, including non-consensual surgeries, medically unnecessary treatments and surgeries, harmful and stigmatising clinical language and being put on medical display and treated as a curiosity. Legal Resource Centre Iranti-Org and Gender dynamix (2016) also observes that other issues that marginalises intersex people than other sexuality minority groups include invisibility, isolation, misunderstanding, stigma, secrecy, shame, and pathologisation.

According to Wickens (2011) some literary works and fictions appear to perpetuate the problem of homophobia; firstly, by portraying homosexuality as a negative entity. Though these works attempt to normalise queer identity, they do so by reinforcing otherness of the community, rather than deconstructing the framework of heterosexist arguments, many literary texts harness these attitudes to drive the plot (Wickens, 2011). Wickens further notes that at other instances in the literary works, queer identity

is humorously or seriously likened to illness or sin. The basis for these attitudes draws upon historical allusion to homosexuality as a psychiatric deviation and illness (Wickens, 2011). Wickens thus concludes that homosexuality and all other 'non-straight' sexuality are demonised and considered to be abnormal, whereas being straight is often seen as normal and healthy, thus it is celebrated.

Once more, Jayawardane and Edoro (2015) emphasise that Soyinka's treatment of homosexuality is cringe-worthy and extremely unsympathetic, as same sex desire is caricatured. While discourse on homosexuality has often painted Africa as a caricature of homophobia, this study shows that homophobia is not a universal phenomenon in African literature. Adichie's short story *Appolo* (2015) and *I am a homosexual mum*, which is called a lost chapter of Wainaina's book *One day I will write about this place,* are some of the works that offer novel voices and narratives about same sex desire from the African continent. They address in their own particular ways gay issues in context and that includes African traditions and social convention.

According to Ifeoma (2015) there appears to be a change in attitude towards LGBTQI people by post-colonial fiction writers, with some writers such as Chimamanda Adichie and Binyavanga Wainaina being open about their personal views on homosexuality and have gone on to challenge and change how homosexuality or same-sex desire is represented in fiction; and with other writers such as Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows,* appealing to readers to be tolerant and sympathetic towards gays.

From the afore-mentioned provisions it is evident that there is a need for a paradigm shift from traditionally focused LGBTQI narratives to "the realm of magical realism, a style which removes homophobic discourse as the prime motivator of the novel's elements and instead allows the characters to explore their own identities without

negative influences of homophobia and heterosexist" (Crisp, 2014, p.336). While commenting on *The hairdresser of Harare* Isidore Okpewho realises the need to nurture a new generation of scholars who will not flinch from questioning the assumption underlying the ideas fed to them, the way their predecessors were seldom inclined to do (Crisp, 2014). Epprecht (2013) also calls for the shift to presenting homosexuality with the dignity that is usually lacking in the politically homophobic rhetoric of most African nation-states, and also challenging the status quo of homosexuality as un-African.

2.3 The socio-political, cultural and religious views on LGBTQIs

There has been lots of observation, political debates in parliament and legal or political opinions about sexuality in Namibia. However, until the 21st century sexuality remains deeply mysterious and difficult to talk about without creating a scandal. For instance, the Namibian member of parliament Jerry Ekandjo during a debate on the legalisation of same-sex marriages, abortion, and cannabis, in the National Assembly in 2021, raised homophobic remarks against gay people. He remarked: "Why should we allow gays here in Namibia? We cannot allow a male person to insert his penis in the anus of another man." These remarks were described by Human Rights activist, Linda Bauman, as inciting violence and placing the safety and security of the LGBTQI community in jeopardy (Ngatjiheue & Shikongo, 2021).

Siwela, Sikhwani and Mutshaeni (2018) note that culture and religion influence the way people view homosexuality. According to Siwela, Sikhwani and Mutshaeni (2018) some African cultures and religions do not support homosexuality, and this leads to LGBTI individuals' vulnerability in the society. It has also been further noted that cultural and religious discourses drive the current wave of homophobia (Siwela,

Sikhwani & Mutshaeni, 2018). Amusan, Saka, and Adekeye (2019) accentuate that the cultural assault on homosexuality is anchored on the argument that its practice is 'un-African' and has the potential to destroy African traditions and heterosexual family values. The above authors further their argument by stating that most opinions relating to the acceptance or rejection of homosexuality arise mostly from the elements of culture and religion.

According to Iitula (2018) homosexuality is usually a taboo subject because of the complicated and controversial social and cultural issues which surround it. Similarly, Osman (2014) in his fiction *Fairy tales for lost children* addressed the issue of culture and traditions and the problem of coming out of the closet, and he realised that it was possible not only to respect culture, but also to revel in it. In his position as a gay and author Osman (2014) further claims that ultimately it is only the LBBTQI people themselves who can give themselves a permission to live, as the LGBTQI people live in a world that antagonises their queerness. Osman (2014) admits that fear and shame are the most potent weapons in the homophobe's arsenal. If one rejects the notion that one has to be ashamed of being gay or lesbian, then half of the battle is won (Ali, 2013). *Fairy tales for lost children* and *I am a homosexual, Mum* are an example where the writing and "coming-out" occurred at the same time (Ali, 2013), and their writing offers a strong voice that will serve as a platform for other "bold voices" Hawley (2017, p.123).

It has also been noted by Wright (2017) that like any other people of the heterosexual identity, LGBTQI people have always been smart, creative, interesting and talented, but societal norms antagonise their queerness.

Epprecht (2013) notes that homosexuality is against African traditions; is un-Islamic; and unbiblical, while LaFont and Hubbard (2007) have noted that there has been no greater debate regarding gender and sexuality in independent Namibia than the one about gay rights. However, the move to reform sodomy laws and protect the rights of LGBTQI people has been met with stiff resistance from church organisations and government (LaFont & Hubbard, 2007). LaFont and Hubbard (2007) note that the African discourse on LGBTQI issues is two sided, as LGBTQI has been represented as a foreign evil, un-African and sinful by those who are hostile to the gay rights movement, while supporters of LGBTQI argue that inclusion, tolerance and human rights are important to democracy.

Adebayo *et al*., (2012) describes many cultures within Southern Africa as 'culturally conservative' with respect to gay and lesbian issues. In most sub-Saharan countries it is still believed that people who are born homosexual and sexual minorities are social deviants who should be prosecuted (Adebayo, *et al*., 2012; Epprecht, 2012; Francis, 2012). Iweala (2018)'s *Speak no evil* is a novel set in Nigeria and it is a typical example of fiction that proves how conservative the African culture is.

According to Wright (2017) the fact that LGBTQI characters struggle to be accepted by the society, results in them concealing, denying and repressing themselves. These acts are considered worse results of the tragedy of discrimination as they lead to worse actions, not only to their society, but themselves as well (Wrigh, 2017). Wrigh (2017) further explains that because of fear of social and familiar prejudices some LGBTQI individuals have acted against themselves. The fact that the LGBTQI characters under study have been subjected to almost all the foulest experiences in life, like being verbally discriminated against by the society, or worst not being accepted by their families, it could be the main reason why they have denied themselves and their sexual

identities, to save themselves from pain of rejection caused by others. As Wrigh (2017) explains that the rejection causes LGBTQI individuals to feel intrinsically different in their physical, emotional as well as in their interest towards their co-species.

It is however significant to note that LGBTQI youth, as well as adults, show remarkable resilience to life challenges. However, societies were socialised to accept heterosexuality as the norm which is why the society has so many gay men who marry, have children, but still seek the love they feel safe with elsewhere (Mutandwa, 2013). At other instances the LGBTQI members of the society have been marginalised and abused by the heteronormative groups, especially by their family members. Research has shown that family acceptance leads to greater self-esteem, social support, better health outcomes as well as protection against substance abuse, depression and suicidal ideation.

Nkosi and Masson (2017) note that traditionally, the Christian religion promotes heterosexuality and does not advocate for acceptance of homosexuality or bisexuality. Nkosi and Masson (2017) further note that the deliberation whether homosexuality is a sinful act in the eyes of the Lord has been continuing on for centuries – a debate that does not appear to be drawing to any definitive conclusion in the near future. According to Nkosi and Masson (2017) many Christians emphatically quote biblical scriptures and use them as a basis to condemn homosexuality, saying that the Bible is very clear on this position. Msibi (2011) therefore observes that religious systems have shaped and informed debates, on LGBTQI matters in Africa while according to Malaba (2014), most religions categorise behaviours associated with homosexuality as unnatural, ungodly and impure.

Sonneveld (2016, p. 13) on the other hand demonstrates that homosexuality and transgenderism exist in Hinduism as evidenced by the portrayed images of transgender deities, and religious tales of transgender beings. It was therefore argued that there is little truth that homosexuality and transgenderism are brought from Western culture.

The second argument against homosexuality is that there are no examples of homosexual marriages in the Bible as homosexuality is unnatural and inconsistent with what God had intended for humans; therefore, there are no examples of gay marriages because in God's eyes all marriages are heterosexual and anything other than that is illegitimate and not recognised (Nkosi & Masson, 2017). However, Gnuse (2015) justify the lack of homosexual marriages and examples in the Bible with a cultural explanation. For instance, Gnuse (2015, p. 70) believes the scriptures are historically and culturally limited. As time changes, culture also changes. Gnuse (2015) thus purports that relying on scriptures which were written thousands of years ago can be limiting as they may not be relevant to the culture of today. To further this discourse, Phillips (2005) as cited in Nkosi and Masson (2017), raises the issue of polygamy and how in the olden times that practice was acceptable but now in the New Testament it is not approved. Phillips (2005) thus believes that the Bible is often interpreted differently by different people.

Iitula (2018), notes that the Bible condemns the act of homosexuality, whereby 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" (Iitula 2018, p.30). These scriptures are, among others, the basis on which those individuals who reject homosexuality align their arguments.

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. Additionally, Obasola (2013) further argues that "Whatever erotic might have been in Africa's cultural past, it has now been radically reshaped by the world's two major patriarchal religions, Christianity and Islam." As well as by "colonial modernity, and capitalist ideology" (Nzengwu, 2011, p. 253). Having said this, it seems evident that the influence of the West in the process of reshaping histories fostered the disappearance of other traditions and forms of understanding human sexuality.

As Clarke (2013, p.177) stresses "the West has set itself up as the authority on knowledge about the homosexual experience, and those who are not part of the West can only benefit from imposition of this structure. Epprecht (2013) however emphasises that Africans do not need to look exclusively or even primarily to the West for ideas on how to circumvent homophobia, they have their own resources to tap into to develop effective responses.

In his critic of religious homophobia towards LGBTQI people, Van Klinken (2016) notes that, as expected the public has shown contradicting reactions and views towards Wainaina's coming out as a homosexual. This has generated public debate and controversy in Kenya and more broadly in Africa and beyond. Many people showed their support for what they considered to be a bold and courageous move, but others expressed their disgust and condemnation (Van Klinken, 2016). For instance, a comment "from the social media directed to Wainaina's public affirmation as gay, notes "As an African, Binyangava must uphold, promote, and protect the doctrine of

46

heterosexuality according to the natural order, Africans have never been gay, at least not publicly" (Van Klinken, 2016).

According to Van Klinken (2016) it was asked in Kenyan parliament as to why openly homosexual persons such as Wainaina were not arrested by the police in spite of the country's laws prohibiting same-sex practices. Yet, this did not prevent Wainaina from becoming one of the country's prominent and vocal African critics, not only of homophobia in Africa, but also of religious forces that incite and fuel it.

Although LGBTQI characters are unsympathetically portrayed in African literature, Wainaina's portrayal in his chapter *I am a homosexual, Mum* appears to be sympathetically represented. According to Van Klinken (2016) Wainaina's positive portrayal allows the foregrounding of African agency in fighting against anti-homosexual politics and the struggle for the recognition of LGBTQI human rights and sexual diversity in contemporary Africa. This study considers Wainaina as a prominent example of agency, courage, creativity and authority, in the struggle for sexual diversity in contemporary Africa.

Blaming the church for the way homosexuality has been politicised and homophobia has become endemic, Wainaina appears to be particularly critical of those arguments conflating 'African culture' with Christianity (Ngunjiri, 2014). Thus, in an interview published in newspaper *The Nairobian*, Wainaina states:

> People always talk about homosexuality and the African culture but when you ask them to quote they quote the Bible. Is the Bible/Christianity part of our African culture? … People who say that Africans must be governed according to Leviticus, as far as I am concerned, should not be in any serious podium discussing any serious thing.

Similarly, Binternagel (2018) argues against cultural and religious misinterpretation of the Qur'an when dealing with issues of homosexuality or same-sex relationships. As argued from the academic perspective, (Binternagel, 2018) that Muslims and Islamic scholars, believers and queer individuals around the world are slowly dismantling the use of the Qur'an as the main source of authority against the identity. Binternagel (2018) therefore argue that, the main arguments that are used against queer individuals, on the ground of cultural or religious Islamic traditions have been properly debated and refuted. Binternagel (2018) also asserts that there is a clear need to break once and for all with rigidity of the heteronormative model to regain freedom of choice.

Although LGBTQI people have endured homophobia emanating from a religious point of view, Asue (2018) claims that the churches' refusal to allow gay marriage is based on religious teaching and not homophobia. That is to say, the church is not necessarily differing with LGBTQI for homophobic reasons, but because of the religious teachings that guides it. According to Asue (2018) the church equally values and respects human natural differences and also calls for protection of the LGBTQI minorities. Asue (2018) thus concludes that as it stands now, the church's position does not condemn homosexual orientation but homosexual activity.

Apart from the above religious view, the political view has also largely contributed to the debate about LGBTQI issues. Obasola (2013) notes that most African leaders have openly denounced homosexuality. South Africa is the only country in Africa which accords the most legal rights to homosexuals (Obasola, 2013). The country offers full rights to people who engage in homosexual acts and legally allows same sex marriages (Obasola, 2013). According to Obasola (2013) the rest of the African continent has

either outlawed and criminalised the activity or have specific laws which apply differently to heterosexual and homosexual individuals.

During the United States of America President Barack Obama's visit to Kenya in 2015, President Obama addressed legal discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) 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 freedom begins to erode" (*The Guardian*, 09 Sep. 2015). The response from President Kenyatta was that there were some things that they (Kenyans) must admit they do not share with the US which are not part of the African culture such as homosexuality (*The Guardian*, 09 Sep. 2015). This is the same argument that the former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, used when he signed the dangerous law of death penalty against LGBTQI people in Nigeria, and that President Yoweri Museveni used in a ceremonial signing of an anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda (*The Guardian*, 09 Sep. 2015). 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 shared the same sentiments 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.

Casteleyn (2019) observes that the political leaders reinforce homophobic ideology as they criminalise and demonise the alternative forms of sexuality and repeatedly vilify LGBTQI in public contexts such as the media, and the government gatherings, and express alternative sexual orientations and practices as un-African. Casteleyn (2019) thus believes that the African leaders' ideological abomination of homosexuality is

based on the colonial legacies of the Christian and Islamic faith and the Western moral values, which have since been woven and embedded in their understanding of the said matter. Casteleyn (2019) hence concludes that by claiming that homosexuality is a Western import, African leaders underscore their independence in opposition to the neo-imperial Western values while covering up the human rights abuses that are happening in their countries. While, Jjuuko and Tabengwa (2018); Luft (2016); Msibi (2011); Nyanzi (2013) believe that the African leader's argument that homosexuality is un-African is unrealistic, and these authors therefore believe that it is the roots of their arguments that is un-African.

Matolino (2017, p. 59) also emphasises that the resistance to LGBTQI is based on the premise that such sexual orientation or consequent sexual behaviour violates basic principles and beliefs of African reality. From the above argument, it appears that the African leaders' take on homosexuality is that of presenting Africa as a monolithic heterosexual block, and their call for homosexual beings to be killed is even worse as it is purely antagonistic to human rights.

However, it is also important to understand the socio-cultural aspects that lie behind the African leaders' take on homosexuality. Thus, Essien and Aderinto (2009) as cited in Gyasi-Gyamerah, Amissah and Dannquah (2019) indicate that the government especially of Ghana and religious institutions identify homosexuality as a form of "sexual colonialism" or Western imposition on Ghanaians which must be confronted.

According to Okechi (2018), to many Africans, homosexuality is a taboo according to culture, illegal according to law, and sin according to religion. For instance, it was a taboo to discuss sexual matters in front of children until they were ready for their passage to adulthood. Although children recognised differences between the genders,

they were not supposed to know what the usefulness of such differences was for, except with regard to the allocation of household roles; They were aware that women brought babies but how it happens was kept a secret (Okechi, 2018).

While most European Union countries appear to accept homosexuality (Gerhards, 2010), the same views are not held by most African countries. According to Kutsch (2013) homosexuality is still considered a crime in 38 African countries and many of these countries still retain their laws against homosexuality that were promulgated during the colonial era. The reason behind this rejection and hostility towards homosexuality that is often provided, is that many African leaders feel that gay rights are against their cultural and religious value systems and consider the advent of homosexuality to be an imposition by Western nations (Kutsch, 2013). Epprecht (2013) contends that homosexuality has been described as a lifestyle which is foreign to Africans and is considered morally, culturally and religiously wrong by the majority of the African society.

However, Eppretcht (2013) believes that dehumanising, moralising and using derogatory language towards LGBTQI people does not work very well to stop them from expressing their sexuality as it feels right according to their own sense of gender identity and sexual orientation. Eppretcht (2013) maintains that LGBTQI people rather conduct same-sex relations furtively to avoid the stigma often hiding behind concurrent heterosexual relationships, which is likely to expand the circle of people at risk of sexually transmitted infections. Owing to the lack of frank and honest education about the full range of human sexuality, the status quo also exposes people to death by ignorance (Epprecht, 2013). Epprecht (2013)'s suggestion is a call for African countries to remove homophobic laws and work toward reducing stigmatising public attitudes as this will act as a form of harm reduction. Furthermore, it eliminates the

incentives of secrecy and concurrently the 'masking' of relationships, while providing knowledge necessary for LGBTQI people to make responsible decisions. Epprecht (2013) further emphasises that educating the public reduces the potential of social backlash and political demagoguery around morals.

Despite homophobic rhetoric given by some African leaders, the negativity towards homosexuality is not universal in all African countries and by all African leaders. According to Lunau, Oberth, Daskilewicz, and Muller (2017) Thabo Mbeki, former president of South Africa stated that sexual preferences are a private matter, and he does not think it is a matter for the state to intervene, as it does not make sense. He further states that what two consenting adults do is not a matter for the law. In the same line of argument, Festus Mogae former president of Botswana, believes that the time has come for African leaders to act against bad laws that stifle our HIV response (Lunau, Oberth, Daskilewicz, & Muller, 2017). Mogae, emphasises that the action should start with recognising the rights of women and decriminalising homosexuality and voluntary sex work, which is vital to protecting the health and dignity of these groups. Not to forget Joaquim Chissano, former president of Mozambique who noted that the nation can no longer afford to discriminate against people on the basis of age, sex, ethnicity, migrant status, sexual orientation and gender identity or any other basis- the nation needs to unleash full potential of everyone (Lunau, Oberth, Daskilewicz, & Muller, 2017). The above extracts show how some African leaders rebuke homophobic attitudes and call for understanding and the protection of LGBTQI groups.

2.4 The socio-cultural challenges that LGBTQI people may encounter in their day-to-day lives

In his study, Francis (2017) discusses some of the social challenges experienced by school going LGBQTI youth in South African schools and concludes that the youth

experience significant homophobia, transphobia, discrimination, isolation, and non-tolerance within their high school contexts. The humanitarian discourse has also shed light on how LGBTQI people are treated in the society. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) transgender persons are often severely marginalised. Similarly, it is noted that intersex individuals may endure persecution because they do not conform to gender expectations, or are viewed as having a physical disability related to their atypical sexual anatomy; and may be subjected to unwanted surgery to "correct" their anatomy or have ongoing medical needs related to their condition (UNHCR, 2012).

It has also been realised by Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Ganga-Limando (2014) that traditional beliefs, combined with homophobic stereotypes, have resulted in traumatic experiences for lesbian and gay persons in South Africa. Young lesbians have been raped by older males apparently "teaching" them to be real women or "curing" them of lesbianism. Young gay men are beaten by other males in order to make them "real men." A study carried out by Mulaudzi (2018) on *Corrective rape and the war on homosexuality: patriarchy, African culture and Ubuntu* and has concluded that, in South Africa, corrective rape affect all lesbian women. That is, lesbian women have a history of oppression that demands for protection.

Moreover, Mulaudzi (2018) realises that although South Africa has a stellar record in the fight for recognition of sexual minority rights in Africa and in the world at large, an effort is still needed in terms of societal reform. Mulaudzi (2018) thus emphasises that the fight towards the recognition of LGBTQI does not end at legislative form, however there is a need to change the mind set of people to bring them in line with the legislation.

Obasola (2013) notes that LGBTQI individuals seem to live in closets and live surreptitious lives because of the strong cultural aversion towards the practice. By coming out and revealing their homosexual orientation, they risk the possibility of being segregated by their families as well as being isolated in society (Obasola, 2013). Some individuals, however, are gradually coming out of the closet to assert what they perceive to be their constitutional rights (Obasola, 2013).

LGBTQI victimisation affects families and communities, saps household resources, strains family ties and depresses family members (Izugbara *et al.,* 2020). Research reveals that to avoid violence, abuse and stigma, LGBTQI persons may censor their behaviours to what is acceptable to their aggressors and victimisers often making them "their own jailers" (Izugbara *et al*., 2020). It is also significant to note that, Namibia illustrates the continuing climate of hostility and fear which many LGBTQI people endure. Interestingly, the fictional writings under study demonstrate how the social establishment such as culture is eventually liable for the prevalent attitudes towards homosexuality.

The observation by Fourie and Lotter (2020) is that LGBTQI people continue to face discrimination across the world, homophobic violence and abuse targeting the LGBTQI people occur on regular times. In the labour market a majority of LGBTQI people continue to hide their sexual orientation or to endure harassment out of fear of losing their jobs. According to Fourie and Lotter (2020) most young LGBTQIs experience estrangement from family and friendship networks, harassment at school and invisibility which can lead to underachievement at school, school dropout, mental ill-health and homelessness. This discrimination does not only deny LGBTQI people equal access to key social goods such as employment, healthcare, education and

housing, but it also marginalises them in society and makes them one of the vulnerable groups who are at risk of becoming socially excluded (Fourie & Lotter, 2020).

A research by Mavhandu-Mudvusi and Sandy (2015) reveal that in the school setting young people face the threat of homophobic bullying and harassment such as beatings and name calling. For instance, as noted by Mavhandu-Mudvusi and Sandy (2015) that some students in a South African rural university were harassed and discriminated against by their heterosexual peers and staff, among other harassment is that they were viewed as sinners, satanic or demon possessed.

The use of stereotypical labels and derogatory terms to describe LGBTQI were also noted by Mavhandu-Mudvusi and Ganga-Limando (2014). In their research done in a rural University in South Africa, the researchers noted that many students suffered at the hands of others, whereby fellow students called them derogatory names such as: "double adapter, Adam and Steve, Eve and Eve, That girl, Wrong turn, Female's demon and Matriple six (666) among others.

Sanger (2015) also echoes the same sentiments that discrimination in the form of bullying at school is one of the major problems transgender youths are experiencing and access to toilet facilities was another serious safety concern. Sanger (2015) further notes that LGBTQI people also experience exclusion at structural levels related to lack of representation of homosexuality, bisexuality and gender identity in school curriculum.

Meanwhile, Sithole (2015) explores the academic and social challenges experienced by students from the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community at a South African university and note the following challenges: labelling, othering, experience of sexual abuse through collective rape, marginalisation by lecturers, exclusion by fellow

students, discrimination from worship as well as discrimination in terms of allocation of residences. Sithole (2015) thus concludes that homophobic remarks and religious precepts about homosexuality are challenges that LGBTQI individuals endure in many schools.

To circumvent homophobia, a number of studies indicate that increased levels of education on LGBTQI issues tend to be a prediction of relative positive attitudes toward homosexuality (Aboave, Cishe, Twaise, & Goon, 2014; Adebayo *et al*., 2012). It seems to appear that, culture, politics and religion are social establishments that condone homophobia by embracing heterosexuality as the only 'normal' sexuality. LGBTQI authors of fiction pay homage to resilience that they have to endure for being queer and coming out to the world. This type of writing gives them a chance of becoming who they are, keeping their dignity and showing the benefit of standing by one's own rights (Duncan, 2013).

According to Mpuka (2017) there appears substantial evidence that LGBTQI are limited in their freedom in the following ways; police officers unjustly arrest, detain, beat, humiliate and extort LGBTQI people. Mpuka (2017) also further reveals that LGBTQI are exposed to work place discrimination which may impact their full productivity, as well as discrimination in schools by teachers and other students which hampers their learning, and encourage student dropout.

2.5 The evolution of the representation of LGBTQI themes in African literature

According to Tamale (2011) African queer genre has battled with numerous obstacles since its earliest days among others are issues of representation, visibility and diversity. Tamale (2011) reveals the nature of the African queer genre by noting that, texts from the 19th century reports offered by white explorers and missionaries reveal a pattern of

the ethnocentric and racist construction of African sexuality. Tamale (2011) further observes that Western imperialist caricatures of African sexualities were part of a wider design to colonise and exploit the black race; whereby narratives equated black sexuality with primitiveness. Not only were African sexualities depicted as primitive, exotic and bordering on nymphomania, but it was also perceived as bestial, and lascivious (Tamale, 2011). In short, Africans were caricatured to as having lustful dispositions. Their sexualities were believed to reflect the (im)morality of African (Tamale, 2011). Tamale (2011) further notes that the imperialist executed this mission through force, brutality, paternalism, arrogance, insensitivity and humiliation. This imposition has highly influenced the writings by many African writers, who seem to follow the representation introduced by their predecessors and failing to enact and decolonise their mind from the said imposition (Tamale, 2011).

Lompang (2014) reveals that the language used to describe issues related to LGBTQI in the novel *Two thousand seasons* is unsympathetic. For example, in Armah (1973)'s novel, *Two thousand seasons,* the language used by the author to describe the homosexual sexual activity is derogatory and carries a negative connotation: "He strode forward at the urgent call and in a moment was naked upon his master's back, ploughing the predator's open arsehole while the master tried to keep his forgetful penis in Azania. The joy of having Askari mount him overwhelmed all Faisal's senses." Words such as "ploughing". "predator" and "mount" influence the reader to construct a picture of animalistic behaviour (Lompang, 2014, p. 81). The use of the metaphor 'predator'; a person who ruthlessly exploits others, in this case a sexual predator, for example, influences the reader to visualise the sexual act being described as a forced act and also portray an animalistic behaviour, 'predator'an animal that naturally preys on other animals. Maybe the idea is to portray the encounter as

inhuman or outside what is natural, and through this violent description there is a tone of disapproval of LGBTQI by the writer or probably the narrator. It is therefore needful for African writers enact themselves from negative portrayal of LGBTQI as this would be a better tool to circumvent homophobic attitudes towards LGBTQI people.

However, some writers such as Huchu (2010) feels the need to enact themselves from such imposition thus presenting LGBTQI in a better light. The above claim is also expressed by Andrews (2019) who attests that in post-colonial literature many African authors looked back at the lives of queer people during colonialism. This reclamation of the past, allowed for the queer characters to reclaim their voice and identity, and acted as a form of 'writing back' against the system which sought to oppress queer people.

Observantly, Goldsmith (2016) notes that numerous literary texts within the queer genre of the post-independence Africa stand out to break from the tradition and clear pathway to new realm of possibility. Goldsmith (2016) further notes that the content of the LGBTQI themed literature has evolved with LGBTQI movements. The fictions under study somehow prove that the overall representation of LGBTQI has improved by the presence of more characters, notably bisexual and transgender characters who according to Tamale (2011) were non-existent in most pre-colonial literature. There is also a shift from the tone of jokes and hate language (Goldsmith, 2016). However, some stereotypes and negative tropes regarding LGBTQI characters lingers (Cook, 2018).

Ahmad and Bhugra (2010) note that huge shifts have occurred in society's attitudes to gender, sex, sexuality and identity - notably by the internet, media representation of homosexuality and others. For instance, in 1965, when *The interpreters* was written,

the world was a very different place to that of the year 2010 when *The hairdresser of Harare* was published. Therefore, the representation in the two literary texts might differ. Moreover, Bintenagel (2018) also puts it that African writers have moved on from resorting to such ridiculous, caricatured depictions of gay people who appear here and there as props that aid in shoring up the masculinity and Africanness of the novel. Ahmad and Bhugra (2010) has also noted that new current assumptions are drawn up and offered as a way of understanding both development and limitations. However, the literary works under study reveal that although there has been a reduction in homophobic attitudes as noted in the literature above, discrimination toward LGBTQI still remains to some extent.

2.6 Sexual orientation and the human rights discourse

The human rights discourse is crystal clear on the desirability and the universality of human rights including the attainment of gender equality, however in the practical sense it appears that "legislations prohibiting homosexuality (male-male relationships especially) are gaining increasing attention in Africa, especially within the global human rights discourse" (Amusan, Saka, & Adekeye, 2019., p.45). Gerber and Gory (2014) have documented that the United Nations Human Rights Committee has been praised as one of the most influential human rights bodies in the world. However, its track record on the protection of LGBT persons has not yet been comprehensively achieved (Gerber & Gory, 2014). This is because, individuals in many parts of the world still face severe human rights violations based on their sexual orientation or gender identity (Gerber & Gory, 2014). For instance, Izugbara (2020, p.3) notes that homosexual activity among men attracts the death penalty in Sudan, Mauritania, Somali, and parts of northern Nigeria; life imprisonment in Uganda, Tanzania, and Sierra Leone; and long jail terms in Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, and Gambia. In Nigeria,

heterosexual family members, allies, and friends who support or aid gay and lesbian men and women risk a 10-year jail sentence (Izugbara, 2020). Political homophobic rhetoric by some African presidents such as Robert Mugabe, Sam Nuyoma and Edgar Lungu as explored in the background of this study, also portray how LGBTQI minorities are discriminated against. Liberal attitudes and robust constitutional guarantees for sexual minority rights in South Africa and Cape Verde have also failed to fully shield their LGBT communities from discrimination, stigma and violence. Generally, it appears that even in countries where minority sexual rights are recognised, such as in South Africa, LGBTQI continue to be side-lined by some members of those societies.

It is noted in Mpuka (2017) that apart from South Africa, where the rights of LGBTQI are recognised and protected by law, LGBTQI people in Africa are largely treated with grave intolerance, outright rejection and lack of recognition. For example, LGBTQI people are subjected to death penalty and imprisonment in some African countries. According to Mpuka (2017) the 2013 human rights report on Namibia has also ranked Namibia among the top three countries in human rights violations in the areas of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights include the right of every person to life, privacy (Article 3), health (Article 25) and equality before the law (Article 7), as well as the right to freedom from discrimination (Article 2) and violence, including torture (Article 5). Notwithstanding the above, LGBTQI persons are constantly at risk of persecution and gross violations of their fundamental human rights in a number of countries (Karlsson, 2015). Mpuka (2017) states that LGBTQI persons face imprisonment, torture, abuse and even murder, solely because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Mpuka (2017)'s study has also

proven that when LGBTQI individuals are harassed by members of the public and they seek redress from the police, the officers also shun insult and harass them for being queer, this conduct has discouraged LGBTQI people from reporting cases of abuse relating to their sexuality.

Karlsson, (2015) is one amongst many authors who have noted with concern that some rights, especially the right to marry has been an exclusive right for heterosexual spouses only. According to Karlson (2015), it is likely that someone among our children, parents, friends or colleagues are persons who secretly or openly identify themselves as homosexuals, bisexuals or transgender. Yet there are still several states where death penalty is imposed for same sex partners engaging in sodomy.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2015) reports that the discrimination faced by queer individuals is on the increase and there are stories of gay men being kidnapped, burned, assaulted, tortured, and extorted. HRW states that much of the discrimination is being spearheaded by religious leaders. Mob violence is a particular issue (HRW, 2015).

As a result of the hostile legal political and religious environments, in many African countries, many LGBTQI people face ongoing hostility and abuse, including non-violent human rights abuse (Jacques, 2014).

However, there is an important development to note in Africa - The African Commission on Human and People's Rights Resolution 275, from May 2014. The resolution condemned violence against persons on the basis of perceived or real sexual orientation or gender identity from state or non-state entities (Cameron, 2016). The resolution encourages prosecution of homophobic attacks (Cameron, 2016). It has however been noted by Cameron (2016), that challenging violence and hate speech remains difficult to resolve. For example, a linguistic study of a news source in Malawi

reveals the commonality of hate speech in the news article comment made by readers, which highlights the importance of engaging with community members to end homophobia (Kamwendo, 2015).

On the contrary, Fourie and Lotter (2020) emphasise that universalising Africa as a queer-phobic continent can be violent in itself, particularly through notions of modernity as demonstrated by some critics such as Altman and Symons (2016). Fourie and Lotter (2020) emphasise that there are many networks, communities, NGOs and state entities operating in Africa that are successfully resisting modes of oppressions and marginalisation, promoting LGBTQI rights advancement and educating people about sexuality and gender identity.

Karlsson (2015) emphasises that through human rights efforts, vulnerable groups have received special protection through treaty law, which has resulted in the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Conversely, it is still a fact that there is no treaty law regarding the protection of LGBTQI rights (Karlsson, 2015). One will thus question where the universality in rights is, when it comes to human rights for LGBTQI individuals.

2.7 Indigenous Knowledge System (IKs) and sexuality in Africa

Although there is a need to interrogate the issue of sexuality from Western theoretical impositions, same sex sexuality research needs to be contextualised and analysed through the eye of indigenous societies. This section addresses indigenous ways of knowing to unpack the practice. This section calls for a different approach on African same-sex practice based on ancestral knowledge found in African traditional religion and African culture.

Okechi (2018) attempts to explain the understanding of sexuality in Africa and realises that; meanwhile, before the contact of the Eurasian with Africa, the subject of human sexuality was well recognised as an individual right which was subject to group norms and values. Okechi (2018) further notes that:

> The interruption of the African traditional system by the Eurasian contact succeeded in redefining the concept of sexuality and sacredness. This shifted the emphasis from group to individual erroneous perception of sex thereby creating a wrong impression about sexuality and sexual relationship. Consequently, the same instigators of wrong orientation of sexual relationship reversed in another dimension to appear through the loophole they created (wrong impression about human sexuality) to instigate another catastrophe in the concept of cultural globalization especially as regards to human sexuality among the African societies. Indeed, they claim to be spreading the message about the freedom of individuals to sexuality and sexual orientation, these were what they destroyed in the past through their religious and cultural proselytisers, who knew nothing about the African traditional. (Okechi, 2018. p.2).

Mkasi (2016) reveals that homosexuality tolerance or, homophobia is not alien to pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial Africa. According to Mkasi (2016) in pre-colonial times there was a more diverse understanding of sex, gender, as well as treatment of sexual and gender minorities within African cultures. This understanding varied from discouraging public discussion of homosexual desires and, to complete tolerance of LGBT minorities including the institutionalisation of some forms of same-sex relationships.

According to Shizha (2013) there was emphasis on the importance of reclaiming African indigenous knowledge, as this would help the next generation not to lose interest in their culture and only adopt Western cultures. In addition, Mackhubele (2013) states that, faced with globalising forces that promote universal approaches to knowledge and understanding, indigenous people have reacted by alternatively seeking to re-discover ancient wisdom as a foundation for pathways to the future. Indigenous knowledge system should be revisited in instances where global knowledge seems to fail to effectively address problems affecting the native people. Furthermore, Owusu-Asah and Mji (2013) persist that African researchers need to persist in developing alternative methods of studying our reality and refrain from sticking to the research pathways mapped out by Western methodologies, within which many have been trained.

Mkasi (2016) notes the need to interrogate freedom of speech from Western theoretical imposition as a flaw. He thus claims that same sex sexuality research needs to be contextualised and analysed through the eyes of indigenous society. Tamale (2011, p.18) also speaks to this by insisting that the fact that the language of Western colonialists has dominated sexuality discourses means that the shape and construction of the meanings and definitions of related concepts necessarily reflect the realities and experiences outside Africa. Lastly, Chilisia (2012) also argues that Western thought and education on sexuality differ from indigenous knowledge systems, and are therefore unable to meet the needs of indigenous problems. Hence the call to revert to indigenous knowledge system in dealing with sexuality issues in Africa.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The current study is located within Queer studies and the theoretical framework through which it will be explored is Queer Theory (Dilley, 1999). Many scholars such

as Michael Foucault, Gayle Rubin, Eve Kosofsky Sedwick and Judith Butler have contributed to the development of Queer Theory, but this study draws from the ideas of Judith Butler (1990); Butler (1993); Butler (1999); Butler (2004) as well as Butler (2011). This study deems it necessary to tap from Butler's different books, as some of her versions are a response to criticisms raised from her first works on gender and sexuality. The major view behind Queer Theory is that gender is fluid and one is not born gendered but acquires gender (Butler, 1990). According to Ruhsam, (2017) Queer Theory is an analytical viewpoint within Queer Studies that rejects the idea that sexuality is determined by biology or judged by the perpetual standards of morality and truth; Queer theorists rather believe that, sexuality is a complex array of social codes and forces, forms of individual activity and institutional power, which interact to shape the ideas of what is normative and what is deviant at any particular moment. Queer Theory thus insists "all sexual behaviours, all concepts linking sexual behaviours to sexual identities, and all categories of normative and deviant sexualities, are social constructs, sets of signifiers which create certain types of social meaning" (Ruhsum, 2017, p. 4). According to Dilley (1999, p.462), "Queer Theory is about questioning the presumptions, values, and viewpoints regarding those whose sexuality or gender places them outside of society's idea of normal". Queer theory therefore houses the analytical tools used to examine what is "normal" and "abnormal," primarily through deconstructing issues of sexuality in society" (Dilley, 1999, p. 462).

In this study Queer Theory will best help the researcher to explore the social understanding and perceptions regarding homosexuality in the African contexts as reflected in the literary imaginaries. Milani (2014) suggests that the Queer theory is a more useful lens in the African context, where – more than in the Western context - identity and behaviour are frequently incongruous. Spurlin (2013) agrees that in the

context of post-apartheid South Africa, "queer" has had a special cachet as a kind of opposition to–and transcendence from – rigid identities and standards previously defined by the state. However, Milani (2014) also recognises and submits that language is a very important component of discussion around LGBTQI identity in Africa, and words like "queer" may carry connotations of whiteness or middle-class that would not resonate in many parts of Africa. In this regard, language becomes a superstructural semiotic tool for the perpetuation and sustenance of particular gendered and sexualises ideologies (Sabao, 2013).

According to Goldsmith (2016, p.12) Queer theory is "a radical rethinking of the relationship between subjectivity, sexuality and representation" within textual or societal discourse. Deriving from Gay theory and Lesbian theory – which, respectively, focus on male and female homosociality; Queer theory holds the binary natures of sexuality and gender under erasure and, consequently, creates a multiplicity of identities. Goldsmith (2016, p.12) further explains that in a literary context, "Queer theory aims to valorise sexual plurality and gender ambivalence of characters and their world by eradicating binary opposition, whether linguistic or thematic, and stereotypes of sexuality and gender within a body of text".

This study aligns its explanation to what Butler (1988) terms gender performativity. According to Kroløkke (2006) Butler (1988)'s idea of gender performativity was inspired by other scholars' ideas such as Austin (1962)'s description of speech acts, and Derrida (1988)'s alterability of performative. Butler's claim that gender is performative means, gender is not stable and is continuously subjected to minor changes and keeps constituting itself (Kroløkke, 2006). Tamale (2011) emphasises that Butler (1990)'s gender performativity can be extremely useful in analysing sexuality in Africa as long as this is done with the continental specifications in mind.

Helle-Valle (2004), as cited in Tamale (2011), highlights some continental specifications as mentioned by Tamale (2011) by stating that:

> One cannot ignore those aspects of cultural ideology that are widely shared among Africans, such as community, solidarity and the ethos of ubuntu (humaneness), just as one must pay attention to the common historical legacies inscribed in cultures within Africa by forces such as colonialism, capitalism, imperialism and globalization. Take the self-identifying terms gay, lesbian and transgendered that have emerged from Western societies. These differ quite markedly from the descriptors for some same-sex relations found on the continent (e.g. *batsoalle* woman-to-woman relationships in Lesotho (Kendall, 1998)). The identity politics that underpin these Western notions do not necessarily apply in African contexts Amadiume, 1987; Kendall, 1998; Tamale, 2003; Oyewumi, 2005 (as cited in Tamale, 2011). (Tamale, 2011, p.42)

Tamale (2011) therefore emphasises that African researchers may not reject or dismantle Western theoretical scaffoldings completely because they provide some useful tools for researchers to reflect upon and to develop insights concerning African sexualities.

According to Butler (1990) the idea of gender performativity emphasises how culture blindfolds people to think heterosexuality is the only normative sexuality. Butler (1990) further emphasises that heteronormativity "facilitates the compulsory order of sex, gender, or desire (p.5)". Butler (1990)'s concept of gender performativity states that for one to be categorised a male or female, it depends on the performances of that person which include walking, talking, and clothing and so on and these are concerns

that will be engaged with in the examination of the literary texts under study. For instance, in the selected literary works some characters are cautioned about their sexual conduct on the ground that it does not correspond to their biological make up. When a male character walks in an effeminate manner or a female character walks in a masculine way, society expresses disapproval. This also applies to the domestic chores that males and females are expected to carry out.

Adversely, gender studies such as that by Kang, Lessard, Heston, and Nordmaken (2017) and Piantato (2016) propound that an attempt to exclusively match sexuality with gender is not only ineffectual but a failed heteronormative manifesto. Butler's (1990)'s argument is that there is no exact match between gender and sexuality because when one is of male sex, it does not absolutely imply that he belongs to the male gender and the same is true with females. Thus, homosexuality can be justified on the basis of gender performativity. While De Souza (2019, p.4) expresses that any attempt to neatly associate males or females with masculine and feminine, respectively, is not only problematic but an endless and misplaced quest.

It is commonly accepted by many authors (Mikkola, 2017; Millet, 1971; Hanslanger, 1995, Kimmel, 2000) that the concepts of gender and sex are different, however Butler (1990) critiques this distinction. Butler (1990) sees sex reassignment surgeries as an example of how people are trying to change their sex to fit the norm, which in her view makes sex socially constructed. The current study noted with concern that there is a compulsory sexuality that the protagonists in the literary works under study try to repel. However, culture and religion as well as political power compel and confine these characters to align to only one type of sexual orientation.

In Ton's (2018) view, Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity implies that gender identity is unstable. Butler (1990) thus claims that it is hard to guess from an outsider's perspective what someone's gender identity is, because it is a personal identity experienced by that individual. Huchu (2010) in *The hairdresser of Harare* justifies this claim by presenting Dumisani a homosexual character who appeared purely masculine by his looks. As Vimbai, Dumisani's friend claims: "he spoke like a 'normal' man, everything about him was masculine. Didn't homosexuals walk about with handbags and speak with squeaky voice?" (p.166). Once more, how people express themselves through their clothes or hairstyle may not match the way they feel internally, or match what society may expect of them, being of a certain gender (Butler, 1990). Mavhandu-Mudvusi and Ganga-Limando (2014) propound that professions such as hairdressing and colours such as pink are typically associated with specific gender, however, these ideas to gender are not stable, they vary from culture to culture.

Furthermore, colour pink and the hairdressing profession were considered girly, nonetheless, nowadays men and boys put on pink colours and they engage in any job, including hairdressing, hence according to Butler (1990) gender norms are evolving. Thus, this is a typical social construct that sometimes even begins from the day the sex of a child is known – even while they are still in their mother's womb, for instance, as part of preparation for baby's room and clothing, or as part of baby shower preparations, both the decorations and cake are assigned specific colours that are aligned to gender and sexuality.

In line with the above, Mavhandu-Mudvusi and Ganga-Limando (2014) propound that it is actually a set of beliefs about cultural and gender role expectation and sexual orientation that is a source of stigma and discrimination. Dress codes, sport codes, and body movements are associated with femininity and masculinity amongst the public.

Failure to adhere to these expectations results in one being classified as LGBTQI and treated differently from others. According to Butler (1990), clothing, colour, or type of job belongs to certain genders change over time. What was seen as typical for one gender, can in a different period in time be seen as atypical for the same gender. Hence the idea that gender is unstable.

The conclusion that gender identity is not stable has provoked criticism. Butler (1990) did not seem to agree with the criticisms she received. Thus, from her work of *Gender Trouble* (1990), she responded to those critiques in a new preface of *Body That Matter* (1993), and later further address criticisms in the new preface of *Gender Trouble* (1999) and *Undoing gender* (2004). In all these prefaces Butler did not seem to give in her ideas, but rather fine-tunes them using the criticisms given as the basis.

Moreover, Butler suggests that "sex is as culturally constructed as gender" and she concludes that if that is the case, then gender and sex are the same (Butler 1999, p. 10). She calls sex a cultural norm because sex is no longer treated as something that is determined by the body (Butler 2011, p. xii). In some African cultures at this point in time it is a cultural norm that everyone should either be of male or female sex, and only these two sexes exist. Thus, Butler (1999) exemplifies babies who are born hermaphrodites are being operated on to 'normalize' their genitalia, to make their bodies into male or female. Likewise, there are transsexuals who themselves want to get operated on their genitals to make them the gender they know they are. Since the sex of people is being changed to fit the current norms, Butler sees sex as socially constructed.

Although used in this study, note should be taken that the Queer Theory has both been praised and criticised. Some criticisms worth noting are those from the two leading

scholars in the study of African sexualities, Marc Epprecht (2008) and William Spurlin (2006) who have taken different positions in the relevance and potential of Queer theory for African sexuality studies. Epprecht (2008) writes in his book *Heterosexual Africa?* that he has become increasingly skeptical about the relevance and potential of Queer theory for African sexuality studies, referring to Queer Theory's heavy dependence on Western theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence.

Queer Theory, for Epprecht (2008) "awaits a rigorously theorised indigenous term or terms grounded in African culture and contemporary struggles, sensitive to lessons learned through decades of Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial critiques of power and the sociology of science." However, Epprecht (2008) himself will not contribute to this as he concludes that "it is important to acknowledge but not to promote Queer theory as a research strategy in Africa (Van Klinken, 2017)."

Spurlin (2006) whose work is picked on by Epprecht as an example of colonising traditions of Western scholarship on sexuality in Africa, in turn dismisses Epprecht's rejection of the Queer Theory as "downright absurd" because, as he argues, the Queer Theory precisely began by problematising the very assumption of a normative sexuality that Epprecht (2008) seeks to debunk, acknowledging the Western origins and hegemonies of Queer scholarship, in his book *Imperialism within the Margins*. Spurlin (2006) proposes to intersect queer studies with postcolonial theory in order to "decolonise assumptions in Queer scholarship about sexual identities, politics, and cultural practices outside the West." According to Van Klinken (2017) Spurlin's major criticism is that Queer Studies "have shown little interest in cross-cultural variations of the expression and representation of same-sex desire; homosexuality in non-western cultures have been, until very recently, imagined through the imperialist gaze of Euro-American queer identity politics, appropriated through the economies of the West or,

at worst, ignored altogether (p. 2)." His concern is that Queer Studies, by remaining Eurocentric, may help "to underwrite nationalist strategies at work in many postcolonial contexts that read homosexuality as foreign to non-western cultures" is particularly relevant in African contexts where there is a strong popular perception that homosexuality is, indeed, a Western invention. Spurlin's ideas are contrary to Epprecht's argument that African scholars and activists are "extremely reluctant to embrace the term *queer.*"

Finally, according to De Lauretis (1991, as cited in Gedro and Mizzi (2014), the Queer Theory attempts to break down the continual use of categories and labels that stereotype and harm those who are in marginalised positions, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, hence its usage in this study. The Queer Theory "re-presents" a more fluid concept of gender and sexuality to enhance understanding of human diversity.

2.9 Chapter summary

Chapter two presented the literature used in this study. Firstly, the chapter exposes the definitions of some words used in this study, mostly the terms in the abbreviation LGBTQI. Secondly, the chapter reflects on the pre-colonial views of African sexual identity in order to expose what literature states about the queer African narratives. The chapter also reviews the literature aligning to the following key points: the literary representation of LGBTQI in African literature, the socio-political and religious views on LGBTQI as well as the socio-cultural challenges experienced by non-heteronormative individuals. Furthermore, the chapter also discussed the representation of LGBTQI characters in old (pre-independent) and new (post independent) African fiction as well as on sexual orientation and the humanitarian discourse. The chapter also considered what the indigenous knowledge system states

regarding sexuality in Africa. Finally, the chapter discussed the Queer theory as a theoretical framework that guided this study. The next chapter presents the research methods used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

THE REPRESENTATION OF QUEER AFRICAN IDENTITIES
3.0 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the traits of the main character of each queer African identity represented in the literary works under study. Different characters are confronted with individual personal challenges in coming to terms with the process of sexual identity construction. For instance, some characters in the novel developed mental health issues, such as the hearing of voices, which reveal to what extent their suffering from distress is directly linked to culturally and religiously constructed stereotypes regarding same sex desire. These mental conditions seem to be overcome when those characters stand firm on their ground and claim their own distinctive sexual orientation. The struggles that these characters deal with are the result of the rigidity imposed by heteronormativity and represent most of the difficulties that queer individuals face at certain moments in their lives, certainly a problem in most African countries nowadays.

Throughout this analysis, this study also discusses how the process of sexual identity construction, as presented in some of the stories, is the result of a combination of factors which contradict the use of rigid binaries that Western patriarchal heteronormative thought has constructed (Foucault 1990; Butler 2007; Sedgwick 2008). Moreover, characters face individual conflicts as they come out of the closet to their families, friends and to the world while they are busy with identity construction. As a result of coming out as queer individuals, characters, in some of these stories, face hostile reactions towards their queer identities as well as family ramification. Often these reactions stem from specific religious, cultural, and socially acquired beliefs. Although it is not the primary focus of this study, it is important to note that

those contexts of struggle and prejudice open the debate on sexual identity construction, as well as on the conflict between nature and nurture.

The contexts of the literary works under study show that challenges faced by queer individuals mostly stem from what De Souza (2016) calls 'compulsory sexuality'. Compulsory sexuality is the idea that compels individuals into opting for heterosexuality relationships regardless of whether or not they truly desire to do so (De Souza, 2016). Compulsory sexuality thus prevents one from exploring their sexuality or honouring what they know to be true about their sexual orientation. It is evident in the literary works under study that homosexual characters are obliged to conform to 'normal' sexuality prescribed by culture, law and religion. This study then shows how African authors seem to respond to compulsory sexuality through the development of strong characters that at times oppose homophobic attitudes imposed on them by members of the family and society.

3.1 Understanding queer analysis

Firstly, it is crucial to look at the theory that underpins this study; the queer theory. Rosenblatt (2005) emphasises that it is vital to understand how theory works— especially the fact that it is lived, embodied, real, and that rather than being merely ideas, often conceptually and discursively complex ones, theories offer up possible tangible explanations why the world works as it does. Therefore, instead of responding to the literary works by examining the connections and disjuncture between their experiences and experiences of the characters in the texts, reading the theory provides us with essential language and concepts for describing and understanding what is happening to the LGBTQI people in the literary works we read.

Sedgwick (2008) explains that each literary work complicates our understanding of how gender identity and sexual orientation aren't necessarily aligned, how the experience of the closet differs depending on a protagonist's specific set of circumstances, and provides a new set of institutional practices for us to consider as we wrestle with what heterosexism looks, sounds, and feels like. Blackburn and Clark (2011) emphasise that Foucault's ideas on sexuality help to explain how sex is a part of our everyday lives, and how diverse institutions reinforce certain norms. Similarly, queer theory is significant because it explains how gender and sexuality work together as well as societal or environmental influences on gender and sexuality.

Queer is not the lumping together of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, although it does pay particular attention to sexual and gender identities such as these (Jagose, 1996). Rather, it is the suspension of these classifications (Pinar, 1998). Queer theorists recognise sexual and gender identities as social, multiple, variable, shifting, and fluid; and while they allow for movement among such identity categories (Britzman, 1997), they advocate for movement outside of these categories as well. By rejecting categories of identity, queer theorists interrogate and disrupt notions of normal, with particular respect to sexuality and gender (Tierney & Dilley, 1998), but not limited to these identities. Queer theory then intends to dismantle the idea of binary sexes and the notion of normalcy.

According to Britzman (1997) LGBTQI inclusive discourses including those under study often reinforce heteronormativity and binary constructions of sex and gender: that is, the social understanding that there are two distinct genders, women and men, that are synonymous with two distinct sexes, female and male, and that the expectation of being a woman (female) is to desire men (males), both emotionally and sexually, and vice versa. Because of this, LGBTQI-inclusive discourses may provide only a

"sentimental education" (Britzman, 1997, p. 158) to readers, one that insists that gay and lesbian people are just like straight people and thus erases significant differences among people. Alternatively, a queer approach endeavours to suspend sexual and gender identities rather than underscore them (Jagose, 1996), interrogating heteronormativity by acknowledging a variety of genders, sexes, and desires, as well as foregrounding the sexual, thereby challenging the notion of what counts as normal among them (Blackburn & Clark, 2011). This explains why the queer theory is used in this study, despite it being an old theory that has been criticised a lot by other writers.

The aim of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, is to explore the representation of the various queer African identities that appear in selected African texts. The literary analysis will be introduced and discussed according to the queer African representation that the characters embody.

3.2 Representing lesbian identities in Fairy tales for lost children: Watering the imagination

Lesbian identity is represented differently by different African writers. In *Fairy tales for lost children*, *Watering the imagination* is a short story of Suldana, a lesbian, as told by her mother. Written in a first person monologue the story reflects on the life and freedom of sexual choice in which the unnamed mother speaks about her daughter's way of life.

The monologue describes the mother and daughter's situation within the contexts of the mother protecting her daughter's freedom of choice regarding sexual matters. Suldana's mother expresses from the beginning of the story that she has never left her motherland, Somalia. The narrator also described herself as a storyteller, someone who keeps the tradition going, honouring the cultural background of Somalian people. She also described herself as someone who passes on "the tales of kings and warrior

queens, freedom fighters and poets" (Osman 2013, p.3) to her daughter as is customary according to their tradition. The narrator appears to be someone who is well accustomed with the Somalian culture; for instance, its do's and don'ts. She appears confident about what she means when she says that "I tell these stories to 'remind' my children and myself that Somalia is fertile with history and myth. The only seed that need regular watering is our imagination" (Osman 2013, p.3). Hence the title of the story *Watering our imagination*. According to Hawley, in his analysis of this story, the mother "in recording why she does so, also suggests the motivation for Diriye Osman and other African writers to produce art that deals with sexual transgressions (Hawley 2017, p.123).

Being an individual who is well acquainted with culture and its practices, this study assumes that Suldana's mother should be aware of certain sexuality issues; maybe traditional issues, and that differentiates her from people of her society. It is due to this awareness that she is able to withstand her daughter's sexual orientation without any hostility or whatsoever, probably knowing that such sexual behaviour is not alien to her culture, although it is a concealed matter. It is interesting to note that the voice of Suldana's mother tells us about her daughter's lesbianism without any homophobic bias:

> My eldest daughter, Suldana, is in love with another woman. She is eighteen and she spends her days working at our kiosk selling milk and eggs, and at night she sneaks out and goes down to the beach to see her lover. She crawls back into bed at dawn, smelling of sea and salt and perfume. (Osman, 2013, p.3)

From the extract above, readers encounter how the aspect of homosexuality, specifically lesbianism is kept a secret, especially by noting that Suldana and her lover do not meet during the day, but rather during the night, perhaps so that no one else sees them. The narrator also states that Suldana "sneaks" out, instead of freely going to see her lover. This is all done in order for Suldana not to raise suspicion which shows an understanding of the societal attitudes of the environment in which they lived. Getting back home at dawn, after seeing her lover, Suldana "crawls" back into bed. All this happens because both Suldana and her mother understand the possible reaction of the society in case they find out that Suldana is lesbian. By exposing the fact that Suldana's mother is a storyteller of old cultural tales, one can conclude that the themes of these said stories may include those to do with African sexuality. Thus, the narrator says these stories are meant to remind her children that Somalia is fertile with history and myth.

Suldana's mother protects her daughter's sexual choice, by not exposing it or judging her. It is an unusual protective position for a mother-daughter relationship, as women's roles in raising families are deeply embedded in African structures. The question here remains whether this attitude regarding a mother and daughter's freedom of sexuality is a common one in Africa. Traditionally, there are certain expectations from an African mother when raising a family, especially on issues of sexuality, the topic which qualifies amongst the unspeakable.

The position that Suldana's mother takes to defend and support her daughter's sexuality is not the dominant attitude common in Africa, but it is a new possible attitude to be acquired by many African families as far as LGBTQI issues are concerned. By creating this new attitude outside of the dominant role and outside the common position of motherly character, Osman could, in this case, be pointing at the

possibility of having a relative who is supportive towards same-sex orientation in an African home, an idea that portrays that Africa is not solely homophobic towards LGBTQI as some writers claim.

Moreover, noting earlier explanations that the narrator has never crossed borders of her motherland, Somalia, this gives us pride in noting that a traditional African woman is able to accept and tolerate differences without much western influences *per se* or influences from modern education whatsoever. This also proves to us that, Africa has a history as well as its own ways of dealing with sexuality related issues despite the fact that there is little or no documentation of sexuality related issues, essential knowledge has been passed on orally from one generation to another. Finding a mother who understands and allows her daughter to have freedom of sexual choice, and who does not compel her onto compulsory sexuality, is a rare experience to cherish. From the view point of queer theory, both Suldana and her mother dismantle the binary construction of sexuality and gender by embracing lesbianism, a sexuality that is considered to be out of the norm.

Other cases of lesbianism are present in other African novels and are worth a brief mention. In Monika Arac de Nyeko's short story *Jabula tree*, Ijeoma, the protagonist is attracted to women from an early age. Her mother finds out and radically disapproves. Ijeoma finds love with a woman but the situation is so dangerous for lesbians there, that she finally marries a man, conforming to the tradition and societal norms. Later in her marriage, she is unable to submit to a marriage life when she is constantly recalling the love she had found before. Returning to her mother's home she now finds an accepting mother and the opportunity of life lived with the real love of her life, a woman. De Nyeko's story is a source of hope that constantly reminds the reader that the homophobic attitude that most families have towards LGBTQI

members might not be a permanent behaviour, as with new experiences, new understanding towards the concept of LGBTQI arises, which might change the people's mind-set.

On the contrary to the above developments in stories concerning African lesbianism, Osman's story *Watering the imagination* presents a proud mother defending her daughter's freedom of sexual choice right from the beginning. Women like Suldana's mother seek to live their lives differently. Suldana's mother applies the freedom she thinks anyone should be able to enjoy by supporting her daughter. Both Suldana and her mother are in search of a way to claim their choice of sexual identity that differs from the standard norm in a world dominated by fierce patriarchal heteronormativity, and by so doing, they suspend the binary construction of gender by demonstrating that there is an alternative sexuality which is lesbianism.

Suldana's mother goes beyond the dominant assumption and cultural constraints regarding the common roles that are prescribed for women in Somalian society, a very strict society as it is governed by Islamic laws of Sharia (Binternagel, 2018). This is evident when Suldana's mother admits that she is not considering any of the marriage proposals from men that she receives for her daughter. For example, when she says that "[e]very day marriage proposals arrive with offers of high dowries, but I wave them away" (Osman 2013, p.3). In fact, she acknowledges the complicity she has with her daughter about her sexual choices and cultural traditions when she states that "[w]e never talk about these things like mothers and daughters should; but I respect her privacy and I allow her to live" (p.3).

In analysing this story Binternagel (2018) realises two aspects that need to be noted in the narrator's description. The first one is how the mother addresses these issues using

the first-person plural pronoun "we"; thus, including herself in that reflection and not only speaking about it as an alien aspect to herself. It is a significant change of attitude since it can be interpreted as a more conscious implication that is also crucial for her as a woman, and not only as a mother. As for the second, Binternagel (2018) points out that this attitude towards marital conventions in Africa is not a common one, let alone the freedom towards same sex orientation that the mother allows her daughter.

Osman is portraying an idealised mother-daughter relationship breaking with the standard rule and providing a fresh new story to be told and this is also what the queer theory advocates. Finding such a strong and confident character placed at the beginning of the book (the first story in the book), can be analysed in light of this new understanding that the intention of the author by starting with Suldana's mother is to offer a strong voice that will serve as a platform for other "bold new voices" (Hawley 2017, p.123).

With this first story Osman seems to be preparing the reader for what is to come in terms of the queerness of the representations in the rest of the stories. To some extent, it could be seen as a renaissance of the representation of sexuality construction in Africa. It is also an example of Osman's position towards homophobic or heteronormative and cultural interpretations, which in many cases also appear as the core of the conflicts between members of those families when for example Suldana's mother says that [i]n Somali culture many things go unsaid:

> How we love, who we love and why we love that way. I don't know why Suldana loves the way she does. I don't know why she loves who she loves. But I do know that by respecting her privacy I am letting her dream in a way

that my generation was not capable of. I'm letting her reach for something neither one of us can articulate. (Osman, 2013, p.3)

As is the case for many queer individuals, these unsaid happenings or taboos about same-sex relationships among others are what makes oneself the individual he or she feels is. However, those happenings are frequently difficult to articulate, and often cannot be fully explored due to the social and cultural constraints that dominate most societies, which are the direct result of the patriarchal heteronormativity rule regarding freedom of sexual orientation. Why should it be important to tell who one wants to love or why, or how does this way of loving differ from the norm? By the way, what way of life is normal and who prescribes it as normal? I consider these questions very crucial when dealing with LGBTQI issues.

Coming out of the closet is not an issue in *Watering the imagination*, as it is in many of the other stories that the study analyses. The question here is addressed from the point of view of letting someone choose, letting Suldana be free to love and break away from the societally prescribed binary sexuality. Suldana can "reach", as her mother says, "something neither of us can articulate" (Osman 2013, p.3). The relevant aspect here is the possibility the mother is creating for Suldana, for her to live her life and to realise her true sexual identity. She will be able to live her way of life in accordance with her true self, something that her mother's generation never had the chance to do.

In narrating this story, the narrator uses the pronoun "we" or "us", when describing issues related to homosexuality. This pronoun creates a sense of togetherness and inclusivity, and the narrator appears as one of those she describes, for instance in this case Suldana's mother in narrating about her daughter's sexuality she uses an inclusive

pronoun, "we" to designate that homosexuality is part of her and it is not something alien to her.

> We take our voices and our stories to the sea. Every evening we walk towards the water and we write our hopes and dreams on scraps of paper. We wrap the paper around stones and tie it on with rubber bands. We then fling those stones that carry our hopes and dreams into the ocean. My mother and my mother's mother used to do this. To us it's a way of expressing some of the things we cannot verbalise. It's a way of sharing our most intimate secrets without shame or fear. In doing so, we have created our own mythology and history. (Osman 2013, p.4)

Homosexuality, being one of the unspeakable in some African cultures, those affected by it find ways to communicate it with nature as it is in the extract above. Most LGBTQI people have dreams and hopes about their own futures, however living in homophobic environments that does not condone homosexual behaviour makes it difficult to realise such dreams.

There seem to be a constructed order that has been a structure sustained and forced in the minds of many generations as the only possible way to live in society; this resonates with what De Souza (2016) calls 'compulsory sexuality'. However, Suldana's mother in *Watering the Imagination* takes the chance to subvert in her own way the compulsory sexuality because she helps her daughter by encouraging her to be true to herself, as when she tells the readers that "Suldana must take that history and forge her own future". She continues by saying that "when she does go forth, I will honour my promise as her parent and go forth with her. We will not turn back" (Osman 2013, p.4). Suldana's mother is a bold and proud voice that speaks to us from

Somalia, the author's motherland, and presents us with a positive narrative of freedom and endurance.

Somalia becomes a place of possibility and of choice despite cultural rigidity regarding the prospect of same-sex relationships. Osman in *Fairy tales for Lost Children* starts with a story about the possibilities of LGBTQI making their own history despite the homophobic environments they live in. Osman's treatment of alternative sexuality in his story *Watering the Imagination* is evidence of commendable efforts at challenging negative attitudes towards LGBTQI people on the African continent.

De Souza (2020, p.6) propounds that most people who oppose homosexuality argue on the basis of culture, saying homosexuality is against cultural values and norms. This is also what Malamba (2012) discerns that "culture has been one of the major reasons most African governments have rejected homosexuality" (p.19). However, in the literary works under study the readers encounter how Osman artistically denounces such fears by developing the character such as Suldana's mother who is a custodian to Suldana and who in this case is aware of the cultural aspects surrounding sexuality issues but, she is portrayed as a homosexual sympathiser. Suldana's mother is the head of the family in which her daughter lives and does not appear to be affected by the fact that her daughter is in a same-sex relationship. She rather gives her the support she needs and protects her from the homophobic society they live in. Osman here suggests that not all people in African cultures are homophobic.

3.3 Representing lesbian identities in *Fairy tales for lost children*: *Ndambi*

Another story that discusses the representation of lesbian identities in Osman's collection is *Ndambi,* which means "beautiful" (Osman 2013, p.71); a nickname given to Samira because of her physical characters. In the story Samira is the protagonist

who is a lesbian. At the beginning of the story Samira recalls the quarrel she had with her sister over the phone about relationships, marriage and in the end about her lesbianism. As a result of those arguments cultural and religious issues come to the forefront, forcing her to end her relationship with the family. *Ndambi* is a story of a person who tries to overcome pain and survive against her family prejudices.

Ndambi's story begins with the echo of a discussion in the form of a monologue in which she recalls the conversation with her sister:

> My sister tells me I'm living in sin. 'Tis true. But she doesn't conk that is my sin. She tells me it is haram for a woman to love another woman. 'Tis also true. But I don't need to hear it from her" (Osman, 2013, p. 69).

The story is based on the conflict arising from the arguments about *Ndambi's* sexual orientation, a discussion in which religious bias in form of sin and *haram* (forbidden by Islamic law) are used against *Ndambi's* lesbianism. In the analysis of this story Binternagel (2018) states that it is worth noting that there are no clear statements in Islamic or in the Quran against same-sex relationships. However, religious bias and misinterpretations, are recurrent elements in Osman's stories, an aspect regarding Islam and Muslim traditions that seems to be relevant nowadays. Most literary works under study portray the issue of religion as a crucial element in terms of sexual orientation as well as in connection with their cultural, ethnic, social and family background when coming out. Basically, many confessions have been influenced by Christian doctrines, patriarchy and colonialism (Foucault 1990, Butler 2007, Sedgwick 2008).

According to De Souza (2016) Islam is the most well-known religion that condemns homosexuality with severe punishment for the offenders. The *Sharia* guides Muslims

in every aspect of life (De Souza, 2016, p.36). In the literature under study, religion is used as a pretext to justify homophobia. Since religion, as represented in the stories denounce homosexuality, the members of the society take it as an initiative or a duty to attack queer people for the sake of their religion.

As for *Ndambi*, she believes that her sexuality is something beyond discussion and questioning at that stage of her life; she is an adult woman, fearless of social or religious bias regarding her sexual orientation. Thus, in the monologue at the beginning of the story *Ndambi* recalls the conversation with her sister, and she appears to have courage to stand up for who she is despite the judgements and criticisms from individual others.

Despite her reasoning and courage, it is a difficult moment in *Ndambi's* life, being alone again. She has recently ended a relationship-and having to face her family makes things harder in that context. *Ndambi's* sister believes that lesbianism is some sort of evil force that has entangled the spirit of a person. Thus, during their discussion with *Ndambi*, her sister gets to the point of telling her that:

> I pray that the '*shatan*' leaves your spirit; I pray that you find a man because lesbianism can be cured. I pray that Allah cures you. I pray. All you need to do is to find a good man and settle down" (Osman, 2013, p.10).

Ndambi has a lot of endurance when she listens to her sister, as her sister is very quick to pass judgement and classify her as someone who is possessed by evil spirits. Something that she believes can only be corrected by dating the right partner; of the opposite gender. In this pretext above, *Ndambi's* sister is seen compelling *Ndambi* to adopt a type of sexuality that she deems correct according to their religion. However, *Ndambi* feels the need to stand up for who she is and dismantle the binary order of sex

as prescribed by the religious and culture. Butler (1999) in her queer theory however, argues that cultural forces (and other forces including religious forces) tend to prescribe what gender a male or female must have. Butler contends that gender is a matter of performance, and one becomes a certain gender because of what they do in life, hence the notion of gender performativity.

3.4 Representing lesbian identities in *Fairy tales for lost children*: *Earthling*

Osman also portrays lesbianism in the story titled *Earthling*. The protagonist is Zytum who is a Somalian woman, who is in a relationship with Mari, a woman of mixed origin (Japanese and Somalia) who owns a coffee shop named Earthling. Zytum has been in and out of the mental hospital several times due to a mental condition which makes her hear voices. At the time of the narration Zytum is out of the hospital and starting to get in touch with her normal life again.

The beginning of the story is a presentation of facts that analogically connect with real passages of the author's own mental problems (Duncan 2013; Jayawardane & Edoro2015; Whitmore 2013). At the beginning of the narration Hamdi, Zytum's sister, seems to support her sister's lesbianism, but soon after the first pages of the story things take a different turn and she faces Zytum with a different discourse. Both sisters are embarking in new relationships, Zytum with Maria and Hamdi with Libaan, a young Somalian man close to the family's clan. The concern showed by Zytum's sister begins with her surprise when Zytum told her that [her new partner] was half-Somali half Japanese. However, even though Hamdi was still getting used to the idea of having a lesbian sister, she was supportive. Her new boyfriend, however, took a dim view. "Two women 'fornicating', says Libaan, "was unnatural and repulsive, not to mention

'*haram*'" (Osman, 2013, p. 79). We learn that Zytum's sister is forced by her future husband to choose between her lesbian sister or himself in order to comply with the heterosexual standards of family traditions. In terms of the queer theory, Zytum is disrupting the expected sexual norms by having a same-sex partner, an act which her sister Hamdi sees as unnatural according to culture and *haram* according to the Islamic religion.

The rift between the two sisters continues with arguments from each of them regarding the suitability of their own independent sexual choices. The quarrel develops into a kind of obligation posed by Hamdi's husband-to-be: Hamdi has to choose between her sister or him. That makes both sisters argue about Zytum's lesbianism, and that results in Zytum confronting the argument using Hamdi's conservatism and forced choice of marriage in order to continue with the family's tradition and so abide by cultural tradition. That is how Zytum sees her sister's reaction when she says that:

> Hamdi took a distinctly puritanical stance when she told Zytum her decision", of wanting to marry Libaan, the man chosen for her. Hamdi reproaches Zytum for standing up for her own sexual orientation and her choice of a relationship with Mari, when she says to Zytum "'it's haram, Zey. It's against our beliefs'" (Osman, 2013, p.80).

Standing strong Zytum replies to Hamdi

> 'No! It's against your beliefs! Anyway, you're only saying that to justify choosing him over me! I didn't choose to be a lesbian. Life is hard enough as it is. If Mari had given me such an ultimatum I would have told her to fuck off' […] I love Mari because she makes me happy. You love Libaan because he validates you!" (p.80).

Zytum blames her sister for choosing Libaan over her.

Zytum is making a clear statement concerning the position taken by certain family members with respect to traditions and marriage, and evidently regarding her sexual orientation. Hamdi uses her marriage to Libaan as the approved social weapon against her sister's sexual identity. Marriage as an institution is, according to Foucault (1990), one of the cornerstones in the construction of sexual taxonomies. It was a process stimulated by the interest to understand sexual desires that grew and transformed into a constraint that resulted in the construction of the heterosexual couple as an example to be followed.

> Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as a model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth, and reserved the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy. (Foucault 1990, p.3)

Binternagel (2018) by describing the marriage of Zytum's sister as a means to validate her as a woman, Zytum seems to be referring to the rigidity and the conditioned features of marriage, "the model" imposed that Foucault addresses in his work.

Here I am returning to the analysis of "*Earthling*" and Hamdi's marriage decision, which Zytum calls a "validating situation", meaning that for her to become a woman in their traditional familiar standards she has to marry a man. In light of this perspective regarding non-traditional marriage practices, it could be argued that such a validation is just another opportunistic gender construction. Hamdi is preserving a tradition that is telling her she will be a woman after having married Libaan. To some extent it could

be argued that marriage in this case turns out to be the performative act that creates the agency of a woman in order to become one (Butler 2007). Zytum's resistance to abide by those roles and rules reinforces the claim she makes about her own sexual identity.

According to Binternagel (2018) queer identities sustain the claim of an umbrella of sexualities, and in the African continent these identities are not foreign even though some may think so or want to believe so. African queer identities are, according to Ekine (2013), currently struggling to find their place, and to articulate their voices in the continent. Despite these assertions, LGBT QI communities, organisations and publications are more and more visible and supported regardless of the constant pressure from political and religious institutions. Authors and academics, publishers and artists in general keep nourishing and providing useful platforms for the voices of the African queer community in the continent, in many cases facing threats and violence against them; or abroad in the diaspora, as is the case of Diriye Osman.

In *Fairy tales for lost Children* Osman is deconstructing the contemporary gender constructions especially by purposefully creating characters that stand against homophobia and construct their own sexual identity. Clarke (2013) claims that Africa is marginalised in Western queer theory, which means that queer Africans are not being represented in leading literature or theoretical frameworks dealing with sexuality. However, it gives me pride to notice that the selected literary work used in this dissertation are gradually changing this deficiency at least in the literary world. This is also what Binternagel (2018) notes.

In *Epistemology of the Closet,* Sedgwick argues that "an understanding of Western culture must be incomplete and damaged to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo or heterosexual definition" (Sedgwick, 2008, p. 34).

Sedgwick expands on the need of "deconstructing binary structures beginning by the heterosexual or Homosexual one which has a better deconstructive capacity as a dichotomy than male or female"; and so, claims that sexual orientation has a "greater potential for rearrangement, ambiguity and representational doubleness" (p.34).

According to Sedgwick (2008, p.10) the strategy for *Epistemology of the Closet* is that deconstructing binaries enables the vision of an in-between space, that space will then be occupied by those left on the margins, which in this case are all those included in the queer project. This 'in between space' that Sedgwick claims, can be created by deconstructing those binaries. For instance, in this context the queer African lesbian representations of Zytum and Ndambi in Osman's stories are claiming their right to occupy that space by confronting the rigidity of patriarchal heteronormativity at the expense of having to break with family relationships. Both characters address the issue of lesbianism in different ways but with similar determination.

3.4 Representing lesbian identities in *The Oracle of Cidino*

Nyathi (2003) also represents the acts of lesbianism in his novel *The Oracle of Cidino*. In act one, scene two, the author introduces the two friends, Thelma and Peggy. The description that they look more Western than the general dress of the villagers informs the reader that the girls had somewhat been exposed to a Western culture. The writer provides this information deliberately, as many African writers do not feel free to expose the unspeakable of homosexuality without linking it to the West and colonialism. As it has been noted in earlier chapters, new writers seem to follow the trend and norm, set by previous writers, therefore not willing to divert from it, as Tamale (2011) claims.

Peggy and Thelma are said to be on recess from overseas where they have been educated. In the introduction of this scene, Peggy and Thelma are drinking the traditional wine and are praising the taste of its content. However, in their praise, they divert from praising the content of the wine to praising each other's beauty. This shift is first noticeable in the lines by Peggy; although the wine is said to be lightly fermented Peggy claims:

> Peggy: I am already intoxicated
>
> Thelma: Intoxicated?
>
> Peggy: Yes, by the chastity of its taste. You are so sweet, my honey, so sweet…the spice of its mug chills my spine…
>
> Thelma: Oh, I catch it. This wine chills my spine too. How beautiful you are, my love. How very beautiful! (Thelma inspecting her friend) Your eyes are like doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats moving down the slopes of burning mountains (p.12).

As they chant and praise each other's beauty, giggling and looking at each other's eyes intensely, Peggy lifts her arm to reach Thelma's lips in a tender way (Nyathi, 2003, p.13). This relationship between two people of the same sex and their acts towards each other is worrisome and not any ordinary person from their culture would understand their doings. The girls abruptly shift the description of their beauty from just any usual description, to the biblical King Solomon's praise. The protagonists deliberately act on this, knowing that the issue of homosexuality or lesbianism is an abomination in the culture where they live. The King Solomon chant here is the best way to conceal their admiration towards each other by saying and communicating their

admiration towards each other without raising suspicion amongst those that might be listening to them or might overhear them.

However, their description towards each other's beauty and their act of doing it proves more intimacy than just the normal praise could be. One could interpret it that the wine being praised here is a metaphorical symbol of the love they have towards each other. Their reaction towards each other also proves that this might not be the beginning of their relationship, they had probably been dating for a longer period of time. However, their act is limited by the environment in which they live, and their act has become a cause of concern given the cultural background they are.

Peggy and Thelma use metaphors in their speech as to conceal the sexuality trouble between them. Although Queen mother has at times found them nearing each other to kiss, she could not get too suspicious to an extent where she could rule out and sense that they are in a romantic relationship. Peggy and Thelma on the other hand are too conscious and careful about their act, thus, quickly blinding Queen mother so that she does not notice a thing.

Queen mother approaches the two girls with a needle and a thread so that they can insert the thread in the eye of the needle. The girls make the whole thing of the needle and thread a circus. As explained by the author on the footnotes of the drama, the needle, the eye of the needle, the failing to insert the thread and eye problem create premises for the trouble between the two girls. As said by Peggy and Thelma, all these actions carry a sexual connotation. The mother on the other hand might be taking the whole failure to insert the string literally. Here Peggy and Thelma symbolise and metaphorically present their sexual trouble, carefully so that the Queen mother does

not find out about it. The two girls disrupt the sexuality and gender norms by involving in an act that is deemed contrary to the societal sexuality norms.

For instance, while the girls struggled to insert the thread into the needle Queen mother asked Thelma:

> Queen: Is it age that is catching up with you or the smoke of the big pipes of the city?
>
> Thelma: I don't know mother, maybe it's hereditary (Nyathi, 2003, p.13).

The term hereditary here might be used by Thelma to refer to the act of homosexuality, to say that it is something she might have inherited, probably something has been passed on from generation to generation; while Queen mother is thinking about sight in a literal way. Peggy and Thelma complicate their speech through the use of metaphors and their conversation is suspicious to the reader.

> Peggy: …Let me go and get my glasses; My eyes are fussy without them. I am
>
> sure I will be able to insert the string into that eye of the needle… I don't know
>
> when last, I did it though…
>
> Thelma: so, u don't know that the end is rough. You'd need to 'soak' it,
>
> 'stretch' it and 'insert' it (Nyati, 2003, p.14)

Starting with Peggy's conversation the word 'fussy' and the statement 'I don't know when last I did it though' as well as Thelma's use of the term 'soak', 'stretch' and 'insert' seem to be too emphatic and equivocal. After their conversation Peggy laughed and left. The sexuality trouble is also exposed by Thelma when she was explaining to her mother how much she loves Peggy, she emphasised: "Mother, Peggy is a very sweet and loving girl, (struggling to speak) She is all I need. She is more than a friend. More than a sister" (Nyathi, 2003, p.14). Queen mother still takes it literally. One may

also interpret it that queen mother seems to live in denial about the whole act between the two girls. A mother who is taking care of the children in an African home is supposed to be conscious about the happenings around her children. Probably knowing that what the two girls are doing is one of the unspeakable, she has no power to address the issue.

In Act three, scene two, the relationship between the two girls advances into a romantic relationship. Thelma, the princess, somewhat proves she has developed affection towards Peggy although Peggy does not really seem to feel the same toward Thelma. Thelma is portrayed at times advancing in love acts towards Peggy. Thelma is insisting and she acts forceful in her acts towards Peggy. In their discussion with Peggy she declares to Peggy that she is not interested in marrying Akapelwa, the man that his father and his friend arranged for her. "They want me to marry him" (p.33). "Don't you believe all I need is you." It is portrayed that Thelma pulls Peggy closer and tries to kiss her…but their action was interrupted by the rushing in of the Queen (Nyathi, 2003, p.33). Although Peggy believes that Thelma feels for her, she understands that the relationship between them will not advance given the culture they are in. Peggy therefore finds love with Akapelwa, the same man Thelma is refusing to marry. In this case, Peggy appears to be a bisexual being who is attracted both to Thelma and Akapelwa, or someone who simply abides with the social heteronormativity that demands that a woman must only be in a sexual relationship with a man. Hence, her relationship with Akapelwa.

In the following scene Peggy and Thelma are in a little dispute, Thelma is refusing to give Peggy's suitcase who is claiming she wants to go back home. The news that the king and his friend Neo are arranging for Thelma to be married by Akapelwa, Neo's son is also not sitting well with the two girls. Thelma who is intensely in love with

96

Peggy her fellow girl maintains that Peggy is the only one she needs, while Peggy seems to understand the culture and tradition therefore, believes that same sex relationship is unheard of in their culture. Peggy on the other hand is interested in Akapelwa and seem to be disturbed by the marriage news. The conflict raise between the two girls as Thelma insists:

> Thelma: You and I promised to face anything together. You will not leave me here alone. Mother knows about us. This is the time for us to be together.

> Peggy: Us? There is no us, Thelma. You have Akapelwa to marry, and I am… (Nyathi, 2003, p.45)

The earlier scenes have foregrounded the love between Peggy and Akapelwa, visible on page 34, when Peggy insists to be kissed by Akapelwa, while Akapelwa was not comfortable and was afraid to be seen by his father and the people of the King, knowing the arrangements his father and the king have about him marrying Thelma. However, Peggy insists: 'We always do it, and you don't fear people then, why do you fear people now? Please come, Hold me (Nyathi 2003, p.34). Akapelwa also admits that he loves Peggy too much and promised to meet her that same evening at their usual spot, the mopane tree. This episode here reveals Peggy as a bisexual; attracted to both genders; Thelma and Akapelwa.

Although Thelma is deeply in love with Peggy the fellow girl, and she is even refusing to accept the marriage proposal her father is arranging for her, Peggy on the other hand is in love with Akapelwa, then Thelma. Knowing the social structure, they live in and the tradition governing their existence, Peggy knows it clearly that her relationship with Thelma has no future, thus she tells Thelma that: "We may be bearing the same deep feeling towards each other, but remember there could be room for being curious.

Perhaps we were just trying." Peggy is aware that their cultural background and their societal norms could not sustain such kind of relationship. Thelma is truly heartbroken and feel emotionally drained without Peggy.

Immediately after Peggy has just left, the King paces around and is infuriated upon hearing about the intimacy relationship between the two girls. Some lines in the drama prove that Peggy and Thelma's secrecy of an intimate relationship has been revealed and have reached the King's ear. It is however not clearly stated in the chapters of the drama how the king came to learn about the relationship between the two girls, however it is evident in his words that he is aware of the act:

> **King**: It has never happened! It shall never happen. Where is she? If crabs and crocodiles can see those of their mates through the muddy waters of the river, what blindness has befallen my own flesh and blood… You (pointing at Thelma) what are you? Are you a man or an epicene…what are you? I asked? Is your friend – is she a woman?
>
> **Thelma**: Yes, she is a woman and I am a woman too. (Nyathi, 2003, p.47)

Unlike the story I analysed earlier '*Watering the imagination'* were we experience a member of the family who is supportive towards the daughter's freedom of sexuality choice, in *The Oracle of Cidino* the reader is confronted with a totally opposite character who questions the whole act of lesbianism. The king in this drama rejects and questions the act between his daughter Thelma and her friend Peggy, and he even compares the two girls to animals to say if animals are able to notice those of opposite sex what fails a conscious being to do so. His expression "crabs" and "crocodiles" is inspired by the words of protest against gay and lesbian by late president Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, who in his protest argued that if 'dogs and pigs' can see who

their sexual partners are, why should man, a rational being, fail to do the same (Nyathi, 2003, p.47).

The king also uses the word "epicene" to question the girl's sexuality. He cannot understand how a woman and a woman can be in a relationship or fall in love with each other, unless one of them should have characteristics of both sexes or one should be of opposite sex. He therefore says to his wife when she tries to defend the girls; "liar, Do not protect them if they can play mother and father business, surely one of them must have a projectile somewhere! Chain the two girls, have them nude for inspection…wait I shall inspect them myself (Nyathi, 2003, p.47). According to Butler (1999)'s gender performativity when one is born a woman, it does not consequently mean that the gender of that specific person is feminine. If one is interested to know who acts as a man and the one who acts as a woman while it has been already stated that the sexual encounter involves two women, it is then logical when Butler argues in gender performativity that one becomes a certain gender because of what they do.

The author on the other hand seems to distance himself from discussing issues related to homosexuality or any sex related act. Every time that the characters are advancing on a same sex act, their action is interrupted by another character leaving the readers in suspension. It is up to the reader to make conclusions. The author also skilfully uses creative language so as to avoid any word that relates to LGBTQI or any word that refers to homosexuality. Considering the setting of the book, Caprivi, now known as Zambezi, this is one of the places in Namibia where customs and traditions are upheld, and one is never allowed to speak about the unspeakable, thus the author in his writing may have complied with the tradition.

3.5 Chapter summary

Chapter 3 discussed the representation of lesbian identities in *Fairy tales for lost children* and *The Oracle of Cidino*. Through lesbian protagonists in the stories analysed, it is clear how LGBTQI people try to subvert and challenge the societal forces that are surrounding them and eventually strive to liberate themselves by diverting from what is considered to be the 'norm'. The next chapter discusses the representation of gay characters in some African literary texts under study.

CHAPTER 4

THE REPRESENTATION OF GAY CHARACTERS IN SELECTED AFRICAN LITERARY WORKS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the representation of gay characters in the short story *Shoga* and *Tell the Sun not to Shine* from the novel *Fairy Tales for Lost Children*, and the literary works *The Interpreters*, *The Hairdresser of Harare*, *Speak No Evil* and *I am a homosexual, Mum*. Gay characters in these stories are faced with many challenges be it in society or within their families. They are also faced with a challenge of coming out of the closet and they live by the sexuality they feel they are, due to compelling circumstances emanating from both societal, traditional and religious beliefs.

4.1 Representing gay characters in Fairy tales for lost children: *Shoga*

Osman (2013) represents the gay identity in a story *Shoga*. The protagonist in this story is Waryaa, a young Somali who lives as a refugee in Kenya. It begins with a scene in which his grandmother is doing his hair. Waryaa's grandmother feels it is high time that she stops doing Waryaa's hair. "This business of me braiding your hair has to stop! You are a boy not a lady-boy! (Osman, 2013, p.33). Here the grandmother "provokes an argument right at the beginning where the issue of homosexuality is mentioned in a joyful context (Binternagel, 2018, p.71). The grandmother links Waryaa's performance to sexuality, as she believes that culturally, braiding is not a trait for boy children but for girls. However, Butler (1990) believes that there is no exact match between gender and sexuality, because when one is of male sex, it does not absolutely imply that he belongs to the male gender and the same applies to females. By letting his grandmother do his hair, Waryaa disrupts the prescribed gender roles by performing an act that is typically known for women and girls in that culture.

Moreover, Waryaa is genuinely cautioned by his grandmother that homosexuality is not fitting in their society. His grandmother charges: "Waryaa if you grow up to be gay, *walaahi* I will do "*Saar*" (Osman, 2013, p.33). According to Osman (2013) *Saar* was a brand of Somali exorcism. Those possessed, which was a code for mentally unstable, were put through to release the spirits from the possessed, who would shimmy and shake and, if they go too frisky, would face the kind of beat down usually reserved for criminals. In this case Waryaa's grandmother considers one who is gay as someone possessed, thus she feels they must undergo exorcism through *Saar*.

It is clear at the beginning that Waryaa's grandmother is not aware that Waryaa is gay, however, linking his gender performance to his sexuality, there seems to be a conflict as far as culture is concerned. Culturally, in Somali traditions it was seen that when one is queer they were considered mentally unstable as they are possessed by spirits that needed to be cast out. This vindicates Clarke (2013)'s assertion that in the past there has been a way of dealing with those who were queer.

Waryaa is also aware of not fitting in the society because of his queerness. Nonetheless he is happy being gay as he affirms "My grandmother did not know I was gay. I've always loved being gay, sure Kenya was not exactly a queer nation but my sexuality gave me joy …There was no place for me in heaven but I was contend munching the devil's pie here on earth" (Osman, 2013, p.34). This quote portrays Waryaa as a young gay who possess high irrefutable level of boldness and liberalism within a context and location that does not specifically embrace same sex relations.

Boniface, a young man who was a helper in Waryaa's grandmother's house ends up in a sexual relationship with Waryaa. Their affair does not last longer as the grandmother finds out. However, the text clearly shows Waryaa as a young man who

will face his grandmother's homophobic bias. Waryaa's reaction towards his grandmother's rejection will break the family bond and both will leave apart from that moment on.

Although young, Waryaa exhibits a sense of boldness and he is very straight forward about his sexual needs. This was exposed as soon as Boniface the house boy was introduced into the household. Waryaa's grandmother invited Boniface into the house to help with some household chores; he wants someone who is strong and fit. However, in Waryaa's eyes, Boniface was a "prime beefcake [papi]" (Osman, 2013, p.35). Waryaa observes Boniface in a sexual way as soon as he was introduced into the house. Waryaa's boldness also appears in his words when he admits that: "I was seventeen and I specialised in two things; weed and sex. And there was only one person who served both plates on a steaming plate for me. Boniface" (Osman, 2013, p.34). Waryaa clearly shows he is sexually attracted to Boniface as soon as he was introduced in the scene.

The author has graphically narrated the affair between Waryaa and Boniface, where explicit sexual scenes were exposed as well as their sexual roles were defined. Waryaa and Boniface develop an intimacy bond; they smoke weeds and have sex several times. Although Waryaa is young, he appears to be experienced. Through their discussions we learn that, as displaced beings living in diaspora, they are emotionally affected by their way of life. Waryaa and Boniface share same status of being refugees in Nairobi. They long for a certain level of sexual freedom. Through their discussion they also discuss their refugee status and dreams for the better future, for instance Boniface who had done his degree in Burundi before the war began, dreams of becoming an engineer in England. While Waryaa "longs to be loved" (Osman, 3013, p.39). Nevertheless, the

society in which they live does not condone homosexuality and this turns their dreams into mere fantasies.

Waryaa's grandmother is very observant and sceptical about the happenings between Waryaa and Boniface. Grandmother goes to her room, pretends to be asleep and not knowing what is happening. After dinner, Waryaa and Boniface keep observing at grandmother's room to see if she has fallen asleep, that is when Boniface goes to tap at Waryaa's window, Waryaa will go out of his room to Boniface's room and they will make love there. On their last instance when Waryaa tiptoed back to his room, he comes to the realisation that his grandmother's door was slightly open and her light was on. Waryaa and Boniface here disrupt the binary construction of sex by engaging in a same-sex relationship while in a society that does not condone such sexual behaviour.

Waryaa is certain about what his grandmother's reaction would be if she finds out that he has a sexual relationship with Boniface. This has been alluded to in the earlier scenes when grandmother warned Waryaa about braiding his hair and warned him that if he turns out to be gay, he will have to undergo "saar" (Osman, 2013, p.33).

Through this story, Osman depicts how the topic of homosexuality is one of the unspeakable in Africa. Upon finding out, Waryaa's grandmother did not confront Waryaa to ask him what happened the previous night. Although her reaction towards Waryaa proves that she is knowledgeable about all happenings between them. This is evident in the following lines where Waryaa the next morning, tries to explain what happens. When Waryaa woke up he found his grandmother preparing breakfast, something that Boniface should have been doing. Waryaa greeted her grandmother but she did not reply.

He asked; Where is Boniface? (Osman, 2013, p.39). But his grandmother did not even look at him. Waryaa's grandmother tries to stay away from the whole discussion of Boniface and his whereabouts that has the potential to drag her into speaking the unspeakable. Upon coming back from school Waryaa finds his grandmother cooking supper, that is when he came to realise that Boniface has probably been sent out of home, following their deeds of the previous night. Even then, asking his grandmother where Boniface was, grandmother could not come to the point of exposing their homoerotic affair, she rather said:

> Boniface "is not here…that man was a thief."
>
> "What did he steal?" Waryaa asks.
>
> "Something that can't be replaced" (p.39)
>
> Waryaa insisted to ask his grandmother what Boniface really stole. He appears to be really disappointed that Boniface is gone.
>
> "The fact is the man was a thief, and I don't tolerate thieves in my house. Or drug addicts for that matter" (p.39).

In their conversation Waryaa appears very embarrassed and acted very disrespectful. Though ashamed about their deeds, Waryaa decided to 'swallow his pride'. He is seen responding to his grandmother in a disrespectful manner, while he denies their deed and defends Boniface, but her grandmother too stood her ground and justified what she knows was true. Waryaa vehemently denies the fact that they were smoking and Boniface was a drug addict.

"Then why were the two of you smoking weeds in his room last night? And the night before? …I can forgive the little marijuana but, the two of you were doing something

else in that room. Something that makes me want to retch (Osman, 2013, p.39). By using the word 'retch' the author is provoking the feeling of disgust in the reader. The grandmother uses that word because she feels and implies that the act of homosexuality is disgusting. In their sexual act, Waryaa plays a woman sexual role, and in view of the queer theory, a character becomes of a specific sexuality and gender depending on the performance he engages in, hence the term gender performativity.

Waryaa pushes his grandmother to the extreme. He insisted that his grandmother tells exactly what they were doing with Boniface. That is when his grandmother blurted with anger and exposes that: "I will not let a '*fanya kazi'* corrupt you. You will not become a…a… (p.39).

"I will not become a *khaniis*? A *shoga*? A *faggot*? Tough luck. My ass is a *khaniis*. I am *shoga,* a *faggot*." (p.39)

Waryaa's confidence in defending his sexual orientation is an unusual one. Admitting with pride that one is a "*khaniis, shoga*, *faggot*" (he is homosexual; he is gay) directly into his grandmother's face was a total insult to the humanity. Mind you, homosexuality is not something to boost about, not to an African parent who is guided by all cultural and religious views and understandings towards the said topic. But, Waryaa pretends to find pride in it, an act that really frustrate his grandmother.

Waryaa is a character who has too much freedom of expression toward his sexuality. He does not 'give a damn' about how his grandmother feels regarding his sexuality. Waryaa is ready to break his bond with his grandmother; to sustain his sexuality. Waryaa's reaction was not what his grandmother expected. As a parent she would expect Waryaa to deny it all and probably apologise for his doing. Conversely, Waryaa is unapologetic and he blurts out with confidence and pride that he is gay leaving his

grandmother in a situation of 'take it or leave it', the act that really infuriated his grandmother. As described by the author, grandmother's face and eyes swelled, she avoided crying in front of Waryaa. She hit Waryaa so hard in the face and Waryaa lost his consciousness for some minutes, she cried and went to her bedroom and did not come out for four days. When Waryaa gained back his consciousness, he snared: "I will leave this house one day and you will die a lonely, embittered, old woman" (Osman 2013, p.41). In the end it happened that Waryaa's grandmother really died lonely, without anybody to care for her while she was sick.

The quarrel between Waryaa and his grandmother puts an end to their family relationship as Waryaa reiterates:

> My relationship with my grandmother was never the same again. She stopped talking to me altogether and we became strangers bound by blood and bad history. When I finished school, she didn't show up for my graduation. When I got a scholarship to study in England she didn't congratulate me. One day I was leaving to London she didn't wish me luck. She didn't whisper comforting words or urge me to come home soon. I got on that plane with a suitcase of painful memories and little else. (Osman, 2013, p.41)

This extract shows that Grandmother lost hope in Waryaa and she is distressed by what has happened, thus, disowning his only grandson. Through his years in England Waryaa thought about his grandmother, his only hope. He tried to call her but to no avail, until he came to learn about her death. Waryaa's queerness has caused bad blood between himself and his grandmother. This is how some LGBTQI members of the family are compelled to part with their families because of their sexuality. Commonly, as the narratives reveal, most members of the family are homophobic toward the

LGBTQI individuals, and most LGBTQI members are not ready to give up on their queerness or live pretentious lives, causing them to choose over their sexuality than their family bonds.

Although most queer members of the family live lonely lives and surely miss their families as it is the case with Waryaa above, they are not ready to give up on their sexuality and live a fake life to please their families and to abide by societal norms. In the story under study, Waryaa reflects about home and mourn his grandmother while making love to Ignacio:

> I took the joint from him, lay down on the bed and opened my legs wide. As he fucked me I closed my eyes and imagined Ayeeyo (his grandmother) in her grave in Nairobi. I imagined my mother and my father (who have already passed on). I imagined our modest home in Nairobi; the baobab and jacaranda trees in the backyard and quiet veranda at the front. The whole life zigzagged in my head. When I came, I cried. Ignacio asked me why. I didn't tell him about my loss instead I said: "Insha Allah, everything will work out…" (Osman 2013, p.42)

Waryaa's description of this sexual experience with Ignacio is not a pleasant one. It appears to be full of emotional pain and desperation, homesick and painful memories of hopelessness. Waryaa thought of home, grandmother and Boniface altogether. As Ignacio played an old music that Boniface once played when he first made love to Waryaa, Waryaa was heartbroken. He felt robbed of everything.

Binternagel (2018) puts it that, in Waryaa's reflection Osman gathers several aspects that link with the difficulties of living in diaspora at the same time that he is presenting the resilience that is in this case faced by a queer individual who is coming to terms

with life abroad. Most queer individuals have to endure the life of loneliness and lack of family relation because of their sexual orientation. As in the story above most break ups with family are forced as heterosexual members of the families could not tolerate and endure staying under the same roof with queer individuals, who are mostly seen as a shame to the family, evil possessed beings who need to be cleansed and who may also be subjected to unjust criminalisation by the public.

4.2 **Representing gay characters in Fairy tales for lost children:** *Tell the sun not to shine*

Moving on, in another instance, Osman (2013) has also represented gay identity in the story *Tell the sun not to shine*. In this story Osman depicts a young Somali man arriving for the first time in the mosque in London. He is spotted there as a first comer by someone who helps him with the basic rituals to be performed before entering. The narrator in this story is not named. He enters the prayer area and heeds to the rituals as expected. During the prayer session the narrator takes note of the familiar voice of the "Imam" who conducts the prayer. He takes note of Libaan, now an Imam, whom he met as a young man in his adopted land Nairobi.

The first scenes of the story reflect back on the memory of the narrator with Libaan. The narrator links the Imam's voice with some sexual feelings. Libaan, like Boniface in the previous story *Shoga*, awakens in him a sexual desire for another man. The narrator shows that Libaan then, came from Somali to spend summer with them in Nairobi. The narrator also remembers their first encounter together. "I remember him towering over me. His skin was dark like oreos" (Osman, 2013, p.8). The scene goes on into more explicit erotic memories, when Libaan and the narrator, then a boy, were in the room that they shared, how they sneak out of the room to the back of the house and smoke, and when they were done smoking Libaan would stroke the narrator's hair

and tell him "let's not mention this" (Osman, 2013, p.9). The story has flash forwards and flashbacks.

The narrator looks at Libaan as he shouts "Allahm Akbar" and the whole congregation prostrated. The narrator reverts back to his memory and thinks about this day:

> Instead of going to his bed that night Libaan had lowered himself into my mattress and slid his hand under my blanket. His hand grabbed my penis. I was hard. His movements were deliberate. He stroked me until my thighs were moist and my throat dry…I went to sleep satisfied and scared and hopeful. (Osman 2013, p.9)

All these happened and went unsaid. Thus, the narrator says each morning they woke up Libaan would look at him, smile a gold-toothed smile that said "nothing happened". Both Libaan and the narrator seem to live in denial about their real sexuality as the narrator says: Libaan was trying to dodge a life of complications, but at night he would continue to perform the same sexual act to him until it was time for morning prayers, and they would go about their day wondering if the previous night even happened. Finally, it was time for Libaan to return to Somalia and a tender moment is observed that shows great emotional attachment between the duo.

After the prayer was done the narrator felt the need to meet Libaan and speak to him about all.

> "I wanted to tell him I once dated an Irish man named Simon."
>
> "I wanted to tell him that I saw his face whenever I made love to Simon."
>
> "I wanted to tell him that my parents disowned me when I came out to them" (Osman, 2013, p.10).

The emotional attachment between the narrator and Libaan is still visible even during this day of the prayers. Seeing Libaan greeting people after the prayer session the narrator wants to blurt out all he could, about memories of pain he had been through after Libaan had left Nairobi.

Now seeing Libaan act 'normal' as a straight man also wonders the readers. Libaan is now a married man who has his wife and child. Is he now a straight man or is he trying to put up with the societal pressure that compels for heterosexual relationships only? As readers we were not informed by the context of the reason of Libaan's departure, as it was in the case of Boniface in *Shoga*. The question still lingers did Libaan resort to heterosexuality or is he still a closeted homosexual? There is a juxtaposition in this story. The narrator has disclosed his sexual orientation to the family and he was disowned. With Libaan on the other hand, it was not clear as to whether he disclosed his sexuality or not, however despite of who he has been, he has become a reverend public figure. Binternagel (2018, p.77) in the analysis of this same story says: "The story reveals how some people acting hypocritically, create personas in order to fit in society, despite their innermost sexual desire."

Osman here exposes Libaan as a character who might have been compelled by the patriarchal heteronormativity model. Libaan might be living in the closet. Although he is a man who has a wife and a child, he might be one amongst those who were forced by the societal pressures to choose between acceptance and personal identity.

The unnamed gay protagonist and narrator on the other hand has revealed his queerness. At the end of the story the reader could notice that Libaan did not notice the narrator outside after prayer. He later raised his head, and his eyes met those of the narrator. Here Libaan appears very apologetic. He is in denial, he looks at him, smiled

the smile that says many things: "Not here, not now, I am sorry, I am scared (Osman, 2013, p. 11). This quote proves that Libaan is not ready for the truth about his sexuality to be revealed at that moment. Libaan's attitude shows that he is probably hiding his true self.

The above scene proves how many queer individuals are afraid to come out and come in terms with their sexuality as they fear family and societal rejection. In the case of Libaan it might also be a fear of religious bias towards LGBTQI beings, where one has to choose between being gay and being Muslim.

Something that I am longing to see as the researcher and author of this dissertation is a successful story of coming out of the closet. In all literary works under study, the stories about coming out are not successful one where for instance the character would come out and is accepted by the family as the person whom he or she is. Most stories have painted the concept of coming out as a devastating and regrettable choice by those who made such a decision as the first reaction from the family and society is rejection and bad ending of the story.

4.3 Representing gay characters in *The interpreters*

African writers and novelists have explored LGBTQI themes and amongst them is Wole Soyinka in *The interpreters* who explores the theme of LGBTQI through the character Joe Golder. Sagoe and other interpreters consider Joe Golder as a foreign individual, who engages in sexual practices that are unknown (at least as far as the interpreters are concerned) in the indigenous Nigerian society. As evident in the exchange with Sagoe, Golder is proud of his gayness however, he does not want people to know about his homosexual preferences, and yet on the other hand, he hopes that

112

he is not reduced to just being a desiring and lustful body by society, read by his friends; that is foreign parasite whose sole purpose is to prey upon the Nigerian men.

Soyinka introduces Joe Golder later in the story, and this character is already fully developed as an adult, a professor at the university. In the story the author reveals sexuality in two different ways through characterisation. Soyinka portrays homosexuality as a foreign behaviour that was introduced into Africa by a foreign man Joe Golder, hence creating an Afro-American character Joe Golder. Nevertheless, the author also uses the same character Joe Golder, as a character who rejects homophobic attitudes and someone who makes the interpreters to understand about African sexuality. In Golder's understanding homosexuality is not new or strange to Nigeria but only covert. Thus, Joe Golder challenges the societal believes that homosexuality is a foreign practice as the interpreters interpret it. In his argument with Sagoe, Joe Golder challenges Sagoe's beliefs from a historical perspective because he is somehow aware of issues related to African sexuality because he is a history professor: Don't give me that! Comparatively healthy society my foot! Do you think I know nothing of your Emirs and their little boys? You forget history is my subject. And what about those exclusive coteries in Lagos? (Soyinka, 1965, p.200).

Golder instigates an argument about the actuality of homosexuality in Nigeria. In the interplay between Sagoe and Joe Golder, Sagoe stands on the belief that homosexuality is un-African despite Joe Golder taking him back to history to remind him of the 'Emirs practice with the boys'. Sagoe holds confidently to his indigenous belief that homosexuality is un-African; for he replies, "You seem better informed than I am. But if you don't mind I'll persist in my delusion" (Soyinka1965, p. 200). Furthermore, the society insists that homosexuality is wrong and therefore should not be tolerated such

that even when Joe Golder points out to Sagoe the Emirs practice of homosexuality with boys, Sagoe holds onto his beliefs. Invariably, the perceived presence of homosexuality does not indicate approval as far as the Nigerian society of Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* is concerned.

In this pretext Sagoe is reminded of the known African and specifically Nigerian history on homosexuality, however he does not want to hear what history says about the said practice. He therefore insists in his views and aligns himself with the cultural beliefs and values. Perhaps, this denial of homosexuality could be a result of external pressure or the need to exhibit an image that is flawless, an image that is sexually "correct". Thus, for instance, heterosexual relationships were considered to be normal as they have procreative and reproductive value, while sexual relationships between same-sex partners are considered a dead end.

The interpreters and other members of the society see Golder as a white man and even address him as 'The American' but Golder insists that he is African, yet he looks whiter then black. Although he is gay, he possesses very masculine physical attributes. Classifying him as a white man also carries the connotation of being un-African, thus being one of those who have introduced the concept of homosexuality to Africa.

In *The interpreters* Golder is depicted as a predatory gay who tries to seek pleasure through every possible way, and a character who foist himself and opinions on others. All he wants is to satisfy his desire and is longing for a same-sex partner. Unfortunately, the society in which he lives is conservative one where queer tendencies are neither encouraged nor tolerated. Golder is misled by the appearance of some males whom he thinks might give into gayness. He roamed the college at night, roamed the night clubs where he misjudged the swaggering hips of tight-jeaned thug,

he brushes the knees of fellow men as if by mistake, begging reciprocation so that he could move the association to the next level. He rather ends up being beaten and insulted, but does not dare to call the police (Soyinka, 1965, p. 216). Golder in this case tries to suspend the binary construction of sex by being gay in a society that only believes in heterosexual relationships.

In another instance, Golder's discussion with Sagoe, shows the phobia that the African Sagoe has towards spending the night in Golder's apartment. There is a stereotype that LGBTQI people have insatiable appetites and will instinctively jump on someone to satisfy their warped carnal urges, and LGBTQI people are individual whose appetite for debauchery cannot be appeased. Sagoe is a journalist and no doubt is well read as to the different forms of sexuality but he is unable to deal with the idea of sleeping under the same roof with a homosexual. His reaction thus shows that education is not enough of a tool to remove irrational fears and doubts.

 Golder was also victimised by his houseboy who blackmails him, so that out of desperation he runs to the lawyer who tells him to ignore the threats, and effectively have the blackmailer fleeing to the safety of his home town (Soyinka, 1965, p. 217). Golder is a character who feels doomed at his homosexual cravings and his frustrations at not being able to get a willing partner to satisfy them.

The context of the story proves that LGBTQI people are at risk of assaults and attacks from members of the families and societies in which they live, however they lack legal protection. Golder's case here was not professionally handled and it is clear that the response from the lawyer does not satisfy Golder. This is also a common concern noted by researchers, including Mpuka (2017) who justifies that most LGBTQI individuals are ill-treated by the police officers when they approach them to report cases related

to sexuality. The victims are usually mocked at and their cases are not taken seriously. This forces most LGBTQI people to suffer in silence and not to report cases. Golder's acts prove how difficult it is for LGBTQI people to thrive in heterosexual dominated society. Nevertheless, it proves that LGBTQI characters have developed survival and coping strategies to strive in their homophobic world.

Golder is exposed by the context as a desperate being, who lives in an entirely homophobic society that does not condone homosexual behaviour therefore he finds it difficult to meet people of a queer nature who would embrace his queer behaviour and even to hook up with him as sexual partners. In attempt to seek for lovers, Golder tries to seduce every man who comes in association with him. One-day Kola goes to Golder's apartment, just to find him naked and soon as he sees Kola, he pretended that it was hot and he was going to take a bath. "Entering the flat, Kola was very astonished to see Golder lying on the sofa, naked, with a scant towel on the small of his back and pretending to read *Giovanni's Room* (Soyinka, 1965, p.217). Kola is non-violent towards Golder and his reaction is always that of tolerance.

Unlike Kola, other characters in this novel unleash their homophobic attitudes openly towards Golder. For example, Golder's overt sexual advances towards Noah results into the youth committing suicide. The boy Noah chooses to die rather than have a homosexual Golder touch him. In this incident, Noah opts death to homosexuality as an adherent to the society norms and values. This proves how much hostility some African societies have towards LGBTQI people.

The homophobic attitudes of Africans extend and could be seen in different areas of the literary work. Egbo's reaction towards hearing that Golder is gay is a terrifying one as it could be noticed from the narrative bellow:

116

As from vileness below human imagining Egbo snatched his hand away, his

face distorted with revulsion and a sense of the degrading contamination. He

threw himself forward, at the back as at some noxious insect, and he felt his

entire body crawl in disgust. His hand which had touched Joe Golder suddenly

felt foreign to his body and he got out of the car and wiped it on grass dew.

Bandele and Kola stared at him, isolated from this hatred they had not known

in Egbo, and the sudden angry spasms that seemed to overtake each emotion

of his body (Osman, 1965, p. 236).

This shows how some Africans view homosexuality and the extreme aversion of the

black man to it. Golder lives in a tough society that does not embrace homosexuality

and he finds it hard to get a sexual partner. This is unlike in the next story; *The other

(Wo) man* by Diriye Osman, where Yassin did not really struggle much in finding a

sexual partner because he could simply meet his sexual partner on dating sites for gays.

The eras in which the characters were developed determines how the concept of

homosexuality is embraced by those in association with the protagonist at hand and

also how the protagonists navigate through their sexualities. Wole Soyinka uses

imagery to further illustrate Joe Golder's homosexual cravings and his frustration at

not being able to get a willing partner to satisfy them.

And Joe Golder fleeing to the reference hall of the library when the craving

took him and he feared the consequences of probes that did not succeed. Here

he would watch them and despise them. Grubs, he said, mere maggots. They

fill their heads with knowledge and churn it out but they are not changed in the

process, they are like the single straight gut of the cockroach, mixing

knowledge with saliva and spitting it back at the examiner. He despised them

but not their bodies, so he stood in the reference room and watched them come in, watched their reflections on the shiny floor and marvelled at their beauty, letting it overpower him, and in satiety alone did Joe know safety, and something approximate to cure. From the floor rose their sensuousness and mockery, his fantasies, and once he said, as in a crystal glass, his fate. In huge numbers he was safe, his senses confounded him and he knew not where to run and desire died. Joe Golder stood in the library staring at huge tomes of encyclopaedia, watching legs in shorts, slavering over blackness until he felt sick and giddy and was gradually restored. (Soyinka, 1965, p. 216)

Golder is frustrated at the fact that people around him are not responding positively to his homosexual advances towards them. He can hardly find a lover and this infuriate him so much, nevertheless he does not stop admiring the bodies of those he feels he is interested in.

It appears that African people in this story as represented by the interpreters and others, choose to live in denial about the fact that homosexuality is an existing practice in African cultures, in order to conform to the societal norms and values. Golder goes around manipulating people and trying to get attention while pretending not to.

The interpreters in this story; Sagoe, Kola, Egbo, Sekoni and Lasunwon represent the African society and each of them react differently towards Golder's homosexual behaviour. For example, Sagoe's reaction is that of anger which Golder continuously arouses in him. Egbo's attitude towards Golder is that of undisguised contempt and disgust. Bandele's reaction on the other hand, is that of pity, while Kola reacts with tolerance and nonchalance. The interpreters represent a society with different people. The society always have different views towards the issue of LGBTQI.

Through a detailed analysis of a pivotal scene in Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreter*s (1965) and other literary texts, this study therefore notes that generalising that the entire African society is homophobic towards LGBTQI would be a misinterpretation of what an African society really is. Additionally, concluding that the African society is exclusively heterosexual as some African authors claim, would be a way of denying Africa some history. Due to the fact that topics related to LGBTQI are some of the unspeakable in African history and culture, there might be little or absence of documentation that relates to African sexuality and homosexuality, but that does not justify its absence in the African culture.

According to Mathuray (2014) studies of pre-colonial forms of same-sex relationships suggest that despite the regulation of gender and sexual roles, social spaces were created for the expression of non-heteronormative sexuality, that Christian missions attempted to destroy these traditional spaces by the demonisation of homosexual practices and that colonial policy completed this process by criminalising them. Soyinka's complex portrayal of Joe Golder, a gay character who is both strangely marginal and central to the narrative, destabilises the masculinist (and heteronormative) assumptions of the central "interpreters" of the novel, which they share, in part, with the contemporary nationalistic rhetoric of African leaders who cast the homosexual figure as the absolute 'other' of the African nation state. The homosexual, therefore, becomes the social and textual site of the paradoxes intrinsic to the use of pre-colonial tradition by nationalist discourses. While these discourses seek to use misogyny, homophobia and heterosexism to secure a hyper-masculine nationalism, the in-between figure of Joe Golder, like Soyinka's in-between text, threatens to disrupt and destabilise the boundaries of self, identity, nation and text.

Wole Soyinkas's first novel *The interpreters* (1965) definitely captures in its astoundingly kaleidoscopic prism, the vast Nigerian society and sexuality issues.

4.4 Representing gay characters in *The Hairdresser of Harare*

Moving on, Tendai Huchu's novel *The hairdresser of Harare* (2010) portrays a gay protagonist who struggles with his sexual orientation and identity in a modern Zimbabwe, an environment where such an orientation is not only criminalised, but also stigmatised. The novel depicts how the protagonist Dumisani closets his sexual orientation after he comes out to the family who disowned him because he is causing them shame in the family. He escaped from the family, however, he did not give up on his sexuality and gender identity. Due to the fear of stigmatisation, it is difficult for Dumisani to come out of the closet in a society that criminalises and pathologises his sexuality.

Before Dumisani's sexuality was introduced by the narrator, the first sentence of the novel already gives a hint to his sexuality. "I knew there was something not quite right about Dumisani the very first time I ever laid my eyes on him. The problem was, I just couldn't tell what it was. Thank God!" (Huchu, 2010, p.1). This statement compels the reader to view Dumisani with a sceptical eye. The narrator seems to be giving the reader negative energy to view the being narrated Dumisani's sexuality in a negative light even before the character was fully introduced. Since the character being described here is a gay character, it seems to appear that the narrator is trying to communicate that homosexuality or gayness is a physical trait that one is able to observe even before knowing the person's actual sexuality. The narrator also continues to say that although she could tell there was something not quite right she couldn't tell what it actually was. The narrator also says "Thank God." The reference to God in the very first line paragraph is also questionable. Is Vimbai implying that "Thanks God" I

couldn't really tell what was wrong with Dumisani, or else…if I had known he is homosexual I would not fall in love with him or I could not accommodate him in my house…?

Vimbai the narrator, being someone who goes to church, uses a reference to God to "evoke the religious perspective that will be developed later as the novel unfolds to admonish Dumisani's sexuality (Ncube, 2013, p.8). The plot is centred on Vimbai and Dumisani. Until Dumisani's arrival, Vimbai is the best hairdresser in town; Queen B as she was called. However, Dumisani's arrival changed many things; the fact that Dumisani is very talented, his experience overshadows Vimbai's experience and Vimbai is seen developing discomfort towards Dumisani. By being a male hairdresser Dumisani dismantles and disrupts the normal construction of gender as his performativity is 'feminine'.

Dumisani's sexuality is slowly unleashed and distributed through almost every part of the chapter in the novel. In chapter two of the novel, Dumisani is portrayed approaching Mrs Khumalo's salon and declaring that he needs a job. To which Mrs Khumalo and the rest of the ladies in the salon laughed and Mrs Khumalo mocks: "Young man d'you think I am looking for a garden boy? I want a hairdresser" (Huchu, 2010, p.7). Mrs Khumalo then angrily chases away Dumisani, who forcefully entered the salon and start to work on Matilda's hair, finally giving her an extremely beautiful look that impressed Mrs Kumalo and convinced her to take Dumisani as a hairdresser.

What made the salon team to doubt Dumisani has to do with what Buttler (1990) calls gender performativity. Mrs Khumalo rejects Dumisani on the ground that he is a man, his gender does not match the performance that he wants to do. The fact that Dumisani is a man nobody could really imagine him doing hairdressing, a job that was previously

labelled as 'women's job.' As the narrative exposes it "These were difficult times (in Zimbabwe economy) and jobs were scarce but I'd never thought that men might try women's job. A male hairdresser, who'd ever heard of such thing" (Huchu, 2010, p.7). Buttler (1990) has made it clear that, most of these gender roles are socially constructed and they may as well differ from one geographical location to the other. Butler also emphasises that identity is felt from within; one can therefore claim that not everyone that becomes a woman is necessarily female.

Many hints about Dumisani's sexual orientation are visible in the novel, for example a reference is made to his masculinity on how different he is from the so-called typical man. "Although he tries to pass off as a straight man his masculinity is constantly questioned by the narrator owing to his excessive grooming and obsession with looking manly" (Ncube, 2016, p.14). Homosexuality in African literature is demonised, where by homosexual people are viewed as sinners, satanic or demon possessed. Dumisani who is a "straight looking gay'' looks so manly that Vimbai could not find out his sexual orientation even when they stayed in the same house. Vimbai invites him to attend a service at her church. On the day that they go together, the preacher gives an 'apocalyptic sermon' (Zabus, 2013, p. 79) on homosexuality.

In the church service the pastor preaches about morality; "Timothy 3:1-9 teaches that 'Men will be lovers of themselves in the last days.' You must be on the lookout for homosexuals and sexual deviants. Perverts shall burn. How can a man and another man sleep together? God made Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve. Can a woman and a woman make a baby?" (Huchu, 2010, p. 72). Using biblical references, the preacher offers a homophobic and inflammatory perspective on LGBTs. He states, for example, that God had a reason for creating Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve (Huchu, 2010, p. 72). Dumisani finds the sermon offensive and asks to immediately leave the

church, leaving Vimbai surprised since she feels that the sermon was powerful and 'filled with the power of the Holy Spirit' (Huchu, 2010, p.72). In the precept above, LGBTQI people are condemned from a moral and religious standpoint. The idea is, homosexuality should be rejected because from the religious stand point the acceptance of homosexuality is associated with collapse of society.

Dumisani never revealed his sexuality to Vimbai; he kept closeted, despite the fact that Vimbai was sexually attracted to him. After the day of the church service Dumisani's mood has changed. Although Vimbai tries to find out what might have caused this change by probing Dumisani to tell, it is to no avail. Dumisani rather lies to Vimbai that his mind is pre-occupied because of his brother's wedding which is around the corner, and rather invited Vimbai to go with him to the wedding. Dumisani continues to give an impression that he is a 'normal' heterosexual man. Even when he asks Vimbai to be his date at his brother's wedding, Dumisani still did not disclose his sexuality. Sometimes Dumisani has told Vimbai that he has not been in good terms with his family however he never told her about the cause of such misunderstanding. However, it is revealed to the readers that the cause of the misunderstanding is that Dumisani came out to the family who had not readily accepted his sexual orientation. As Michelle the last born in Dumisani's family reveals:

> I have known for a while now that my brother is gay, and I am cool with it. The rest of the family isn't. Dumi came out to us when he finished high school, he wasn't seeing anyone at the time. Dad went ballistic, Patrick wanted to burst his knee caps it all went crazy. It was hard time for Dumi, he has suffered a lot just for being who he is…He is just different in a world which wants to force him to be what he is not (Huchu, 2010, p.187).

Little did Vimbai know that this was the case.

Meeting his family at the wedding, Dumisani introduces Vimbai to them as his girlfriend. Something that the family was quite impressed about, and especially Dumisani's mother was very delighted at this new development; she refers to Vimbai as "the girl who cured my son" (Huchu, 2010, p.117). According to Ncube (2013, p.15) such description of Dumisani's sexuality by his mother implies that homosexuality or gayness is an illness which needs to be cured simply by dating a partner of the opposite sex. However, sources under study have proven that LGBTQI may have sexual partners of the opposite gender because of social compulsion, but that does not erase their queerness, as their true sexual identity remains within themselves. Dumisani also had the same understanding about his sexuality, thus he reveals "I used to think of my gayness as a cancer for which I needed treatment. Then I met Collin and he told me how wrong I was. Now I realise it is just something I was born with as long as Zimbabwe can't accept it" (Huchu, 2010, p.184). It should also be known that holding homophobic attitudes towards LGBTQI does not change their inner sexual identity, but rather it compels them into cloistered beings who live upon societal induced sexualities.

Throughout the wedding ceremony, Dumisani fakes all impressions to deceive the family that Vimbai is his girlfriend. Even after introducing her to his family as his girlfriend, Dumisani does not reciprocate to romanticise Vimbai, when she tries to romanticise him. He also refuses all sexual advances that Vimbai makes and this hurts her so much, she started thinking that maybe Dumisani is seeing another woman. "What type of man, even a catholic man was it who refused the prospect of sex offered him on a silver platter? (Huchu, 2010, p.159). Vimbai's fear that Dumisani must be

seeing another woman overpowers her. These fears reach a stage where Vimbai seeks around Dumisani's room for possible evidence, she finds a diary which he writes the most intimate parts of his life, which Vimbai reads. Parts of the diary read:

December 2

Spent the weekend at home with Collin. We decide not to go anywhere. No man has ever made me feel so good about myself. He is trying to persuade me to go with him to Canada… am very tempted…

March 10

The sound of the door breaking and booted footsteps still wakes me at night. I can still hear the sound of him (Collin) screams as he was dragged from bed and bundled into a van. There is no Doubt in my mind that it was father who sent them…

September 13

Met strong, dashing man who literally saved my life…

Through his writings in the diary Dumisani's sexuality is clearly exposed. Vimbai reading the diary was so astonished and angered:

DUMI IS A HOMOSEXUAL – *Ngochani*. If it wasn't written in his hand and before my eyes, I would have denied it. I could not have foreseen this. He spoke like a normal man, wore clothes like a normal man and even walked like a normal man. Everything about him was masculine. Didn't homosexuals walk about with handbags and speak with squeaky voices? (Huchu, 2010, p. 166)

In the above diary entry Dumisani's sexuality is explicitly exposed. Vimbai learns that Dumisani dated a man called Collin, who was prematurely deported back to Canada after he was dragged from bed, the incident that Dumisani has no doubt that it must have been engineered by his own father. Vimbai also learns that Dumisani has been having a homosexual relationship with the minister's husband; whose wife is called Minister M in the context. Vimbai approaches Minister M and alerts her that his husband has been in a relationship with Dumisani.

The minister in turn sends a group of state security agents to 'fix' Dumisani. The agents assault him and leave him for dead. When he does recover from his injuries, he is advised by the minister's husband to immediately leave the country because his life is in danger. The story ends with Dumisani boarding a flight to the United Kingdom (UK) in order to safeguard himself from persecution. Mr M although he felt for Dumisani, he did not try to go to the UK as his name was on the list of people barred from entering the European union.

Ncube (2013) critiques this conclusion because it gives the impression that the West offers LGBT friendly spaces. As exposed in the context, when Minister M hears that Dumisani is organising for a visa to go to England she said: "Is that where he wants to go? It should suit him well there. Their government is full of gay gangsters. They even walk the street parading themselves. He will be happy in Sodom" (Huchu, 2010, p.187). This is a monolithic view given that LGBTQIs are able to find and carve spaces, within homophobic countries, in which they are able to freely express and embrace their difference. Although such spaces are largely underground, it shows that LGBTQI friendly spaces are not only found in the West. This study also agrees with Ncube (2013)'s view that some African writers including Osman (2010) in some of

his short stories, share an impression through their characterisation that the West is haven for LGBTQI individuals by showing in their stories that there is hope for better living and freedom to queer life when one leaves Africa and go to the West. This idea is based on the claim that most African writers still continue to deny the existence of homosexuality on the continent and therefore vehemently deny its existence and its tolerance. However, sources still reveal that even in the West and in countries where LGBTQI rights are recognised for example in South Africa, LGBTQI people still continue to suffer homophobic attacks.

The relationship between Vimbai and Dumisani reveals that Dumisani tries to find comfort and sanctuary in this relationship. This proves how at time LGBTQI characters are threatened by the societal expectations, and therefore try to comply with the society's operations in order to gain acceptance. Ncube (2013) puts it that what the type of relationship suggest is that gays cannot be outside of so-called heterosexual relationships. LGBTQI people tend to comply with society's demand for fear of rejection, and other punishments. *The hairdresser of Harare* draws to our attention the difficulties of being gay within a deeply homophobic society. My take in the above argument is that, there is a need to interfere with homophobic attitudes of the society, as LGBTQI individuals cannot adequately shrive in an environment of constant disapproval and pretentiousness. Family members also disown and deny homosexual members of the family because of social pressure. Nobody, actually wants to be seen mingling with a homosexual being. For instance, when Dumisani's father heard from a friend that he has seen Dumi on holiday with some white guy, he arranges with some pals in police to have the Canadian man deported before anyone knew what was happening with his son. In another case, Minister M warned Vimbai that the act between Dumisani and his husband must be kept a secret and not communicated, and

also warned Vimbai to alert Dumisani that he must keep his mouth shut even when he goes to England. She is saying all these in order to save this story from going viral to save his face and her reputation as a member of politics in the country. The issue of homosexuality here is concealed and remains an unspeakable. Even when Minister M sends some security forces to go and kill Dumisani she could not tell them the reason why they should do it, "We were not told why we're doing this, but we'll fix you" (Huchu, 2010, p.184). Issues regarding LGBTQI are kept under cover to protect certain individuals. This then proves that homosexual beings suffer homophobic attacks from different members of the sphere, hence closeting.

Nayar (2011) also concludes that uncloseting puts on heteronormativity family structures. This is also what this study has alluded to earlier that in all literary works under study all the queer characters who have tried to disclose their sexuality to family members, later ended up in misery as this cost them their family relation. Other characters in the stories under study who closeted their sexuality appear to have lived their lives better. This then evokes a question of whether it is really safe to uncloset or to keep in the closet in order to maintain family ties. Most characters who broke ties with families due to disclosing their sexuality, end up in depression since they tend to lack a sense of belonging and identity.

Some terminologies used in the literary works and in analysis while describing LGBTQI or sexual acts between homosexual people carry a negative connotation. Most writers under study including Huchu (2010) have used the term "normal men" to refer to supposedly heterosexual men. This term has a negative connotation as it classifies the two groups homosexuality and heterosexuality as "normal" and probably one can presuppose that the non-heteronormative groups could be classified as "not

normal men". The question of normality is also further asked by Ncube (2013, p.70) when he says "What is normal man? And who defines a normal man?" This study thus feels that describing non-heteronormative as 'non-normal man' equates to denying them humanity.

 As a narrative strategy, characterisation has been used to argue that Dumisani is a feminine man because of his social performances. Dumisani's character agrees with Butler's gender performativity in the sense that the protagonist's gender roles are not restricted by his sexuality. Dumisani defiles the societally prescribed gender roles by participating and engaging in gender roles typically labelled as women's roles. Butler (1990) claims that "when the constructed status of gender is theorised as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one" (p.9). This means that being a man or a woman is by "cultural compulsion to become one. And clearly, the compulsion does not come from sex" (Butler, 1990, p.11). Butler furthers this argument by stating that one can therefore claim that there is nothing like the one who becomes a woman is necessarily female.

Back to Huchu (2010), confused about Dumisani's sexual orientation as well as plagued by a deep sense of guilt after having led to Dumisani being assaulted, Vimbai goes on a search to unravel the complexities of sexuality and gender. She visits her brother, Fungai, who is a member of a philosophical group that spends long hours debating different issues about the human condition. Fungai convinces her that 'the illegality of homosexuality is the product of man-made laws' (Huchu, 2010, p.178) and that 'homosexuality between consenting adults behind closed doors harms no one'

(Huchu, 2010, p.178). Vimbai concludes that 'he [Dumisani] had one kind of love for me and another for this man, we were both loved but each of us in their own way' (Huchu, 2010, p.182). This certainly marks a complete change in Vimbai's consideration of sexuality and identity. She begins to understand that it is possible to look beyond monolithic binaries of correct or incorrect, right or wrong, homosexual or heterosexual.

Commenting on the above extract, Huchu (2010) through the character Vimbai clears the air by alerting the readers that it is wise to have a broader understanding towards the issue of LGBTQI and also alert the readers that having a monolithic way of interpreting issues related to LGBTQI can be a deficiency in thinking. In the views of this study, interpreting the issue related to LGBTQI with emotions and subjectivity is in itself a hindrance to understanding this topic better. In this case Huchu (2010) deliberately introduces the group of 'philosophers' to give the view that there are people in our communities who have a broad understanding on issues of LGBTQI who could possibly teach others who may lack understanding on the named issue. For instance, Fungai convinces his sister Vimbai that 'the illegality of homosexuality is the product of man-made laws' (Huchu, 2010, p.178). In the views of this study these laws were set by the patriarchal heteronormative group that believes that there are only two binaries of sexuality. This is what Butler through queer theory tries to erase.

4.5 Representing gay characters in *Speak no Evil*

Uzodinma Iweala is another African writer who alludes to the theme of homosexuality in his liliterary work *Speak no Evil* (2018). A revelation shared between Meredith and Niru sets of a chain of events with devastating consequences. Niru has a painful secret: he is queer - an abominable sin to his conservative Nigerian parents. No one knows except Meredith, his friend the daughter of the prominent Washington – insiders; and

one person who seem to understand and not judge it. *Speak no Evil* portrays what it means to be different in a fundamentally conformist society and how that difference plays out in our inner and outer struggles.

The dominant theme of Niru growing awareness of his sexuality identity and the backlash to it, is established when his only friend Meredith invites him to her place and tries to kiss him. A tense moment ensues, and through anxiety and horror he blurts out that he is gay. This revelation sets Niru on a collision with his Nigerian parents. Although in his teenage, Niru has started to realise the difference between sexualities. The narrative exposes Niru's admiration for other men at different occasions such as, in their dressing rooms when they changed to go for sports Niru would watch fellow boy's bodies with sexual admiration.

 Niru has however learned from his mother that "boys aren't supposed to like other boys" (Iweala, 2018, p. 16). His mother has also urged that God said man is for woman and woman is for man. That's how it is supposed to be. So Niru has decided to love girls even though he does not really feel for them. "I decided I would only like girls even if I could feel that I liked looking at them less than I should" (Iweala, 2018, p.16). Niru realises that he developed sexual attraction towards fellow men and little or no attraction to women. As the narrative exposes: "At home I would watch women with women and men with women on my phone, trying only to focus on women as I touched my self. But those men, their bodies, their sounds. I wanted to gauge out my eyes" (Iweala 2018, p. 17). Niru tries all these because he is in conflict with himself, therefore defeating himself from within. He tries to love women as his mother has urged, but realises he has no attraction to them.

Niru also reveals that his friend Meredith would touch him; he would feel 'something' but never very strong or for very long. Meredith makes several sexual advances towards Niru, to which Niru has never reciprocated. This reaction is similar with that of Dumisani in the previous analysis, who never reciprocated to Vimbai's sexual advances. When Niru comes out to Meredith that he is gay, Meredith does not feel affected and she has respect for his sexuality. However, Niru feels that by telling Meredith about his sexuality, he has let something loose that he can't control.

In attempt to help Niru to explore his sexuality, Meredith installs a dating application for gay people in Niru's phone. Niru leaves his phone unattended and he realises that his father has accidentally seen the text message from Ryan and as well as the notifications from the dating cite. Niru's very strict and conservative father, Obi, is affected upon finding out that Niru is gay. He terribly attacks Niru both verbally and physically and he blames Ify his wife for Niru's behaviour; "I never should have let your mother name you. I told her, we don't give men that kind of name, but she insisted that it had to be this name" (Iweala, 2018, p. 31). Niru's father believes that Niru's mother treats him like a woman, and culturally, the name Gwamniru is a feminine name, hence Niru's sexual behaviour. Obi also questions America in general and the school that Niru attends and insists that they are a contribution to Niru's homosexuality and threatens to call the headmaster at Niru's school and confront him about the matter. As a family from Nigeria, Obi believes that he should have sent Niru to schools in Nigeria. He yells at Niru:

> You want to go and do gay marriages? Is that what you want? You want to go and carry man, put your thing for his *nyashi*?" Abomination. You want to go

and do all sorts of despicable, filthy, unnatural and unclean things? (Iweala, 2018, p. 32)

Obi who is very religious, argues from a religious perspective that what Niru engages into is sinful and satanic. Since this behaviour is enforced by satanic sources it can only be cured through strong prayers and spiritual intervention. Obi insists on escorting Niru back to Nigeria for strong and powerful prayers and spiritual revival sessions aimed to cast out the 'demon' of homosexuality. Obi therefore consults Reverend Olumide. Both Niru's father and the religious leader are of the view that Niru needs spiritual deliverance because of his sexual orientation. According to De Souza (2016, p.29) in religious circles it is usually those people believed to be possessed with evil spirits that needs deliverance. This then entails that Reverend Olumide's declaration that Niru needs deliverance suggests that Niru is possessed by evil spirits.

Niru has no choice but to accept to go to Nigeria:

I wonder if my father and reverend Olumide are right, maybe there is something truly abominable about me that only purifying fire of constant prayer can purge. Maybe I have spent too much time in the United states soaking up ungodly values and satanic sentiments as my father has said and that has created confusion that only the motherland can cure. (Iweala, 2018, p.32)

The reader encounters how Niru undergoes spiritual interventions from different spiritual leaders but it has no tangible effects. Niru also tries to live by his parent's induced sexuality, but his inner identity does not reconcile with the invented sexuality. Pastor Olumide being one of the pastors who attended to Niru's case explains to Niru's father that: "This demon of homosexuality has become so entrenched in America that

you can't really fight it there, some churches are preaching that love of any kind is good while some of them have lost their way and are appointing gays as their clergy" (Iweala, 2018, p.72).

The above quote gives the impression that the homosexuality is a behaviour that is embraced well in the United States even by churches. The pastor therefore believes that it is hard for one to fight this demon of homosexuality while in the US where it is rooted. Therefore, coming back to Nigeria is the best decision that Obi has made.

In another instance, Niru finds out that Meredith has revealed his sexuality to other boys at school. Boys bully and mock him by reminding him of his sexuality "The one who you're afraid to fuck. He is not afraid, he just likes it in the butt" (Iweala, 2018, p. 90). Niru is so embarrassed, he did not expect his sexuality deviance to go viral, so he confronts Meredith about the fact that he has shared his secret with other pupils at school to which Meredith denied and retaliated by shouting at Niru that "I did not make you gay" (Iweala, 2018, p.96). Niru suffers emotional pressure from both his friends and family.

4.6 Representing gay characters in *I am a homosexual, Mum*

Another story that explores gayness is *I am a Homosexual, mum*. As described the author Binyavanga Wainaina, that it is a lost chapter of the main biography, *One Day I will Write About this Place* (2011), is an imaginary story. The writer imagines coming out to his late mother while she lies helplessly on her death bed. The chapter is about missing the opportunity to tell his mother about his sexuality before she dies. He comes out through this chapter amidst a fierce debate about gay rights in several African countries. Wainaina's mother died in the year 2000 and he still had not faced up the thoughts he had been having since he was a child. He never told his parents about his

sexuality. Wainaina (2000) in his 'Lost Chapter', imagined the tone he would use to tell his mum "Never, mum. I did not trust you, mum. And. I. Pulled air hard and balled it down into my navel and let it out slow and firm, clean without pumps out of my mouth, loud and clear, over a shoulder, into her ear. I am a homosexual mum".

Wainaina narrates in his chapter that "I did not meet a man sexually until I was 35, until I met a man who will give me a massage and some brief, paid-for love" in London, as he describes it in his chapter. "I cannot say the word gay until I am 39, four years after that brief massage encounter. In his article Wainaina would chose to use the term "being gay in public" instead of the term "coming out". Wainaina is one of the writers who feels that the claim that homosexuality is not African is an incorrect view, but he rather feels it is homophobia which is not African and that has been fuelled by the West.

In this chapter, Wainaina somewhat reveals his fear of the possible reaction from his mother thus he notes that 'he did not trust her', meaning that he would not feel a sense of security if he could have told her about it. This is a type of narrative where the author writes and comes out of the closet at the same time. Wainaina has managed to tell Africa what he never managed to tell his own mother. In his chapter Wainaina did not reveal what the possible reaction from his mother would be, something which this dissertation was curious to know about, taking note of the period at which Wainaina's coming out occurred. 'This Chapter' is however said to have received a lot of comments in print and social media, with some people commenting on Wainaina's bold characters that allow him to come out to the public and others expressing their disgust towards the concept of homosexuality.

Although some LGBTQI characters are unsympathetically portrayed in African literature, Wainaina's portrayal in literature appears to be sympathetically represented. Wainaina's positive portrayal allows the foregrounding of African agency in fighting against anti-homosexual politics and the struggle for the recognition of LGBTQI human right and sexual diversity in contemporary Africa. This study considers Wainaina as a prominent example of agency, courage, creativity and authority, in the struggle for sexual diversity in contemporary Africa.

Blaming the church for the way homosexuality has been politicised and homophobia has become endemic, Wainaina appears to be particularly critical of those arguments conflating 'African culture' with Christianity. Thus, in an interview published in newspaper *The Nairobian*, he states:

> People always talk about homosexuality and the African culture but when you ask them to quote they quote the Bible. Is the Bible/Christianity part of our African culture? … People who say that Africans must be governed according to Leviticus, as far as I am concerned, should not be in any serious podium discussing any serious thing (Ngunjiri, 2014).

LGBTQI characters in the literary works under study battle to free themselves from the imposition emanating from religious understanding, especially the imposition from family members who use religion as a means to oppress LGBTQI members. This study aimed at neutralising the understanding towards LGBTQI people and called for all human beings to learn to co-exist with others and to tolerate individual differences.

4.7 Chapter summary

Chapter 4 analyses the representation of gay characters in the African literary works under study. From the analysis above it is visible how the gay characters try to

emancipate themselves from both societal and religious forces that compel them to adhere to what the society or religion has prescribed.

CHAPTER 5

THE REPRESENTATION OF TRANSGENDER, TRANSITIONAL, BISEXUAL AND INTERSEX CHARACTERS IN THE SELECTED LITERARY WORKS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses how transgender (transitional), bisexual and intersex characters are represented in some literary works under study. Like any other people of the minority, sexuality, transgender, bisexual and intersex people are faced with socio-cultural or religious based challenges in their daily lives. LGBTQI people in the literary works under study strive to liberate themselves from what they feel is heteronormative forces that entangle them, preventing them from living their true self.

5.1 The representation of transgender and transitional identities in *Fairy tales for lost children: The Other (Wo)man*

Diriye Osman introduces the challenges experienced by transgender and transitional characters in *The other (Wo)man* and *Pavilion* as they construct their new identities. The story *The other (Wo)man* is about a feminine Somali gay, Yassin who has moved from Nairobi to London. Yassin meets Jude, a married man on Gaydar the dating site for gay. Yassin explores an aspect of his personality that he has never explored until he meets Jude. "In Somalia and Kenya, the countries were Yassin was born in respectively, homosexuality was something to be hidden for fear of violence. The chances of Yassin to meet other men like him were slim, so he quietly buried his desire and prayed for the day he could leave for England. When he was in England that is when he slowly allowed the mask to slip off as he became more comfortable in his new surroundings. Nevertheless, even in England Yassin continues to be ostracised by other gay men.

In Yassin's understanding being queer or gay in Western society is equivalent to being accepted regardless of your personalities. Little did he know that he has   to   be ostracised by the fellow gay community especially for being a feminine gay. This somewhat threatened his idea of freedom that he associated with the western societies. For instance, when Yassin Joined Gaydar; the online platform for gays, his expectations were high:

> The site ran a competition to determine the sex appeal of its members called 'Sex Factor'. The winners were typically men who exhibited considerable muscle-mass and had the words 'straight-acting' as part of their profiles. Feminine-acting men, Yassin soon noticed, were considered losers. Manliness was the thing most worth embodying, even if that manliness was a front, hence the term 'straight-acting'. (Osman, 2013, p. 119)

However, Yassin comes to the realisation that even when he feels a sense of belonging; that of belonging to the group of those who share the same qualities with him, he is expected to meet certain criteria to be accepted and revered. But in this case his femininity features write him off, as he is considered 'the loser' by the 'straight acting' gays. Yassin realises there are biases to overcome if one does not fit into the idealised muscular straight acting archetype.

According to (Butler 2007; Jagose 2001; Sedgwick 2008) the rise of the gay and lesbian liberation movements during the 70s and 80s projected a certain image associated with a kind of behaviour and aesthetics. This image of the gay prototype has resulted in the production of an icon for the gay community and has raised several debates about the kind of identification that other gays around the world have been subjected to. All those who do not follow or comply with those aesthetic norms are

subjected to rejection (effeminate gay among others) by those same liberation movements even though all these individuals are fighting for the same, civil and political rights. The Queer theory sought to end those debates by creating, or better said, by restaging the use of the term 'queer', in order to enhance the possibility of designing with it an umbrella concept that could include all possible sexual and gender identities.

Back to Osman's story, what Yassin is facing, while searching on the gay site and learning about the stereotypes he does not conform to, is precisely that kind of rejection that, for him, was dispiriting. "Yassin was a slightly feminine young man who, no less than others, desired the ideal male as presented in underwear ads: a man so sculpted as to seem super-real" (Osman, 2013, 119). Binternagel (2018, p.95) also propounds that Osman uses this masculine attitude with a two-fold intention since it will undermine Yassin's confidence and expectation of finding someone to have a relationship with, yet at the same time the person he will find will be a very masculine man. It is also a way to show to what extent the influence of the gay icon is embedded in queer individuals despite its subjectivity. Even though Yassin is aware of his femininity he is at the same time influenced by the gay mainstream aesthetics, he desires an idealised version of the gay male, he "worshipped musculature, and for someone shy like himself Gaydar was the best place to find it" (Osman, 2013, p.119).

In his self-identification as a feminine gay man who likes muscular males Yassin reveals the harsh reality he will be fighting as he builds his sexual identity. Yassin creates a pictureless profile for dating at the Gaydar site, also omitting certain personal details revealing his lack of security, his fear of rejection, as well as being partly closeted when he admits that he does not upload a picture of himself since "[a] myriad of reasons against doing so filled his head, both generic (someone crazy recognising

him from it and attacking him on the street) and specific to him, a Somali Muslim not so long arrived in London" (Osman, 2013, p.120). Osman is making a point about the expectations of freedom that many queer individuals think they will gain by leaving their countries where their queerness is persecuted by law, culture and tradition. The author plays with the contrast of wanting that freedom at the same time that it is a dangerous situation to be confronted with.

At the instance Yassin is portrayed as an uncomfortable being, who is yet exploring his new identity and who appears to be a transitional character transiting completely into a feminine being. A conflict arises when Yassin receives a pair of silk stockings from Jude, the lover. He angrily chases him out of his room and temporarily breaks up with him and claims: "I am gay not a tranny" (Osman, 2013, p.135). Jude seems to have opened Yassin's eyes to realise a trait and "an aspect of homosexuality in himself that had not been explored, that of becoming *The other (Wo)man*" (Binternagel, 2018, p.89). This is so because, after some days Yassin decides to put on the stockings he received from Jude, while he tries them on he admits that "they felt wonderful against his skin", and they felt "unexpectedly natural"; moreover, he tells the readers that "he felt free in those stockings, freer than he had felt in a long time. He now understood why some men dressed this way: "it allowed them to become for a short private while the heavenly creatures in their heads, the beautiful girls who had the world in their palms" (Osman, 2013, p.139). Yassin bonds with his new sexuality and embraces it.

Yassin goes beyond the perception of his own femininity by trying on women's lingerie brought to him by his lover. He also went on to buy women's clothing from the local shops and trying them on. However, being still an explorer of his own identity, he was uncomfortable in buying the clothes.

As he was in the women's section in the shop he picked a necklace and looks around to see if any customer will react. He was afraid they may shout any abusing words to him, therefore he was contemplating in his mind of how to defend himself. Seeing that no one actually cared about the hell he bought, he felt embolden to go deep in the women's section. However, he was still ashamed to fit in some items since he thinks that the shopkeepers would react and shout homophobic threats to him, so he lied to them that he has a twin sister whom he wants to buy some birthday presents, and she is exactly "identical (to him), same height, foot size everything about us, except the parts that really matter" (Osman, 2013, p.142).

Yassin wants to unmask and explore his sexuality, but the fear of social perception keeps dragging him back. He is however determined to explore his sexuality, so he bought himself "deep blue jeans with golden butterfly embroidery on the back pockets and red pumps with golden heals" (Osman 2013, p.143). By buying women's clothes Yassin sets himself free from the prescribed binary of sexuality, and in some ways erases the expected societal norms. One of the shopkeepers realised that Yassin is nervous as he was buying his items, she cocked her eyebrow and asked:

"What size are you?"

"42" Yassin replied.

"And your sister's feet are that big?"

"What can I say? Shrugged Yassin. We are a cut from the same cloth."

"Next time you'll be telling me you are the same person" (Osman, 2013, p.144).

The shop-girl scoffed and murmured in an irritated way. She tries to embarrass Yassin by passing on her comments to him. Most LGBTQI individuals face these types of reactions from the public as well as verbal assaults when they want to find ways to explore their identities. Theron (2013, p.316) reveals that transgender, transsexual and gender non-conforming people face oppression in the most tangible way, being on the peripheries of our gendered society. Living in an invariable struggle to validate their existence, and many times being rejected by their loved ones, transgender people constantly face marginalisation.

According to GLAAD (2010) transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms - including transgender. The term transgender refers to people whose gender identity (the sense of gender that every person feels inside) or gender expression is different from the sex that was assigned to them at birth. At some point in their lives, transgender people decide they must live their lives as the gender they have always known themselves to be, and often transition to living as that gender. For instance, Yassin has realised the 'person' within himself and no longer wants to be a slave of social convention.

A typical example of transgenderism in Namibia is that of Josper Moris Cloete; Mercedez von Cloete as commonly known, who was born male 24 years ago in Keetmanshoop, and who desires to transform to the sex he feels he is. Like any other transgender person he has experienced a lot of challenges especially when he has to undergo extensive and time consuming questioning at both Namibian and South African borders because of the claim that the picture on his identification document does not look anything like him, nevertheless, when he applied for the photo to be

143

changed, Home Affairs claimed "his transition is messing up the system" and threatened that if he does not cut of his hair, he will continue to have problems acquiring Namibian documentation. Transgender people continue to endure challenges despite LGBTQI movements that are working tirelessly to have their rights protected.

Diriye Osman uses several layers of sexual orientation and gender identity construction in his story. He also plays with words especially in the establishment of the story tittle. The tittle *The other (Wo)man* appears sarcastic as Yassin transforms into the other (Wo)man, as he already has feminine features yet, he extends such traits by wearing women's clothes and all performances are changing into that of a woman, but 'The other (Wo)man'. Yassin is no longer just gay, but a gay who has transformed into 'The other (Wo)man' thus in this study I considered him a transitional character.

Yassin has a relationship with a married man, Jude who has his wife and children, and who does not consider himself as gay or homosexual. This is what Jagose (2011, p.7) refers to when he states that in a survey carried out in the USA to provide some data which could explain why heterosexual couples were affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, those surveys revealed that "many heterosexual men, even married and with children, had regular sexual encounters with other men, yet did not consider themselves gay or homosexual. Having a heterosexual man admitting that he can have sex with other men but not considering himself homosexual for that matter seems coherent and to some extent stimulating, from a queer point of view, since it helps us sustain the lack of boundaries and the flexibility of sexual identity construction.

Yassin considers to meet Jude for he feels very attracted to him and also because he has been straightforward about his marital status. However, Yassin's best friend Savannah does not agree with him meeting Jude. Savanah is someone, according to

Yassin, who "prided herself on being an expert in analysing people, Freud reincarnated as a barb-hurling black lesbian" (Osman, 2013, p.126). For her Jude is a married man who "wants to maintain his relationship with his wife, come home to a good meal, spend quality time with his kids, [and] he also wants to use you as a receptacle for the sexual fantasies his wife can't fulfil. This fucker wants to have his cake and not only eat it but gorge on it" (Osman, 2013, p.126).

Osman is working here with three types of sexual identities by gathering an effeminate gay Yassin, a lesbian Savanah and a straight man Jude, a reflection of the fluidity of sexual identity. Placing the three characters in a story is a strategic move towards queering the narration of sexual identity construction. In Binternagel (2018)'s views these characters help us to deconstruct the rigidity of binaries that constrain the construction of sexual identity by questioning them. In addition, it helps reinforce the argument that the queer theory inhabits an in-between space, a flexible location to be occupied by all those who do not comply with heteronormative rules and rigid sexual identities. Osman opens a space of articulation that confronts the mainstream assumptions and evidences those made by heterosexual conventions.

Yassin goes beyond those first steps of wearing the stockings he got from his encounter, which helps him to explore his femininity. He embraces some other feminine features to complement his newly felt sexuality:

> He applied Kohl around his slanted eyes until he resembled a mahogany china doll. He pencilled his thin eyebrows … the last touch was to apply red lipstick to his full lips…he tried to get into the butterfly jeans and discovered that they weren't built for a man's crotch. So, he tucked his penis and balls in between his legs and taped them in place with masking tape. He had seen that procedure

performed in *Paris is Burning*, the cult Eighties film about New York's drag

ball culture. Even though he had always loved the film's depiction of drag as

gender performance, he had never imagined that it would one day inspire him

in his exploration of his own gender role. (Osman, 2013, p.144)

Although wearing the jean was the most painful process that went beyond physical

pain, Yassin felt empowered by the make-up and the tight clothes, as if the social

construction were markers of authentic womanhood. "He was willing to erase his male

persona and squeeze into the butterfly jeans and tight blouse to complete his

transformation into a woman" (Osman, 2013, p.145). Yassin did not only put on the

jeans, he also puts on a scarf around his neck, like a *hijab*. He did not just want to be

a (wo)man, he wants to be a Muslim woman. With this Osman challenges the two

institutions that condemns homosexuality, culture and religion. Yassin decides to

break the social structures and gender binary by wearing women's clothing and also

challenges the religion as a Muslim. By wearing a scarf like a Muslim woman, it

portrays him as someone who belongs to both the culture and religion of the Muslim.

> So, within his deviation (of being queer) there was a desire to belong to his
>
> own tradition although his tradition stipulate that it was sinful to engage in such
>
> deviation. The idea of questioning one's gender role was considered un-
>
> Islamic, and here, he was not just questioning it but challenging it in the most
>
> dangerous way (Osman, 2013, p.145).

What Yassin is doing fits directly with gender performativity and gender construction

as exposed by Butler's theory. Although Yassin has a male organ (a penis) he has

become a woman because gender is performative it is what he does that makes him a

woman and not his sex. Yassin is a feminine man because he presents himself in a manner his society sees typical of women.

Though he feels powerful by exploring his identity, Yassin was worried he might be assaulted if he is seen walking in the street dressed as a Muslim transvestite. On his way out of his flat he found some hooligans on the stairways who whistled and shouted "Hey sexy gyal" as they were convinced that Yassin was a woman. But later reacted in disgust upon realising that he was a man after he replied to their comments, as his voice was deep.

 Even Savanah his friend who came to pick him up could not realise him as he was knocking at the window for her car so she asked: "Who the fuck are you? You just look too fucking real woman, at least 'til you start talking" (Osman, 2013, p. 147). Off they went to the lesbian bar. Savanah who is a lesbian woman is shocked and surprised but at the same time supports her friend's transformation. Wanting to explore his identity Yassin goes with his friend to a lesbian bar, instead of gay's bar as a man. At the bar, Yassin realised he was paid more attention by the bouncers he finds there, "He has never been paid this much attention dressed as a man. Why was he suddenly so lusted over as a woman? Was he that unattractive as a man? (Osman, 2013, p.148). Yassin is however aware that once he speaks his real biological identity will be revealed. Here Yassin constructs an identity and performs it, although his construction is nothing but a temporary construction. According to Butler's theory gender performance, the performance must be repeated or performed in a repetitive manner for it to be permanent; for instance, for Yassin to feel a woman, his performance such as wearing women's clothes must be done in a repetitive manner.

5.2 The representation of transgender characters in *Fairy tales for Lost Children: Pavilion*

Diriye Osman has also involved a transgender character in the story *Pavilion. Pavilion* exposes a matured transgender nurse, named Cat, also known as Ms Granger. Cat does not appear to have any conflict with regards to his sexual identity at work, until he had a misunderstanding with Riley; Zipporah's boyfriend who was hospitalised and under Cat's care. Zipporah who is a head nurse does not get along with Cat as the context exposes their relationship that "she dislikes the idea of a man wearing stockings to work, she disliked my weave, acrylic nails and ostentatious spirit" (Osman, 2013, p.60). Though Ms Cat is of male sex, she is being described as a woman in the story because his gender performance is of a female; according to Butler's idea of gender performativity it is her performance that makes him a woman, but not his sex.

Riley imposes his homophobic attitudes on Cat. He goes on to mock at Cat by asking if she wants to have sex with him, to what she replies audaciously that she "doesn't fuck devil spam" (Osman, 2013, p.61). Riley feels provoked and starts bullying her, calling her names like "fucking fag", and keeps verbally abusing her to the point of doing so in a sexual manner. Cat endures this while at the same time planning her "retaliation", which comes during a night shift when Riley does not want to take his pills as he says from 'a skeet queer'. After that Cat threatens to inject him with a lethal poison she calls "Pavilion", while holding a syringe filled with water. The threat issued by Cat results in the involvement of the hospital Board. After involving the hospital Board, Riley's mother also comes in and verbally assaults Cat by calling her a "homicidal trans-fanny." Riley on the other hand emphasised that Cat was going to inject him with 'Pavilion' which is not a true drug that exists, but just a fake-drug-name that Cat invented to tease Riley.

To defend herself Cat convicts Riley's family because of "transphobic slurs and murder accusations" (Osman, 2013, p.63) towards her; and standing up for her rights, Cat told them that she will file a complaint with the authorities for their transphobia and because "you have repeatedly victimised me, why? Because I wear tights and a bit of slap? You compromised my physical and emotional safety by encouraging an environmental of naked hostility towards me" (Osman, 2013, p. 64). In this story Osman gives voice to the queer; Cat, by creating her as a *persona* who stands up for her rights and threatening to raise a complain towards those who verbally abuses her. This is a total opposite of other Osman's stories where most of the queer protagonists lack some freedom of expression and are suppressed by the environments in which they live. I find this story very pertinent to the context of this study because it is one amongst those stories which gives voice to transgender people, the sexuality that is not commonly represented in most literary texts.

5.3 The representation of bisexual and intersex characters in the selected African literary works

The portrayal of bisexual characters in the literary works under study is not really detailed and the characters involved in bisexuality are not fully developed. Nevertheless, the reader could spot out certain characters that could be classified as bisexual characters. For instance, in *The Oracle of Cidino*, Peggy is in a relationship with Thelma and, the context also shows their sexual advancement with Akapelwa. It is not clear whether Peggy was really in love with Thelma or she was just exploring her identity, as she states 'there could be a room for curiousness'.

In the literary work *Fairly Tales for lost children* the short story *Tell The Sun Not to Shine* Libaan had a sexual relationship with the un-named narrator. However later in the story, Libaan was met by the narrator in the mosque where he was an 'Imam'

conducting the prayer service. To his surprise the narrator realised that Libaan is now a married man standing next to his wife and child. Libaan looks at the narrator with begging cautioning eyes that says 'please do not say it out now'. This is clear that in this regard Libaan decided to get married in order to satisfy the ego of the society by pacifying them that he is not gay.

It could also be that his Muslim religion could not allow a gay individual to be an Imam, due to the fact that this religion is guided by the strict *Sharia*. Meanwhile, in *The Other (Wo)man* Jude is a married man yet he has a sexual relationship with Yassin a fellow man. Although very young than him, Jude finds sexual pleasure in Yassin. Savannah is a lesbian, and a friend to Yassin looks at the relationship between Yassin and Jude as a mean for Jude to satisfy his sexual urges that his wife cannot meet. Savannah therefore disapprove this relationship. Although he has a sexual relationship with Yassin, Jude claims that he is not gay. *The Hairdresser of Harare* also portrays a bisexual character, Minister M_'s husband. Although he is married, Mr M_ has a sexual relationship with Dumisani. The context did not clearly reveal whether these bisexual partners give equal attention to both their relationships or one relationship is simply a form of shield where they can seek refuge from homophobic attacks.

Finally, as for intersex characters the literary work under study did not include any intersex character. Even though they are not included in the literary works under study, this minority group needs to be protected and cared for, because literature has proven that intersex people experience similar challenges as those of other minority groups. It is also a call for African writers to consider including intersex characters in their literary works.

5.4 Chapter summary

Chapter 5 analysed the representation of transgender, transitional, bisexual and intersex characters in the literary work *Fairy Tales for Lost Children*: *The Other (Wo)man*, *Pavilion*, *Tell the Sun not to Shine* as well as in the literary works *The Oracle of Cidino* and *The Hairdresser of Harare*.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIO-CULTURAL CHALLENGES THAT LGBTQI PEOPLE ENCOUNTER IN THEIR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES

6.0 Introduction

LGBTQI people, as members of a social minority group, are suffering from various forms of socio-economic and cultural injustices (Obasola (2013); Fourier & Lotter (2020); Mavhandu-Mudvusi & Sandy (2015)). The lack of social recognition has an effect on the capacity of LGBTQI people to fully access and enjoy their rights as citizens. According to Subhrajit (2014) LGBT(QI) are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation, than those that identify themselves as heterosexual. They face tremendous difficulties growing up in a society where heterosexuality is often presented as the only acceptable orientation and homosexuality is regarded as deviant. This chapter examined the sociocultural challenges that LGBTQI people encounter in their day to day lives as portrayed in the literary texts under study.

6.1. The sociocultural challenges experienced by LGBTQI people as portrayed in the literary works

6.1.1 Homophobia and transphobia

LGBTQI are confronted with different socio-cultural challenges in the social environment they are living, among others is homophobia and transphobia. Osman (2013, p.61) in his story *Pavilion* constructs the character Riley who imposes his homophobic and transphobic attitudes on Cat a nurse at the hospital. He goes on to mock Cat by asking if she wants to have sex with him, knowing that Cat is a transgender. When Cat defends herself, Riley feels provoked and starts bullying her, calling her names like "fucking fag", and keeps verbally abusing her to the point of doing so in a sexual way.

LGBTQI people experience homophobia and transphobia in their social environment, be it at home or at their work places as it is visible in the narrative above. According to Subhrajit (2014) homophobia manifest itself in different forms, for example homophobic jokes, physical attacks and discrimination in work places as well as negative media presentation. For instance, in *Pavilion*, Zipporah who is a head nurse does not get along with Cat as the context exposes their relationship that "she dislikes the idea of a man wearing stockings to work, she disliked her weave, acrylic nails and her ostentatious spirit" (Osman, 2013, p.60). Subhrajit (2014) further notes that LGBTQI are more likely to experience intolerance discrimination and harassment and threats of violence. Ncube (2014) explains that living in a homophobic environment forces many LGBTQI people to conceal their sexuality for fear of negative reaction and consequences of coming out.

Stigma arises from social ideologies about homosexuality. People who disclose their sexual orientation can face prejudice and discrimination from their family, friends and also from wider community. Nevertheless, in this story Cat is a character who possesses bold personalities and who stands as a voice of the queer as she stood firmly to report the abuses to the authorities. This act terrified those who made transphobic remarks towards her and they eventually stopped abusing her. In his article, Osman (2014) empowers LGBTQI people by clarifying that LGBTQI people are the only ones who can give themselves permission to live. By this Osman emboldens the LGBTQI individuals to liberate themselves from the chains of homophobia or transphobia.

6.1.2 Ramifications of homosexuality on family relationship

Subhrajit (2014) notes that a significant number of LGBTQI people who suffer discrimination and harassment without support suffer psychological distress. A typical example is that in *Your silence will not protect you* a short story in *Fairy tales for lost*

children by Osman. Diriye upon realising that he is gay and after coming out to his father who gave it a blind eye and never supported him, got very over-concerned about his sexuality and the possible reaction from his community and immediate family members. Due to overthinking he started to suffer from psychosis; a mental illness that caused him to start hearing some agonising chorus of voices. The voices he heard sounds familiar and they shout homophobic attacks towards him. "…the voices I heard in my head when I was unwell were always shouting homophobic slurs at me. Those voices didn't belong to strange nebulous creatures. Those voices belonged to my family (Osman, 2013, p. 113). This reveals a direct result of lack of psychological support from the family and social environment in which LGBTQI people dwell.

The narrative reveals that when Diriye came out to his elder sister that he is gay, she looked frightened by the revelation, but gathered herself and reassured Diriye that it would be fine and jokingly said "I will support you. You are my brother, and I will support you" (Osman, 2013, p.108). This assurance gives Diriye a piece of mind as he reveals; "relieved that I have shared this secret with her, I went home and slept peacefully for the first time in years" (Osman, 2013, p. 108). From this quote one can conclude that keeping in a closet is comparable to imprisonment. In this case the imprisonment of the soul is felt, and as one opens up about their sexuality that seems to break the chains that had entangled such individual and eventually setting them free.

However, revealing one's sexuality also comes with a huge price to pay, and that includes separation from families. This is the case with Diriye. He had no intentions to come out to his entire family, however, after coming out to her sister, she went on to tell the whole family. The family made a fuss about Diriye's sexuality and this weakened their family bond. Even his sister who was ready to support him snared: "What you are doing here is against our beliefs" (Osman, 2013, p.10). It is clear that

Diriye's sister had a different view from the rest of the family before informing them about Diriye's sexuality, but the family members seem to have a stronger view that convinced her to turn away from her brother because of his sexuality.

In this narrative culture is used as a means to justify homophobia. The rest of the family members feel embarrassed to associate with a family member who is queer, thus Diriye's brother says: "You are gay? Yuck! "You're no brother of mine. My brother can't be a fag" (Osman, 2013, p.111). Diriye's younger sister on the other hand has left his flat and no longer wants to stay with him.

Unlike in other instances where many African writers always present LGBTQI as victims of abuse and homophobia, in this story Osman presents a character who is courageous to stand against homophobic attitudes from his family. Together with JT his partner, Diriye is able to stand his ground and challenge homophobia. JT urged Diriye to go to the police station to report the cases of abuse from his family members. The police officers who were sceptical about Diriye pressing charges against his own family, told Diriye to go back home and think about it. He tells the police officer on duty "but homophobic abuse is a hate crime, and regardless of whether it's a stranger on the street or a member of family, I am going to report it" (Osman, 2013, p.112). He comes back the next day unchanged, and emphasised that he would like to press charges against his brothers.

With this, Diriye just like Cat in the previous story, tries to liberate himself from abuse of family members as he says: "Regardless of how it's dressed up, whether it is presented as love from family or friends, abuse is abuse and I was unwilling to put up with it" (Osman, 2013, p. 111). In this story Osman also gives a positive picture of the authority; in this case the police that is willing to assist LGBTQI people by opening a

hate crime against Diriye's family. This is contrary to Mpuka (2017)'s findings that when LGBTQI people go to the police station to report violence against their abusers, the police members on duty have on many occasions joked and sneered at the LGBTQI victim reports, succeeding in discouraging them from reporting incidences of violence. This attitude of 'adding insult to injury' has caused may LGBTQI people to suffer in silence and without any legal support. In order to protect the dignity and wellbeing of LGBTQI people, the police and other responsible authorities need to stand against the abuse of any person regardless of their sexuality. Mpuka (2017) emphasises that negative behaviours and attitudes of state agencies such as the police have a detrimental effect on the lives of LGBTI people such as depression, fear, suicide and many psychological complications.

Although, he was in the state of depression and isolation as well as having a sense of sadness and trauma persisting for a period of time Diriye has learned in a hard way to accept to be away from his family:

> As a gay man I had to learn that nothing in life is fixed, especially families. And as a gay man I had to learn that I live in a country where I don't have to suffer in silence; that there are laws that protect my rights. As a gay man I had to learn in a bitter sweet way that I can choose my family, that certain people have come into my life who share a genuine sense of affinity with me. We may not have the power to choose the family we're born into but we can certainly choose the family we decide to make our own. (Osman, 2013, p.113)

The above extract portrays how the author responds to compulsory sexuality through the protagonists Diriye who is willing to part with his family in order to live as a true self.

The family altogether imposes heteronormative claims on him while using culture and religion as pillars for their homophobic attitude. The protagonist reveals that he has grown up in a very close-knit family where everything was shared, and he was now an outcast in a very real sense. He also reveals that it was mentally and emotionally draining to part with his family, however he is tired of living a pretentious life and he longs for freedom. According to Subhrajit (2014) family rejection has a serious impact on LGBTQI young people's health and mental wellness. LGBTQI young people who were rejected by their families because of their sexual identity have much lower self-esteem and have fewer people they can turn to for help. They are isolated and have less support then those who were accepted by their families.

Diriye's father uses the two aspects; cultural believes and religion to make Diriye understand why he shouldn't be gay: "You are proud of being gay? This is not our custom. We have a faith. Are you telling me that you are not a Muslim? I can't accept this. Stay away from my kids and stay away from me" (Osman, 2013, p.114). By using the term custom and faith Diriye's father tries to remind him what the culture and religion says regarding homosexuality. He especially cannot understand that Diriye can be both Muslim and gay. The narrative also reveals that the Somalia community where Diriye hails from is all about tradition and that sense of tradition comes with an air of secretiveness, suppression and puritanism. Nevertheless, the narrator has no desire to live in secrecy anymore but, deliberates on all possible ways to liberate himself; it does not matter if he has to part with his family.

Another, story where the reader observes bad blood between family members that is caused by issues of sexuality is *Earthling*. Hamdi was very supportive to her lesbian sister Zytum, until Libaan comes into Hamdi's life. Libaan, however took a dim view towards Zytum's relationship; "Two women fornicating was unnatural and repulsive,

not to mention Haram" (Osman, 2013, p.80). At first Hamdi was furious that Libaan reacts like that to her sister, however, she sees herself growing old and wanted to get married to Libaan, who gave her an ultimatum that she has to choose between him and Zytum. Hamdi therefore makes her choice for Libaan. In this narrative one can observe two important aspects regarding sexuality. Firstly, the reader observes that family members do not entirely have similar views regarding LGBTQI issues. There is always a member who might be understanding and who wishes to stand with the queer member of the family. However, there might be strong forces from the majorities or individuals within the family who might overpower such a supportive member. Secondly, there is an array of compelling circumstances that might compel supportive members of the family to part with queer members in the family. For instance, Hamdi would like to support the sister but his boyfriend Libaan gives her a choice to choose between him and Zytum, which is a very tough choice to make. Hamdi is also somehow compelled by the cultural aspects as she states that she is twenty-nine years and in their traditional Somali lens she views herself as an old maid. She rather chooses Libaan as she is desperate to get married, than choosing a lesbian. Pride got over Hamdi and she confronts her sister on the issue of lesbianism.

Hamdi and Zytum have a serious argument, whereby Hamdi imposes her heteronormative views on Zytum. This argument started when Hamdi made a choice to choose Libaan over her sister Zytum. She took a very puritanical stance when she told Zytum her decision:

"It's haram, Zey. It's against our beliefs."

"No, it's against 'your' beliefs! Anyway, you are only saying that to justify choosing him over me! I didn't choose to be lesbian…if Mari had given me such ultimatum, I'd have told her to fuck off!"

"Well I am not you, and I will never be" (Osman, 2013, p.80)

Zytum feels empty without her sister Hamdi and blames her for choosing Libaan over her. She feels worthless and this is emotionally draining her. Like Diriye in the previously analysed story, Zytum develops Psychosis and started hearing voices. While in the internet café to spy her sister Hamdi's Facebook profile, Zytum hallucinates that the woman who was sitting next to her speaking on Skype was throwing shades at her regarding her sexuality:

Yes, my darling…*no, this smelly Somali lesbian is sitting next to me* … Yes, the sermon was fantastic…*yes, it is a shame but dykes are such nasty creatures*…Adetoun talked to the pastor afterwards…*Hell, that's where you're headed, you dirty bitch*...The pastor was wonderfully insightful and of course, *lesbian are nothing but cheap whores…sick sick sick sick dyke* (Osman, 2013, p.78)

Zytum's mental condition is worse than that of Diriye in the previous story. In the above extract the reader is exposed to a character who defeats herself from within. When the lady next to her speaks on Skype, Zytum hears an extended version of her conversation. It is all about her lesbianism. Due to societal beliefs, Zytum is aware of what the reaction of the society would be, upon knowing that she is a lesbian. Zytum is thus in conflict with herself; she is hearing voices of critique against her, and she tries to respond to such voices, making the whole scene a circus. Wherever she is,

Zytum is contemplating in her mind and devising all possible mental defence of the voices she is hearing.

Subhrajit (2014) notes that people who have been brought up to believe that homosexuality is wrong with a realisation that they might be queer can cause feelings of shame and self-loathing leading to low self-esteem. This is the case with Zytum, she develops self-loathing attitudes that she feels she must end her life. The narrative reveals that she keeps her earphones on her ears every time to avoid the voices, however she could still hear insults from old women in cars even if their windows were shut, she could hear murder threats, but where way they coming from? Their abuse has a psychotic intensity. Why would people attack her so randomly? Was there a mark upon her forehead that disclosed her sexuality? Suddenly the fact that she was lesbian was no longer the only issue; there were now new insults to deal with other aspects of her life for instance she is an ugly beggar who might have venereal diseases (Osman, 2013, p.79). This further attests to the psychological effect that abuse and rejection of LGBTQI may have on individuals.

6.1.3   Marginalisation, intolerance and discrimination

LGBTQI faces marginalisation in their societies. This marginalisation does not only come from heterosexual members of the society, but also from their fellow LGBTQI community. In *The Other (Wo)man* a short story in *Fairy tales for Lost Children* Yassin joined Gaydar, a dating application for gay people. Since he was an effeminate gay he was marginalised when the application carried out the sex appeal for its members. He was mocked at called the 'the loser' just because he does no conform to the traits of being a 'masculine gay'. This evoked the need for him to cancel his account on Gaydar and venture into the real word, even though a different set of terrifying rules applied to dating beyond cyberspace. This is what (Butler, 2007; Jagose 2001;

Sedgwick 2008) propound when they say the rise of the gay and lesbian liberation movements during the 70s and 80s projected a certain image and expectations of LGBTQI people. All those who do not fit or comply with those expectations and norms are subjected to rejection by those same liberation movements even though all these individuals are fighting for the same, civil and political rights.

6.1.4 LGBTQI as victims of terror and terrorism

LGBTQI are also victims of terror and terrorism. When Yassin joined the Gaydar application he did not attach a profile picture of himself. As the narrative exposes it: "A myriad of reasons again doing so filled his head, both generic (someone crazy recognising him from it and attacking him on the street) and specific to him, a Somali Muslim not so long arrived in London" (Osman 2013, p.120). Yassin had a different image of London and his sexuality when he left Kenya. He assumed London as "a place teeming with romantic possibilities where he would never have to worry about being alone, but, despite the city's myriad possibilities here he was, four years later, lonelier than ever" (Osman, 2013, p.127). This study has alluded to the mythical understanding that some LGBTQI people have regarding the idea of leaving their places of origin to other places such as England or America, with the understanding that these places are homophobic free and they will therefore freely express their sexual desires. Just to meet the opposite when they get there.

Yassin thought the thousands of men on sites like Gaydar, huddled miserably over their computers, desperate to connect, conversely, he realised that London's scale only deepened the isolation he felt, magnified it and made it unbearable. Yassin prayed for the day he could leave for England, because in Somalia and Kenya the country he was born and raised respectively, homosexuality was something to be hidden for fear of violence; and the chances of meeting other men like him were slim. It appears in the

literary works under study that many LGBTQI people have an incorrect view of thinking that the West is a haven of LGBTQI people and a place where such minority group is free from homophobic attacks, which is actually not a reality.

According to Dunton and Palmberg (1996) the late president Robert Mugabe made a homophobic remark that gives hope that Europe and the US are homosexual friendly places when he said "let them be gay in US, Europe and elsewhere. They shall be sad people here." Yassin's imaginary London is not the London he comes to meet. The stories under study are an eye opener and a justification that there is hardly a homophobic free place, although the magnitude of homophobia might differ from one place to another. Literature has proven that, even in countries where homosexuality is a legal right; such as in South Africa, LGBTQI people still continue to suffer homophobic attacks and marginalisation. Hence a call to mitigate homophobic attacks and attitudes everywhere in the world wherever the human race is found.

6.1.5 LGBTQI as victims of Identity-conflict and regret

LGBTQI people are victims of identity conflict and regret. Most LGBTQI characters in the literary works under study begin to feel a sense of 'identity loss' as soon as they start exploring their own sexualities. Yassin after his first sexual experience with Jude felt like he strayed from his own roots. He thought to himself:

> He came from a community that lived by strict Islamic rules and here he was beyond even the periphery of that culture, so much that he has to create his own rules as he went along. He felt his sense of Somaliness slipping away from him and he was afraid of letting it go, afraid of the moral, psychological and social anarchy its loss threatened to create within him. (Osman, 2013, p.137)

Yassin tries to comfort and encourage himself but he seems to be losing it all. He is not sure if he should be hanging on a sense of social allegiance. But wouldn't he be automatically excluded from his community because of his sexual orientation wherever his allegiance lay? He believes that he does not only belong to one society: he was gay, Somali, Muslim and yet all the cultural positions left him excluded. He feels that being Somalian held all his-selves together, because he was "Somali first, Muslim Second, gay third; born Somali, raised Muslim, discovered gay'' (Osman, 2013, p.137). Yassin now feels he is venturing out into the world without a sense of his place within it and this frightened him. He is at the crossroad; he is not sure whether he should deny one aspect of his life for another? Yassin finally decided that he will hack out his own place in the world. It is this place that Osman (2014) has claimed in his position as a gay and author that there is no other person can claim this space for them, it is only LGBTQI people themselves that can claim their own space. And give themselves permission to live. In the understanding of this study, such space and permission to live is a necessity for LGBTQI people.

Yassin who is born male transits from male in order to establish the ground of what he thinks he is. This is what the queer theory means when it suggests that gender is fluid, flexible and subject to change – not rooted in an essential male or female (binary) gender identity. The theory also suggests that structures and institutions within society work to normalise, naturalise, support and privilege heterosexuality above other forms of sexuality. Taken together, these ideas show that the binary gender system is a heterosexist one, which privileges masculinity and straightness over femininity and queerness (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009).

6.1.6 LGBTQI as victims of the closet

The *Hairdresser of Harare* is another novel the portrays some socio-cultural challenges that LGBTQI people suffer. In this story, Dumisani the protagonist lives in secrecy about his sexuality as a gay man. When he came out to his family that he is gay after his high school, his family disinherits him. He then escaped from the family, but without renouncing his sexual orientation. As Ncube (2014) expresses it in the analysis of the same novel Dumisani has a secret life that he leads away from those who know him. This documented secret life becomes evident to Vimbai when she finds his diary and goes through it. This secrecy was necessitated by the homophobic attitudes of the society in which Dumisani lives. As exposed by the context, Dumisani's immediate family members, especially his father, views him as a total disgrace to the family. Since Dumisani comes from the most prestigious and revered family, his father would not want to be associated with a gay son. This is especially evident in the episode where some friends to Dumisani's father mentioned in passing that they have met Dumisani on holiday with some white guy.

The reaction from Dumisani's father is that of complete homophobic attitudes. He howled with rage. To try to protect his family name, he arranged with his friends in the police to have the Canadian man deported with immediate effects before anyone knew what was up with his son (Huchu, 2010). This incidence is fully described in Dumisani's diary. This in itself proves the extent to which some members of the society go to detach themselves from anything that is LGBTQI related. In this case Dumisani's father goes to the extent of imposing hate crimes on the Canadian man, however, even those who were sent to capture the Canadian man were not informed of the reason why they had to do it. They subjected him to abuse and this left psychological scars in Dumisani's mind.

6.1.7 LGBTQI as victims of politically sponsored violence, harassment and hostility

In another episode in the same story, Vimbai discovers Dumisani's long-kept secret about his sexuality when she reads his diary. She finally discovers that Dumisani is gay and has Minister M_'s husband as his sexual partner. Overwhelmed by her findings, Vimbai approaches Minister M and informs her about Dumisani's affair with her husband. The readers could observe how Minister M was eager to protect his ego as a political leader, upon hearing from Vimbai that her husband is homosexual. He was quick to inquire: "Who else knows about this? Are you absolutely certain that there is no one who knows this?" (Huchu, 2010, p.172). The fact that Minister M is a politician and has the nation to look up to her, she does not want the issue of her husband's sexuality to degrade her authority, she thus warns and urges Vimbai to keep it as a secret between the two of them:

> I have ambitions that run to the highest office in the land. My ministry is one of the few functional ones left, because I can get things done. I've bled for this country and dedicated my life to its service. I also have many enemies all around me waiting to bring me down at any moment's notice. The information that you have given would be very useful to them if it falls in their hands. That's why this has to stay in this office and go nowhere else. I need to be able to trust you. (Huchu, 2010, p.173)

The above could be interpreted that, since Minister M_ is serving the government that is against homosexuality as represented by the then president Robert Mugabe, it is hard to expect her to have a different view about homosexuality. Of course, one cannot fight against his master. It is understandable for Minister M_ to have homophobic attitudes as this is what the ruling government should be urging them as political leaders. She

thus does not want other political leaders especially those from opposition parties to find out about her husband homosexual affairs with Dumisani, as they may use this information to degrade and challenge her.

She therefore must do something to stop this story from going viral. She sent a group of security forces who went to drag Dumi from the hotel where he was boarding, they blindfolded him and took him to a place where they seriously tortured him and when he passes out, they revived him with water. And later they thought he was dead and they went to throw him somewhere near the road. They told him that they have not been informed of the reason why they had to torture him, but they will have to fix him. This is clear that in order for Minister M_ to protect his dignity he did not tell the security forces of the reason why they have to torture Dumisani. This act in itself is a form of hate crime that most LGBTQI suffer at the hand of the public. They mostly do not have a voice to report these incidences as nobody will be willing to side with a homosexual. The context shows that Dumisani was totally beaten and was lucky to have survived the incident as Mr M_ explains when he went to see Dumi at the hospital:

> I need to know if you are well enough to travel…The people who did this to you will come back to finish the job as soon as you leave this place…Consider yourself lucky they do not usually get it wrong for the first time. They will target your family as well if you try to resist what it is they 're going to do. It is best you leave the country and go where they'll know you will not be an inconvenience to them. (Huchu ,2010, p.184)

The above extract may be a justification as to why some LGBTQI people live in diaspora, away from families. Some may be compelled by homophobic experiences

166

that are beyond their control. They have become victims of targeted violence that they continuously live in terror. For example, Dumisani would have to go to Britain. This is where Minister M believe it will suit him: "It should suit him there. Their government is full of gay gangsters. They even walk parading themselves. He will be happy in Sodom (Huchu, 2010, p.187). Even when Dumisani will be in Britain he is threatened and warned by Minister M_, through Vimbai that he must make sure that he keeps his mouth shut while he is there.

LGBTQI mostly have no bold voice to express their sexuality, and mostly the better form of expression would be through writing down their experience. While amongst his own people, Dumisani knows how dangerous it could be to have his sexuality known by everybody, not even Vimbai whom he shares a house with should know about it. He therefore only writes down all possible experience, hopes and dreams in his diary, as Dumisani explains: "I wrote it hoping that one day someone like you might read it as an explanation of why things are the way they are. You just found it before it was ready (Huchu, 2010, p.184)." This lack of freedom is a call that LGBTQI minorities need protection.

In his analysis of the role of the closet in the construction of a sexual self, Seidman, as cited in Ncube (2014), alleges that the closet makes it possible for LGBTs to lead a socially respectable life. However, this comes at the high price of living a lie. Seidman, as cited in Ncube (2014) compares the closet to a prison in that it emasculates the self by repressing the very passions that give life richness and vitality. In the case of individuals like Dumisani, the question is whether to live a lie, live in prison or lose their life altogether. The stakes are certainly weighed heavily against 'coming out' given the dangers and stigma that such an undertaking involves.

Vimbai's reaction and that of the Minister towards realising that Dumisani is gay seems to justify why Dumisani decides to keep his sexuality a secret, knowing the possible reaction from the general society. The broader society does not readily accept his sexual orientation. Vimbai's reaction upon discovering Dumisani's sexual orientation mirrors the attitude exhibited by the greater society:

> My daughter had been the product of the union between man and woman. What could a man and a man ever hope to produce in a million years? Even the president called them worse than pigs – I might have disagreed with a lot of what he has done to the country but I had to agree with him there. Even now I imagined Mr M__ with his silly moustache fondling the man who was my fiancé. (Huchu, 2010, p.167)

Here Vimbai gives her heteronormative and monolithic view about sexuality. In her understanding two people of opposite sex must be in a relation for the whole purpose of procreation. This is the same view that is expressed by the pastor as he exposes his hate speech during his sermon during the church service: "…God made Adam and eve not Adam and Steve. Can a woman and a woman make a baby? (Huchu, 2010, p. 72)." To them the act of sexual experiences does not exceed procreation purposes. Thus, the issue of sexual enjoyment and pleasure, let alone liberal attitudes to sex is not in their understanding. This is a common understanding in the literary works under study, and in the general African society. Reflecting back to Chapter two of this study where African leaders give their views on homosexuality, it is visible that most of them critique homosexuality on the basis of procreation. According to Lopang (2014, p.81) paints homosexuality as meaningless and even taboo in that in terms of output this sexual union is a dead end.

The reaction of Vimbai and the minister is complicated. This is because Dumisani, in his endeavour to give the impression of being a straight man, uses Vimbai for his own selfish end of pleasing his family and showing them that he had been 'cured' of his homosexuality, when he introduced Vimbai to them as his girlfriend. This has assured and justified the family's cultural beliefs that homosexuality is indeed a curable ailment; a homosexual being simply needs the right sexual partner; of an opposite sex, then he or she will be cured. On the other hand, in his private life, Dumisani has a sexual relationship with a man married to a very important minister. This reflects the dualistic nature of the closet. To begin with, it allows Dumisani and Mr M_ the freedom to have a homosexual relationship. By concealing their sexual orientations, they pretend that they are uncle and nephew and thereby escape society's reprobation. However, this semblance of freedom reflects the lies they have to tell so as to live out their difference. Moreover, through closeting of homosexuality, it is also possible to read in both Dumisani and Mr M_, shame in their sexuality. Dumisani has Vimbai on the other side of his sexual life just as a symbol to pacify the immediate society that he is a heterosexual man.

The narrative also shows how Dumisani was living a pretentious life probably for safety, so that he does not raise suspicion of the society. "…He spoke like a normal man and even walked like a normal man. Everything about him was masculine" (Huchu, 2010, p.166). Dumisani would have to adopt what the society likes, or else he will be placed on the spot and subjected to abuse and harassment. Butler (2010) states that LGBTQI individuals who do not behave appropriately to social gender roles that are expected are exposed more violence and harassment in the society.

Although Dumisani's performance; of hairdressing; was questionable instantly, nobody could imagine him as a homosexual being, especially because everything

about him was heterosexual. This is what Ton (2018) states about Butler's notion of gender performativity that it is hard to guess from the outsider's perspective what someone's gender identity is, because it is a personal identity experienced by that individual. The context of these literary works under study also proves that, how people express themselves through their clothes or hairstyles may not match the way they feel internally or match what the society may expect of them, being of certain gender. Once more, ideas about what colours males and female put on or what profession is for what gender; these ideas to gender are not stable and they evolve with time. Hence Butler's idea of gender performativity.

According to Ncube (2014) the novel suggests that within the context of homophobic societies, the closet might represent a space of safety and security. However, this safety and security is almost always threatened given the extreme monitoring of bodies and sexualities. Two options are available to such individuals. Firstly, they can leave the country and settle in so-called LGBT friendly countries. This option, as I have argued previously, is monolithic and only serves to buttress the essentialising idea that Africa is homophobic whilst the West is more accommodating. Secondly, they may opt to come out of the closet, an act that also comes with a heavy price of parting with family and loved one and living in isolation and away from loved ones.

6.1.8 LGBTQI as victims of verbal and physical abuse

LGBTQI people are subjected to verbal and physical abuse. In *Speak no Evil*, Obi upon finding out that his son Niru is gay, he was so agitated. He cannot understand how his own son can be gay. Raised in a very God-fearing conservative family, Niru met a friend Meredith who made sexual advances towards him and out of anxiety Niru blurts out that he is gay. Before speaking out about his sexuality, Niru felt safer and he could pretend he did not know about his sexuality. This is the power of the closet as it is

described in Ncube (2014) that the closet makes it possible LGBTQI's to lead a socially respectable life. However, after speaking about it he felt anxious and confused. Knowing how homophobic his parents may be and how the rest of the school mates may react to it, Niru feels like he has let something loose that he would not be able to control. By this statement Niru refers to the danger and other prices that come with un-closeting. Niru started to get worried about the danger of coming out of the closet. He started getting worried about what people may be thinking about his sexuality and as he walks around the school ground he was concerned about his fellows getting to know about his sexuality.

Meredith appears to know much about different types of sexuality, and in her attempts to get Niru to explore his sexuality and get linked with his fellow gay community, she installs dating applications into Niru's phone.

Niru forgot to switch off notifications on his phone and his father spots them. His father gives him a serious lecture before he could beat him up until he loses his senses. The manner in which Niru was beaten can be described as homophobic violence. Obi could not ask Niru to explain about the issue, he however over-reacts upon seeing the dating application. By that time, Niru did not yet start engaging in homosexual activities, he only expressed his inner feeling to Meredith who then took Niru's phone and installed the dating applications without Niru's knowledge or consent. Niru's father is concerned about the family name, he feels Niru has caused shame and disgrace to the family.

Obi throws homophobic verbal comments on Niru and blames America for corrupting his son with such behaviour. He reiterates on the fact that he did not want his son to school in America, he always wanted him to school in Nigeria. He also blames his

wife for naming their son Gwamniru, a name that was supposed to be for a girl child, and he believes that it could be one of the contributing factors to his homosexual behaviour. He further blames his wife that he treats Niru like a woman, hence Niru's homosexual behaviour. He blames the content at school that Niru attends and threatens to call the headmaster to confront him about the issue.

Iweala deliberately creates the conflict of Niru's sexuality in order to prove how some African people strongly deny the existence of homosexuality in Africa and accuse the West of introducing the concept of homosexuality to the Africans and to the continent at large. Obi in this case blames America for having introduced his son to homosexual behaviour and believes his son could not be gay if he could have schooled in Nigeria. To both Obi and reverend Olumide America is the mother of homosexual attitudes, thus they believe Niru needs spiritual cleansing, however this cleansing can only succeed if Niru is taken back to Nigeria. To them two, Nigeria is a saint place, free of the demon of homosexual behaviours and were spiritual cleansing will be a success. Hence reverend Olumide feels that: "This demon of homosexuality has become so entrenched in America that you can't really fight it there" (Iweala, 2018, p.72). In this extract homosexuality is demonised, this is what Wickens (2011) claims that homosexuality and all other non-straight sexualities are demonised and considered to be abnormal, whereas being straight is often seen as normal and healthy, henceforth it is celebrated.

Obi therefore suggests to take Niru back to Nigeria for spiritual revival, so that the pastor can undo the psychological and spiritual corruption in his son's mind. Obi views homosexuality from a religious point of view and feels that it is a sinful, satanic, unnatural and unclean behaviour that can simply be removed by strong spiritual intervention. This unnatural view of homosexuality is not only portrayed in *Speak No*

Evil, but it is also expressed in Armah (1973) as analysed by Lopang (2014, p.81) that what a writer like Armah imply in her novel is that for an African to become a homosexual that implies that you are not in control of your actions and are simply acting out an urge that is beyond the realms of nature. One thus inhabits a place outside the natural and should be pitied or treated as a thing.

Niru is subjected to religious cleansing by different religious leaders, but to no avail. Niru hardly says anything to his parents, making them believe that the pastor's pronouncements and prayers are working. Yet, Niru does not feel that prayers are causing any improvement in his sexual life, nor unpin his gayness; he still feels a strong desire to love men. Niru appears to be at the crossroad of his sexuality, on one hand he feels the need to explore his sexuality, and on the other hand when he looks at the cards of bible that he got from Reverend Olumide he thinks that there is still a chance to change his ways.

Despite Obi being aggressive and overwhelmed by Niru's homosexual behaviour, Ify his wife on the other hand does not say a word about it. However, Niru has spotted that his mother searches on the internet about all sorts of topics regarding homosexuality, and "How to talk to your gay son about sex" (Iweala, 2018, p.127) is one of the topics she searches. This is another case where the author tries to depict that Africa is not entirely homophobic as some writers claim.

In this story Obi and Ify represent Africa. Although the two characters reside in America, they hail from Africa, as the context describes them that they are still very Africans. Nonetheless, they have different views towards the concept of homosexuality; Obi clearly shows his homophobic attitudes, hatred and disgust of homoerotic desires, while Ify his wife appears to stand with his son Niru. Although

she does not say much on how he feels about his sexuality, she is seen caressing Niru with love, nursing his wounds, protecting him from further assaults from his husband as well as protecting his dignity by saying he must stay home until he recovers. Here we are presented with two different African views about homosexuality, and this evidence is convincing enough to justify that Africa is not entirely homophobic.

This study notes that the efforts that Niru's parents made to put towards detaching Niru from homophobic behaviour, appears to encourage Niru to keep his sexuality a secret. Niru started to explore his sexuality with Damian while keeping an eye on his conservative father. Niru feels that even after meeting with Damian "outside, the world is still normal" (Iweala, 2018, p.124). Like any other LGBTQI characters in the previous literary works, Niru longs for his sexual freedom. He stares at his family on the photos on the wall of his room and thinks "I wish I were a different person, with white skin and the ability to tell my mother and my father, to fuck off without consequence (Iweala, 2018, p.166). In his view, Niru feels that unlike black people 'white-skinned' people have freedom let alone sexual freedom to express themselves and make their parents understand issues without them being questioned or subjected to threats. This then calls for the need to allow LGBTQI people to have an audible voice that stretches out to the world without them being subjected to threats of verbal and physical.

6.1.9 LGBTQI as victims of rejection and phobia

In *The Interpreters* Wole Soyinka deliberately creates the character Joe Golder, who unlike in the rest of the literary works under study, is an open homosexual. Golder is created in such a manner that he does not have to suffer the implications of the closet and its consequences of coming out. He is rather free-floating character whose sexuality is clearly known by the rest of the characters, especially by the interpreters.

Like any other characters in the literary works under study, at times Golder is a victim of rejection, Marginalisation and phobia. He struggles to establish his place as a gay character. What makes it hard for him is his desire to look for a sexual partner by physical acts; by brushing thighs and knees of the men he thinks are likely to be gay, just to be shunned and victimised by them.

In their discussion with Sagoe, Golder asks him: "Are you afraid of me?" (Soyinka, 1967, p.198). Sagoe's reaction is that of surprise and he does not want to sleep under the same room with a homosexual. Sagoe amongst others has a view that homosexuality is a practice that came to Nigeria with the awake of colonialism. Nevertheless, Golder who is a History lecturer at the university explains to him that homosexuality is not a white ailment and that even African cultures have been practicing homosexuality without being coerced by colonialists. Thus, Golder gives an example of the 'Emirs and the little boys and the exclusive coteries in Lagos'. However, Sagoe is forthright in living in the comfort of ignorance by stating that "if you don't mind, I'll persist in my delusion" (Soyinka, 1967, p.199). As Lopang (2014) claims, it is no doubt that Sagoe clearly understands about different types of sexualities, yet opts to live in denial about the existence of homosexuality in Africa. In this case Sagoe is seen undermining the confidence of Golder by clearly marginalising him and classifying him as homosexual.

Sagoe and other interpreters always see Golder as the 'other' and even call him 'The American' which is a classification which Golder denies and claims he is an African; of coarse one of them, though his appearance is more white than black. The aspect of othering is also visible in other literary works under study, where LGBTQI characters are seen as individual others who are outside of the normalcy.

Total homophobic attitude is visible in *The Interpreters* for example, Sagoe reacts with anger when Golder brings up the topic of homosexuality in their discussions and eventually imposing his understanding on Sagoe. While, Egbo expresses obvious hatred and abhorrence, which is visible when he suddenly wipes his hand that touched Golder on the grass dew upon hearing that he is gay. The youth Noah on the other hand commits suicide merely because he does not want to be touched by the homosexual Golder. Golder is also victimised by his house-boy because of his sexuality, yet when he reported the matter to the authority, the authority sided with the victimiser; shielding him to escape. The novel portrays a bold character of Golder who struggles within a homophobic society to establish his own basis.

In *The Oracle of Cidino*, the sexual advancement between Peggy and Thelma is not fully developed in the plot. It seems the writer brought up a slice of the unspeakable that he does not have much courage to talk about. Nonetheless, the reader is clearly informed by the context of the drama that there exists lesbianism between the two girls Peggy and Thelma. Thelma's father who is a king, reacts with total disapproval and homophobic attitudes toward the two girls upon realising that they are in a sexual relation. He questions their humanity and feels that what they are doing is out of nature. He further questions their sexuality and is not convinced that they are all girls, he thus claims: "If they play mother and father business surely one of them must have a projectile somewhere" (Nyathi, 2003, p.48), and insist that they should be chained and brought upon him so that he can inspect them. The king also questions their rationality to say: "If crabs and crocodile can see those of their mates through muddy waters of the river, what blindness has befallen my own flesh and blood? This statement by Nyathi (2003) is informed by the words of the late president Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, who made a claim that homosexuals are worse than pigs and dogs. This

animalistic view of LGBTQI is common amongst many who try to analyse and comment on LGBTQI issues. This is the same view that Lopang (2014) alluded to while analysing LGBTQI themed texts. This play implies that for one to become a homosexual that indicates that they are not in control of their actions. It is common knowledge that a human being is a rational being who has a consciousness; than other creatures, therefore should be able to reason and act better than other creatures. Hence, their comparison with animals.

The content of the play justifies that Peggy is aware of the socio-cultural understanding of people around them and convinces Thelma that, although they may be bearing the same deep feelings towards each other, it could be that they were just curious, maybe they were just experimenting with their feelings. She also encourages Thelma to understand that his family wants her to be married by Akapelwa. Nonetheless, Thelma feels only for Peggy and she claims: "I don't need lectures on issues that run contrary to my taste and feelings. I know what I want. I wasn't trying, Peggy – I was and I still feel deeply involved with you" Nyathi (2003, p.45). Besides, Peggy has given up on their relationship knowing that it is a dead end.

In the play *The Oracle of Cidino* patriarchy plays a major role. Queen mother who is the mother to Thelma is aware of the sexuality trouble between the two girls. However, she lacks a voice to express herself about the matter, nor inform her husband about it. At times she tried to bring up a conversation with her husband, she is shut down and reminded to know her position. The writer here gives us two characters; Thelma's parents, who reside in the same house but bear completely different views on homosexuality. For the king, the negative attitude towards homosexuality is visible through his words and reaction. As for Queen mother, she has been aware of what is happening between the two girls but she does not say a word about it. She however

appears to side with them when the king demands to inspect them, and suggest that their grandmother should do it instead. This different view then proves that it would be erroneous to generalise that Africa is entirely a homophobic block. It is clear that people hold different views on issues related to LGBTQI.

In the literary works under study we learn that the characters react with mixed feelings toward the issue of homosexuality and to LGBTQI people in general. Some characters react with revulsion, vigilantism, extortion, blackmail, hostility and negative stereotypical behaviour. Others react with a sense of empathy, pity, understanding and support. Nonetheless, it is clear that negative reaction amongst others overpowers positivity.

6.2 Cultural views and understanding on LGBTQI and African indigenous knowledge system on LGBTQI

As alluded to in the earlier chapters, many African scholars hold a belief that homosexuality is un-African. According to Shizha (2013, p.6) many African scholars strongly criticise African indigenous knowledge and refer to it as superstitious beliefs. There have been cases of known homosexual practices in the African cultures; most of the homosexuality that occurs in the constraints of traditional rituals, however "the homosexuality that occurs in the parameters of traditional rituals does not need social recognition because matters relating to tradition and ritual are not public issues" (Shizha 2013, p.6). Below are some examples of known queer or same sex practices in ancient Africa, as noted by Tamale (2014) as well as by Chantal (2014):

Same Sex eroticism For Spiritual Benefits

Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe marching in Harare in 1998

In some parts of Africa, it is believed that 'Same-sex acts' possess spiritual benefits, so it is practiced for it's seen as a fresh source of power. This practice is seen in the Ndebele and Shona tribe in Zimbabwe, Nupe in Nigeria, Azande in Sudan & Congo, Tutsi In Rwanda and Burundi.

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Female Husbandary

This is one of the oldest queer practices in Africa found in over 40 African cultures both Ancient and contemporary Africa. This is a situation where a wealthy, powerful and influential woman marries other women for the sake of reproduction(get them pregnant by men and still retain them) and sometimes erotic relationships. This practice can be seen in Kuria of Tanzania, Nuer of Sudan, Igbo of Nigeria, Nandi and Kisii of Kenya. One prominent figure who was known for this was Njinga Mbande of Mbundu, Angola. She was a powerful gender non conforming Queen who married Women.
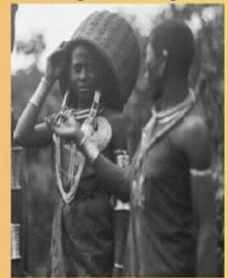
@matthew.blaise   1/9

Languages Of Queer Existence

Before the exception of colonialism. Gay people were referred to with different names which shows the indigenousity of queerness. In Shangaan of South Africa, there's the (Male-wife); this is the Butch woman in a same sex relationship. Basotho when in erotic relationships were called 'Motsolle' which means (Special friend) in Senegal, Homosexual men were called 'Gor digen' (Men women). In Nigeria, effeminate men are called 'woman wrappa' this uncolonized language shows the existence of queerness and Queer people in Africa.

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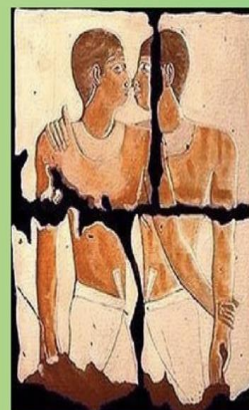
Love & Eroticism

In ancient cave painting of the San people near Guruve in Zimbabwe, there are depiction of two men engaging in anal sex. Tombs were found by archeologists that dates back to 2400BC in Egypt. They contained the remains of men embracing themselves.

Sources

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@matthew.blaise   6/9

Figure 1. Same sex practices in ancient Africa

The above captions are some of the justifications that homoerotic desires have existed in Africa even long before the onset of colonialism. Nonetheless, the Africans engaged in these practices for many different traditional reasons; for instance Bertolt (2019), Roscoe (2001) and Eprecht (2013) state that same sex practices were used as a means of becoming wealthy as well as during some initiation rites. This type of homosexuality was not necessarily for the whole purpose of finding pleasure in the sexual partner as it is the case with the western definition of homosexuality. Thus in the understanding of this study, the African definition of the concept of homosexuality may not necessarily equate with that of the West, and this could be one of the reasons why some of the African scholars deny the existence of homosexuality.

This study therefore capitalises on the importance of digging deeper into African ancient knowledge in order to claim back the Africa that was misrepresented in an ethnocentric and racist way in the pre-indipendent texts as claimed by Tamale (2011), and representing it in a better light relying on existing indigenous knowledge such as the above. This study emphasises that there are specific aspects of African culture that have been diluted by colonialism and by new transformations, aspects which hold value in the African set up and which define African identity, hence, writers such as Mkasi (2016) criticises transformation and modernity that ignore African cultural practices that affirm life.

According to Mkasi (2016) knowledge of same sexuality in African communities require a far more complex narrative of indigenous knowledge and culture of the older generations that upholds them. Although the novels under study did not dwell much on homosexuality and the tradition, some novels such as *Fairy Tales for Lost Children* in the story *Shoga* proves that there have been ways of dealing with those who were seen as sexual deviants in the past. For example, in Somalian cultures they were

subjected to *Saar* a ritual where one gets beaten in attempt to cure him or her from homosexual behaviour. This is similar to what Clarke (2013) suggests when he says Africans, even before colonialism, had policy in place to deal with issues that concern homosexuality.

Although there is a need to interrogate the issue of African sexuality from Western theoretical imposition, same sexuality research needs to be contextualised and analysed through the eyes of indigenous people. To substantiate this point, the narratives under study show how the aspect of culture and morality is a foundation of human existence in the African culture. For as long the African LGBTQI being is trying to establish his or her own sexuality, the issues of culture, morality and general expectations of behaviours by the society remains a challenge to them. As it appears in the literary works under study, while they explore their sexualities, LGBTQI people develop a sense of guilt consciousness and regret that results from knowing the expectations of the society, as they feel that by being different, they part with their roots and identity.

6.3 The evolution of the representation of LGBTQI themes in African literature

Several researches by scholars show the representation of LGBTQI in pre-colonial literature done in a negative light. According to Tamale (2011) in pre-independence literature the African homosexual was caricatured as having lustful dispositions, where the white explorers and missionaries reveal a pattern of ethnocentric and racist construction of African sexuality. Although Tamale (2011) further claims that many African writers seem to follow the representation introduced by their predecessors, this study's finding differ with this claim.

Looking at the novel *The Interpreters* by Soyinka (1965); this study classifies this novel as one that represents the corpus of the post-colonial texts. Although the representation of gayness in this novel is caricatured and ridiculed this study shows that the author used these features for comical effects to reveal the reality of what happens in everyday social environment. Nevertheless, what is more commendable to note is that, the character Joe Golder is not only represented as a victim as some literature claims; he is represented as a heroic figure who stands firmly on defending his sexuality and tries to teach those near him that homosexuality is not a colonial ailment as they claim. He did this by reminding the interpreters about the homosexual practices in Nigeria, that had been recorded by history. Golder also claims that he is African despite the interpreters calling him 'The American'. The author through the character Joe Golder, creates these conflicts in order to air the view that homosexuality is not a colonial burden, but something that has existed within human race. The author also deliberately creates the character Sagoe who opposes homosexuality and represents the African views on homosexuality as being a colonial burden. With these two characters the author creates an unresolved debate on homosexuality that Africa continues to battle with, to date.

This study supports the claims by Cook (2018) that some stereotypes and negative tropes regarding the representation of LGBTQI still remain, yet, there is a great shift from what most pre-independent literature is claimed to be. Probably because of "the shift in societal attitudes towards LGBTQI people" as stated in Ahmad and Bhugra (2010). Soyinka uses different voices through his novel to represent different attitudes towards homosexuality, but his most audible voice is that represented by Joe Golder as he claims his sexuality within an overly heterosexual environment.

Despite Soyinka's novel to some extent representing LGBTQI characters in a better light, there are still some negativity towards the concept of homosexuality in his novel. For instance, somehow homosexuality is still blamed on colonialism, some characters appear to show open hatred towards homosexuality including Noah who committed suicide simply because he does not want to be touched by a homosexual. The novel also shares a monolithic view that Africa is pure and free of homosexuality. Joe Golder represents the voice of the LGBTQI people, however this voice is not audible enough to overpower the voice of the masses, thus it is suppressed until it is no longer audible.

Other literary works in this study Nyathi (2004); Huchu (2010); Wainaina (2011); Osman (2013) and Iweala (2018) are classified as post-independence texts. These are the novels among others, that Goldsmith (2016) claims that they stand out to break from the tradition and clear pathway for new possibility. To some extend these literary works have heeded to this claim. These pieces of literature have improved by representing more characters, not only the commonly known gay and lesbians, but also by including bisexuals and transgender characters who were not commonly represented in the pre-colonial literatures.

There is also an improvement in the tone of jokes and hate language. Unlike in Soyinka (1965) where disguised language is used in order to conceal the explicit sexual acts, most if not all post-colonial texts under study appear to show some freedom of expression through explicit depiction of sexual acts and sexual language (see Sabao, 2013). *The Hairdresser of Harare* amongst other novel stands out to fight for social justice because the author brings in an episode of the philosophers who gather at the sport fields to discuss issues regarding humanity in their Philosopher Club. In this club, the philosophers challenge the heteronormative idea and explain that it is a mistake to think that there are only two sexualities "there are hermaphrodites, those born with

both genders, who straddle the line between men and women. In fact, approximately ten per cent of the population is gay or homosexual'' (Huchu, 2010, p.177). This group of philosophers do not only think homosexuality is there, but they also feel that it is necessary. They try to understand and seek for the truth as it is thus they claim: "We do not refer to the bible as an authoritative text. To us it is just one of many philosophical texts and while we do pay attention we do not place it on pedestal" (Huchu, 2010, p.176). These philosophers also feel that there are two types of law, 'natural laws' and 'man made laws' and the illegality of homosexuality is a product of man-made laws. As this discussion was going on, some members of the philosophy club started leaving one by one, the cannot stand for Fungai who appears to be a homosexual ally. They went to spread rumour in the street that he is *Ngochani*. This study then concludes that, Tendai Huchu creatively gives his views on homosexuality through these fictional characters. He also gives the view that it seems one is despised if they are seen as homosexual allies. This gives us a justification as to why some political leaders and members of the society may stand their ground to deny the existence of homosexuality, because they may want to protect their dignity and their position in public, for instance: who would want to elect a leader who openly support the homosexuals? Is he or she part of them?

Although the philosopher's view is strong, it is simply a "fight by speech" but not by action thus an LGBTQI individual is still not protected from social homophobias. This is also the reality we have in societies today, there are voices to protect LGBTQI but these voices are not audible enough to protect the LGBTQI from homophobia. It is mostly one organisation after the other, but with little or no tangible effects to protect LGBTQI people from homophobia. In the understanding of this study it is not

homosexuality which is a problem as it does not pose any danger to those near it, but it is homophobia which has detrimental effects on humanity.

It is noteworthy that the dominant discourses in Africa suggest that same-sex intimacy is un-African, and that sexuality in Africa is largely a heterosexual phenomenon. However, the stories from different African countries under analysis in this study do not only show that same-sex intimacy is African, but also that sexual desires; whether same-sex or heterosexual are innate (Jebeli, 2020) and people can only express them when the socio-political context allows such relationships. These fictional literary texts under study also show the extent to which LGBTQI people go to express their sexual desire, even in the context of strict discrimination and condemnation.

Although the researcher acknowledges the efforts made by the authors in representing LGBTQI people in a good light, most literary texts in this study still represent these individuals as victims of homophobia and individuals with no voice. They also present concept of homosexuality as westernised and pathologised. The animalistic view of representing LGBTQI people still persist. Africa is still painted as a homophobic block and the west as a haven for homosexuality and LGBTQI people are still stigmatised. It is important to note that literature, whether fictional or non-fictional is deduced from the societies; most happenings represented in literature are happenings of the society. Therefore, literature helps the readers and researchers to make an informed guess of where the society is standing in terms of gender and sexuality issues. The above calls for efforts to improve the society's understanding on homosexuality as well as to device ways on how to combat homophobia.

6.4 Ways to mitigate homophobic attitude towards LGBTQI people

This section looks at possible ways to mitigate homophobic attitudes towards LGBTQI people, and it is basically the opinionated suggestions of this study, except where it is acknowledged. This section is necessitated by the on-going debate on the acceptance of LGBTQI people in Namibia. Through the exploration of different ideas from scholars, this study exposes the harsh realities of what LGBTQI people go through at the hands of families, school and the general society, religious circles, just to mention but a few. This then evokes a need for protection for LGBTQI people. Figure 2 summarises some possible ways to mitigate homophobia against LGBTQI people.
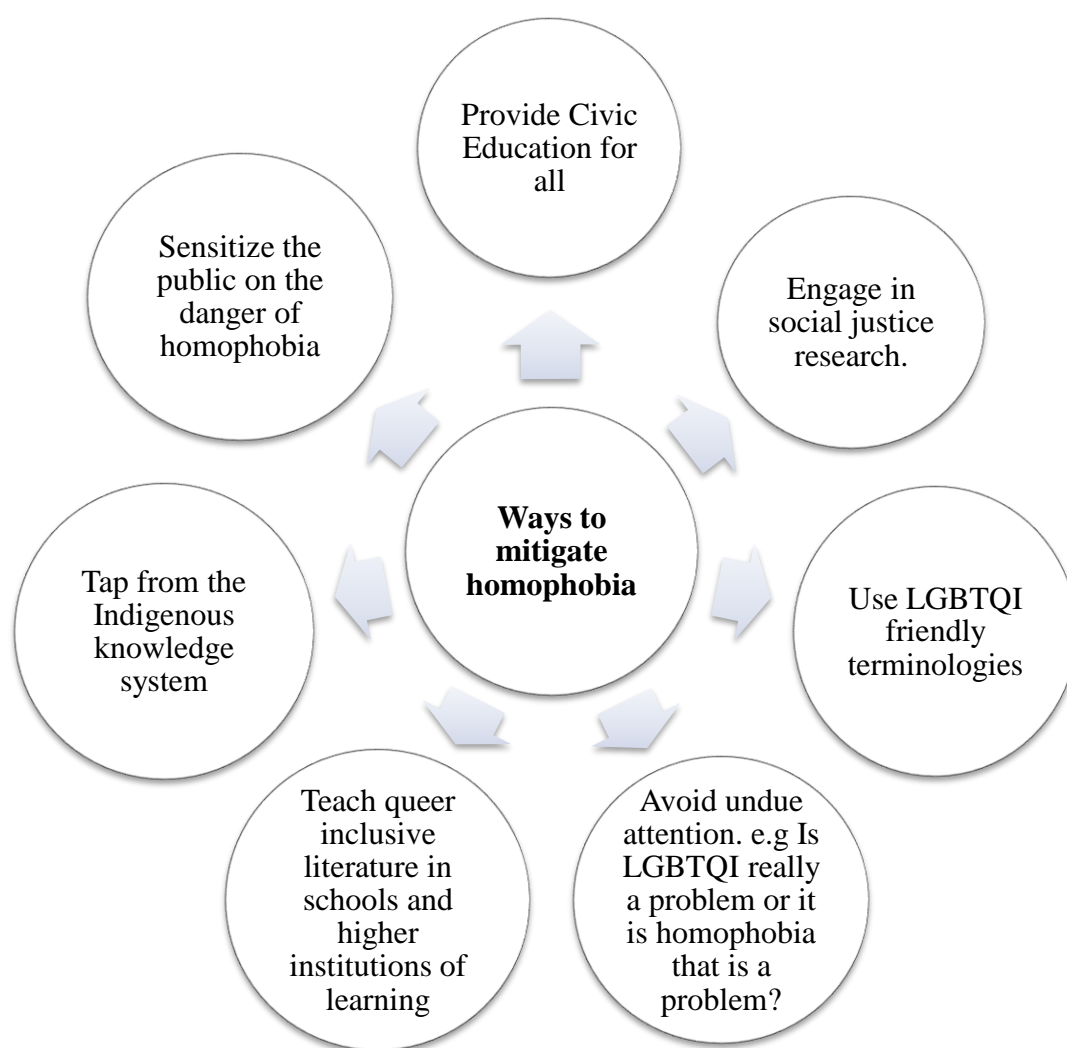

Figure 2. Ways to mitigate homophobic attitudes

Civic Education should be based on progressive/activist/maximal conception, which, according to Winston (2007), is a process aimed at empowering the learners and individuals in general to learn to struggle for societal transformation and social justice. In order to achieve societal transformation and social justice learners must therefore strive to nurture cosmopolitanism, critical analysis, political engagement and cross-cultural respect as well as have a holistic understanding of their responsibilities in society. In other words, learners must open up to different cultures in order to learn and appreciate that their empowerment as learners is not one directional but that they could learn as well from people with different life experiences.

Considering the findings of this study, the researcher proposes Civic Education as a means to combat and mitigate homophobic attitudes toward LGBTQI people. This is the type of education which, according to Winston (2007), is a process aimed at empowering the learners and individuals in general to learn to struggle for societal transformation and social justice. In order to achieve societal transformation and social justice learners must therefore strive to nurture cosmopolitanism, critical analysis, political engagement and cross-cultural respect as well as have a holistic understanding of their responsibilities in society. In other words, learners must open up to different cultures in order to learn and appreciate that their empowerment as learners is not one directional but that they could learn as well from people with different life experiences.

This point is supported by Duffy and Cunningham (1996) as cited in Davies (2018), who contend that generally, education occurs when the two tenets of constructivism are met: "learning as an active process of constructing knowledge rather than [only] acquiring it; and instruction is a process that involves supporting that construction rather than of [only] communicating knowledge." The above point concurs with Duffy

and Cunningham (1996), as cited in Davies (2018), who contends that generally, education occurs when the two tenets of constructivism are met: "learning as an active process of constructing knowledge rather than [only] acquiring it; and instruction is a process that involves supporting that construction rather than of [only] communicating knowledge."

Although homosexual rights or acceptance of homosexuality is perhaps one of the most socially unwelcomed, touchy and politically loathed topics to broach in contemporary Africa, as Lyonga (2014) states; intense civic education could be a starting point in trying to mitigate homophobia towards LGBTQI people. This type of education could be integrated through different means such as through generally sensitising the public on the danger of homophobia, taping from indigenous knowledge systems to seek knowledge on how issues of homosexuality have been dealt with in the past, creating space for debate between traditional and modern communities on LGBTQI issues, educating the public to use LGBTQI friendly terminologies in order to avoid negative connotations and labelling, teaching queer inclusive literature in schools and higher institution of learning as well as encouraging students and researchers to engage in social justice research, just to mention but a few.

The philosophical understanding of this study is that, to do away with homophobia, individuals need to understand that Namibians live in a political space, and in this political space all of people must co-exist regardless of their personal differences, including their sexual differences. Various communities must co-exist within this democratic space as per the Namibian constitution, yet within this space that Namibians exist, people have many personal spaces. These spaces are defined by cultural differences, religious differences, social statuses, political ideologies and many more. These major spaces may also have mini spaces within them for instance,

in a political space, there exists different political parties such as SWAPO or PDM, while within the personal space there may be those who are classified as heterosexuals and those who are classified as LGBTQI individuals. Figure 3 demonstrates the virtual spaces into which people exist.
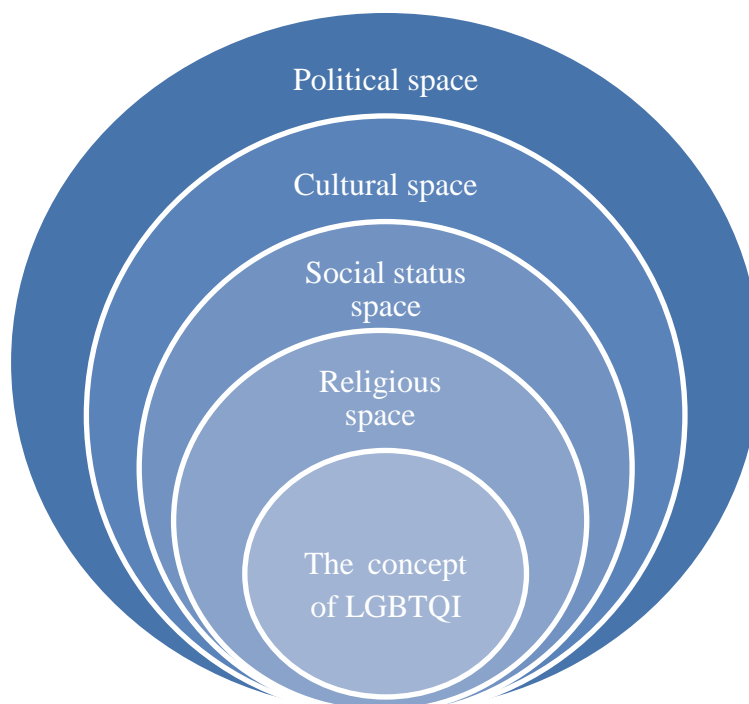

Figure 3. Spaces of Existence Model

As alluded to earlier, naturally when heterosexual beings look at an LGBTQI person they do not only look at someone who seems to be completely and diametrically opposed to how they practice love, but they also have layers of cultural, religious, and political interpretation of what an LGBTQI person is, and these layers might form some form of building blocks in their minds, and this is where homophobia begins. Therefore, in order to reduce homophobia, one should try to reduce these layers. For example, one needs to intellectually accept LGBTQI people and also in terms of the Namibian constitution, one might understand how to accept them, but since human beings are products of the environment and culture, one might still be stuck with

homophobic attitudes emanating from the cultural understanding of LGBTQI. How does one ensure that they also accept LGBTQI people using cultural lenses? There is a need to deconstruct these layers through civic and liberal education that holistically prepares a human being to be able to accept and tolerate differences from others without othering them. One has to deconstruct these layers in order to understand that an LGBTQI is a human being who has a different sexual orientation, something that I have nothing to do with. However, I have to co-exist with that person in peace. How do we de-construct the cultural mentality that has given us the lens lenses through which Africans view LGBTQI? The same is true with religion, one has to deconstruct that religious aspect that compels Africans to alienate LGBTQI people. Homosexuality is therefore a complex issue that has got layers that are in-explainable.

Since the Namibian constitution is secular by design, one does not necessarily need to agree with what the LGBTQI community does. However, what is needed is that the LGBTQI people must respect other peoples' religious or cultural space, and that the heterosexual people must also respect the sexual orientation space for the LGBTQI people. The purpose is for all human beings to co-exist within the given space. Once humanity has identified borders of existing spaces, human beings will respect each other and co-exist with each other. As a result, homophobia will be reduced or even obliterated. Through civic education people can become more liberal in democracy and become tolerant towards their fellow human beings. That was the contention of this study.

This topic could be a very interesting topic mostly open to liberal people, however it could be the hardest topic to present to a conservative society such as in Africa. By minimising homophobia, the researcher does not mean that those who do not subscribe to the sexual orientation of the LGBTQI people must accept and practice it, but that

people must reduce that tension and avoid being homophobic. The only way one cannot be homophobic to understand one's civic duties. One needs to understand the democratic ideal that people can co-exist regardless of their sexual orientation.

In Namibia, some political leaders have been observed to make very homophobic remarks towards LGBTQI people. These are the same leaders who claim to uphold and defend the Namibian constitution. It would appear there are some flaws in the set-up of the Namibian constitution. The very constitution that speaks for the rights of all citizens and allows everybody to co-exist is the same constitution that criminalises sodomy; an act which is only practiced by LGBTQI community, as this is the way they practice their love. It is clear that Namibia has a quiet diplomacy towards the LGBTQI community because the government does not generally prosecute LGBTQI for their sexual orientation. However, if they involve themselves in the act of sodomy, the act itself is criminalised. Thus, the on-going debate is about attempts to decriminalise the act, because if the constitution allows the LGBTQI people to co-exist within the political space, then why should it criminalise the act that only exist within the space of the LGBTQI community? Which means, if the act of sodomy stays, then homophobia is promoted by the very same constitution. It will then not be questionable if the members of the public will refer to LGBTQI as criminals when they practice the act of sodomy, as the constitution refers to them.

The LGBTQI community is a minority group, and in a democratic society it is the majority's duty to protect and look after the weak; the minority. Just because the majority does not subscribe to this minority group, it does not mean in any material form that the majority must impose their views and their social interpretation of life on those minorities. It is the duty of the government to protect the LGBTQI from the majority and that is what democracy is all about, and also how the constitution protects

everyone. For instance, it does not mean that just because one political party is very small then it must be crushed to death. The small contribution from that party is needed for true democracy to flourish. The protection of the minorities is also necessary for humanitarian reasons, and Namibia has subscribed to the United Nations in terms of humanitarian assistance and one way to do so is to protect the minority groups. With civic education individuals may become liberal. Although it does not happen overnight, to achieve this, gradually education has an impact on human being.

Finally, just like heterosexual human beings, some LBGTQI people are productive members of the community who spearhead and contribute to the development of the community. The questions that should be raised is how their personal choices of life affect the bigger picture of social cohesion or how people live. Therefore, it is the researcher's stance that, as long as one holds their personal or religious space where the LGBTQI people do not come and interfere in it, they will learn to co-exist with them without imposing their views on them and expects them to reciprocate equally. No one has monopoly to morality to equip them and qualify them to declare that the LGBTQI people are sinners. Therefore, the wholesome condemnation of the LGBTQI people is uncalled for. In this way homophobia can be minimized. Of course, I have a religious space, but this space does not extend to impinge on other people's spaces. We must learn to co-exist in peace, whether black, white, gay, lesbian etcetera. That is my guiding philosophy.

This study emphasised that human rights should apply to LGBTQI individuals to the same extent as for the heterosexual individuals due to the core values of the universality of human rights. Human rights are often described as universal and equal for all individuals, and are seen as inalienable rights which all humans inherited through birth. It does not matter if someone believes that the concept of gay

relationships is culturally, politically, or by nature wrong or immoral. A gay person is still a human being and therefore entitled to his or her human rights due to the fact that he or she was born into the human race. On the contrary, literature reveals that the equality of rights and equal protection of rights is not yet applied universally in terms of LGBTQI persons. If one denies LGBTQI persons the enjoyment of all human rights then one can conclude that these individuals are seen as less human since the society does not let them access the same rights as heterosexuals.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter is a continuation of the presentation and discussions of the results and it deliberates on the last objective of the study. The chapter discusses the sociocultural challenges experienced by LGBTQI people, and outlines these challenges as presented in the literary works under study. Lastly, the chapter presents the researcher's suggestions on the possible ways to mitigate homophobic attitudes towards LGBTQI minorities.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction

This chapter closes this study. The study explores the literary portrayal of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex characters in six African literary works. This chapter consists of the conclusion and findings. The chapter recaptures the research topic and theoretical framework which guided the study, as well as reverts back to individual research objectives and sums them up accordingly. The last section of this chapter will proffer recommendations which aligns with the findings of this study and which highlights possible future research areas.

7.1 Conclusion and findings

This section of the study presents the conclusion and findings by firstly presenting the relations between the topic of the study and the theoretical framework guiding this study. Secondly, this section also presents the summary of each of the research objectives in relation to the discussions engaged earlier in the previous chapters.

7.1.1 Re-examining the research topic and theoretical framework

The study "*Sexuality in fiction: Exploring the literary portrayal of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex characters in selected African novels*" dissects gender and sexuality issues of individual LGBTQI characters through the lens of the Queer theory. The title of this dissertation is a crucial one to broach in present-day Namibia, especially during this year when most citizens especially politicians are busy contemplating on the issue of the illegality of homosexuality in Namibia. Getting to understand how LGBTQI people are represented in African literary works sheds light to the understanding of personal experiences of LGBTQI people in real-life societies; and this may aid decision making regarding this issue. It is true that literature

represents almost the totality of the real-life happenings of the society; this appears in the literary works under study that through writing; the authors simultaneously come out of the closet.

The Queer theory that guides this study is about questioning the presumptions, values and viewpoints regarding those whose sexuality or gender places them outside of society's idea of normal, and in this case, these are the LGBTQI people. Scholars such as Milani (2014) suggests that the Queer theory is a more useful lens in the African context where more than in the Western context, –identity and behaviour are frequently incongruous; hence its usage in this study, despite some criticisms against it. The Queer theory re-presents a more fluid concept of gender and sexuality to enhance understanding of human diversity. Unlike gay and lesbian theory, Queer theory is inclusive and incorporates all non-heteronormative sexualities, for instance in literary context Queer theory focuses on eradicating the binary oppositions, aspiring to valorise sexual plurality and gender ambivalence of characters and their work. The Queer theory can be extremely useful in analysing sexuality in Africa as long as this is done with continental specifications in mind.

7.2 Revisiting the research objectives

7.2.1 Examine the portrayal of LGBTQI characters as depicted in selected literary works.

LGBTQI characters are represented diversely in different works. Firstly, in some instances there are some family members and members of the society who understand and appear to be tolerant towards LGBTQI people and therefore view them objectively. These understanding members of the society are empathetic and supportive to the LGBTQI people and protect their rights as human beings. However, the concept of homosexuality is concealed and kept a secret especially to other

members of the society who may have a different view towards the concept of homosexuality. This concealment is necessitated by the protection of LGBTQI people, because the literary works under study have proven that a large number of the fictional society into which the LGBTQI individual live, is against the concept of homosexuality, therefore many LGBTQI people live in constant fear and continuous threat at the hands of the heteronormative families and societies.

Secondly, homophobia is one of the recurring themes in all literary texts under study. Homophobia emanates from religious bias and misinterpretations as well as from socio-cultural beliefs regarding the concept of homosexuality. With religious views the concept of homosexuality is demonised and those belonging to the LGBTQI communities are classified as sinners and demon possessed, while with socio-cultural beliefs, there is a total denial of homosexuality as being African, from some authors, who interpret homosexuality as a product of colonialism and a western imposition. Other authors however through their works present homosexuality as part of humanity and not a colonial ailment as some authors and scholars claim.

Worth noting is also the fact that LGBTQI people are not only portrayed as victims of abuse, but individuals who are ready to set themselves free from societal abuse and are ready to defend their sexuality freedom; taking the legal route; even at the expense of parting with their family members. Nonetheless, family rejection is one of the devastating experiences LGBTQI people endure, and literature has it that it is one of the factors that compels LGBTQI people to stay in the closet and conceal their sexuality.

This study has also noted that there is no successful story about coming out of the closet, all literary works under study paint the concept of coming out as a devastating

and regrettable choice by those who opted for it, as it always attracted negative reaction from the family and the society.

7.2.2 Explore the socio-cultural challenges experienced by people of different sexual orientation.

This study noted that LGBTQI people are subjected to biases rooted in beliefs and traditions about sexuality and gender. Such people also face tremendous difficulties growing up in societies where heterosexuality is often presented as the only acceptable orientation and homosexuality is regarded as a deviation. It appears that LGBTQI people experience homophobia and transphobia in their social environment, be it at home or at their work place. Homophobia and transphobia manifest itself in different forms including homophobic jokes, physical attacks and discrimination amongst others. LGBTQI people also experience family ramifications whereby they are compelled to part with families because of their sexuality. They are also faced with social challenges such as being victims of terror and terrorism, facing identity conflict and regret, facing challenges in coming out of the closet, facing political sponsored violence, harassment and hostility, as well as being victims of verbal and physical abuse, just to mention but a few. Although they have plenty of survival and coping strategies to deal with these challenges, LGBTQI people appear to live a burdened life full of pretentiousness in order to fit the 'norm'.

7.2.3 Examine cultural views and understanding towards LGBTQI minorities.

Although many African scholars hold a belief that homosexuality is un-African; available reliable sources have nullified this claim and have depicted known queer practices in African cultures that have existed even before colonialism. This study has also noted that the African definition of the concept of homosexuality may not

necessarily equate to that of the West, thus, same sexuality research in Africa needs to be contextualised and analysed through the eyes of indigenous people. Basically, same sexuality in African communities require a far more complex narrative from indigenous knowledge and culture.

7.2.4 The evolution of the representation of LGBTQI themes in African literature

Tamale (2011) reveals the representation of an African LGBTQI by the white explorers as that which lacks African flavour. Tamale further reveals that LGBTQI characters in pre-colonial literature were presented in a negative light; whereby they were caricatured as to having lustful dispositions. However, the findings from this study reveals that there is a great shift from the representation described by Tamale (2011) and other researchers of African sexuality. For instance, although the representation of LGBTQI in *The Interpreters* (1965) by Soyinka's novel appears to be caricatured and ridiculed, this appears to be a stylistic way the author has used to convey his message and present his argument on LGBTQI issues considering the time it was in history. What is worth noting is that, the protagonist in *The Interpreters* who is a gay character is not only presented as a victim of the societal mockery but also as a heroic figure who stands firmly to defend his sexuality and teach those near him that homosexuality is indeed not a colonial ailment as the society claims.

In the play the *Oracle of Cidino* the protagonists Peggy and Thelma stand out to embrace their sexuality despite the cultural environment they find themselves. While in *The Hairdresser of Harare* Dumisani breaks the stereotype and myth about gender roles and stands out to be the only male hairdresser in Harare. Similarly, the literary text *Fairy tales for lost children* presents quite different characters of varied sexualities and ages; from children to adults. The literary text presents characters who are liberal

about their sexuality, such as Waryaa who portrays undisputed liberalism towards his sexuality, sacrificing his good relationship with his only grandmother. In the same light, in the novel *Speak no Evil,* Niru the protagonist realises his sexuality as a young boy and opted to stand out for his sexuality despite the challenges he experienced upon coming out.

Lastly, the literary work *I am a homosexual, Mum* is one of the exceptional one in the view of this study, because the tittle of the 'chapter' itself portrays a sense of liberalism in terms of LGBTQI themes. Although the theme of LGBTQI is one that was concealed by some writers such as Nyathi (2003) as illustrated earlier in this study, writers such as Wainaina break away from that type of portrayal and craft a title that refers to the theme of LGBTQI. Wainaina refers to this literary work as a 'Lost chapter' of his memoir *One day I will write about this place*; however, in the view of this study this chapter could have been deliberately omitted so that it stands out from the rest of the book since it carries an aspect of Wainaina's life that is important to stand out. It is in this chapter where Wainaina writes and comes out at the same time.

Overly, the portrayal of LGBTQI characters in the literary works under study demonstrate a change in terms of inclusion of different sexualities in the literary texts, self-awareness of LGBTQI and liberalism in terms of sexuality expression among other. The challenges that LGBTQI Protagonists meet in the context are there to inform the readers that LGBTQI people endure socio-cultural challenges in their everyday lives, nevertheless, these challenges do not define them as human; but they rather find survival strategies to overthrow them.

7.2 Recommendations

The study explored the literary portrayal of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex characters in selected African literary works, using queer theory as a lens. Following the above findings and conclusions the following recommendations are made:

- In future studies, researchers should consider coming up with a new theory that best fits sexuality literary studies, or alternatively device ways that would help the existing Queer theory to fit the African context, as the current queer theory faces criticism especially for usage in the African context.

- The university of Namibia should consider teaching queer inclusive literature in its courses to enhance understanding regarding LGBTQI matters.

- Further research on LGBTQI should be conducted on African indigenous knowledge in order to tap knowledge on how such issues have been dealt with in the past.

- Up-coming researchers should emphasise the benefits of coming out of the closet by LGBTQI people, as in the literary text under study there is no successful story of coming out of the closet.

- Researchers should consider engaging in social justice research, as this may help to sensitise the public on the danger of homophobia.

- Political leaders and members of the media must use LGBTQI friendly terminologies and avoid instigating phobia through language.

- LGBTQI people are a minority group, the government must consider protecting the rights of such minority group and not to alienate such group of people.

7.3 Chapter summary

This is the final chapter of this study and it closes off the study. It consists of the conclusion and findings of the study which recaptures the research topic and theoretical framework guiding this study. Herein, the research objectives of the study have also been re-stated and summarised accordingly. Lastly, the final part of the chapter proffers some recommendations and possible future research areas.

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