

**THE DILEMMA OF LESBIAN CHARACTERS IN SETTINGS OF
HETEROSEXUAL HEGEMONY IN SELECTED AFRICAN LITERARY
WORKS**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my son Alay for the several times he had to lull himself to sleep in my absence.

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Lesbian:** A woman who is not only attracted to another woman sexually but also one who seeks emotional support, comfort and solace.
- Dilemma:** Is a state of indecisiveness where a person is trapped into two opposing feelings or attitudes towards an idea and the decision made is embedded with severe consequences.
- Heterosexuality:** The dominant sexual orientation norm which refers to the so called Edenic union where the relationship is characterized as male-female relationship by the society.
- Hegemony:** Is a state of dominance where a certain opinion is preferred over another by a group of people by virtue of their sexuality, political affiliation and power.
- Sexuality:** Is a natural sexual drive characteristic of all human beings in terms of their sexual orientation.
- Homosexuality:** A relationship characterized by same sex sexual relations.
- Sexual orientation:** Is the sex drive towards either a male or female counterpart.
- Queer:** A person whose sexual drive is in contrast with the heterosexual orientation norm.
- Gay:** A sexual relationship characterized as a male-male union.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the dilemma of lesbian characters in settings of heterosexual hegemony in selected African prose works. The study is grounded on the premise that literature by African writers is a mouthpiece to communicate the pain and struggles of homosexuals in trying to escape from the jaws of living in a closet in highly homophobic countries. The objectives guiding the research will examine how lesbian voices have been represented in selected African prose works, interrogate the socio-cultural rejoinders to lesbianism in African fiction and investigate possible social visions of lesbianism in the selected African prose works. The research employs queer theory to analyze the selected African prose works. Queer theory is as postulated by Judith Butler, Gloria Anzaldua, and Michel Foucault among others. The theoretical framework aims at redefining the concept of sexuality. This study employs textual analysis as the methodology for collecting, organizing, interpreting and analyzing data on the dilemma of lesbian characters in settings of heterosexual hegemony in selected African prose works. The research has brought to the fore repressed and empowered voices of the lesbians in the selected works aiming at voicing struggles of lesbians in a heteronormative society. However, the society in the selected African texts imposes marriage, religion and structural violence as a means of ‘curing’ and silencing lesbians. Nonetheless, a possible social vision is alluded to in the texts under study as stringent heteronormative adherents accept lesbian family members and their sexuality. The analysis has thus articulated how heterosexual hegemony hinders lesbianism from expression. It is recommended that there is need for further studies in assessing the nexus between the representation of lesbian voices in Western and African societies in prose works.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Sexuality is a natural and positive drive in human beings. However, different societies have given the term sexuality varying semantic shifts depending on what they believe to be the preferred sexual identity. In the selected African prose works under study, heterosexuality is imposed as the preferred sexual identity and any other identity or sexual orientation is regarded as a misfit in society. The term *hegemony* was introduced by Antonio Gramsci who termed it as “political leadership based on the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class (qtd. in Bates 352).” The views that were highly regarded as the sacred truth not only in politics were based on the imposition by those controlling the means of production. However, Gramsci also states that hegemony and dictatorship are mutually dependent as “hegemony is imposed and does not operate only through consent (qtd. in Gundogan 52).” Hegemony has been used to homogenize sexuality where it is assumed there is sameness in sexuality. The heterosexual relationship has acquired dominance over other sexualities and is viewed as the norm. Heterosexual hegemony is evident in the texts; *Under the Udala Tree* by Okparanta, “Jambula Tree” by Arac de Nyeko, *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho’s Daughter’s Out in Africa* by Diesel and “On Monday of Last Week” by Adichie. However, according to Foucault, hegemony leads to the repression of sexuality as the differences are not acknowledged and people are lumped into masses of heterosexuals.

Those who confess their differences live in fear of being punished for holding dissenting views as their desires are in contrast with the majority of the society.

In the world, the discourse on homosexuality is accompanied with fear. In the 1940's in America, the national silence on homosexuality was broken and homosexuality was condemned on all fronts. Major religions considered it sinful while psychiatrists considered it a mental disorder that required treatment and the state put up laws to criminalize it. The gay people in America were placed in mental institutions for treatment which included "aversion therapy, electric shock treatment and even lobotomies (Tyson 319)." Between the year 1947 and 1949, the discourse on homosexuality was published in two largest Newspaper weeklies that is *Time* and *Newsweek*. However, homosexuality was negatively connoted as "abominable, degenerate, disgusting, evil, extreme, medical disorder, immoral, sex criminal and wicked (Thistle July 4)." The Stonewall riots of 1969, led to the liberation of the Gay Movement where the gay rioters and the police had a confrontation during a raid. This in turn led to media coverage in the 1970's on homosexuality to increase and focused more on the quest for personal and political freedom for the homosexuality in America. In the year 1974, the treatment strategies ended as homosexuality was removed from the list of psychological disorders in the American Psychiatric Association. In 1990, the ban on the homosexual immigrants to the United States was lifted. Despite the Gay Liberation starting in 1969 to advocate for the rights of the homosexuals, gays still face discrimination in America and other parts of the world. In the African texts under study, the homosexuals are discriminated on and subjected to hostility in the society.

African scholars have argued about the existence of homosexuality in Africa with differing views on the discourse. Dawn Mokhobo suggests that “homosexuality is non-existent in the current African society and the term is abhorrent (qtd. in Busangokwakhe 128). Robert Riddinger suggests that heterosexual marriage is a foretaste of the external joys of paradise whereas homosexuality is classed as a form of “adultery, a revolt against the divinely established order and a source of darkness and disruption” as it occurs outside the licensed boundaries of marriage (qtd. in Busangokwakhe131). Riddinger thus asserts that homosexuality existed in the African society however; it was a taboo as it tried to challenge the natural order of heterosexuality.” The texts *Under the Udala Tree* by Okparanta, “Jambula Tree” by Arac de Nyeko, *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho’s Daughter’s Out in Africa* by Diesel and “On Monday of Last Week” by Adichie expose the existence of homosexuality in some African countries. Furthermore, the texts enunciate the oppression that befalls the homosexuals as the discourse is a taboo in the African society. In addition, Chief T. Mataruse argues that;

“Homosexuality is not really a foreign phenomenon. Homosexuality is practiced by some boys at puberty... However, the intention is that of relieving sexual urges without any shadow being cast on future plans for heterosexual sex in marriage.” (qtd. in Tabona Shoko 636)

In line with Mataruse’s arguments, homosexuality was allowed in the African context and it had no impact in the future heterosexual bonds. Shumba, a female elder elaborates that “both men and women do homosexual acts in the absence of the opposite sex. All that people need in these relationships is love (qtd. in Shoko 636).” According to

Shumba, love is seen as the core of the homosexual relationships in times of loneliness while in heterosexual relationship love is not considered essential.

In spite of the arguments made on the existence of homosexuality in Africa, there lies an unresolved contradiction. How can the African society term homosexuality as a taboo if it never existed? Arlene Swindler disagrees with Mokhobo and claims that “condemnation of homosexuality is what is un-African (qtd. in Busangokwakhe 129).” The implication of the sentiments above is that homosexuality was in existence in the African society but was unpopular as efforts were being made to hash it down by terming it as foreign as heterosexuality had been normalized. In the African texts under study, attempts to silence the discourse on homosexuality are postulated on. Nonetheless, reference to homosexuality in the selected texts does not regard it a foreign phenomenon. Therefore, there is need to address the dilemma that accompanies lesbian characters in selected African prose works.

Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook affirm that “heterosexuality like masculinity and femininity- is taken for granted as a natural occurrence derived from biological sex (443).” This implies that heterosexuality is believed to be a biological occurrence at birth. Julia Kristeva however, differs with the sentiments that sex and gender are biological and instead terms them as social constructs. She affirms that “sexual, biological, physiological and reproductive differences [between women and men] reflects a difference in ...the social construct (qtd. in Tyson 103).” The differences in biological meaning are usually consumed, overshadowed and displaced by the social meaning

which is patriarchal in nature. This is because “patriarchy defines and controls the way we relate to sex (qtd. in Tyson 103).” Kristeva thus asserts that heterosexuality is a social construct and not biological in nature. In the African texts under study, the society stipulates the sexuality of its individual members.

One of the unresolved issues though is that homosexuality homogenizes all other sexual orientation while “the analytical categories of homosexuality that is; the lesbian and the gay...seem inappropriate to the cross- cultural studies of same –sex sexualities (Amory 8).” Evan Mwangi thus asserts that the nonexistence of a signifier in the African indigenous languages is what people take as an absence of the signified in the discourse of homosexuality (190). However, according to Mwangi, the lack of a signifier in African languages does not necessarily mean the absence of the discourse. This study hopes to delve on the issue of homogenization of homosexuals as it narrows down to study the lesbians in the selected African texts, their struggles and experiences in the African society.

In addition, homophobia in different nations has made it impossible for the homosexuals to come out from the closet due to fear of being shut off from the society. This fear reciprocates to acts of violence against the gay and the lesbians in these nations. Most African presidents in unison have condemned homosexuality in their countries by signing bills meant to destabilize the said “unions.” Nigerian’s president, Goodluck Jonathan signed into law a bill criminalizing same sex relationships and the support of such

relationships on January 7, 2014. Those found culpable of the offenses are to be sentenced to fourteen years in prison.

On February 24, 2014, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda signed into law an anti-homosexual bill that is meant to punish and give life imprisonment to gays and lesbians in Uganda. President Mugabe of Zimbabwe in addition lambasted homosexuals as “worse than dogs and pigs and should be hounded out by society (Shoko 644).” Leaders with this mentality enact laws that make the existence of homosexuals in society to be inoperative. South Africa is the first country however that has outlawed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in its 1996 constitution. Despite this fact, homosexuals in South Africa still live in fear of coming out. The fear surrounding the homosexuals in South Africa has been outlined in one of the texts under study namely, *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho’s Daughter’s Out in Africa* by Diesel. The text articulates the despair that the homosexuals are faced with.

Elie Wiesel’s view on homophobia tries to show the inhumane nature of acts perpetuated against the queer in society due to heterosexual hegemony. He poses this for internalization:

“Do I hate my brother because he reminds me of myself, or do I hate my brother because he reminds me of someone who is “not” myself? Whom do I hate; the one who is me, or the one who is anything but me?” (qtd. in Nickel 505)

The above sentiment brings to the fore that most people who are against homosexuals cannot even establish the reasons as to why they are against them. Innately, the

homosexuals could be a reminder of their own inner battles which they yearn to escape from. The suppressed fear is evident in the texts under study as most lesbian characters fear 'coming out' as the society in those texts impose harsh judgement on homosexuals.

Jonathan Rauch states that:

“Homosexuals are objects of scorn for teenagers and of sympathy or moral fear or hatred for adults. They grow up in confusion and bewilderment as children, then often pass into denial as young adults and sometimes remain frightened even into old age.” (523)

Homosexuals in the selected African texts are regarded as misfits in society and as a result they live in denial of their sexuality as society has taken up the role of defining the preferred sexuality and any other is regarded as a violation of the norm.

The homosexual identity is shunned in society and silence is imposed on homosexuals to maintain the patriarchal structure. Amina Mama, an African feminist theorist, argues that sexuality “is more often repressed than liberated: homophobia is rampant, lesbianism hardly enters public discussion (qtd. in Currier and Migraine 135).” The discourse on sexuality is unspoken of and when it is mentioned in the texts under study, it propagates heterosexuality as the preferred sexuality.

However, literature, and especially the novel, gives subjectivity by portraying homosexuality as a lived experience that makes a contribution to shaping the identity of the homosexuals. Chris Dunton argues that texts on homosexuality should not just be part of a social typology but rather should be able to make an impact on those who read them.

He states that:

...in texts...the subject of homosexuality becomes liberated, in the special sense that whether or not it is treated sympathetically, it is granted a greater capacity to disturb, to call questions, than in texts where it merely forms part of the data of a social typology. (103)

Thus the fictional text is meant to create social awareness as it has the power to question the unquestionable. Hence it brings to the fore issues that do not just remain statistical data and attempts to advocate for the rights of the minority. Thus Keguro Macharia advocates that the stories should not be read in ways that reduce them to “singularly homophobic Africa” but instead they should “emphasize the struggles and dreams and desires of queer people... (qtd. in Green-Simms 145).” This in depth reading attempts to give an understanding of the homosexuals and what they go through and their dreams and inspiration for others of their shared sexuality.

In addition, Synnott states that a body which is seen as a representation of self and society implies that a homosexual body is channeled into social control where it has to conform to the socialization principles such as religion and state. The homosexual body therefore is forced into formulation of various meanings hence end up living a lie. The body social is many things: the prime symbol of the self, but also of the society; it is something we have, yet also what we are; it is both the subject and object at the same time; it is individual and personal... yet it is also common to all humanity... the body is both an individual creation, physically and phenomenologically, and a cultural product; it is personal and also state property. (qtd. in Kaigai 59)

The sentiments imply that it is hard for homosexuals to live freely and truthfully as their body is forced to conform to the societal expectation as homophobia forbids homosexual relations. The study articulates the discourse of hegemony as a way to control and maintain the desired sexuality. Michel Foucault in *History of Sexuality* argues that for many years we have been living under the realm of Prince Mangogul that is; “under the spell of an immense curiosity about sex, bent on questioning it, with an insatiable desire to hear it speak and be spoken about, quick to invent all sorts of magical rings that might force it to abandon its discretion (77).” This study is aimed at addressing the gap created by repression of the discourse with the desire to get knowledge about it.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The creation of space for lesbianism is being felt in creative writing with some writers penning down their experiences to voice the struggles and dilemma due to heteronormative ideology. The discourse was initiated quite early by Ama Ata Aidoo in her work but has been revived and has gained currency recently through authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi and Chinelo Okparanta. This drastic step has enabled readers to get an authentic feel into the world of the other sexuality. However, prior studies on the discourse of lesbianism have created a gap. Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Our Sister Kill Joy* for instance, portrays lesbianism as a foreign phenomenon in Africa where Marija a German is solely blamed for the encounter with Sissie. Additionally, Rebeka’s *Ripples in the Pool* refers to lesbianism as a neurotic disorder through the character of Selina. Therefore, there is need to interrogate the portrayal of lesbians in the selected literary texts, struggle for space and acceptance in the homophobic countries. In addition, the study sets to

investigate the social-cultural responses and the fate that accompanies the discourse of lesbianism in African countries.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. Examine how African authors use characters to represent the voices of the lesbians in the selected texts.
- ii. Interrogate the socio-cultural rejoinders to lesbianism by heterosexual African societies in the texts under study.
- iii. Investigate the authors' social visions for lesbianism as presented in the selected African texts.

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- i) How do the characters represent the voices of the lesbians in the selected texts?
- ii) How do societies depicted in the texts respond to lesbianism?
- iii) What are the authors' social vision for lesbianism in the selected texts?

1.5 Research Assumptions

This study makes the following assumptions:

- i. African writers create characters that represent the voices of lesbians despite the homophobic environment.
- ii. Different societies give certain responses and reactions to the discourse of lesbianism and predominant responses bespeak of heterosexual hegemony.

- iii. Authors offer social visions for the lesbian community to survive and co-exist with others.

1.6 Justification for the study

The debate on the existence of homosexuality in pre-colonial African societies has been on for some time and is still ongoing. The African region has not received much scholarly attention in the field of homosexuality. Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* being among the first African works to speak of lesbianism has paved the way for recent texts on the topic of lesbianism. Texts that have started to dominate the field include Chinelo Okparanta's Lambda Award 2016 literary novel *Under the Udala Tree* (2015), Monica Arac de Nyeko's Caine Prize winning short story "Jambula Tree" (2008), autobiographical texts by Ken Mwachiro's *Invisible: Stories from Kenya's Queer Community* (2014), Shamim Sarif's two novels *The World Unseen* (2001) and *I Can't Think Straight* (2008), and Alleyne Diesel's *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho's Daughter's Out in Africa* (2011).

Among these texts the study will focus on *Under the Udala Trees*, "Jambula Tree," "On Monday of Last Week," and *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho's Daughter's Out in Africa*. The research has resulted to a mix of fiction to assess how authors enunciate the sexuality discourse in different types of writings. The fiction stretches from novel, short stories and an autobiography. The mixing up of fiction borrows from Kosofsky's linguistic performativity analogy where language changes its meaning when used in different positions. The word queer when used in the first, second and third person will denote a difference in meaning where in first person it personalizes the experiences while second

and third appears to distance themselves from the experiences. Hence there is need to assess the different positions the authors occupy in their narrations.

Alleyne Diesel's autobiography, *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho's Daughter's Out in Africa* is vital as it gives stories of personal experiences of lesbians in South Africa. An autobiography is a creative work as it entails a selection process of including and excluding ideas, thus enabling the author to voice an issue of concern in the society through the characters life stories. The weaving together of the experiences of the lesbians in the autobiography qualifies the stories as creative works as the author selects what is of concern to his topic and chooses to exhaust facts on it. Furthermore, "autobiography allows scholars writing from traditionally marginalized positions to simultaneously assert the legitimacy of their view point and challenge perspectives that have been presented as disinterested and universal...autobiographical criticism has the power to change dominant discourses by raising awareness of views outside of the mainstream" (McMillan 108). This is because, as Philips states, if any segment of society is excluded from its literature, the implication that is conveyed is that the said group is without value in the society. The texts will give a sneak peek into the lives of the lesbian community and their struggle in the selected African texts.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

The study specifically limits itself to the following texts; Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, Monica Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree", Chimamanda Ngozi's "On Monday of Last Week" and Alleyne Diesel's *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho's Daughter's Out in Africa*. This study is limited to character and thematic analysis as

contextualized in the authors' vision in the selected texts. The integration of the texts is to give divergent views on the discourse of homosexuality in the selected African prose fiction from different regions.

1.8 Literature Review

1.8.1 Lesbianism in Africa in selected African prose works

The discourse on lesbianism in Africa has been exposed by authors who have in turn published works for others to read and have knowledge on the issue. Adrienne Rich and Alice Walker have played a pivotal role in attempting to define the lesbian relationship to free it from the prejudice that it is solely sexual. Rich terms the relationship as "lesbian continuum." A lesbian continuum includes:

A range-through each woman's life and throughout history-of-woman-identified experience not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman...the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support....(1603)

The above sentiment implies that the said union is not meant for sexual satisfaction as it majorly focuses on the comfort and solace experienced towards other women. This inner satisfaction can only be felt with the bond between the women. In addition, Walker argues that a womanist is "a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually (qtd. in Hill 12)." Walker reinforces the idea of lesbian continuum where lesbians do not love solely for sexual benefits but also for the sisterhood bond. Walker also adds that the word used to define lesbian women "would have to be a word that affirmed

connectedness to the entire community and the world, rather than separation regardless of who worked and slept with whom (qtd. in Torfs 25).” A lesbian should be a woman who is all round by embracing her own culture and at the same time free to express her sexuality regardless of societal norms and beliefs. The lesbian continuum will inform this study so as to unearth and understand the reasons behind woman-woman relationships and the benefit it triggers in the woman’s life. It will attempt to clarify the bias that lesbian relationships are solely sexual and bring to the fore the sisterhood that guides these relationships.

1.8.2 Literature related to lesbianism

Ama Ata Aidoo portrays female same sex desire in *Our Sister Killjoy* between a German (Marija) and a Ghanaian (Sissie). Gay Wilentz argues that the affair is catalyzed by the breakdown of Marija’s family where the husband has no time for her. He thus attributes the sexual affection arising from the despair of a western-style, isolated, loveless family life. Marija thus finds comfort and solace in Sissie out of her frustration in marriage and creates a bond to cure her loneliness. A love spark is rekindled with the bonding of the two women who are able to create their lesbian continuum. However, Aidoo terms the relationship as the West’s degeneration hence freeing Sissie from societal blame of confronting heterosexual hegemony. This study attempts to interrogate the involvement of Africans in reciprocation of woman-woman relationship and to divert it from the bias that it is a western phenomenon.

On the other hand, Evan Mwangi argues that *Ripples in the Pool* by Rebeka Njau reminds us that female-female desires are not new in Africa as homosexuality is evident in the Gikuyu Community. Njambi and O' Brien argue that:

“In our Gikuyu locale, women in these relationships did not talk about sexual involvement with one another, although some did indicate sharing the same bed at night.” (qtd. in Mwangi 200)

Thus there is no need for scandalization of Selina's lesbianism as it was already in existence in the community. Mwangi also argues that the text seems to embrace the disruptive “ripples” of sexuality as the changes provide an avenue for the liberation of women, despite the decadence that comes with modernity. However, Ato Quayson states that the binary opposition of homosexuality to neurosis which are the key motifs in the text lead to “aesthetic nervousness.” This implies that the readers dismiss the lesbian character (Selina) as her neurosis causes her to murder two characters. Reasons behind her actions are not understood and the novel fails short of expounding the issue. Mwangi asserts that the tragic end of Selina compels empathy towards her plight and hence the novel champions a society where the lesbian is not driven mad by social constraints on sexuality. This study is aimed at analyzing the sanity of lesbianism by diverting it from a neurotic point of view.

Gulia and Mallick also state the term homosexual was applied indiscriminately to “same sex attraction disorder, an inverse sexual orientation and a mental illness.” (pg 5) Homosexuality according to the scholars above was seen as a medical condition.

However, Hirschfeld in *The Homosexuality of Men and Women* attempts to shift the assumption of homosexuality being a medical disorder. He argues;

“The book was designed to provide a unified, comprehensive description of homosexuality which would clear heterosexuals of homophobic prejudice and allow homosexuals to accept themselves and stop feeling isolated.” (Pg 11)

The two scholars affirm the book would lead to an understanding of the other sexuality and address the bias attached to the discourse.

Chantal Zabus on *Out in Africa* that a Mozambican woman in 1993 chose to go into exile instead of rehabilitation and stated that “I will not deny that I am a lesbian, that my primary commitments are and will always be to other women (252).” The sentiments of the Mozambican woman affirm that there is need to accept one’s identity as denouncing one’s sexuality does not change anything. These sentiments will inform the study as the characters have taken the initiative of speaking about their sexuality with the hope of a better tomorrow.

1.8.3 Studies on African societal responses and attitudes towards lesbianism

Chimamanda Ngozi in “Dear Ijeawele, or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions,” gives an insight on how Ijeawele is advised never to speak of marriage as an achievement. This is because girls grow up obsessed with marriage while the boy child is not and hence she ends up in an unhappy marriage as there is no reciprocation. Marriage is meant to tie her to her gender roles speculated by the society and the husband is seen as the perfect “other.” Kaigai states that;

“The normalizing apparatus of sexuality has restricted the ways in which sexuality can be interpreted, by imposing normalized heterosexuality and utilizing an unflinching yet hypocritical religiosity.” (68)

Sexuality has been restrained in terms of its interpretation due to heteronormative ideology. This study aims to reveal the loop holes in the romanticized heterosexual relationships as most are not perfect and end up as being the worst option for companionship in the texts under study.

Bohme states that the government of Tanzania reacts towards the discourse of homosexuality through censorship of the 2011 video film “*Shoga*.” The term shoga implies a very close friend, a homosexual. However, Bohme states that;

The introduction of the medium of video has led to major changes in experiences of the cinema and viewing practices in Tanzania...As the cross media scandal around *Shoga* has shown, making the unshowable showable has strongly affected the discourses and understandings of love and sex. In making films like *Shoga*, film makers have opened up debates about such controversial issues as homosexuality, in spite of their intentions and the films’ messages about morality. (77-78)

According to Bohme, the drastic step the film makers of *Shoga* undertook, broadened the understanding of homosexuality as it mounted debates in the film industry. The censorship by the government might have minimized the consumption of the contents of the film, but those who had the opportunity to view it had already gotten a glimpse into the discourse.

Farrell and Morrione argue that the responses towards homosexuality are determined by the interaction distance of the lesbian for instance and the “straight” members in contact with him. He argues that;

“Attitudes towards a deviant group member become more unfavourable as interaction distance decreases. That is, those in regular and intimate contact with the deviant find it more difficult to accept him than those who are required to share his stigma or spend a great deal of time exerting tact and care regarding it.” (pg 2)

According to the two scholars above, regular interaction with the “non- straight” members exposes the lesbians to hostility and discrimination with the people they are in close proximity. The response leads to the stigmatization of the lesbians. However, Goffman argues that with the familiarity and constant interaction, the response of discrimination recedes. The discrimination is substituted with gradual sympathy, understanding and realistic assessment of personal qualities.

In *Sister Outsider* Audre Lord describes the practice of woman- woman marriages in different African societies. The said marriages involved wealthy women who would pay brideprice for more wives with intent of claiming the offsprings of the other women as heirs. Lorde states that woman-woman marriages, allowed some African women of means who wish to remain free to elude men’s authority. Additionally, she claims that some woman-woman relationships were lesbian relationships. However, there are dissenting views terming the classification of woman-woman relationships as lesbians inaccurate. The inaccuracy is alluded to by the distance between the strong bond and support and the the lesbian sexual practices.

1.8.4 Review of critical works on texts under study

Lindsey Green-Simms in a reading of “On Monday Of Last Week” states that in this text,

“Queer desire is not a problem or a stigma; it’s not something to choose or not to choose. Here, queer desire, like any desire, exists in a raw seemingly unpoliticized way, “flowering” up unexpectedly.” (151)

It is hoped that this study will bring to the fore voices of the lesbians ready to explore their sexuality without fear of societal condemnation.

In addition, Emma Cueto argues that Okparanta’s *Happiness Like Water* is pegged on “trying not to get lost. Not lost in a bad relationship or a good one, in other people’s expectations or your own family’s prejudices, in painful memories or in fear of the future (Bustle 2013).” Under the *Udala Trees* study differs from Okparanta’s above work as the lesbian character Ijeoma, an adolescent, is portrayed as courageous and able to face her lesbian fears in Nigeria and does not leave for the diaspora. William Gibson states that “the future is already here. It’s just not evenly distributed (qtd. in Anshow 2015).” The future is alluded to and people have to fight for it to bring it into realization sooner. Under the *Udala Trees* is meant to give hope that lesbianism may be acceptable one day in Nigeria as most of the characters in the text have come to the acceptance of Ijeoma’s sexuality and the realization that it is impossible to change her.

Sofia Ahlberg argues that “*Jambula Tree*” by Monica Arac De Nyeko is a story of defiance. She states that “...the enormous effort to narrate love in times of war is an act of resistance unparalleled by any other.” (409) This is because love between two adolescent girls is explored against the forces of tradition and convention in modern Uganda. A

triumph of this love is an indication of an inner victory for the lesbians as it is a victory against the societal patriarchal structure. The story is a metaphor of the state as the war in the country is equivalent to the inner wars of lesbians in search of their rights and acceptance in society. However, the war in the country has given little room for lesbian expression to be realized. This study is aimed at attempting to articulate the voices of the lesbians in their quest for identity.

Lillian Artz argues that in *Reclaiming the L-word: Sappho's Daughters Out in Africa* the stories are well crafted, thoughtful reflections from real South African women about their real lives. The stories are fearless, compassionate and compelling. "They are surprisingly positive and accepting of all of the weird and wonderful stages of coming out, and being out, and of unlikely cultural, sexual and racial connections made even during the 'bad old days (140)." However, the stories try to show that rights are never won in the laws or court rooms but by people exercising the said rights dutifully. This study is aimed at articulating the dilemma in fighting for the rights of the lesbians in a society that is highly homophobic in the selected African prose works.

Ggola Dineo argues that Zanele Muholi's *Difficult Love, Enraged by a Picture* resists attempts to name, tame and classify the other sexuality. She states that "Zanele ushers in a new language to articulate Black lesbian sexuality creatively and politically at the same time. She documents the plight of the other sexuality through photographs.

The texts above have a symbolic power and marginality that resists the hegemonic systems of power. Huggan states that "the western embrace of marginality-the

postcolonial text-is, above all, a self-empowering strategy that takes strength from marginality. Marginal (third-world) products, valued for their properties of “resistance,” are included in mainstream (western) culture in order to reinvigorate it, reinforcing opposition against hierarchical social structures and hegemonic cultural codes (qtd. in Pucherova 20).” It is hoped that this study will have an impact on the understanding of different sexualities.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study will employ Queer theory. Queer theory has been described as an interdisciplinary approach to the study of sexuality since it derives its sources from feminism, gay and lesbian studies, cultural studies, post structuralism, deconstructionism among many others. The theory is attributed to the pioneering work of Michel Foucault in his genealogies on power, knowledge and sexuality. In addition, the contribution of scholars like Teresa de Lauretis who coined the term ‘queer theory’ referring to the refusal of heterosexuality as the norm, sensitivity to gender by interrogating assumptions that gay and lesbian studies are homogenous, and underscoring the numerous ways in which race shapes sex subjectivities gives a broader understanding of the discourse of queer. The definition by Teresa de Lauretis will aid in analyzing the lesbians in the texts under study who have been portrayed as having defied the expected social norm in terms of the desired sexuality.

The term queer has been defined differently by scholars to accommodate different ideas. The attempts in defining queer are a move towards positivization of the term free from bias. Gloria Anzaldua defines queer as “...the mirror reflecting the heterosexual tribe’s

fear: being different, being other and therefore lesser, therefore sub-human, in-human, non-human (18).” Eve Kosofsky also terms queer as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically (8).” Thus the term queer signifies thinking beyond the binaries in order to create space for the other sexuality. However, Anzaldua rejects the use of the term queer which unites the races, ethnicities and classes as the term tends to homogenize lesbians and erases their differences. She advocates for the creation of *la mestiza* the new and higher consciousness that resists invisible borders of ‘subject-object duality that keep her prisoner.’ She states that;

“As a *Mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman’s sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. *Soy un amasamiento*, I am an act of kneading, of uniting, and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings.” (80)

Anzaldua argues that a *la mestiza* is liberal in thoughts, questions and understands the differences in sexuality. The study focuses on the characters in the selected African texts under study that inhibit the character of the *la mestiza* on matters sexuality.

Furthermore, Alice Walker attempts to define a lesbian by not terming her as queer and instead refers to a lesbian as a womanist. Womanism theory as attributed by Walker,

attempts to define lesbianism as analogous to womanism in her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden*. Walker views womanism as gaining roots from the black women's concrete history in terms of racial and gender oppression. Womanism embraces that culture and femininity are vital to the existence of a woman as culture acts as the lens through which femininity is realized. In addition, Patricia Hill states that Black women "broke silence" in the 1970's and in 1980 and 1990's. African American women developed a "voice", a self-defined, collective black women's standpoint about black womanhood (9)." She also adds that coming to voice "allowed longstanding differences among black women structured along axes of sexuality, social class, nationality religion, and region to emerge (9)." Audre Lorde argues that "it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences (qtd. in Modupe 96)." Accepting the difference reduces the conflict in supremacy as each gender embraces the gender space. The texts under study assess how the refusal of the differences separates the characters and creates conflict.

Foucault just like Walker argues that culture plays a pivotal role in sexuality. Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* observes that "desires are not preexisting biological entities, but rather, they are constituted in the course of historical specific social practices (2386)." This implies that sexuality is a social construct which constitutes the culture of the people and has no biological roots. Anzaldua argues that "culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power (16)." Havelock Ellis, a British sexologist like

Foucault believes that “...sexuality was not understood as absolutely biologically determined even though he claimed, a predisposition towards one form of sexual practice or another is apparent in all human beings...it is probable that many persons go through the world with a congenital predisposition to inversion which always remain latent and unroused (qtd. in Sullivan 8).” The texts under study uphold a culture where heterosexuality has gained roots due to patriarchal society and any other sexuality is unacceptable. The patriarchal society in the texts under study has set the standards for sexuality.

The attempts to understand the unroused predisposition which is homosexuality, has led to a crisis in trying to define it. Its definition has led to binary pairings in order to understand the term homosexuality. Eve Kosofsky argues that the binaries homosexual/heterosexual, masculine/feminine, knowledge/ignorance, private/public, secrecy/disclosure and others are inherently unstable and incoherent because each paired term is dependent on its opposite for its meaning. In order to understand the meaning of “public” for example, one must comprehend the meaning of “private,” which is in a way dependent to it and vice versa. Catherine Mackinnon states that;

“Privacy is everything women as women have never been allowed to be or have; at the same time the private is everything women have been equated with and defined in terms of men’s ability to have.” (qtd. in Kosofsky 110)

This implies that women issues are not to be heard in the public domain while issues in regards to men are a public affair. The African texts under study have propagated the

notion of silence in the articulation of the discourse on lesbianism. Lesbian characters in the texts are treated as private entities and their sexuality is hidden from the public domain.

Similarly, Kosofsky argues that the term “homosexual” is, first, inextricably fused with the concept of heterosexuality; not mentioning that homosexuality has been defined in quite different ways. For example, some consider a gay man to be effeminate (a woman in a man’s body), others see the gay male as being the epitome of masculinity (with a desire for complete “male bonding”). However, she shows the collapse of binary oppositions especially those dealing with sexuality that is; heterosexuality versus homosexuality. She argues that such hinder freedom and understanding of sexuality, in fact she finds them too simplistic as one is embedded on the meaning of the other.

According to Kosofsky, language is crucial in understanding sexuality. She states that “language can produce effects of identity, enforcement, seduction and challenge (11).” Language positions can change the way we understand meaning. She refers to this as linguistic performativity. For instance, the word “queer” can semantically differ if it is used in the first, second or third person in a sentence. She argues that the only way to make the description of the word queer real is by using it in the first person. The texts under study have been told from the first person and third person perspective. The different points of view will make understanding of the discourse deepen and shift from the societal prejudice as it will be more objective.

Therefore, it is through our interaction with society that one of our sexuality is aroused. Judith Butler hence states that “gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts* (270).” She therefore believes that gender is performed where the body is forced into performing gestures that make it suitable for the standard of normal identification. The sexuality that challenges the social structure remains unroused as it goes against the norm. Hence people are forced to adapt to set standards of sexuality.

History of Sexuality can be read in form of “repressive hypothesis.” This is because with the rise of the bourgeoisie culture in the 17th C any cost in pleasurable activities was not entertained and therefore the topic of sex was regarded as a private affair between a husband and a wife. Discussions outside the confines of marriage were prohibited and repressed. Hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie could be expressed in repression. This is because “repression operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know (Foucault 4).” This was a lie as sexuality was there and could not be hashed down into non-existence by those operating the means of production. According to Anzaldua, “heteronormativity becomes the cage that constrains dissident sexual desire and gender expression. There is no discussion of the option to ‘come out’ as a homosexual (140).” The African texts under study repress the discourse on lesbianism to a certain degree hindering the coming out process of lesbians.

However, confession was seen as an outlet where the “improper” sexual feelings could be channeled safely in form of psychiatry. Steve Marcus referred to those who opted for psychiatry as the “Other Victorians” who created their own space for sexual discourse which broke the confines of conventional morality. People grabbed the chance to not only hold confessions on sexual deeds but also their desires, thoughts, dreams and any inclination towards sex.

The confession was and still remains, the general standard governing the production of the true discourse on sex...it is no longer a question simply of saying what was done- the sexual act-and how it was done; but of reconstructing, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations and quality of the pleasure that animated it. (Foucault 63)

Confessions according to Foucault was seen as a means of ‘coming out’. In the selected African texts, some lesbian characters have confessed their different sexuality and this can be termed as a source of power.

Similarly, Westphal a German psychiatrist concurs with the notion of mental illness for the deviants. He agrees that homosexuality is congenital but argues that “whilst homosexuals should not be imprisoned, they would benefit from medical treatment since homosexuality was a deviation from ‘normal’ sexual development (qtd. in Sullivan10).” He is among the first writers to discuss extensively and in medical terms same-sex relations between women. Westphal’s sentiments will make a contribution in assessing

the options available to homosexuals in the texts under study to redeem themselves as their condition is termed as an irregularity assumed to be treatable through medical means.

Foucault asserts that the cultures of Rome, China, Japan, India and the Arabic-Muslim worlds treat sex as an object of knowledge hence deal in “*ars erotica*”(erotic art) whereas in our “world” we deal in “*scientia sexualis*” (science of sexuality). *Scientia sexualis* deals with the confessions extracted from the unlearned rather than secrets passed down from the learned. Confessions is key as it enables the quest in finding the truth realized and creates a form of liberation from repressive powers that try to silence us. The listener is in control and not the speaker as confession is seen as therapeutic. The difference between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* is that the former focuses on sex as a human phenomenon that is enjoyed and desired while the latter speaks from the perspective of a distanced observer and focuses on the inhumane aspect of sex that is; sex is viewed as a form of reproduction that people indulge in the same way as animals. Anzaldua argues that “women are made to feel like total failures if they don’t marry and have children (17).” This is because they have gone against the societal expectations. The study investigates how the texts under study articulate the notion of *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis*.

Power is termed as the force that creates our knowledge and truth about us. According to Foucault, power is characterized as being always repressive, one-sided, incapable of doing anything more than preventing what it dominates from doing anything either. It takes the form of a law and demands obedience. However, if power represses then the repressed is unjustly treated and lacks freedom to air disputing views. In addition, power

does not structure itself in the sense of ruler and ruled and can emanate from any position. This implies that power can also manifest itself in resistance where the individual goes against the prescribed stipulations. In order for one to be liberated one must recognize the potential of power and opposition at every point and use it to their advantage. Azaldua's refusal to be fragmented or categorized as queer is a weapon against oppression and this can be seen as a sense of power as it tries to change the perceptions of reality. This study assesses how power has been used by the characters in the texts under study to articulate the discourse on lesbianism.

These theorists will help in unearthing and understanding the motives behind the homosexual world and especially the lesbian world. Their views will be the guiding force in disseminating the characters in the texts under study.

1.10 Research Methodology

This study involves close reading of *Under the Udala Trees*, "Jambula Tree," "On Monday of Last Week" and *Reclaiming the L- Word: Sappho's Daughter Out in Africa* so as to identify data on the dilemma of representing lesbian characters in selected African texts. The study engages qualitative research methodology as "the researcher or evaluator can assume the role of providing a voice to the disadvantaged groups; with all the implications that power entails (Mugenda and Mugenda (201))." The disempowered groups are given a chance to be heard and, in turn, are empowered.

Textual analysis is the main methodology of collecting, organizing and interpreting the information since the study is library oriented. This methodology is appropriate as

“textual analysis is a data-gathering process that enables researchers to understand how human beings make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world they live in (Mckee1).” The effectiveness of the works under study is brought out through content analysis where the thematic concerns as envisioned in the authors’ social vision are addressed. The study employs Queer theory tenets to articulate the discourse on lesbianism. Possible limitations brought about by textual analysis are hoped to be reduced through use of relevant secondary materials such as journals, online or internet resources among others.

CHAPTER TWO

DEPICTION OF LESBIAN VOICES IN SELECTED AFRICAN PROSE WORKS

2.1 Introduction

In line with objective one, this chapter addresses how African authors use characters to represent voices of lesbian characters in the texts under study. Foucault's tenets on the repressive hypothesis and unilateral manifestation of power guide this chapter in articulating how the discourse has been repressed by heteronormative ideology. Carl Jung's archetypal images inform the study on whether the characters in the texts identify their animus and face the shadow beast. Additionally, linguistic performativity by Eve Kosofsky analyses the effect the point of view has in narration on the discourse of lesbianism. Culture dictates societal norms and Gloria Anzaldua's view on the effect of culture to sexuality informs this study. The texts under study are *Under the Udala Trees*, "Jambula Tree", *Reclaiming the L-word: Sappho's Daughter Out in Africa* and "On Monday of Last Week".

Heteronormativity in society is viewed as the standard norm of sexuality. The society condemns the existence of homosexuality thus homophobia takes root and homosexuals fear 'coming out' of the closet of silence. Homosexuals who fear speaking about their sexuality are referred to as the repressed voice in this study. However, some characters in the texts under study have faced their animus and have openly stated their sexuality. These lesbians are a representation of the empowered voices. The African societies in the

texts under study have played a key role on the coming out or repression of the discourse of lesbianism.

2.2 Repressed Voices in selected African prose works

Homophobia has played a role in silencing lesbians in society. Homophobia can either be internal or external in nature. Internal homophobia is when the individual lesbian is in denial of her sexuality and fears accepting who she really is, while the latter is when society has posed stringent standards on sexuality where heterosexuality takes dominance and any other sexuality is banished from the public domain. Maya Sharma argues that:

“The word lesbian is...so loaded with fear and embarrassment and prejudice, a word shrouded in silence, a whisper that spoke of an identity that must be hidden from others, that frightening word that dare not cross the threshold.” (qtd. in Hawthorne 126)

The above sentiments term lesbianism as synonymous with silence as it evokes a sense of fear and shame that no one dares to speak of. Some authors, for instance, are forced to write their stories in pseudonyms for fear of coming out. Rani Soni, for instance, writes “Living a Lie: Issues of Identity” under a pseudonym to hide her real identity. Rani has been raised in a conservative Hindu Gujarati family and has had a lot of challenges to face for being a lesbian. Although she is living a fulfilling spiritual life as a lesbian, she is not ready to freely use her name and “come out” of the closet completely.

Foucault terms this hashing down of sexuality as the “repressive hypothesis” where sexuality is not discussed in the public domain. He states:

“As if in order to gain mastery over it in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present. And even these prohibitions, it seems were afraid to name it.” (History of Sexuality 17)

The discourse on sex is hashed down, and control over its usage is repressed at the level of language. Repression of the discourse on sex is emblematic of the bourgeois society in the 18th century where expenditure on pleasurable activities is frowned upon and is seen as a private affair. In the repressive hypothesis Foucault tries to assess the historical accuracy of sexual repression to the rise of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie intended to distinguish themselves from the proletariats and hence embraced harsher controls on themselves to distinguish their sexuality from the others as they were controlling the means of production. Repression of the discourse on sexuality in the texts under study intends that little is to be said or known about lesbianism and hence in turn aiming for the discourse to disappear from the public domain. Foucault argues that “repressive hypothesis” is a revolt to the discourse on sexuality as it gives it importance as it is assessed further. He argues:

“Discourse therefore, had to trace the meeting line of the body and the soul, following all its meanderings: beneath the surface of the sins, it would lay bare the unbroken nervure of the flesh. Under the authority of a language from which it had been carefully expurgated so that it was no longer directly named, sex was taken charge of, tracked down as it were, by a discourse that aimed to allow it no obscurity, no respite.” (History of Sexuality 20)

The discourse on sex is explored further to understand it using the same tool that subjugates it, that is, language. Repression thus led to its intensification through religious confessions, sexuality being taught to school children, looked at from the psychiatric

point of view in medicine and criminal justice. With the discourse being within the confines of marriage it was forced to focus on those who fell outside the confines of marriage such as children, homosexuals and the mentally ill. Ironically, the attempts to silence the discourse expounded its boundaries in the African texts under study.

The selected texts approach the discourse of lesbianism indirectly. *Under the Udala Trees* by Chinelo Okparanta narrates a story about Ijeoma a young girl who gets into a love relationship with Amina and in her adulthood a lady named Ndindi. However, her mother, the Grammar School teacher and society are opposed to lesbianism and attempt to expose the girls into heterosexual relationships to cure their lesbian nature. However, the attempts by her mother prove to be futile as her marriage to Chibundu fails even on siring a child with him. The daughter Chidinma gets to embrace the fact that her mother Ijeoma is different and is against the violence propagated towards lesbians in Nigeria.

In *Under the Udala Trees*, Okparanta introduces the characters by narrating the Biafran war first and postpones the discourse of lesbianism. However, this could be a preparation of the battle that lies ahead where her protagonist Ijeoma has to face society and proclaim her lesbian identity despite the propagated homophobia. At the onset of the war, Ijeoma vows never to forget Mrs. Enwere's Social Studies lesson. She asks:

“First a coup, and then a countercoup. Coup,” she said...” A coup”...who knows what that means?”...Mrs Enwere waited only a moment for a response, and getting none, she continued.

“I shall define ‘mutiny’ for you,” she said, looking around the class. She spoke loudly: “Mutiny is a revolt against authority.” (Udala 17)

However, Ijeoma's mind is transfixed on how to get back home and coincidentally Mrs Enwere walks towards her and urges her to concentrate and repeat the meaning of mutiny as she had stated it. This act is a foreshadow towards the life of Ijeoma as she faces her own kind of mutiny as she has to exert a coup against patriarchal authority which she finds inappropriate as it defies the boundaries of sexuality. Lesbians in society are faced with the dilemma of coming out fearing the outcome of their actions.

Secondly, postponement of the discourse on lesbianism could also be a reflection of the fear that surrounds the issue of lesbianism which has to be camouflaged when it comes to being raised in the public domain. Ijeoma's mother can barely mention the word lesbian during the Bible lessons with her daughter in attempts to straighten her sexuality.

Her voice was a whisper, very calm. She said, "Do you still think of her?"... I lowered my head, thinking of ways in which I could pretend not to have heard. But Mama would not let me pretend. She asked it again, and in more detail: "Do you still think of her *in that way*?" (Udala 85)

The mother cannot stand the thought of her daughter being *that way* (a lesbian). She finds it shameful and instead refers to it as *in that way*. However, Ijeoma admits to still feeling *that way* about Amina and this angers her mother who in turn asks Ijeoma to ask God to cleanse her. Ijeoma states:

The answer was simple: of course I still thought of Amina. And, yes, *in that way*... Suddenly, Mama was rising from the floor, flailing her hands in the air, shouting about prayer and forgiveness. She pulled me up by the collar of my dress. She screamed, “Get on your knees now! I say get on your knees!”...”Pray!”... “You must ask God for the forgiveness of all your sins, but especially for that one particular sin in you...No child of mine will carry those sick, sick desires. The mere existence of them is a terrible disrespect to God and to me! (Udala 86)

Ijeoma admitting to having desires towards Amina identifies her as a sinner and she is even forced to ask for forgiveness from God to heal her. Her mother uses religion to repress her daughter’s “undesired” feelings and even tries to cleanse her to rid her of the spirit that possesses her. This is in harmony with Foucault’s argument that:

Doubtless acts “contrary to nature” were stamped as especially abominable, but they were perceived simply as an extreme form of acts “against the law”; they were infringement of decrees which were just as sacred as those of marriage, and which had been established for governing the order of things and the plan of beings. (History of Sexuality 38)

According to Foucault, “natural order” of beings is believed to approve heterosexuality as the only preferred sexuality. Any other sexuality contrary to the natural order is seen as going “against the law.” Mama believes that at the mention of religion Ijeoma will mend her ways. However, “irony seems to be lost on those who condemn same sex relations as alien while simultaneously bolstering their arguments with ‘foreign’ religions such as Christianity and Islam (Tamale 24).” Mama seeks religion as her justification to condemn lesbianism but is blind to the fact that just like lesbianism, Christian religion is also

foreign to the African culture. Mama appears to choose what suits her argument to convince Ijeoma from being a lesbian.

When Ijeoma's mother is unable to convince Ijeoma with the Biblical teachings, she results to instilling guilt in Ijeoma. Mama blames herself for abandoning Ijeoma at the grammar school teacher's house to be a house girl. She tries to gain pity from Ijeoma aiming to divert her emotions. Ijeoma states:

Up to this moment, I had still been holding a grudge against Mama for abandoning me at the grammar school teacher's. But now, hearing how much she herself had been thinking about it, how much she was still tormenting herself over it, all my grudge melted away.

(Udala 88-89)

This manipulation by Mama is meant to soften Ijeoma's heart with the hope of discouraging Ijeoma from her lesbian nature. Verse after verse, Ijeoma is left with no option but to lie to Mama that she finally understands to get her peace of mind. Ijeoma fakes her compliance to Mama's words to suppress the pressure directed towards her.

Mama is also the reason why physical manifestation of love between Ndindi and Ijeoma is repressed. The fear of being caught by Mama being so close prohibits the two from sharing their love in public. Ijeoma states:

“We stood there awkwardly staring into each other's eyes for a few seconds. In a different world, we might have leaned in and kissed each other on the lips. We might have held each other tightly the way that lovers do. But there was the matter of Mama being so close. She might suddenly appear and all hell would break loose. Anyone at all might suddenly appear, to the same effect.” (Udala 193)

Ndindi and Ijeoma exhibit fear of being caught in acts contrary to societal expectations. Even in the darkness of the night, the two cannot express their love freely for fear of judgment. When Ijeoma and Ndindi finally consummate their love, Ijeoma is haunted by “Mama’s scolding face, her reprimanding finger...threatening to poke out an eye (Udala 201).” Not only do lesbians have to deal with the fear of being physically reprimanded but also the psychological torment of not measuring up to the expectations of loved ones. The society upholds stringent standards on lesbianism exposing lesbians to mental anguish of being policed by society.

In addition, “Jambula Tree” by Monica Arac de Nyeko is a letter written by Anyango to Sanyu giving a glance at their lesbian sexuality and the dire consequences they had to face upon Mama Atim realizing their sexuality. Sanyu is exiled from the society in attempts of repressing their lesbian nature. However, the story also airs out the challenges that heterosexual marriages face. Despite opposition from the society, Anyango hopes that one day the fear and guilt that surrounds the discourse of lesbianism will vanish. The question that lingers is if Anyango will send the letter to Sanyu for it to gain importance as the issues she writes about are weighty. Furthermore, the prejudice by society on lesbianism leaves little room for the discussion on lesbianism as Anyango does not even mention how far they had ‘gone’ before the glare of Mama Atim’s torch caught them. This fact is due to the silence that surrounds the discourse for fear of the unknown. Desiree Lewis argues:

“African individuals often rely on conservative fictions of self to gain acceptance within communities, societies or nations. Both men and women may collude in perpetuating customary laws and practices. This happens not because women and men gain equal measure of power from these, but because many women are able to derive a seemingly enduring and meaningful sense of self and belonging through them. The survival of fictions of sexuality in the myths by which many live and structure their lives is probably the most obvious indicator of our need to interrogate representations of sexuality today.” (qtd. in Tamale 26)

The above sentiments seem to argue that in most African communities, the discourse on sexuality is treated in a conservative manner. There is collusion in selection of what is to be said about sexuality. The thriving discourse on sexuality is based on myths some of which appear questionable. The silence is spearheaded by the need to have a sense of belonging to avoid being completely shunned by the society.

Furthermore, Mama Atim is a symbol of the traditional African societies view on lesbianism and the stringent rules the society imposes on its members. She is portrayed as a woman who cannot be trusted and who is jealous of the lifestyle of others and gossips about everything. She is the root cause for the bond of Sanyu and Anyango to be separated as she gossiped about their “immoral nature.” Mama Atim disapproves of Sanyu’s return from London and rubs it in that their relationship is prohibited. Anyango states:

Mama Atim says you are tired of London. You cannot bear it anymore. London is cold. London is a monster which gives no jobs. London is no cosy exile for the banished. London is no refuge for the immoral. Mama Atim says this word “immoral” to me, slowly and emphatically in Jhapadhola, so it can sink into my head. She wants me to hear

the word in every breath, sniff it in every scent so it can haunt me like that day I first touched you. Like the day you first touched me. (Jambula 5)

Mama Atim is bent on instigating fear and embarrassment in Anyango to discourage her thoughts and feelings towards Sanyu. She insists that their lesbian love is immoral and has no place in that society. The society tries to show the lesbians that they cannot fit in the society due to different sexuality.

Sanyu's return ignites fear as the values and beliefs of the community are challenged and the patriarchal structure is under threat. The patriarchal society holds the power in this society and differentiates right from wrong. Foucault states that "power is essentially what dictates its law to sex. Which means first of all that sex is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden (History of Sexuality 83)." The society imposes sex rules and judges the acts as either right or wrong depending on the prejudices of the society. Sanyu and Anyango's relationship is seen as illicit as the society is embedded on the heteronormative ideology. Natasha Distiller states that "being invisible to one's world and possibly to oneself is not a position of power, and being constituted as Other is often to be victimized (48)." Victimization by society leads to guilt of being the 'other' of patriarchy.

The fear of being termed as the 'other' leads to repression hence remaining in the 'closet.' Anyango fears disclosing her relationship with Sanyu although she loves Sanyu. However, Sanyu is courageous in facing her sexuality and takes the blame to protect Anyango. Anyango says:

“That time would be a night, two holidays later. You were not shocked. Not repelled. It did not occur to either of us, to you or me, that these were boundaries we should not cross nor should think of crossing. Your jambulas and mine. Two plus two jambulas equals four jambulas. Even numbers should stand for luck. Was this luck pulling us together?”
(Jambula 11)

Sanyu realizes that fear only inhibits her from expressing her sexuality and chooses to free herself from being repressed. However, the harsh reality that society holds in regard to woman-woman relationship never crossed her mind. This bond that they shared that night forced them to be outcasts as society possesses power which mandates ‘coming out’ or staying in the ‘closet of silence.’ The society’s power to silence is congruent to Foucault’s argument that:

Confession frees, but power reduces one to silence; truth does not belong to the order of power but shares an original affinity with freedom: traditional themes in philosophy, which a “political history of truth” would have to overturn by showing that truth is not free by nature nor error servile, but its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power. (History of Sexuality 60)

The above argument implies that trying to come out of the closet is through confessing ones sexuality. However, confession does not free since those in power in society infringe on the freedom of the confessor forcing them into their cocoons of silence. Sanyu and Anyango cannot freely enjoy their feelings towards each other as society is judgmental of the kind of love they share and silences them.

The society in Nakawa estate upholds heteronormativity and is reluctant to embrace any other sexuality. This society exiles Sanyu as their masculine social scale that is

propagated by women under fear of patriarchy is seen to be at threat. The masculine social scale is what Kimmel argues that:

“Women become a kind of currency that men use to improve their masculine social scale” Women are used by men to be the determinants of their masculinity in the eyes of society. This is because “homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men.” (214)

It is for fear of being challenged that the lesbians are forced into repression to maintain the patriarchal structure. In most African cultures patriarchy is the norm. This is the culture that has been adopted by the societies depicted in the texts. Gloria Anzaldua states that “culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality it communicates... (16).” This implies that as Africans we have been cultured into believing that heterosexuality is right and is the norm as “manhood is equated with power-over women, over other men (Kimmel 217)” and challenging this notion only proves one to be considered alienated. Culture does play a vital role in shaping the identity of those in society.

Alleyne Diesel in “Does Your Mother Know that You’re Out?” states that she finds nothing wrong with homosexuality so long as it is between two consenting adults who love each other. Despite this fact it becomes impossible to openly discuss her sexuality due to societal views. She states:

“Although I had no real problem with accepting my sexuality myself, living in a society that generally condemned it was mostly agonizingly difficult, at times very scary and stressful.” (Reclaiming 136)

Even with lesbians accepting their sexuality and not living in denial the society has built bridges so high that it is impossible for lesbians to come out. They have been prompted to live a lie as the society upholds a different sexuality.

Furthermore, women who have tried coming out have been forced back into their cocoons of silence and shame. In “Jambula Tree”, Anyango still carries the shame of being involved with Sanyu as society mocks them. She states:

We made that promise never to mind her or be moved by her. We said that after that night. The one night no one could make us forget. You left without saying goodbye after that. You had to, I reasoned... Maybe things could die down. Our names became forever associated with the forbidden. Shame... I still imagine shame trailing after me tagged onto the hem of my skirt. Other times, I see it, floating into our dreams across the desert and water, to remind you of what lines we crossed. The things we should not have done when the brightness of Mama Atim’s torch shone upon us naked. (Jambula 1-2)

Mama Atim’s torch is symbolic of the eyes of society glaring at the ‘shameful’ act of Anyango and Sanyu. The glance of the torch towards the girls’ nakedness is to humiliate them for committing an act considered as taboo in the society. Although time is said to be a healer of all wounds, even with Sanyu being exiled in London, Anyango is still trailed by shame for committing the act. Anzaldua argues:

Most of us unconsciously believe that if we reveal this unacceptable aspect of the self our mother/ culture/ race will totally reject us. To avoid rejection, some of us conform to the values of the culture, push the unacceptable parts into the shadows. Which leaves only one fear that we will be found out and that the Shadow Beast will break out of its cage. (Borderlands 20)

The fear of rejection by society for the lesbians only leaves them with the option of conforming to what society entails and hinder their lesbian desire from being exposed. In addition, Carl Jung argues that unconscious expressions manifest in forms of archetypal images and he places emphasis on primal images that occur during the journey of individuation such as the persona, shadow and the anima/animus archetypes. The archetype of the shadow, he states:

... is a negative aspect of personality. Its source is in the collective unconscious and is derived from instincts. It focuses on the needs of all unacceptable thoughts, feelings and actions and one is aware of the contents of the dark side of the psyche...it includes the concept of original sin, or Satan's idea. (Adamski 565)

The societies in the texts under study repress the shadow in our unconscious to hinder the "beast" from visibility. The shame of being associated with the unacceptable sexuality in society prompts repression on the discourse as it reflects the "Shadow-Beast" manifestation. The discourse triggers all the negativity in the moral values of the lesbian and challenges the personality of the lesbian where the Shadow dominates the unconscious expressions. Anyango who sees no mistake with her relationship with Sanyu resolves to silence as the shame associated with the "deed" represses her from speaking her mind. The story is a reflection of the tension that exists between expression and repression. Although the story is meant to be a coming out narrative, it still remains coming out in the private domain as Anyango does not openly come out but instead does so in a letter. The constant reminder that the society is against the act is meant to repress the homosexual discourse from gaining stage.

In addition, Ashika Maharaj in “My Journey” describes her journey in denial of her sexuality for fear of being cast out. She states:

I had heard of people who were gay or lesbian, but at that point didn't know how to define it. I got into a relationship with a guy because I was still not sure what was going on, and I thought I had better go down that road and see what it was all about. I was searching for some clarity. Things seemed to be working out, until some friends said they had a lesbian friend for me, and I was, like, “No, I'm not interested in women.” (Reclaiming 61)

Ashika tries to find a way to evade the fact that she is a lesbian and even attempts heterosexual relationships as she fears societal perception of her nature. However, she is able to come to terms with her sexuality and to join an LGBTI organization with the aim of changing the perception of queer people in society. In society, the homophobia that surrounds the discourse prohibits the homosexuals from coming into terms with their sexuality.

Furthermore, Liesl Theron in “Orientation Quiz,” narrates how her mother tried to force her back into the ‘closet of silence’ on realizing she is a lesbian. Her mother monitored her relationships and even took several trips to the hospital to have Theron ‘cured’ of her illness. She believed that Theron was not of sound mind because she was a lesbian. She argues that “since the “outcome” of the psychologist of my choice was favourable towards me, my mother believed that I had somehow informed him in advance to tell her that I was perfectly healthy(minded) young adult, even if I was a lesbian.” (Reclaiming 70) Even with the doctor's report her mother is adamant that her mental state is unstable. This move by her mother prompted Theron to swear celibacy after each lesbian

relationship as this compromise would please her mother. However, Theron's mother later on comes to embrace the fact that her daughter is 'skew' and even publishes a book. The book captures the experiences and challenges parents face on realizing their children are either gay or lesbians.

Chantal Zabus argues that "lesbians, like people in all oppressed groups, have to work on issues of self-esteem and self-worth to counter the damage of internalized oppression faced by oppressed groups" (Out in Africa 69). This implies that if lesbians come to terms with the nature of their sexuality then a probability of facing the larger society is likely. Characters such as Sanyu and Ijeoma who have tried to voice their sexuality are trailed with shame and banishment from the society for being different but inner acceptance makes them able to face society with their sexuality. However, being in homophobic countries makes it hard for lesbians to cope and the inbuilt fear results in lesbians looking down upon themselves as they are 'misfits' in the society.

2.3 Empowered Voices in selected African prose works

Lesbians who have succeeded in fighting their way out of the closet have been able to voice their lives and experiences as lesbian due to the realization of the Animus archetype. According to Carl Jung, "if one recognizes Anima and Animus, he or she realizes what in our subconscious is of the opposite sex, as well as the realization of our shadow, which allows us to know the dark side of our psyche (Adamski 566)". Empowered lesbians have the courage to face the "shadow" that society struggles to inhibit. Anzaldua terms those who "come out" as "divine warriors (Life and work of

Gloria 103).” This is because they have pledged to confront heterosexual normality.

According to Foucault:

“It is said that no society has been more prudish; never have the agencies of power taken such care to feign ignorance of the thing they prohibited, as if they were determined to have nothing to do with it. But it is the opposite that has become apparent, at least after a general review of the facts: never have there existed more centers of power, never more attention manifested and verbalized; never more circular contacts and linkages; never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold, only to spread elsewhere.” (History of Sexuality 49)

Repression of the discourse on sexuality has led to the discourse being discussed further instead of silencing it. Those who are oppressed by a certain ideology can rise up and fight against it to reclaim their rights and in this case they possess the power. In the texts under study some of the oppressed lesbians have revealed their sexuality to society. This is because resistance is also part of a power relationship which manifests itself in different places and moves according to the dynamics of power. Foucault terms the act of confessing “improper sexual feelings” as the “Other Victorians” (History of Sexuality 3). This is because the “Other Victorians” broke the confines of conventional morality by openly discussing sexuality and giving their innermost desires and thoughts which went against the norm. Characters such as Ijeoma, Sanyu, Kamara among others in the texts under study are a representation of the “Other Victorians.”

In “Finding the Real Me in a Storm of Violence,” by Marco Ndlovu, her desire for power is what encourages her to face her sexuality head on. She states that:

“I earned a reputation as a tomboy because I chose to dress like a boy, and play games like soccer with boys. To this day there are people who ask me if I am a boy or a girl. I enjoy this power that I have over them: the power of not fitting easily into anyone’s idea of whom I should be.” (Reclaiming 56)

Resistance of sexual hegemony that has been propagated by society gives Ndlovu the power she yearns for in society. Sexual hegemony is the dominance of one sexual group over the other and in this case heterosexuality has been hegemonised. Ndlovu is the only one who can define herself as she does not fit into the societal sexual stand. Lesbians who resist the expectations of society in terms of sexuality, exhibit a form of power as they can define their sexuality who they find it best suit.

Ijeoma leaves her marital home to her mother’s house as she cannot withstand her marriage to Chibundu. She tells her mother:

“Mama, please let me in. I can’t anymore with Chibundu.” Mama lifted her eyes. She took Chidinma from my arms, carried her with one arm. I did not expect it when her other arm came around my shoulders...”All right,” she said... “God who created you, must have known what He did. Enough is Enough.” (Udala 322-323)

Despite the opposition, Ijeoma persuades her mother to finally accept her sexuality as the preferred heterosexual relationship has failed as she has realized her Animus. Stephen Murray argues that “those with heavy soul (sunsum), whatever their biological sex will desire women, while those with light souls will desire men... (22).” Ijeoma’s persistence is what has played a pivotal role in her mother finally accepting her nature as a lesbian. Mama who at first is a staunch traditionalist who believes in heterosexuality undergoes transformation after seeing Ijeoma’s struggles. Mama eventually gets to understand

Ijeoma's lesbian nature and even terms the fight against homophobia as a "noble cause (Udala 318)." Ijeoma's coming to terms with the fact that she cannot stand staying married to a man she does not love and openly speaking out about her sexuality grants her power and emboldens her in her fight for identity.

Cheryl Clarke adds advocates that political lesbians referring to those "lesbians resisting the prevailing cultures' attempts to keep us invisible and powerless, we must become more visible...to our sisters hidden in their various closets, locked in prisons of self-hate and ambiguity, afraid to take the ancient act of woman-bonding beyond the sexual, the private, the personal (134)." Clarke shows the vitality of lesbians taking a stand as a way of empowering other lesbians who still live in fear of coming out of the closet. In the society, those who are empowered can motivate the others living in cocoons of silence to accept their sexuality.

In *Under the Udala Trees*, the lesbians have a haven where they can freely express their feelings and where they can find solace from the homophobic society. After Amina's marriage, Ijeoma's dreams of sharing her love with her were shattered but through Ndindi another lesbian the flame is reignited. The haven is a church which is later on camouflaged as FRIEND IN JESUS CHURCH OF GOD: "FOUNTAIN OF LOVE". It is in this "church" that Ijeoma feels at home with other women of her kind. She states:

“The music grew loud then, overpowering my thoughts. Ndindi held me tighter, pressed her body into mine, and there was a reassurance in it. Never before had I danced this way with a woman, never before so freely. I banished all thoughts of Amina, and of Mama’s Bible studies, and of the grammar school teacher’s scolding, and of stonings. I told myself to enjoy, just enjoy. Enjoy, enjoy, enjoy!” (Udala 93)

All worries and despair disappear as the sisterhood gives the lesbians hope that they are not alone in their struggle against homophobia. The church in the text, is a symbol of subversion of faith as the same church heterosexual members find solace in is also where the lesbians find the will to move on. It renews the lesbian faith to believe that their fight to exist is worthwhile.

According to Eve Kosofsky, language positions can alter the meaning of a word and she terms this as linguistic performativity. The lesbian being able to define and speak about her sexuality makes it authentic and non-biased as she is able to give her true feelings towards her sexuality. The Auto biography *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho’s Daughter’s Out in Africa* stories, interweaves the experiences and struggles that lesbians undergo in South Africa. Lesbian relationships in the texts under study portray love as the core of this relationship. Janet Shapiro in “A Comfortable Fit” states that:

“We have little to say about our sexuality- we love each other and that is as good as it gets. I don’t even know that Marian would call herself a lesbian- she fell in love with me and there is space along the continuum of sexuality for just such a relationship.” (Reclaiming 51)

Love is seen as the core factor in a relationship and labeling love seems to drain its relevance. The emphasis on the love between women being ‘sexually or nonsexually’ is

what Alice Walker advocates for women as sex should not be used to categorize women.

Foucault states:

“In the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience; pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself; it is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul.”(History of Sexuality 57)

The pleasure that is derived from two people in love is what conjoins the body and soul despite differing sexualities. Pleasure should not be viewed in terms of binary opposition but on the intensity of emotions it provokes. Refusal to categorize one as a lesbian is an act of resistance as the categorization denies the lesbians their difference and homogenizes them. This is the sole reason Anzaldua prefers the term *la mestiza* which resists the subject-order duality and gives it new meaning. The lesbians have the liberty to define their feelings without necessarily categorizing themselves as such as they are not homogenous. Furthermore, Ijeoma, on realizing that Amina has given up on their love and is getting married, writes a pledge that “all the things the boy will do, I promise to do better. In all the ways he can love you, I promise to love you better (Udala 166).” The key catalyst of woman-woman relationship is the love bond that unites them and strengthens them against the patriarchal nature of society.

Kamara in “On Monday of Last Week” after meeting Tracy is hypnotized into thinking only about her. Kamara’s broadness in addressing her sexuality is evident of her empowered mind. Her friend Chinwe would say “A fellow woman who has the same thing that you have? ... Tufia! What kind of foolishness is that? (On Monday 80).

However, saying those words to herself did not veer off Tracy's thoughts from her head.

Kamara states that:

“Saying those words to herself changed nothing, because what had happened in the kitchen that afternoon was a flowering of extravagant hope, because what now propelled her life was the thought that Tracy would come upstairs again.” (On Monday 80)

The act of Kamara 'coming out' despite being married is defiance against the heterosexual ideology in society. Tamale argues that:

...it is not surprising that most homosexuals find it difficult to “come out” of their closeted lives or to be open about their sexual orientation. Most blend within the wider society and even live under the cover of heterosexual relationships while maintaining their homosexual relationships underground. The tendency is to construct “comfort zones” where they complacently live a different and segregated lifestyle. (3)

Kamara sharing her feelings towards Tracy is a step towards coming out of the closet. She chooses not to remain in her 'comfort zone' and courageously dares to state that she expects more from Tracy. In society however, homophobia has played a big role in creation of comfort zones for the lesbians due to the fear of coming out.

Furthermore, Audre Lorde avers that even in living in silence, one will suffer and the freedom yearned for will not be achieved. She therefore states:

It is necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths which we believe and know beyond understanding. Because in this way alone we can survive... And it is never without fear- of visibility, of the harsh light of scrutiny and perhaps judgement, of pain, of death. But we have lived through all of those already, in silence, except death. And I

remind myself all the time now that if I were to have been mute, or had maintained an oath of silence my whole life long for safety, I would still have suffered, and I would still die. (Cultivating Black Lesbian 160)

Remaining quiet for lesbians to escape judgment leads to being entangled in emotional torture. It is therefore better to attempt to fight for what one believes in to reassure the inner being of attempts made even with dire consequences accompanying speaking out. Languishing in silence according to Lorde does not offer a solution to the issue on the discourse.

Ijeoma in *Under the Udala Trees* finally comes to the realization that silence does not liberate and goes ahead to reveal her sexuality to her daughter Chidinma. However, she learns that Chidinma is empowered and holds nothing against lesbians. Her mother's manifestation "turned out to be an underwhelming kind of revelation, almost a nonrevelation... (Udala 320)." Chidinma held nothing against lesbians as she had already attested to love between her mother and Ndindi and instead she advocated for the rights of lesbians to be upheld. Ijeoma argues that even though Chidinma is not of her sexual orientation, she is a representation of the new generation of Nigerians who have "a stronger bent toward love than fear (Udala 318)." It is through Ijeoma's quest for identity in society that Chidinma is able to identify with her mother's plight and hence accepting the differences in sexuality in individuals and not judging them.

In addition, Rani Soni in “Living a lie: Issues of Identity” argues that so long as one accepts her sexuality, you cannot be shaken so long as you know who you are as an individual and you are happy about it. She claims that:

“My sexuality is really a spiritual thing. I don’t go around telling people about my religion, and what it means to me. It’s a quiet acceptance of a spiritual presence, and I think this is how I’ve experienced being gay: it’s just a quiet acceptance of who I actually am... It doesn’t change me, it just adds to who I am, and it helps to define who I am....” (Reclaiming 118)

Accepting one’s sexuality gives one the leeway to living in peace as one does not need to depend on others for identity. It gives power to the lesbian to dictate to herself who she truly is regardless of the views the society holds.

Recently the discourse on lesbianism is gaining prominence in the public sphere in Africa. Rebeka Njau argues that;

“if I express myself like this, what will people think? We fear to turn ourselves inside out. If we become courageous enough to come out and write on social or political issues, our voices will be heard.” (In Their Own Voices 107)

Lesbians voicing their views without fear of being cast out fight oppression from the society. The thought of facing judgment should not trigger silence as the voices of the oppressed carry power. In the texts under study, those have broadly opened up on their sexual identity have used that power to be heard by others. Patricia Kihoro, a Kenyan media personality, recently came out as a lesbian after years of denial. She states that:

“I have been accused of being a lesbian but first of all, it is not an accusation, because calling me a lesbian is not an insult as I have met wonderful human beings who are homosexual and are far better than people who have stood in certain standards of judging others. So that is why I never speak about it. I am who I am, you know! I know what I stand for and my family knows what I stand for.” (Eve, September 28, 2018)

According to Kihoro, the character of a person should not be judged based on their sexual orientation. She states that the society is judgmental of the ‘other’ sexuality yet she has interacted with lesbians who are of good character. The society in general is judgmental of anyone who goes against the stipulated standards. In the texts under study, lesbians have been judged and discriminated upon their character notwithstanding. Ijeoma in *Under the Udala Tree* for instance, is portrayed as perseverant, forgiving and open-minded. However, the society judges her based on her lesbian nature rather than her true character.

Kihoro also adds that:

“I can never defend myself or say I am not this and that because that will offend my friends, who are what I am saying I’m not. The people who matter to me know better who I am, so I will never defend myself.” (Mpasho, September 27, 2018)

Kihoro is contented with her identity as her interaction with the homosexuals has made her to understand that most homosexuals are “far better” than those who judge others. She believes that what her family perceives her to be is what is vital. A lesbian in society who has already faced her animus is able to define herself as she has already come into terms with her sexuality.

2.4 Conclusion

Lesbianism is a thorny issue in the heteronormative society in the texts as it tries to challenge the patriarchal power in society. The prejudice in which society holds lesbianism has given rise to homophobia which has hushed down the voices of the lesbians trying to come out of the closet. This is evident as seen in the characters of Amina, Ndindi, Anyango, Ashika among others. For instance, Amina's first intimacy with Ijeoma leads to resentment by the Grammar School teacher and Mama. The two girls are then exiled to Obadoanuli boarding school as punishment. Murray states ...the belief by many Africans that homosexuality is exogenous to the history of their people is a belief with genuine social consequences... in particular stigmatization of those of their people engaged in homosexual behavior or grappling with gay identities (2). This belief has in turn led to the stigmatization of lesbians and lesbian voices being repressed. However, other lesbians have opted to freely speak about their sexuality although trailed by judgment and shame due to stringent standards upheld by society. The repressed and empowered voices in the texts under study signify the dilemma in the 'coming out narratives' of the lesbians.

CHAPTER THREE
SOCIETAL REJOINDERS TO LESBIANISM IN SELECTED AFRICAN PROSE
WORKS

3.1 Introduction

In view of objective two, this chapter intends to address the socio-cultural rejoinders to the discourse of lesbianism in the selected African prose texts. The characters in the texts under study respond to hegemonic institutions towards the discourse of lesbianism. This chapter interacts with Foucault's repressive hypothesis, power ideology and to assess the reaction the society upholds towards the discourse on sexuality. Additionally, Gramsci's view on hegemony and Althusser's ideology on state apparatus will be employed. Gramsci and Althusser's views will expound on how the state apparatuses in the African texts under study have been used to hegemonize heteronormativity. Some lesbian characters in the prose works under study have been able to question the heteronormative ideology and thus Anzaldua's ideology of 'soy un amasamiento' will expose these characters.

The chapter will focus primarily on the depiction of marriage in the texts under study, literary writers view on religion in relation to the texts and structural violence experienced by lesbians due to the hegemonized institutions as portrayed in the selected African prose works.

3.2 Depiction of marriage in the selected African works

African societies like almost all other societies in the world regard marriage as the normative mode of life. Marriage between people of the same sex is prohibited in many African societies and attracts dire consequences due to homophobia. Societies in the texts under study have attempted to eliminate the number of homosexuals through forced marriages. It is assumed once a woman indulges in a heterosexual relationship her lesbian desire ceases to exist.

In *Under the Udala Tree*, society advocates for marriage for those exposed as lesbians. With the discovery of Amina and Ijeoma's lesbian relationship, the Grammar school teacher and Ijeoma's mother take up measures to separate them and they are even taken to Obadoanuli Girl's Academy where girls intend to become nuns. Later on, Amina is hurriedly married off to a Hausa man with expectations that marriage would cure her. Ijeoma states:

“Mama's eyes had been widening, little by little, as Amina spoke. Now her hands came together, as if to clap, and she turned to look at me. “Did you hear that Ijeoma? An educated young man! Please-o, better hurry up and find yourself someone like that before you wind up getting left behind....”(Udala 170)

Ijeoma's mother and the Grammar school teacher are pleased with Amina's decision and do not care about the feelings of Amina or Ijeoma. They are expected to conform without contesting. However, the Grammar school teacher's wife seems to identify with their plight but does not openly show her position on this issue.

His wife had been silent this whole time, but now she turned to me. Mama and the teacher were going on about Amina. His wife looked at me. There was something sympathetic in her eyes, and when she spoke, she spoke softly. “It’s just the way things are done,” she said. “You understand, don’t you?” ... She said, “Don’t worry. Somehow it all works out.” (Udala 171)

The Grammar school teacher’s wife embraces silence as her response to lesbianism. This is what Foucault terms as the “repressive hypothesis.” The discussions on the discourse of sex are not entertained in this society. The abandonment of Amina and Ijeoma is an attempt to silence any discussion on the girls’ sexuality. The Grammar school teacher’s wife acknowledges the silence that accompanies the discourse and thus withholds comments towards the girls’ encounter. However, her silence towards the girls’ plight does not hinder Ijeoma from exploring about her sexuality. The silence is a reflection of society and its resistance in articulating the discourse on lesbianism even though it has been latent in society.

A conspiracy by Ijeoma’s mother to marry Ijeoma off to Chibundu is seen. The conspiracy portrays an act of hegemony. According to Gramsci, hegemony and dictatorship are mutually dependent of each other as it does not rely on consent. Ijeoma is hesitant in marrying Chibundu but does so due to her mother’s persistence. Ijeoma, however, sees this a conspiracy and shows no interest in the subject of marriage in her conversation with Chibundu. Chibundu argues:

“I’ve been thinking,” he said when his eyes met mine.
 “Thinking what, Chibundu? I asked stiffly.
 He laughed nervously, but still he spoke. “I’ve been thinking that every man needs a wife.”...

“*Omalicha*, won’t you agree that every man needs a wife?” I laughed with discomfort, more a snicker than a regular laugh. “I suppose some women would also do well to have a husband.” “That’s right”, he said. “It goes both ways. Every man needs a wife, and every woman needs a husband.” I repeated, lingering on the “some,” drawing it out for emphasis. “Yes, *some* women would do well to have a husband.” (Udala 213)

Ijeoma tries to enforce her resistance against marriage hoping her decision will be respected. Ijeoma exercises power through resistance to getting married. According to Foucault, power is not unilateral to take just one form of the ruler and the ruled; the will to resist is a form of power. This is evident when Ijeoma tries to stress that people should not speculate that all women need men in their lives as this is not the case and only some do so. She intends to change the mindset of Mama and Chibundu to no avail. Mama is persistent on the need for her to get married. She states:

“No, no, she does not have a boyfriend. You came just in time. Even one day’s delay might have changed your fate,” she said, smiling, patting him on the back. “Who knows, another man might have walked in and stolen her from you. But you are lucky, Chibundu my boy. Very lucky. Good timing.” (Udala 213)

Her mother tries to find an immediate solution to Ijeoma’s “problem” and creates a picture of her daughter being in high demand and if Chibundu delays he might lose her which is not the case. Her desperation and obsession of getting Ijeoma married is meant to free her from being ashamed and scorned if society were to learn of her daughter’s

sexual orientation. Thus, Mama finds marriage as the best precaution to hide her daughter's true nature.

Ijeoma's unhappy marriage is a catalyst to her upholding her lesbianism. Ijeoma and Chibundu are unable to consummate the marriage as Ijeoma is not in love with him. Sena Christian argues:

“We know what love is not. Love is not what a husband feels for his wife when he beats her. Love is not exchanged between a rapist and his victim...with so much hatred towards women, it is difficult to clearly define love in a patriarchal and misogynistic society. Does it really even exist?” (Pg 33)

Ijeoma's marriage is misogynistic in nature as she can only attest to loving Amina but cannot bring herself to love Chibundu. She faces a lot of hostility in her marriage and can only think of Amina. Anzaldua argues that “women are made to feel like total failures if they don't marry and have children (17). The perception of marriage as an obligation is what Mama tries to enforce to Ijeoma. For Mama and Chibundu, a woman can only be complete if she is married and has children. However, the society in the text is blind to the fact that most women undergo marital rape in some of those arranged marriages. Ijeoma's marriage for instance, is characterized by violence as Chibundu exercises his power through humiliation and marital rape. She laments:

We were in bed again. The lights in the room were out. Moments earlier he had lain down beside me. Now he spoke. “You think I don't know that you are awake?”

I ignored him, and continued to pretend to be asleep.

He pulled on my hair.

“Chibundu, please,” I shouted.

“Chibundu, please what?”

“I’m trying to sleep. Please just let me sleep.”

“You’ll sleep when you’re done.”...

Soon he was stamping his feet and coming around the bed, and I opened my eyes to find him standing before me, his wallet and some naira bills in his hand.

“Ngwa, tell me, how much do you want? How much does it cost to get you to do it tonight?” (Udala 293)

Chibundu treats Ijeoma like a whore and even resolves to pay her so as to sleep with her. Chibundu believes that he should get his rights regardless of whether Ijeoma is in the mood or not just because she is the wife. Ijeoma is continuously raped in her marriage in an attempt to cure her. In this regard, she formulates a discontent towards the heterosexual marriage.

Edwards states:

“The greatest means of control embodied in sex as men’s weapon against emancipation lies in RAPE. Men’s widespread resort to rape as a means of control on women, to “keep them in their place,” that is, to conquer them...has thus far been and remains violently effective. (pg. 27)

Chibundu finds rape the only way to exercise his power over Ijeoma. He is indifferent towards her emotions and only satisfies his manhood through consistently taking

advantage of her. Ijeoma remains non-cognizant to the harsh treatment as she fears airing out her issues in public due to the repression of the discourse on sexuality. She states:

“Marriage to him was what I now knew as normal and familiar, so that even with this terrible treatment of me- calling me a whore, throwing money in my face, and the rest- the thought never once occurred to me that these were grounds on which I could now pack up my bags and leave.” (Udala 294)

The society in the text leaves no room for women to leave from unhappy marriages. Ijeoma finds her plight with Chibundu as normal and perseveres believing this is societal expectations of a wife.

Additionally, failed heterosexual marriages are a recipe for lesbianism in the texts under study. In “Jambula Tree,” the relationship between Sanyu and Anyango has been highly criticized as it challenges the norm. However, those in marriages suffer in silence as their husbands engage in acts of infidelity. Anyango laments:

“Sanyu, those women know every love charm by heart and every ju-ju man’s shrine because they need them to conjure up their husband’s love and penises from drinking places with smoking pipes filled with dried hen’s throat artery. These women know that an even number is a bad sign as they watch cowrie shells and coffee beans fall onto cowhide, when consulting the spirits about their husband’s fidelity.” (Jambula 2)

That women have to resort to witchcraft to stop their men from cheating is a sign that they are unhappy in their own marriages and are only staying there to fulfill societal expectations of marriage.

Sexual harassment by married men has attributed to lesbian desires in some characters in the texts under study. Sanyu in “Jambula tree” hates her father as he took advantage of her with the knowledge of her mother. She laments;

“I hate him.” You said more times than I could count. It was not what he didn’t do, you said. It was what he did. Those touches, his touches you said. And you could not tell your mother. She would not believe you. She never did. (Jambula 9)

The men in the text do not respect the boundaries of marriage which they overstep by committing incest. Although married, Sanyu’s father is unable to control his urge and in turn, Sanyu detests men for the sins of her father.

Desertion by husbands in the heterosexual marriages in the texts has also played a pivotal role in the lesbian relationship. In “On Monday of Last Week” by Chimamanda, Tracy is married to Neil but they rarely have time for each other despite having a son together. Tracy is so preoccupied with her work as she finds no joy in her marriage. Kamara also is married to Tobechei but seems not to be aroused by him. However, when Kamara and Tracy meet a bond is formed between them with just a simple touch and encounter.

She had taken to closing her eyes while Tobechei was on top of her, willing herself to become pregnant, because if that did not shake her out of her dismay at least it would give her something to care about...On Monday of Last Week, though, he had noticed the change in her. “You’re bright today, Kam,” he said as he hugged her that evening... She was both thrilled and sorry, for having this knowledge she could not share with him, for suddenly believing again in ways that had nothing to do with him. (On Monday 86)

Kamara's initial perception of marriage is what Foucault terms as "*scientia sexualis*" (science of sexuality) which focuses on the inhuman aspect of sex where sex is solely for reproduction just like animals. Kamara realizes the detachment with Tobechi and only thinks of getting a child to avoid loneliness. However, after her encounter with Tracy, Kamara's view on love and intimacy change. Foucault refers to the belief that Kamara holds as "*ars erotica*" (erotic art), which is regarded to as an object of knowledge to learn the desires of the other person, then the women will not feel chained to societal prejudices on marriage (History of Sexuality 13). Kamara actualizes herself and Tobechi realizes this change not knowing Tracy I behind the change.

Kamara recalls:

Tracy's hand was still on her chin, slightly tilting her head up, and Kamara felt. First, like an adored little girl, and then like a bride. She smiled again. She was extremely aware of her body, of Tracy's eyes, of the space between them being so small, so very small.
(On Monday 87)

These instances reveal a bond that is stimulated between two married women who find solace, joy and fulfillment in each other despite being married. The desperation between the two women due to their husbands' desertions propelled them towards the lesbian relationship. Marriage in the text appears as a disguise to reduce societal pressure and prejudice in advocating for heterosexual relationships.

3.3 Literary depiction of religion in selected African literary works

Most religions in spite of their different doctrines have almost a similar agreement when it comes to the discourse of homosexuality. Religion in the texts under study has been used to buttress societal attitudes towards lesbianism. Same-sex behavior in the texts is condemned and regarded to as sinful and same-sex union is not sanctioned.

Regina Jurkewicz argues that *Lex Scantinia* is a Roman law that condemned homosexuality before the expansion of Christianity (594). In the initial stages the law applied in cases involving the abuse of minors and prostitution but the new rigorous legislation condemned every homosexual act. According to the Roman law, homosexual acts were prohibited at all forefronts and classified as sins against nature. Louis Althusser classifies religion as part of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). In his argument, ISA “functions massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression... (qtd. in Blunden 1970)” Religion in the texts under study has been used to repress the discourse on homosexuality as it upholds the set doctrines guarding it. For instance; Ijeoma’s mother in *Under the Udala Trees* stresses the Christian ideology by stating that:

“The bottom line, Ijeoma, my dear,” she said, “is that if God wanted it to be otherwise, would He not have included it that other way in the Bible?” (Udala 68)

Mama’s argument is based on the scripture where she alludes that it should have been indicated in the scripture if God had willed the existence of homosexuality. The absence of the discourse according to Mama proves its prohibition. Congruent to Mama’s

argument, St. Thomas Aquinas argues that “the natural order was established by God and its violation offends the creator (qtd. in Jurkewics 594).” In order to avoid offending the creator, Mama urges Ijeoma to stick to what is written in the Bible.

Additionally, in Islamic faith, homosexuality is viewed as a “deviation of man’s true (heterosexual) nature (Ahmadi 549).” Okparanta attempts to bring out the similarity between Islam and Christianity in how they discern homosexuality. When the Grammar School teacher catches Amina and Ijeoma in the act he angrily laments:

“An abomination!”... “That is what it is, if a name is to be given to it! That is what the Bible calls it!” Now he turned to Amina. He shouted at her too. “The Koran condemns it as well. I don’t know much of Islam, but I know enough to know that the Koran and the Bible see eye to eye on this matter!” (Udala 125)

The Grammar School teacher remains non cognizant of other Islamic teachings but is aware of the similarities with Christianity in the issue regarding sexuality. He uses the argument to enlighten the girls on the stand of the two religions in regards to homosexuality. Christianity and Islam both disapprove of homosexuality.

However, a conflict between Christianity and homosexuality in the texts is evident. Dawne Moon proposes that nature and scripture need to be understood differently. Moon proposes two ways of defining nature and refers to it first as “relevant to science, to what may be experimentally observed in the natural world” and secondly as “interpreted from a perspective of morality (Nasrudin and Geelan 1).” This denotes that nature not only refers to the physical attributes that can be observed but also whether it is right or wrong. Additionally, Moon defines scripture in two different ways that is, “literalism” which is

“word for word truth” and “contextualism” which implies that “truth is bigger than human language and must be understood in the context in which it is read, thus enabling people to determine the greater truth within (Nasrudin and Geelan 1).” Nature and scripture are independent entities semantically thus fusing the two brings a contradiction. In the texts under study, Christians conflate the meaning of these two terms “nature and scripture” contrary to Moon’s ideologies. Some of the characters allude strict adherence to the scripture as moral.

Ijeoma in *Under the Udala Tree*, for instance, argues that religion should not be followed without questioning the possibility of other truths. She argues that:

“The thought occurred to me: Yes it had been Adam and Eve. But *so what* if it was only the story of Adam and Eve that we got in the Bible? Why did *that* have to exclude the possibility of a certain Adam and Adam or a certain Eve and Eve? Just because the story happened to focus on a certain Adam and Eve did not mean that all other possibilities were forbidden.” (Udala 83)

Ijeoma tries to justify her sexuality by being open to other possibilities. According to her, the mentioning of one story does not have to mean the exclusion of other possibilities. Ijeoma’s stand on the creation story is congruent to Anzaldua term *Soy un amasamiento*.

The term refers to questioning what is believed to be true. That is being:

“...an act of kneading, of uniting, and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings.”(80)

Soy un amasamiento according to Anzaldua is one who is not only able to identify the ‘animus’ but also able to question deviations from the norm and derive new meanings for

the new creature. Ijeoma in *Under the Udala Tree*, attempts to find possible meanings of the Biblical stories she had heard. She questions the unwritten and is open to other possibilities of inferred meaning by alluding to a certain Adam and Adam and a certain Eve and Eve.

In addition, Moon also argues that people debating the scriptures can be categorized as either modernist referring to “those who believe that science brings more truths than what the scripture offers” or fundamentalist “who believe that the written truths of scripture constitute God’s dear and incontestable will for all times (Nasrudin and Geelan 1-2).” In the texts under study, some characters have been portrayed as modernist and fundamentalist due to the ideologies they uphold. Ijeoma’s mother in *Under the Udala Tree* is portrayed as one who upholds a fundamentalist view. She argues that:

“The fact that the Bible says it’s bad is all the reason you need,” Mama said... “God intended for it to be man and woman. And God intended also for man and woman to bear children. It is the way it should be...” (Udala 75)
I looked at Mama and said, “Mama, the Bible is full of stories. Maybe they’re all just allegories of something else.”

“Hush,” Mama said. “The Bible is the Bible and not to be questioned. What we read in it is what we are to take out of it.” (Udala 81)

Ijeoma’s modernist approach towards the topic of lesbianism is hushed down by Mama who draws reference to the Bible. Ijeoma believes that other truths are possible towards the discourse on lesbianism. However, Mama discourages Ijeoma from questioning the

scriptures and urges her to follow its doctrines. This act by Mama portrays her fundamentalist approach towards the scripture.

In the story “Who are you to tell me who I am?,” when a rape victim is taken to hospital by Zanele Muholi the doctor instead of examining her asks her; “Why are you a lesbian at this age? Do you know that it is against the constitution to make such a decision without the consent of a parent? You are wearing a cross of Christ, did you know that it is an abomination in the eyes of God to be lesbian? (Reclaiming 93).” The doctor also upholds the fundamentalist approach towards the scripture as he justifies his standpoint to the discourse on lesbianism in reference to the scripture by being abominable.

The fundamentalist approach is evident the texts under study which leads to a dilemma in the characters as they are torn between adhering to the scriptures and denouncing their sexuality vis-a vis accepting their sexuality and embracing their ‘animus.’ The dilemma is brought about by the sexual hegemony reinforced by the society. Ijeoma in *Under the Udala Tree* for instance, after having a sexual encounter with Ndindi, is haunted by the Bible lessons from her mother and she goes to church in search of cleansing. She suffers from inner guilt as she cannot openly talk about her sexuality as society has prohibited it.

Ijeoma explains:

“My breathing finally stabilized. I attempted once more to string together the words to form a prayer, but nothing came. I remained mute. Not a single word to express myself, not a single one to explain or to defend myself, not one single word to apologize and beg forgiveness for my sins. All I felt within me was a trembling from this questionable sort of guilt. A sense of defeat washed over me. Tears spilled out, forming tiny dark spots on the grey cement

floor of the church... Somewhere in the middle of it, I remembered John 8. I knelt there at the front of the church and at last the words came out of my mouth, Jesus' words: *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*" (Udala 202)

Even in prayer, the repressive hypothesis is under play. Foucault argues that sexual repression meant there was little to be said or known about the discourse. In this case, Ijeoma lacks words to utter in her prayers as lesbianism in the society is repressed. The guilt of 'coming out' in prayer still haunts her. However, Ijeoma still finds refuge in religion as she gets reassurance that all mankind is sinful and none should be quick to judge according to the scripture.

Similarly, after her encounter with Sanyu, Anyango carries a lot of guilt and goes to church for confession as she believes she has sinned. She states:

"Sanyu, I went for confession the next day, right after Mass. I made the sign of the cross and smelt the fresh burning incense in St. Jude's church. I had this sense of floating on air, confused, weak, and exhausted. I told the priest, "Forgive me father for I have sinned. It has been two months since my last confession. And there in my head, two plus two jambulas equals four jambulas..." (Jambula 11)

Lesbians have been programmed by society to police themselves through feelings of guilt. There is the fear that accompanies their 'coming out' in the public domain.

Scholars of the *Shari'a* also regard homosexuality as a crime, rather than a mere sin. However, Islam and Christianity deviate in terms of public manifestation of homosexuality according to these scholars. Khalid Duran argues that "where homosexuals do not publicly assert their homosexuality, they have relative autonomy to do as they wish. Silence and repression will prevent prosecution (qtd. in Ahmadi 554)."

According to Duran, homosexuality is punishable if it is a public nuisance. If this is not the case, there is a leeway of other possibilities. However, despite scholar's stand, the texts reveal Islamophobia which trails the homosexuals. For example, Shifra Jacobson in the story "Then and Now" gives an account of being involved romantically, spiritually, sexually and emotionally with a Sephardi/ Mizrahi Israeli woman. However, they separate through mutual agreement due to Islamophobia. The fear of being segregated spiritually is still a punishment in itself as it leads to internal anguish of living a lie as lesbians cannot freely explore their sexuality.

In addition, Ashika Maharaj in "My Journey" argues that "religion constrains you...For this reason I'm not really too much into religion, because they don't cater for LGBTI people" (Reclaiming 66). Religion being the most powerful tool in society has been employed to propagate issues of sexuality in relation to Biblical and Quranic routes. Lesbianism has thus remained confined and not freely spoken about in the public domain due to fear of judgment by society.

3.4. Structural Violence towards lesbianism in the selected African prose fiction

Violence towards lesbians in the texts under study is alluded to when lesbians openly 'come out' in the public domain. The State Apparatuses used to hegemonize sexuality are the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA). Louis Althusser states that The RSA "functions massively and predominantly by repression (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology (qtd. in Blunden 1970)." These include the government, administration, army, police, courts and prisons among others. The state in the texts under study is portrayed as meting

out violence against the homosexuals. Violence against lesbians in society is channeled by homophobia which is propagated by laws made by governments against homosexuals or by societal prejudices due to the heteronormative ideology upheld.

Violence experienced by lesbians is not only physical but also emotional. Instances of violence against lesbians are evident in the texts. Ndindi in *Under the Udala Tree* narrates the shame and inhumane act that had befallen a gay couple:

“There were two men. I never knew them. They were friends of Adanna from the university. For days they seemed to have disappeared, fallen off the face of the earth. And then yesterday she heard something at the market, whispers about a pair of ‘sissies’ being beaten by a crowd of people. She went to the bushes behind the dirt road not far from where they lived, and she found the two of them there, naked and beaten to death.”
(Udala 205)

Homosexuals are physically beaten up and humiliated to act as a warning to those engaging in similar acts. The violence perpetuated towards the homosexuals in the texts is as a result of what Gramsci refers to as hegemony. Sexuality has been hegemonized in the text and differing ideologies are dealt with both by the state and society. Even with the injustice being done to the homosexuals, the police under the government in the text cannot do anything to salvage the situation and instead support the inhumane act. Ndindi continues;

“We called the police. They couldn’t even be bothered to do anything, not even to take the bodies away. ‘Let them rot like the faggots they are,’ one of the officers said. The other one said, ‘If they were not dead already, we would beat them some more.’ In the end, it was Adanna and I who took their bodies away,” she said. “We carried them and cleaned them and prepared them for burial.” (Udala 205)

The police in the text take sides against homosexuals rather than uphold justice for the gay couple brutally killed by the mob. The text exposes the law to reflect the ideology of the ruling class and homophobia is initiated on lesbians tending to go against the state. Adanna and Ndindi due to the police indifference result to cleaning the bodies of the ‘sissies’, a task that was to be done by the state.

On the other hand, ISA “functions massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic (qtd. in Blunden 1970.” They include religion, education, culture, family, legal, trade union and media. Ideologies of the ISA hinder any other sexuality from getting audience. The beliefs which are upheld by the Ideological State Apparatuses govern whether the discourse will gain prominence or not. This is evident in the texts under study.

In *Under the Udala Tree* for instance, The Friend in Jesus Church of God: Fountain of Love became the safe haven for the lesbians to be meeting up after their first hideout is burnt down. The church was a good camouflage as during the day people worshipped there and at night it became the lesbians’ parlor. However, religion in the text advocates for ideologies against homosexuality. This is evident when on learning that lesbians had turned the church into their hideout, an attack is planned. Ijeoma narrates:

“We had hardly walked two yards when we saw, in the backyard of the church, a flame of orange and blue. A stack of burning logs. Ndindi began to cry, and then all of us were crying too, because we had all seen what had remained of the face, and we had all

recognized her: Adanna in the midst of the logs, burning and burning and turning to ashes right before our eyes.” (Udala 209)

The lesbian is killed in an inhuman painful way as the rest are hounded down to face similar fate. The irony in the text is that the brutal act is spearheaded by Christians who uphold their ideologies on homosexuality and disregard other teachings as the right to life.

Family members in the texts under study subject the lesbians in their families to forms of violence. For instance, the story “Finding the real me in a storm of violence,” Marco Ndlovu narrates the hardship that comes with being a lesbian. She states:

“As a lesbian, hate, violence and misogyny follow me wherever I go. I became pregnant as a result of being raped by a man I believed to be a friend. I have been beaten almost to a pulp because of my sexual orientation, at the instigation of none other than my mother.” (Reclaiming 55)

Lesbians in the texts undergo emotional torture after being raped and have to live with the psychological torture of having their innocence forcefully torn from them. Hegemonic violence is accepted by family as those instigating the rape happen to be their closest friends and family hence loss of trust. In this case sexual violence is hegemonized. Rape is embraced as a remedy to lesbianism in the texts under study. Rape acts as a form of misogyny. According to Sena, misogyny acts indirectly and in a subtle manner. She states:

“It is more of an underlying mentality of disrespect and devaluation of women that weaves in and out of individual minds, interpersonal relationships, public discourses, media images, gender roles and societal codes and expectations.” (Sena 34)

The devaluation of women is mentally catalyzed and initiated by the societal expectation of women being the ‘other’ of men. It is this belief that spearheads the victimization of women in the society in the texts.

In addition, Keba Sebetoane in “Who are you to tell me who I am?” is raped repeatedly in attempts to change her from being a lesbian into liking men by a man she thought to be her friend. She states that:

“Tonight I’m going to change you, and from now on you are my girlfriend.” I got angry and I told him that I knew my rights. I started to leave. He got up holding a screwdriver and threatened to stab me if I didn’t cooperate. I became quiet, trying to calm him down and think of a way to leave his place without anyone getting hurt. He ordered me to take off my clothes while he hit me with anything he came across...He raped me repeatedly for over an hour. I was quiet with tears streaming down my face. He continued beating me even though he had succeeded. He kept asking me if I loved him and when I said no, then the beating got worse....(Reclaiming 92)

Sebetoane is subjected to physical violence as the society has hegemonized sexuality. Her friend imposes violence on her for her differing sexuality in attempts to ‘cure’ her from her lesbian nature. On being taken to hospital, the male doctor who is a heterosexual refuses to write a medical report for her claiming there was no forceful penetration as she was not a virgin and that the blood in her eyes was due to constant rubbing. The doctor made her case weak as she had no medical report to back up her claims. Seeking for justice was next to impossible as there was no medical report to support her claims. She states:

“I was failed medically, and the justice system proved its non-existence.” South Africa is celebrating twelve years of democracy but with written policies that are not implemented. We are told to cooperate and not take the law into our own hands. Others harm us and get away with it; we have no way of getting justice. Will South Africa ever change and accommodate everyone? (Reclaiming 94)

Neither the justice nor medical systems in the text are willing to stand up for them. Sena argues that “women are constructed, positioned and represented as objects for male use, to be used, abused, discarded, loved and hated however men see fit.”(Sena 35) According to Sena, men use women as objects and handle their bodies as they please. This is evident in the texts under study as women are condemned on all forefronts and violence such as rape and being beaten brutally due to their sexuality is seen as a norm.

Trade unions in the texts exhibit reluctance in advocating for the LGBTI rights. Ashika Maharaj also in “My Journey” explains how lesbians and gays go through a dilemma as the Home Affairs department has no time for them as they claim to be fully booked. Other lesbians and gays are mistreated and Ashika believes that the frustrations directed towards the LGBTI is due to the lack of sensitization of the public. Hence attempts to have the Civil Union Bill incorporate the rights of the lesbians and gay proves difficult as it is difficult to secure appointments to ensure the rights of the LGBTI are protected by the constitution. The frustrations directed towards leaders of the LGBTI in discussions of their rights is a move aimed at numbing the queer from coming out.

Moreover, violence against lesbianism can be seen in terms of discrimination and banishment. Sanyu in ‘Jambula Tree’ is exiled when the glare of Mama Atim’s torch gets hold of her and Anyango in the ‘act.’ The torch is a symbol of violence as it is used to

shame Anyango and Sanyu by shining on them. It forcefully hegemonizes by giving its shine in order to 'light' those in the dark. The two girls are humiliated by the glare of the torch for being different. Banishment is used as a means of trying to repress the lesbian relationship between the two girls. Sanyu is sent to exile in attempts to relinquish her relationship with Anyango. However, the banishment does not make Anyango's feelings to disappear and instead she looks forward to meeting Sanyu.

Nonetheless, if the lesbians are not exiled to other foreign lands, they are discriminated against and no one wants to be associated with them. The grammar school teacher, on realizing that Ijeoma and Amina are lovers, sends them to Obodoanuli Girls' Academy-Land of Joy Girls' Academy, to rid himself of taking care of the two girls. The fear of society associating him with them made him take the drastic step with Mama's approval. The school is a boarding school that was far from Nnewi and more to the West hence the two would spend most of their time at school and not home. Mama reveals the intention of taking them to the school.

“No more of that nonsense between you and that girl...And lucky for you that the grammar school teacher is still willing to live up to his end of the bargain by sending you to school, despite the shameful way that you behaved under his care... No matter what you do, stay away from that girl!” (Udala 134)

Due to the shameful act, Ijeoma and Amina are taken to Obodoanuli Girls' school against their will. Ijeoma states that they should not be taken to the same school with Amina if Mama feared that they would still engage in their lesbian relationship. (Udala 134)

Mama continues:

“It’s the only school that the grammar school teacher can afford to send both of you to. If not, believe me, I would have seen to it that you two were sent to schools as far apart from each other as heaven and hell.” (Udala 134)

The two girls are discriminated against and taken to a school far away from home on realizing their true sexuality. Mama even prohibits Ijeoma from seeing Amina despite the fact of them being in the same school and even admits that if she had the power, she would have separated them completely.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on depiction of marriage in the texts, depiction of religion in the literary texts and structural violence as portrayed in the selected texts. The texts outline how the issues above have been used to hegemonize sexuality and disregard other possibilities. Lesbians in the texts are faced with a dilemma of ‘coming out’ due to the homophobia that accompanies the discourse of lesbianism. Stringent heterosexual ideologies in the texts prohibits the lesbian characters from voicing out. Heterosexual marriages in the texts although advocated for by members of the society, have their own challenges. For instance Sanyu’s father assaults her sexually, Ijeoma’s marriage to Chibundu fails among others. Additionally, the lesbian characters in the text try to view religion in terms of contextualism to avoid condemnation by the society. The texts also portray the violence meted to the lesbian characters through the ISA and RSA ideologies. The state, police, families and religion uphold ideologies that expose the lesbian characters in the texts to violence in terms of mob justice and banishment from the societies in the texts.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIAL VISION FOR LESBIANISM IN SELECTED AFRICAN PROSE

WORKS

4.1 Introduction

In view of objective three, this chapter articulates the social vision alluded to by the authors in the literary texts under study in reference to the discourse of lesbianism. The aim is to try and deduce the thoughts of the author through his or her writing and imaginatively translate it as the author's stand or opinion on the discourse. Judith Butler's theory on gender and gender roles will be employed to assess the roles prescribed by the society and how the lesbians in the texts react to the roles. Additionally, Adrienne Rich and Alice Walker's lesbian continuum and womanism ideology respectively investigate the solidarity the lesbians in the texts portray and redefining the term lesbian. According to Michel Foucault, confessions play a pivotal role in 'coming out' in a heteronormative society. Foucault's ideologies on confessions and erotic art aid in assessing the effect of confessions to the lesbians and the reassessing of the meaning of pleasure in the texts. The chapter will primarily focus on how lesbian characters in the texts under study portray solidarity, the transformation of characters in the texts who are strict adherents to hegemonized heterosexuality and the attempts to revise religion by the characters in the texts under study.

4.2 Creation of Solidarity among lesbian characters in selected African literary works

Society in the texts under study gives family importance as it is a core unit that is mandated to ensure beliefs and customs of a community are passed on. However, the family institution has been politicized in the texts and has been used to repress the discourse on lesbianism. The repression is through strict adherence to patriarchal structures in order to maintain heteronormativity in society. Gender and gender roles in the texts has been highlighted to hinder lesbians from ‘coming out.’ According to Butler, “gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts* (270).” This implies that gender in society is dictated by the repetition of acts which are imposed as the normative heterosexual ideas. Thus, gender being a social construct hinders lesbians from facing their ‘animus’ in ‘coming out’ in the heteronormative society. Diane Homer argues:

...for girls, acceptance of the position prescribed for her in patriarchal culture entails an acceptance that not only is she different from the boy but also that she is inferior to him, ‘castrated’; that he has something which she lacks...she could, of course, reject the conclusion that she is inferior to him, an option on which female homosexuality hinges.... (Significant Others 138)

Homer’s argument is that a girl has been conditioned by the heteronormative environment to accept the position of inferiority towards a man. However, the girl can be what Gloria Anzaldua terms as a ‘*la mestiza*.’ A ‘*la mestiza*’ refuses heterosexuality as

the norm hence holds the power to define herself and accept her differing sexuality. Some lesbian characters in the texts under study have challenged the societal gender roles.

Zanele Muholi, for instance in the story “I have truly lost a woman I loved” recounts how her mother stood by her side to defend her from her relatives due to her sexual orientation. The mother stands up for her as Zanele had already accepted she was different. She states:

“I remember one day when my aunt asked me about when they would meet *umkhwenyana*- the husband. My mother just said, “Zanele is not interested in men.” I knew from that day that even though my Mama had never had the opportunity for higher learning, she understood love. Love for her children, and especially for me, her “special” child.” (Reclaiming 22)

Muholi’s mother due to Zanele’s broadness to face her ‘animus’, becomes her voice to silence the relatives from judging her daughter’s sexuality. This illustrates that she understands her daughter and has come to terms with her being of a different sexual orientation.

Furthermore, Heidi Van Rooyen is pulled ‘out of the closet’ by her sister who reveals to the family Heidi’s sexuality which she herself feared to disclose. According to Foucault, “confession was and still remains, the general standard governing the production of the true discourse on sex...” (History of Sexuality 63). The discourse on sex greatest channel of communication is through confessions where one out powers what is in their ‘shadow’. It is through Heidi’s confession to her sister that the sister helped her out of her guilt.

I had reworked and replayed coming out to my family so thoroughly over the years that it was starting to silently choke me rather than build my confidence to enable me to eventually voice my story...By “outing” me, my sister did me the greatest favor. She forced me out of myself and my fears, into my family’s love and embrace, and acceptance of who I really was. There were the usual questions: “How come I am gay? What made me gay? How did I know that I was gay?”... I fumbled my way unsatisfactorily through their questions. Eventually, my older sister...piped up and said: “You know what-it’s just the way you are.” (Reclaiming 8)

Although Heidi is unable to explain why she is a lesbian, her sister already understands that it is her nature and she can do nothing to change it. Her sister comes to her rescue to ensure that her family gets to understand her and accept her for who she really is.

Women’s acceptance towards other women’s sexual orientation can be termed as lesbian continuum. According to Adrienne Rich, the “lesbian continuum” is the history through a woman’s identified experience that not only grounds itself on the sexual experience between two women but also stretches to the bond against male dictatorship and the support females offer each other (1603). The lesbian continuum primarily does not center on the sexual act but the sisterhood and support that women offer other women despite their sexual orientation. The characters in the texts exercise ‘coming out’ to other women with the hope of acceptance. Liesl Theron in the story “Orientation Quiz” is embedded in ways to make her mother accept her sexuality without criticism. She argues:

...my mother came to terms with my sexual orientation long ago! You might wonder why I speak predominantly about my mother. Well, it was she who grappled the most with my coming out...She was initially shocked, in denial and “hating” all my new ho-mo-sex-u-al friends (with an emphasis on each syllable). This stage did not last too long. At the outset, my dad was disappointed-he had all his dreams of his eldest blue-eyed-blond girl shattered but, in not too long a time, in his own way, he accepted the new status quo...A short while after I came out, I think around the time my dad had just started accepting my sexual orientation, we worked in the garden again...We had a few shrubs and trees to plant. Chuffed with ourselves we stood and admired our handiwork, and called my mother...She took one look at the trees and her only comment, pointing out one tree, was: “This one is skew.” As she turned around to walk back into the house, my dad commented: “Not everything (one) in life is straight!” (Reclaiming 70)

Theron’s greatest achievement is her mother’s acceptance towards her sexuality. She experiences a form of satisfaction knowing that she could now count on her mother to support her. In general, the texts portray some families who have been able to accept and give hope to the lesbians despite the homophobia perpetuated by the heteronormative society.

4.3 Portrayal of Marriage versus Partnership in selected literary works

Marriage in most African countries is pegged on the relationship of man and woman joined in matrimony. The heterosexual union in the texts under study is portrayed as patriarchal in nature where the man is in control and exerts force towards the woman. Partnership in the selected texts is evident in the lesbian relationships as both partners have been given equal footing.

Okparanta in *Under the Udala Tree* uses the symbol of a bicycle to state how a relationship should be through Ijeoma’s mother. She describes the relationship of a man

and a woman as a bicycle where the man leads and the woman follows. However, Ijeoma tends to liberate her thoughts from her mother's prejudice and defines a relationship in her own way. She argues:

“These days, I think a lot about something Mama used to say: that a bicycle has two wheels. And, of course, it does. Ndindi is one, and I am the other. We have now shared decades together, and though there can be no marriage between us (a relationship like ours is still too dangerous a thing, let alone a marriage), we feel ourselves every bit a couple.” (Udala 320)

According to Ijeoma, although a bicycle has one wheel in front and the other behind, the two wheels are equal and similar in terms of size and one cannot do without the other. The two wheels are symbolic of the partnership that Ijeoma and Ndindi share. The relationship between the two is not characterized by “lack” but the sharing of desire which gives each one of them a sense of satisfaction where none feels inferior to the other. This is in line with Alice Walker who argues that a womanist is “a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually (qtd. in Hill 12).” The implication of the statement is that women can share the bond with other women and does not have to be a sexual bond. This is the reason Ijeoma feels that she and Ndindi are a reflection of the wheels of the bicycle. In addition, Diane avers that:

“If lesbianism is based on a mobility of desire, an oscillation of identifications, then it follows that lesbianism also opens up a space for feminine identifications which are not heterosexual... Lesbianism is not merely a refusal of the category ‘woman’ but a reworking of it, an insistence upon new meanings of ‘woman’, new possibilities of gender. Lesbianism is now conceived as a collective and increasingly public identity and the new social forms it takes create new psychic realities.” (Significant Others 149)

Lesbianism redefines the meaning of woman and gives room for femininity to thrive in different realities free from prejudice on who is a woman. It paves way for other possibilities to be realized. The desire that thrives in lesbianism gives hope to the lesbians that one day they may be able to freely declare their true identities. Ijeoma states:

“Some of those nights when we are together and in bed, Ndindi wraps her arms around me. She molds her body around mine and whispers in my ear about a town where love is allowed to be love, between men and women, and men and men, and women and women, just as between Yoruba and Igbo and Hausa and Fulani.”
(Udala 321)

Ndindi yearns for that time when love will be accepted as love regardless of the two people in the relationship. Just like the different tribes in Nigeria try to co-exist with each other despite the different cultures and religions, she hopes for an indiscriminate love.

Similarly, Anyango no longer fears thinking about her love for Sanyu as she has recognized her ‘animus’. According to Carl Jung, “if one recognizes Anima and Animus, he or she realizes what in our subconscious is of the opposite sex, as well as the realization of our shadow, which allows us to know the dark side of our psyche (qtd. in Adamski 566).” The shadow is the ‘unacceptable’ part of our psyche and Anyango acknowledges her different sexuality. Despite living in shame in a society that rejects lesbianism she finally comes to terms with her reality as even with time elapsing her feelings for Sanyu do not change. She states:

“I do mostly night shifts. I like them. I often see clearer at night. In the night you lift yourself up in my eyes each time, again and again. Sanyu, you rise like the sun and stand tall like the jambula tree in front of Mama Atim’s house.” (Jambula 12)

Arac de Nyeko uses symbolic language in describing the relationship between Anyango and Sanyu. Sanyu rising like the sun is symbolic of the hope that the relationship will flourish and shine in the society. The jambula tree in the quote above is symbolic of their love taking root tall enough to face Mama Atim and proclaim victory despite the homophobic environment. In addition, ‘Jambula tree’ in the text gives a glimpse of hope of acceptance in society. Anyango states:

“We were seated under the jambula tree. It had grown so tall. The tree had been there for ages with its unreachable fruit. They said it was there even before the estate houses were constructed. In April the tree carried small purple jambula fruit, which tasted both sweet and tang and turned our tongues purple.” (Jambula 11)

The fruits of the tree were unreachable due to the height, the tree was in existence for a while. The above sentiments are analogous to the discourse on lesbianism as it is far from gaining any prominence in the public domain. However, it is existent in the texts under study but languishes in silence due to what Foucault terms as the ‘repressive hypothesis’ where sexuality could not be discussed outside the comfort of homes. Hope for the discourse to be heard is manifested when the fruits can actually be tasted and each person who actually tastes the ‘fruit’ has an opinion of it being ‘sweet or tang’. In the texts, the discourse on lesbianism is welcomed and at the same time jeered by others in society. Anyango in addition, is enthusiastic about the number of increasing jambulas. She argues that “two plus two jambulas equals four jambulas (Jambula11).” Initially, the jambula

fruit was rare but now the jambulas have increased in number and they actually get to taste them with a hope of luck increasing the number. Thus, with the union of Anyango and Sanyu, they hope that others will dare to taste the ‘jambula fruit’ as well.

However, the tone used in “Jambula Tree” is sarcastic as it allows for ridicule of alternative sexuality yet it is not without fault. The society in Nakawa Estate has to grapple with immorality. Anyango’s father, for instance, left the mother to raise three children on her own as he went on his escapades. Anyango’s mother states that if “Papa had any sense in his head, he would not have left her with three kids to raise on her own to settle for that slut he called a wife” (Jambula 7). Anyango’s mother is seething with anger towards her husband’s infidelity yet she still advocates for a heterosexual relationship for her daughter turning a blind eye to the flaws in her already heterosexual relationship. In addition, Mama Atim acknowledges that the heterosexual unions are characterized with infidelity. She expresses her awareness of who has gonorrhoea, where they got it from, and the soldiers who transmitted the disease. Irrespective of this fact, the Nakawa society is stringent in formulating rules to be followed about differing sexuality when the heterosexual relationship upheld is characterized by immorality. The immorality in the heterosexual relationship acts as a catalyst for lesbianism to be explored by Anyango and Sanyu as they crave for something foreign and new, different from the collapsing heterosexual hegemony. However, when spoken about, the lesbian discourse slowly sneaks out of the closets of silence.

Kamara likewise, does not feel ashamed of her true feelings towards Tracy. Unlike her lack of desire towards her husband, Kamara is drawn towards Tracy just by their first

encounter. After working for three months as a nanny to Tracy's son, she finally meets Tracy and can hardly rid her from her mind. She states that ...what had happened in the kitchen that afternoon was a flowering of extravagant hope, because what now propelled her life was the thought that Tracy would come upstairs again (On Monday 80). Kamara is drawn towards Tracy and the hope to be loved is rekindled as she no longer feels loved by Tobechei her husband. Kamara yearns for the 'lesbian continuum' which is filled by Tracy. She yearns to meet Tracy just to get emotionally satisfied, share the sisterhood bond and even spots similarities of Josh to Tracy. She sees Tracy in Josh.

“Josh grinned and she thought about the curve of his lips being exactly like that of Tracy's. She hit her toe against the edge of the counter. She had begun to bump into things too often since Monday of last week.” (On Monday 80)

The desire to feel loved leaves Kamara so infatuated that she sees Tracy in her mind and in her son and even bumps into things just by the thought of her. This is what Foucault terms as erotic art.

In the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience; pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself; it is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and soul. (History of Sexuality 57)

Pleasure is not viewed as either forbidden or permitted but rather the intensity of emotions it evokes towards the subject and the effects it causes in the body and soul of the two individuals who are in love. Kamara experiences pleasure in the presence of Tracy and is unbothered where that pleasure is forbidden or permitted. What matters to Kamara is she feels appreciation for the first time something she had not experienced in her heterosexual marriage.

Tracy's hand was still on her chin, slightly tilting her head up, and Kamara felt, first, like an adored little girl, and then like a bride...She was extremely aware of her body, of Tracy's eyes, of the space between them being so small, so very small. (On Monday 87)

The slightest of touch and adoration that Kamara receives from Tracy awakens her being that drives chills down her body and soul. She is not perturbed if the relationship is "forbidden" and instead enjoys the pleasure that comes with every single touch. The texts portray partnership in lesbian relationships where the individuals involved are not in subordination like the heterosexual marriages in the texts.

4.4 Revising Religion in the selected African prose works

Religion in the texts under study is used as a tool to hegemonize sexuality. Ijeoma is accused by Mama of being possessed. However, Mama now realizes how religion has been used by some characters to benefit and favor the patriarchal structure of society and incite violence against the homosexuals. Ijeoma narrates:

“Several years ago-2008-reports had it that a bunch of God- preaching hooligans stoned and caused their flesh to become as swollen as purple-blue balloons. Mama put down the newspaper from which she was reading about it and exclaimed, “Tufiakwa!” God forbid! Even among Christians, it can’t be the same God that we worship!”(Udala 317)

Mama now realizes how religion has been misinterpreted to benefit few members of society who eventually take advantage of the unknowing followers to instigate hatred and violence towards other human beings.

Ijeoma quotes a Bible verse she believes is meant to show that there were loop holes in the first version and hence another version is created to seal the inefficiencies in the first version. Ijeoma states:

“Hebrew 8: God made a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that He made with their fathers. If that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been made for the second. With that new covenant, He made the first old. And the first one was allowed to vanish away.” (Udala 321)

Ijeoma argues that even the first covenant that God made with the fathers of Israel and Judah needed to be reviewed and He made new covenants with Israel and Judah. The old covenant was done away with and the new covenant adopted. Ijeoma believes that new teachings and understanding of the Bible can arise and people should be open to embrace the new and do away with the old teachings on sexuality. Ijeoma adds that:

“...Sometimes I sit with my Bible in my hands, and I think to myself that God is nothing but an artist, and the world is His canvas. And I reason that if the Old and New Testaments are any indication, then change is in fact a major part of His aesthetics, a major part of His vision for the world. The Bible itself is an endorsement of change...Maybe the rules of the Bible will always be in flux. Maybe God is still speaking and will continue to do so for always. Maybe He is still creating new covenants, only we were too deaf, too headstrong, too set in old ways to hear. Yes, there are the ways of God that have already been made known to us, but maybe there are also those ways in the process of being made known. Maybe we have only to open our ears and hearts and minds to hear.” (Udala 321-322)

According to Ijeoma, God continues to make new covenants which reflect a change from the previous covenants He made. She believes that if people are open to observe and embrace the changes that come with time, then the society will be a better place to live in. She also adds:

Just because the Bible recorded one specific thread of events, one specific history, why did that have to invalidate or discredit all other threads, all other histories? Woman was created for man, yes. But why did that mean that woman could not also have been created for another woman? (Udala 83)

Ijeoma is a reflection of a ‘la mestiza’ as she questions the truth of the Bible and is open to the eventuality of other sexualities. Ijeoma’s contextual understanding of the Bible enables her to overlook the verbatim meaning of the Bible and explores the inferred meaning of it on the discourse of lesbianism. Ijeoma acknowledges the history recorded in the Bible but does not remain non cognizant of other possible histories and eventualities. She is involved in the creation of another culture, a culture that rejects the subject- object duality of sexuality.

Furthermore, some priests have started embracing the thought of homosexuality. “Ponie” Nozipho Ngcobo in “Discovering my Identity,” is relieved after undergoing confession. Her mother who is a staunch Christian, is embarrassed by her daughter’s sexuality and believes that a priest can actually transform her daughter. Nonetheless, the priest surprisingly asks her “hadn’t you noticed? This is the reality (Reclaiming 172).” The priest has already come to terms with the fact that other sexualities exist. When Nozipho goes to confession, the priest advises her to “feel free and ...must decide whether I was sure about it (Reclaiming 172).” The priest gives Nozipho the chance to assess her conscience in facing her ‘animus’.

Lesbians in the texts under study have also started taking leadership positions in church and this is a form of revolution. Alleyne Diesel in “Does Your Mother Know that You’re out?” states how Miss J enticed her to be committed into religion. Although Miss J is a lesbian, she taught Bible class at the Baptist Church and this prompted Diesel to join the church and became a committed member and even won Sunday school prizes to the church. She was able to study Theology at Varsity and was able to question the doctrines of Christianity and came to the realization that she was “no longer able to fit...into that box (Reclaiming 128).” Revisiting religion would thus create an avenue for the lesbians to worship freely without hindrance to their sexuality. Diesel’s quest to learn more about different religions signifies the inner peace that lies with religion and her desire to transform the doctrines of different churches to ensure wholeness and acceptance of all people despite their sexualities.

4.5 Conclusion

Authors in texts under study have attempted to show the hope that lies ahead for the discourse of lesbianism. Although homophobia is still a threat to the discourse, characters in the texts have laid claim to their lesbian sexuality by openly speaking about their desires and emotions with an aim of being understood. Characters in the text who at first were stringent adherents to the societal prejudice on sexuality, some such as Mama for instance have proven they can accommodate other sexualities in future. Lesbian protagonists on the other hand, at long last have come out to claim their sexualities and are open about it even to their families. Ijeoma, Anyango, Ndindi, Kamara, Zanele Muholi among others, through their experiences are a representation of the troubles and danger that their sexuality poses. The hope that the discourse will gain audience is a possibility as the penning down of the individual experiences is an eye opener to the prejudice that surrounds lesbianism. The sharing of the experiences gives an avenue to air the despair, dilemma, joys and fulfillment that accompany the lesbians. This in turn will aid in understanding the individuals as part of a broader society.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The study set out to investigate lesbian dilemma in confronting heterosexual hegemony in selected African prose works. The African prose works studied include *Under the Udala Trees* biographed work by Chinelo Okparanta, *Reclaiming the L-word: Sappho's Daughters out in Africa* by Alleyne Diesel, “Jambula Tree” by Monica Arac de Nyeko and “On Monday of Last Week” by Chimamanda Ngozi. This chapter encompasses purpose of the study and findings that have arisen on the said topic. It also assesses possible recommendations for further studies that can be done.

5.2 Summary

The purpose for this study was instigated by the fact that homosexuality is considered as ‘alien and un-African’. However, authors have recently started voicing their experiences on the discourse in their writings in attempts to express the dilemma of living in a heteronormative environment. The research assumed that African writers created characters with the aim of representing lesbian voices in the society. In addition, the society projected various responses as reactions against lesbianism as the society upholds heterosexuality. Lastly, it was assumed that the authors offered a social vision for lesbianism to be acceptable in future in the texts under study.

The findings of chapter one brings to the fore what has been done on the discourse and the relevance it bears on the current study. In addition, a statement of the problem highlights the gap that has arisen from background study on the discourse. Hence the study aims at bridging this gap. The study is guided by the objectives which assess how African authors use characters to represent the voices of the lesbians, the socio-cultural rejoinders to lesbianism by heterosexual African societies and to investigate the author's social vision for lesbianism in the selected texts.

The theoretical framework employed is pegged on Michel Foucault's queer theory. The theory aided in seeking and understanding the discourse of lesbianism and the input of other theorists who seek to contribute to the discourse of sexuality and the misunderstandings surrounding the discourse. The study employs qualitative analysis as the method of collection of data which includes textual analysis in the collection, organization and interpretation of findings of the research as the study was mostly library oriented. The approach also aided in content analysis of the research materials so as to unearth the thematic concerns as contextualized in the author's social vision.

Chapter 2 findings are that the authors use the characters voices to represent the voices of the lesbians in the texts under study. Some voices of the lesbians are empowered as they have accepted their sexuality and informed the people closest to them about their different sexuality. Although this step proves to be fatal due to the harsh judgment by society, the said lesbians still stand their ground. However, some lesbian voices are repressed as fear due to homophobia in society proves to be a stumbling block. These

lesbians are forced into stringent societal prejudices so as to silence them and rid them of their sick desire towards other women. Hence they remain in the closets of silence.

The second objective examines the depiction of marriage, literary writers view on religion and structural violence in the selected texts. Marriages in the selected texts are depicted as heterosexual in nature. However, some of those marriages are a recipe for lesbianism to be actualized. Some of the marriages fail, the couple is unhappy while young girls are sexually harassed by men. Nonetheless, the texts portray marriage as the solution to the lesbians and it is forcefully initiated.

When marriage fails in the text, religion is used as a tool of silence by the characters. However, it arises that the scripture can take two forms that is, literalism and contextualism. Literalism is said to be verbatim which implies word for word truth while contextualism is the implication of the scripture at that particular context that it is read. Thus religion can be understood from the two perspectives depending on which side one decides to take to suit their purpose.

Structural violence against lesbians is practiced in an attempt to repress the other sexuality. Violence is exercised through the Repressive State Apparatus (functions by violence) and the Ideological State Apparatus (functions through ideology). Homophobia in most African countries has led to lesbians living in fear and also instigating hatred between the heterosexuals and the homosexuals as heterosexuality has been hegemonized. Lesbians in the texts are humiliated in public by being beaten, stripped naked and even torched alive. The government however, does not advocate for the rights

of the lesbians to be respected and the society takes over as the justice system killing and humiliating other human beings for being sexually different from them.

In chapter four, the authors' in the selected texts seem to offer a social vision for lesbianism as some of the characters who are against lesbians finally come to the realization and acceptance of them. Some of these characters even come to the rescue of the lesbians. Negative religion in the texts that propagates violence against homosexuals is jeered at eventually. Mama for instance, cannot stand the violence that had been documented in a report. Christians had meted out violence towards some lesbians and had beaten them to a pulp. She believes that Christians should be the last people to propagate violence. This gives a glimpse of hope in the texts that homophobia may cease with time. Mama gets to embrace Ijeoma's sexuality and even hopes that the Nigerian president will stand against violence towards the homosexuals.

5.3 Conclusion

Lesbian efforts to 'come out' of the closet has been met by impediments of the heteronormative ideology in society. The society remains reluctant in embracing the discourse on lesbianism and the stringent measures by some African governments in the texts thus hinder its voicing. Nonetheless, texts under study give a ray of hope as speaking about the discourse is a step towards the revelation of the struggles of lesbianism with the hope of one day gaining acceptance.

5.4 Recommendations

The discourse on lesbianism in the selected texts under study has been repressed by heteronormative ideologies. Prejudices of the discourse have in turn thrived as fear and shame engulf the discourse or anything related to the discourse of coming out. Silencing the discourse reveals there is much to be said hence should not be shunned from the public domain. The following areas are recommended as guidelines for further scholarship:

- i) A study on the nexus between African and Western culture representation of lesbian voices in prose works. The theory employed in this study is by Western theorists, hence need to assess the differences or similarities the discourse evokes. An understanding of whether race plays a significant role in the representation of the lesbians will aid to understand if bias is evident.
- ii) Assessment of medical conditions such as trauma in the normalization process by lesbians and their families in selected African prose works. The lesbian characters have been portrayed as experiencing dissatisfaction, rejection and banishment from their families. This has not only had a mental negative impact on the lesbians but also their families who have to grapple with the society on having a homosexual relative.
- iii) Aesthetic techniques employed by the authors' of the texts under study in delivery of content. Do the techniques "dilute" the truth or slowly but surely sneak the truth? This will be necessary in evaluating the form the 'coming out' novels adopt.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Research Approval



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL**

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 810901 Ext. 57530

Website: www.ku.ac.ke

Internal Memo

FROM: Dean, Graduate School

DATE: 7th November, 2018

TO: Gitahi Wairimu Beth
C/o Literature, Languages and Linguistics
Dept

REF: C50/33989/2015

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

=====

This is to inform you that Graduate School Board, at its meeting of 19th September, 2018 approved your Research Proposal for the M.A Degree Entitled, "Lesbian Dilemma in Confronting Heterosexual Hegemony in Selected African Prose Fiction".

You may now proceed with data collection, subject to clearance with the Director General, Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed Supervision Tracking forms per semester. The form has been developed to replace the progress report forms. The supervision Tracking Forms are available at the University's website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Thank you.

JULIA GITU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

c.c. Chairman, Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Murimi Gaita
Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics
Kenyatta University
2. Dr. Kariuki Banda
C/o Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics
Kenyatta University

Appendix II: Research Authorization



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
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P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 8710901 Ext. 57530

Our Ref: C50/33989/2015

DATE: 7th November, 2018

Director General,
National Commission for Science
& Innovation,
P.O. Box 30623-00100,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FOR BETH WAIRIMU GITAHU – REG. NO. C50/33989/2015

I write to introduce Ms. Beth Wairimu Gitahi who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. She is registered for M.A degree programme in the Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics.

Ms. Gitahi intends to conduct research for an M. A Proposal entitled, "Lesbian Dilemma in Confronting Heterosexual Hegemony in Selected African Prose Fiction".

Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,


PROF. ELISHIBA KIMANI
DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

JG/rwn