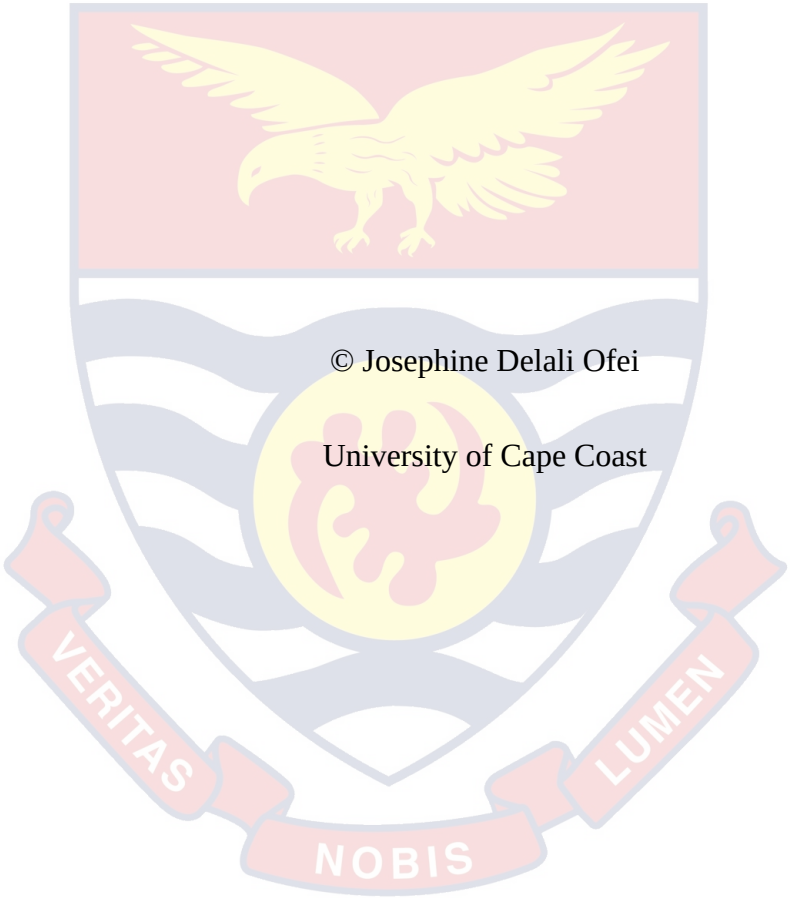
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

THE "I" IN "OTHERED" SEXUALITIES: QUEER INTIMACIES IN CHINELO OKPARANTA'S *UNDER THE UDALA TREES* AND ZUKISWA WANNER'S *MEN OF THE SOUTH*

JOSEPHINE DELALI OFEI

2020



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

THE "I" IN "OTHERED" SEXUALITIES: QUEER INTIMACIES IN CHINELO OKPARANTA'S *UNDER THE UDALA TREES* AND ZUKISWA WANNER'S *MEN OF THE SOUTH*

BY

JOSEPHINE DELALI OFEI

Thesis submitted to the Department of English of the College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Philosophy Degree in Literature

OCTOBER 2020

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

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

Signature:..... Date:.....

Candidate's Name: Josephine Delali Ofei

Supervisor's Declaration

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

Signature:..... Date:.....

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Daniel Oppong Adjei

ABSTRACT

Knowledge about queer Africans is largely not just erroneous, but also mythical. The labyrinth of existent scholarship on the queer African is mainly factored on the hypothesis of anti-queer. While a number of African writers do not disclose specified embodiments of the incontrovertible same-sex erotic acts, one could apprehend traces of such acts in some African literary works. Studies on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, asexual and intersex (LGBTQAI+) have on the whole elicited considerable attention. Critics mostly contend that the consciousness of an individual's sexuality and sexual orientation remains their inherent individual experiences. This study underpins the emerging presentation of queerness by some African writers. The research further demonstrates how contemporary works of fiction generate space and language with their narratives for the experiences of queer individuals within the African culture. Drawing on the influential queer theory, the study explores ways in which characters in Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) and Zukiswa Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010) contribute to the conversation about the body and sexuality. The thesis further examined some literary roles queer sexualities play in the texts one of which is: the use of metaphor to justify some significant decisions and actions taken by the queer protagonists.

KEY WORDS

Closet

Heteronormative

Queer

Sexuality

Stigmatisation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Daniel Oppong Adjei, for his insightful comments which helped organise my thoughts and ideas. His far-reaching suggestions purged this thesis of most of the indiscretions and excesses typical of a candidate.

I also owe a depth of gratitude to Dr. Theresah Addai-Mununkum for giving me free rein of her personal library and a comfortable hideout to conduct this research.

I would also like to acknowledge the senior members of the Department of English whose encouragements have contributed to the realisation of this thesis. Special mention must be made of Prof. Lawrence Owusu-Ansah, Prof. Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang, Prof. Joseph Benjamin Archibald Afful, Dr. Moussa Traore, Dr. Isaac Mwinlaaru, Dr. Samuel Kwesi Nkansah, Dr. Lena Awoonor-Aziaku.

To Dr. Christabel Aba Sam and Auntie Hannah Amissah-Arthur, who have been my big sisters throughout, I say a big thank you. I appreciate my siblings: Nora, Sheila, Eben and Louis for the love and support they have shown and keep showing me. And to David Mc-Whinney, who believed in me but had to exist too soon.

Words cannot express my profound gratitude to Daniel K. A. Ambrose, for his support and encouragement especially during the COVID-19 break when I had lost everything and thought I couldn't go on. And to Oswald Osei Kofi I say, "thank you".

DEDICATION

To my mother, Agnes Mercy Segbedzie, whose love and prayers have brought me this far, and to Mummy Theresa Addai-Mununkum.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The issue of sexuality has rekindled the already existing subfield of queer identities within the African context. Sexuality is a central aspect of human life which is often influenced by the interaction of biological, sociological and religious factors, among others. It is mostly explained along the binary dimensions. Most of Africans, therefore, usually express their internal and deeply felt erotic emotional attachments towards the opposite sex. However, an individual within this context who happens to be sexually attracted to another person of the same sex, or something between the binary sexes is seen as going against the norm; hence, may be termed queer. "Queer" is a defining term for a range of marginalised possible sexual identities which include: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex, among others. Africans who identify as queer mostly become the *Other* in their heteronormative environments. With this definition in mind, many African texts seem to be written based on the default reading that is characterized by a set of fairly concrete heteronormative features. Such default readings touch on crucial aspects of our identities as human beings in a communal environment. Based on this assumption, queering becomes a tool of literary analysis for considering the more fluid spectrum of gender attitudes in texts such as Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* and *Men of the South.*

In Africa, queer sexual identity has been received with mixed feelings leading to the debate in a bid to clearly define the legalisation or non-legalisation

of it in various countries. Following the works of Tyson (1999), Salem (2013), and Osinubi (2016), studies on queer sexuality have elicited considerable attention. Consequently, the crust of this study is to draw on the broader queer concept in interrogating concerns of queer sexual identities in some selected fiction. By centering on a critical queer conceptual framework, this research follows the discursive practices of existing scholarly work on emergent queer sexuality.

Chronologically, the study begins with a discussion of the evolution of queer theory, which is the theoretical framework of this research. It also takes into consideration the converging and diverging points of queer representations to the African cultural identity. This is geared towards fostering a thorough investigation of queerness in the selected texts. The study further seeks to place emphasis on the understanding that queer sexualities provide alternative solutions in adverse conditions to some individuals who are equally humans but cannot help being the way they are. This is because, as noted by Herzer (1986), (and cited by Gooren; 2011):

> In addition to the normal sexual urge in men and women, nature in her sovereign mood has endowed at birth certain male and female individuals with the homosexual urge, thus placing them in a sexual bondage which renders them physically and psychically incapable – even with the best intention of normal erection. This urge creates in advance a direct horror of the opposite sex, and the

> victim of this passion finds it impossible to suppress the feeling which individuals of his own sex exercise upon him (p. 637).

To this end, O'Flaherty and Fisher (2008) advocate:

> All human beings are persons before the law regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and are entitled to rights and freedoms deriving from the inherent dignity of the human person as well as to the equal protection of the law without discrimination (p. 2).

In view of this, the study highlights pressing issues that border the arc of the various queer characters in the texts under study. This will further take into consideration the identity development of the various queer characters in the texts under study.

Brief Evolving Landscape of the Queer Theory

Broadly speaking, 'queer' is a defining term for an array of possible sexual identities which include: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, intersex and questioning among others. It may also take into consideration fluid sexual characteristics which are parked between these diverse sexual orientations. Obviously, the queer sexuality seeks to provide a collective identity to which all non-straight individuals can belong. This is perhaps made possible because, the theory rests on a new comprehension of gender, sex and sexual identities that does not correspond to the erstwhile normative discourses of sexuality studies, but then

"problematises the idea of fixed gender and sexual identities and challenges the basis for a unitary identity politics" (Beemyn and Eliason, 1996, p. 5).

The conception of queer theory is directly traced to the radical lesbian and gay movements. This theory has been a very controversial concept in the sense that it contests the norms that bound the notion of a definite identity category. For this reason, Beemyn and Eliason (1996) briefly explain that the "genealogy of queer theory" is the consequence of the incessant case that was championed by the gay liberation movement in the 1970s. However, De Lauretis's (1991) popularisation of the term "queer theory" sets the pace for reconsidering the discourse of sexualities. Her revolutionary study on *Queer theory: Lesbian and gay sexualities* proves this model to be the embodiment of a great multiplicity of sexual formations. This further signifies the denial of heterosexuality as the ultimate sexual identity. The queer concept comes in to interrogate the lesbian and gay critiques of society's construction of sexual acts and sexual identities. While lesbian and gay studies questioned the licit and illicit; natural and unnatural sexual behaviours, the queer theory extends this study to cover all sexual activities and identities that are considered deviant by the structural relation of the normative society.

According to Spargo (1999, pp. 8-9), "Queer can function as a noun, an adjective or a verb, but in each case, it is defined against the normal." Previously, the term 'queer' was a casual reference for homosexuals. It was ingrained in a strong homophobic implication and repeatedly used as a derogatory word. This has been as widely acceptable than the terms, "pervert" and "deviant". However,

with the publication of De Lauretis's (1991) study, the import of the term *queer* took a different turn by shedding what may seem to be its unfavourable connotation. Consequently, this term now defines individuals who often find others of the same sex to be sexually appealing and also, to the other sexual orientations that cannot be harmonised with the dominant societal norms.

In actual fact, Jagose (1996) identifies that the queer concept "was at best, a slang for homosexual, at worst, a term of homophobic abuse" (p. 1). This conception of the term queer by Jagose suggests that the term is now largely significant of an embodiment of culturally marginal sexual identifications. Additionally, it defines the theoretical model which originated from the gay and lesbian studies. Nonetheless, the application of this "theory turned into a symbol of struggle against the privileged heterosexual culture, becoming a term of reference for those marginal sexualities that could not fit into the traditional discourse about gender and sexualities" (Piantato, 2016, p. 3). Moreover, the implementation of this term is premised on queer individual's assertion that sexuality is defined by desire which has no eyes, and as a matter of fact, restrictions should not be placed on one's desire. Obviously, the queer concept recontextualises the established hetero-cultural intelligibility and principles of intimacies to foreground their arguments. In light of this, earlier prejudiced understandings depict queer sexualities as acts of promiscuity which is the consequence of the fear of an open intimacy.

Remarkably, queer sexuality is supported by a definitional indeterminacy which is in turn backed by its elastic constituent characteristic. This is primarily

because queer is not associated with any one particular non-heterosexual identity. Besides, since there is no critical boundary to the definitional harmony, the queer theory leaves room for other interpretations of what could be considered queer. This creates the possibility for the theory to further imbricate the existence of other sexualities. However, the adoption of this term signifies a political necessity to consolidate all marginalised sexual identities. As a result, it provides an inclusive approach to understanding the wider community of sexual identities that digress from the established heterosexuality. It further evidences the effort to re-fashion the queer from its homophobic implication in an attempt to establish the argument that, heterosexists ought not outline gay and lesbian experiences (Tyson, 1999). As Tyson rightly observes, "the act of defining the terms of one's own self-reference is a powerful move that says among other things, *We're not afraid to be seen!"* (p.317). This is precisely due to the fact that queer individuals have come to acknowledge language as a tool for change rather than oppression. So, adopting this semantic approach explains the proponents' resistance to external definitions. The queer person's ability of self-reference creates the necessary condition for the complexity of the definition of queer sexualities.

With the aim of homogenising the fragmented fluidity of individuals' sexualities, queer theory unsettles the *hetero-cultural* idea that, the binary gender category is an indispensable part of identity. Identity here, may refer to the name used to interpret one's gender based on the deeply held beliefs, qualities, personality as well as expressions that make up a person. The normative identity typically falls into the conflicting strand of the binary man and woman category.

Added to that, the advent of queer theory has highlighted non-binary gender categories which include genderqueer and genderfluid as well as the ungendered categories, which also has to do with agender and genderless identities (Nicholas, 2019).

Explaining further, an individual's gender identity could either be in harmony with the sex allotted them at birth or otherwise. Though the understanding of sexual identity is in continuous development, critics' approach contend that people are continually interrogating the existing notion of fixed sexual identities using various approaches. It follows then that the queer theory scrutinises the discrepancies among individuals' sexual desires, their sexual orientation or gender identity and the anatomical sex. It also defies the hegemonic heterosexuality. Hence, Berlant and Warner (1998) intimate that these "hegemonies are nothing if not elastic alliances, involving dispersed and contradictory strategies for self-maintenance and reproduction" (p. 553).

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, queerness has garnered quite a lot of discourse across the world. Quite interestingly, a considerable number of these studies have attempted proving that queer sexuality is a colonial import. Notable among them is Dunton (1989) who hypothesises that; "homosexual practice is almost invariably attributed to the detrimental impact made on Africa by the West" (p, 432). Notwithstanding, others including Murray and Roscoe (1998) provide a historical account of queer

sexual identities on the continent. In this, they sketch a queer identity to the period before the arrival of the Europeans where they state emphatically that, queer sexuality has roots in Africa as well. As they argue out in their *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands*:

> the vastness of the continent and the diversity of its cultures together with the social forms come as no surprise that same-sex patterns are diverse as well. Yet still, this diversity is unlimited since homosexual behaviour is universal (p. 6).

The spotlight to this study particularly rests on interrogating how characters in the collection of texts who identify as queer, self-construct their identities and want to be recognised as such. This is to re-examine the notion of these characters being *Other*, marginalised and subsequently, closeted. My work is, particularly, different from previous studies on queer African sexualities like those of Courtois (2018), Dlamini (2019) and Frateur (2019) in the sense that I am mainly focusing on the point of views as used in the selected texts. The present study also acknowledges the importance of queer sexualities in the two literary texts by considering how they help in achieving the overall aim of the writers. Consequently, the study addresses the following questions:

1. How do the queer characters in the selected texts self-identify as queer in heteronormative societies?

2. What literary roles do queer sexualities play in the texts under study?

Significance of the Study

The extended catalogue of scholarship on queer sexualities demonstrates that the study of queer theory champions a political campaign against the marginalisation of all sexual identities that do not fall within the boundaries of heteronormativity. Previously, most of these researches carried out on African queer sexualities concentrate mainly on the alienation or otherwise of such minority sexualities in the continent. In view of this, the current study will, above all, contribute to the ongoing scholarship on African sexual intimacies by exploring the representations of characters in some African settings while adopting the analytical viewpoint of the controversial queer theory. The focus is on a holistic representation of the queer characters. Correspondingly, it will bring to the fore how the various queer characters in the selected literary texts self-identify as queer. This proves significant as such characters mirror the thematic concerns raised by the various authors. Similarly, this study serves as an indispensable academic undertaking since it will further bring to light the various interpretations the characters in the primary texts associate with queerness as they putatively contend with the socially constructed notions of the various categories of sexual identities.

Methodology

Considering this area of study in academia, the qualitative research methodology is employed. This enables a systematically legitimate analysis of the queer sexual identities in the selected texts. Shank (2002) construes qualitative

research to be "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (p. 5). Its principal focus borders on the appreciation of natural occurrences in a "humanistic, interpretive approach" (Jackson et al, 2007, p. 23). The approach is also mostly characterised by inductive methods of establishing some specific knowledge building which is geared towards the formulation of new understandings (Leavy, 2014). The qualitative methodology is therefore requisite in grappling with what being queer in a heteronormative environment means to the protagonists in the data. The approach also fosters a critical examination of the texts in order to reveal and help understand the queer sexual representations in ways that enhance a better understanding of the main theory. Besides, it will enable a robust examination to unpack the nuances ascribed to the subjective experiences of queer sexual activities and identities embedded in the texts under study. In view of this, the purpose of the current study is to primarily scrutinise and explain the various interpretations of queer sexualities, as well as the roles they play in the selected texts. The primary sources of data for this study are *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) by Chinelo Okparanta and *Men of the South* (2010) by Zukiswa Wanner. The selection is primarily informed by the target characteristics that drive the research which are exclusive to these two texts.

The study employs the textual approach in examining the various queer characters in the selected texts. Using the qualitative content analysis with the understanding that the texts under examination are cultural products, I examine how the queer characters in the text respond to social values. The choice of this approach is justified by the fact that it will help in answering the research

questions that guide the study. It must be noted that these questions will strictly direct the course of the analysis of the research data. Each text will further be analyzed independently, based on the Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, asexual and intersex (LGBTQAI+) theory as explained by scholars such as Tyson (1999).

Justification of Texts

The choice of the two literary texts for this study: *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) by Chinelo Okparanta and *Men of the South* (2010) by Zukiswa Wanner is based on the fact that they unquestionably sit well with each other. They also situate well within the context of queer analysis. This is because, the queer concept happens to be an area that is in constant change. And, looking at the current changing trends of this concept in Africa, the selected literary texts happen to flow freely alongside the fluid queer discourse. It follows then that these texts provide sub-plots of characters that have an overtly queer erotic and queer social bonding with some other characters. Thus, the texts' selection was based on the purpose sampling method.

During the selection of the texts, I came across quite a number of texts like De Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" (2006), Dibia's Walking with Shadows (2005), Huchu's *Hairdresser of Harare* (2010), and Osman's *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013). However, my choice was grounded in the queer assertion that "we tell us who we are" (Tyson, 1999, p. 334). It happens that these two texts employ the first-person narrative perspective where the protagonists are given a voice with which they share

their queer experiences. The primary data have purposefully been selected because they give two variations of queer sexualities. One of the texts (*Under the Udala Trees*) presents the personal account of a lesbian whereas the other narrates the personal experiences of a gay man. Both texts are authoured by African women. So, whereas the woman in *Under the Udala Trees* is better placed to tell her own story, *Men of the South* seems to echo the experiences of a gay man which makes the study of this text an interesting undertaking. Again, these authours present daring accounts of queer sexualities in the African context. It is also important to state that although these texts do not necessarily conform to the traditional utopian genre, they contain an emancipator utopian imagination which breaks away from the established African hetero-cultural model. The selected texts provide clear queer signs which include characteristics that heterosexist culture stereotypically associates with queer individuals. Among these are: *feminine* male characters as well as *masculine* female characters. Moreover, the selected literary texts provide the basis for coded signs generated by the queer subculture. There also exist some identifiable thematic occupations that thread the two literary texts together. These reasons make it possible for the selected texts to unanimously speak to the purpose of the study in the sense that, the queer characters are allowed to define their individual sexual identities chiefly using the first-person point of view. This resonates with the broader perspective on queer activists' postulation that; "You don't tell us who we are – we tell us who we are" (Tyson, 1999, p. 334). Thus, these in conjunction with other textual evidences will aid in the queer interpretation of the texts.

Biographies of the Writers and their Works

In order to have a clear understanding of the thesis, the researcher finds it needful to give an overview of the biographies of the writers whose texts form the primary data of this study. Hence, this section of the research provides a background of Chinelo Okparanta as well as Zukiswa Wanner and their current writings.

Under the Udala Trees (2015) by Chinelo Okparanta

Chinelo Okparanta continues to build up a record as one of Africa's current best young writers. The conception of her writings can be traced to when she was barely eleven years old, the period in which her essay on domestic violence won her a prize. She is categorised among the new wave of writers with the likes of Adichie. (*The New York Times*, 2015).

Currently, Okparanta is the author of two interesting novels. The first, titled, *Happiness like Water* (2013), is a collection of ten short stories. This particular text has the theme of essential, yet elusive happiness running through the entire collection. Notably, the book resonates with her family's relocation from Port-Harcourt, in Nigeria to the United States. Okparanta breaks the mold with her second novel in that, she broaches taboo issues in a way that most of her Nigerian counterparts previously dare not grapple with. She artistically does this by bringing up issues of queer sexuality while providing graphic depiction of sex episodes. Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) gives an account of the

experiences of a young woman who defines her sexual orientation at an early age to be contradictory to the Nigerian societal norms.

This particular novel of Okparanta opens an interesting dialogue of global concern. It has received a lot of mixed reactions in her country, Nigeria. This is partly because a number of her audience are of the view that the lesbian concept that guides this text is against Okparanta's Jehovah Witness upbringing. Most of these popular critics further insist that the natural order of life contradicts the queer novel because according to the Bible, God created Adam and Eve as the symbolic representation of all morally upright intimacy, not Adam and Steve or "Eve and Eve" (p. 18). So, most of her Nigerian critics are of the view that Okparanta's depiction of queer sexuality seems to question some of the literal explanations given to some of the Bible stories. On the contrary, Okparanta contends that, "Just because the story happens to focus on a certain Adam and Eve did not mean that all other possibilities were forbidden" (p. 18). Fleshing this up, Okparanta in an interview with Lombardi (2018) reveals:

> Before the West decided that homosexuality was a sin, I don't think anyone in Africa, based on my research, thought it was a sin. Our own cultures were not against women-to-women marriages. My own grandmother was married to another woman (p. 20).

This quotation may seem quite strange to the average African since the continent largely professes to be a heterosexual setting.

In spite of the numerous tongue lashings, this novel has equally welcomed numerous accolades and awards. Notably, it has been tagged as one of National Public Radio's Best Books of 2015. *Under the Udala Trees* is one of the ten outstanding 2015 Nigerian novels as well as one of *Afridiaspora*'s best African novels of 2015. It has also appeared on the long list for the 2015 Center for Fiction First Novel Prize and subsequently nominated for several 2016 award categories including Hurston-Wright Legacy Award in Fiction and Lambda Literary Award.

***Men of the South* (2010) by Zukiswa Wanner**

Zukiswa Wanner is an essayist, story writer and a journalist by profession who contributes to an extensive number of journals which include: *The Guardian*, *Open Society* and *Sunday Times*. Dlamini (2018) is of the view that Wanner is herald as the queen of black chick lit based on her first two novels: *The Madams* (2006) and *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). According to Ferriss and Young (2006), this chick lit is a literary genre championed as a British and American concept that has over the years been adopted by writers of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. "The genre is precisely known as women's fiction and addresses issues of modern women in a humorous, light-hearted fashion" (Dlamini, 2018, p. 11396). To support this claim, Wanner comes up with her own definition of chick lit thus; "literature by women on issues that affect women" (Klemperer, 2007).

So, to follow this pattern, Wanner inculcates the humorous tone associated to chick lit in her novels. Besides, like most other chick lit, Wanner sometimes engages

the first-person narrative perspective and at other times the multiple viewpoints in her discussion of issues of love, identity (re)-creation in post-apartheid South Africa, among others. Despite the fact that this chick lit is generally tagged as "unworthy trashy fiction" (Dlamini, 2018) and the "froth sort of thing that wastes time" (Ferris and Young, 2006), the issues raised in Wanner's literary works advance to contemporary global concerns.

Her first published work, *The Madams,* which first saw the markets in 2006, depicts a racy, yet comic representation of the African economic empowerment in post-apartheid Johannesburg. She further broaches these concerns in similar deployment of literary techniques and language with the publication of *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), *Maid in SA: 30 Ways to Leave your Madam* (2013), *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), and other literary pieces. Her cross-examination of this label is further endorsed by her publication of *Men of the South* (2010), a story narrated by three men whose lives are closely linked to each other by the heroine. Wanner fashions her works in the manner of her mentors which include Buchi Emecheta, Sindiwe Magona and many such others. So, it is not surprising to see Wanner appropriate her chick lit in addressing some major contemporary South African issues, such as love and queer sexual identities in the home.

Her third novel, *Men of the South*, which was shortlisted for the 2011 Africa Region Commonwealth Writers' Prize as well as the 2011 Herman Charles Bosman Award, lets the reader in on the private lives of three men living in Johannesburg. The plot addresses real life issues that confront most men in contemporary Africa. This story speaks volumes about three men in the southern part of Africa whose lives

are curved fastened to each other by one woman. Three of the main characters, Mzilikazi (Mzi), Mfundo and Slindile (Sli) grew up together in a small town during the apartheid regime in South Africa. Mzi had earlier introduced Mfundo and Sli to each other. So, he becomes their confidante when these two characters fall madly in love. However, this does not affect the friendship ties shared by the three.

The novel opens with the narration of Mfundo, a struggling jazz musician who is in love with Sli. Sli is an uptown educated woman charmed by Mfundo's potentials, but finds herself stuck with an overgrown boy. Then, there is Tinaye who joins the trio during their adult life. He is an Oxford graduate who has migrated to South Africa and is bent on getting a citizenship for himself. Before this character, we are introduced to Mzi who is currently a senior executive working with an NGO. He is a married man who seems to have an ideal family. Yet, he identifies as a "hundred percent (100%) [closeted] gay" (p. 85) man. This challenges his loyalty to his two very good friends. The aforementioned queer character appears at a point when he is gathering courage to tell his close relations about his true sexual identity. Eventually, Mzi feels he has to leave Johannesburg. He divorces his wife and moves to Cape Town where he hopes to get all the freedom to explore his sexual identity. He is however confronted by a harsh and promiscuous gay society. Due to this, he finds it difficult to cultivate the kind of relationship he anticipates. He, however, finally finds a nourishing intimate relationship with Thulani, another queer character.

Men of the South (*MOS*), which also won the K. Sello Duiker Memorial Literary Award 2015, does not paint a black and white picture of pro or anti- queer sexual opinion. Instead, the style employed in crafting the three-part story is a subtle

and teasing method of using multiple first-person narrative voices inter-woven to create a single story.

Interestingly, "homosexual rights or acceptance of homosexuality is perhaps one of the most socially unwelcomed and touchy topics to broach in contemporary Africa" (Lyonga, 2014, p. 783). Following the legalisation of queer rights in South Africa, the issue of queer sexual identities should have been addressed on a different level in *Men of the South*. However, events in the narration by the three men concerning homosexuality seem to assert McRuer's (2010) challenge on how some cultures continue to "accommodate, despite and indeed through the shifting crises surrounding them, heterosexual […] norms" (p. 79). It is no wonder Mfundo describes the discovery of his friend's sexual orientation as "*the shocker*" (p. 27). However, he attributes the "homophobic thoughts that run through [his] head" (p. 29) to the circumstances under which he finds out his friend is queer.

Delimitation

The following delimitations are necessary in order to set the present work in sharp focus and to establish the boundaries of the study for valid results. First of all, the study mainly focuses on the queer texts by African writers. To ensure a fairly scholarly work, the research focuses on two texts by two writers from two different geographical locations: *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) by Chinelo Okparanta which centers on the growing love between two lesbians in Biafran Nigeria and *Men of the South* (2010) by Zukiswa Wanner which focuses on a South African queer man in the corporate world.

The core of the study will take into consideration the differences in the two African cultural contexts. Of the two countries, South Africa has the most flexible attitudes towards queer identities. Principally because not too long ago, same sex partnerships were legalised in this country and it covers the protection of the rights and privileges of such individuals. As Da Costa Santos (2013) observes, South Africa's sexual rights policies marks her as unique in the continent. This may be because most of the other African countries characterise queer relationships with criminality. That notwithstanding, the heteronormative African culture is still reflective in this society. Nigeria, on the other hand, has intensified the criminalisation of queer sexualities with the enactment of the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, 2014 which was transformed to the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Law in 2018 that makes illegal these sexualities as well as any activity that supports it (Okanlawon, 2018). According to this law, same sex couples are considered offenders of the law and will be convicted to a sentence of fourteen years in prison. This law equally prohibits gay clubs, societies as well as any public show of queer amorous activities. Thus, the *Country Policy Information Note Nigeria: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression* (2019) indicates that the law considers queer allies as offenders of the law and subsequently liable to a jail term of ten years. So, queer sexual practices and similar related issues are not loudly articulated. That notwithstanding, Okparanta (2015) undertakes a daring exploration of queer sexualities in *Under the Udala Trees*. Basically, the research is primarily focusing on an in-depth examination of the representations of queer sexual identities in the two selected African novels; hence, the choice of texts.

Organisation of the Study

The study is structured into five chapters and it follows this order: Chapter one is basically the introductory section which states the thesis of this study. It provides a general background to the study, identifies the theoretical framework and the methodology that underpin the research. It moves on to state the problem, the significance of the study, provides the research questions that guide the study, justifies the choice of texts as well as delimits the scope of the study. Chapter two examines existing literature on the theoretical perspective that will be used in analyzing the data under study. It also reviews existing studies on literary texts that lucubrate queer sexualities in Africa. This is done with the aim of establishing the niche in order to situate the present study within the context of the ongoing queer discourse. Having the research questions as the focal point, chapters three and four will serve as the crust of the analysis of the thesis. As such, the exploration of the various queer representations in the texts will be carried out in both sections. Also, based on the analysis of the texts, chapter five will delineate the findings and make some recommendations while eliciting a conclusion to the thesis.

Conclusion

Chapter One has attempted exposing the motivation that buttresses the study of queer intimacies in African texts. It has delineated the focus of the thesis by discussing the background in order to justify the relevance of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Following the background to the study, scholarly works that have a bearing to the current study encompass the objective of this chapter. It will begin with a review of empirical studies on the primary data. The purpose of examining these empirical evidences is primarily to demonstrate how the present research is both similar to and unique from previous works. It further provides a conceptual context for the analysis and discussion of the selected texts. This is directly followed by a discussion of the theoretical perspective of the study and then a review of some works on queer sexuality in African texts. The conceptual thrust of the study is underpinned by the queer theory.

Empirical Review

Critical Reception on the Selected Texts

This section of the review takes into consideration the reception rendered to *Under the Udala Trees* and *Men of the South*. In so doing, the section sheds light on some of the scholarly attention paid to the two texts. This aspect of the study is geared towards reinforcing the niche that has earlier been identified in the statement of the problem.

Tracking the Scholarship on *Under the Udala Trees*

In as much as the exposition of queer erotic desires remain an abomination in the Nigerian setting, it is realised that *Under the Udala Trees* burdens itself with the task of claiming an existing queer African identity. In line with this, Courtois (2018) underlines the daring attempt made by this narration as staging a platform for the subalterns who may have been backgrounded so that they do not have the voice with which to articulate themselves. According to him, "The recovery of the silenced voice has been the main project at the heart of Subaltern Studies, in order to 'recover' the agency of subalterns" (p. 120). Examining the text by this approach may reject the subjection of the non-heteronormative sexual identities. It rather recognises the "traditionally marginalised" identities in society (Fatheuer, 2011). In this text, the protagonist's narration actually reflects the consciousness of the marginalised queer individuals while questioning their capability to adequately assess their personal situations. It is for this reason that Mukherjee (2017) renegotiates the politics of sexual identities by interrogating the Foucauldian viewpoint concerning the relationship between the heteronormative community and the concept of queer. It follows then that *Under the Udala Trees* relays personal issues that may probably endanger the life of the narrator in the heteronormative setting. Consequently, Courtois (2018) maintains that; "creating a lesbian character can be a militant act judging from the overwhelming pressures that this community undergoes especially on the part of religious zealots" (p. 130). Hence, it could be the case that the narration becomes the voice with which the queer protagonist negotiates a sexual identity in a heteronormative society. On

the contrary, Meghani and Saeed (2019) intimate that for as long as the issue of sexual minority is concerned, attaining an acceptable queer identity may not always follow through.

Interestingly, Courtois (2019) further navigates into examining the novel as a bildungsroman that is connected to one of the most depressing experiences in the history of Nigerian which is the Biafran war. In defining the *bildungsroman*, Morgenstern and Boes (2009) see it as representing the evolution of the protagonist's right from the initial action as they progress to some particular level of accomplishment in the denouement. Central to Courtois's argument is the proposition that the heroine of the novel develops in line with the occurrences while reflecting the historical emergence of the setting of the text. He posits that Okparanta intends to offer "a new feminine voice in the Nigerian war novel corpus". Okparanta takes into consideration Derrida's (2017) "The law of the genre". This suggests that her text participates in rather than belongs to the traditional bildungsroman. This author negotiates a bend by altering the casting of a hero and introducing a heroine, instead. According to Fraiman (1999, as cited in Courtois, 2018), the idea behind the use of a heroine in this genre could be geared towards arriving at an intersection that is equally tangible and metaphorical which is "not a single path to a clear destination but […] the endless negotiation of crossroads" (p. 10).

Added to the above, Bezhanova's (2014) bildungsroman offers space where female writers and readers can explore how women's experiences advance their personal growth and analyze obstacles such as growth itself. The

bildungsroman, thus, becomes a communal terrain where female writers and readers can deliberate upon the diverse scenes of advancement as well as add their opinions to the controversial aspects of the evolving female character. This also enables them participate in a joint endeavour of resolving the issues facing them. This whole idea is reverberated in *Under the Udala Trees* since the bildungsroman extensively utilises the internal monologue. According to Piaget (2007), this is an indication of the desire to own a voice. Notably, the desire to speak out may be because of an established domineering system. Also, as is common with the female bildungsroman, *Under the Udala Trees* follows the codified exposition of Clifford (2001) thus: "the female bildungsroman identifies the struggle of the woman with patriarchal norms as a common characteristic" (p. 125). Interestingly, while Courtois's study argues that the novel stages a subaltern lesbian protagonist who may be projected by renegotiating the form of the coming of age stories, it seems to be short of a critical attention to the ramifications of the self-portrayal of the narrator in the heteronormative setting.

In like vein, David (2019) looks at Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* from the angle of the coming of age story. His study outlines society's classification of the unique gender experience that depicts "women as good or bad, belonging or not", based on the role of the phallus in *Under the Udala Trees* and Okpewho's *The Last Duty* (1976). He rests his focus on how the changing aspects such as social location in terms of: class, ethnicity, gender, level of education, age, sexuality, physical strength and refugee status conflate to present an intense form of suffering for the helpless characters. This is clearly justified by

mapping such features outside a supposedly homely space. David further examines the ways by which the patriarchal heteronormative discourse of belonging generates ferocious mundane truths for nonconforming individuals in Biafran Nigeria. Thus, in the novel, Okparanta (2015) creates a location for those trapped in the margins of society. Thus, in this story, she revives the Nigerian history in a manner that permits the projection of a voice for those stigmatised on the basis of their queer erotic desires.

It could be argued that the novel, on its own, contends the homophobic reception of queer sexualities in Nigeria by crossing the borders of the basic denial of marriage. However, the institution of marriage is not projected in the novel as necessarily dysfunctional. Ijeoma is tied up in a marriage she abhors because she is more interested in women than she is in men. Her identity seems to spell a queer type of marriage that could succeed (David, 2019). This queer marriage as portrayed in the text seem to underscore what British anthropologist Leith-Ross (1939) long established as fluid with regards to sexual experiences of the Igbo community from which Ijeoma and Ndidi originate.

Linking this to the historical remembrance, Carrier and Murray (1998) as well as Amadiume (2015), counter the myth surrounding the un-African queer identity where they document the institution of marriage between women in most precolonial African societies, including present day Nigeria. The female husbands in such relationships consciously play dominant male roles. Carrier and Murray (1998) argue that in communities such as Dahomey and Lovedu, the female husband is prohibited from having male partners. So, these scholars suggest that

queer erotic practices might be involved in such relationships. Similarly, a more current study by Migraine-George and Currier (2016) recovers transnational African queer archives because the authors believe that though elusive, it is a dynamic site of knowledge. In the context of the novel understudy, although Ijeoma and Nididi's queer union is not a formally recognised institution in their society, the protagonist believes it feels like one. Therefore, David (2019) posits that this lesbian bildungsroman seeks to renegotiate the style of the genre which classically ends with a marriage, in an attempt to interrogate the heterosexual norms.

Obviously, it could be argued that the novel undertakes a journey of normalising queer sexualities. Nonetheless, in accordance with Butler (1993), the term *queer* becomes a site for "interpellation" (p. 18) and it creates a social bond that all marginalised sexualities identify within a homophobic environment. As a matter of fact, once the term is stabilised, it may lose its cogency. Thus:

> If the term 'queer' is to be a site of collective contestation, […] it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage (Ibid, p. 19).

As it stands, although David (2019) intensifies his study on the lesbian character in a heteronormative Nigeria, his study is still short of the queer characters' self-identification as queer, and the roles their sexualities play in the

text. Therefore, it becomes necessary to interrogate alternative perspectives in line with the heroine's self-development in a heteronormative environment.

In a similar discourse, Hawley's (2017) study; "In transition: Self-expression in recent LGBTIQ narratives", demonstrates that there is an existing institution of numerous sexualities in Africa. However, he also observes that this tradition has been pugnaciously influenced by the influx of western culture. According to him, the neocolonial extension of these restrictions moulds the on-going quest for acceptance among queer persons and societies in the African continent. So, the African fiction and film seem to recommend a new development. Clearly, Hawley seems to miss a little point here since the term has evolved to include all other emerging sexualities and his consistent use of the misappropriated LGBTIQ instead of LGBTQIA+ is slightly restrictive. He looks at the changing dynamics of queer publications and concludes that some literary texts like; *Chuchote Pas Trop* (2005), *Walking with Shadows* (2005), *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010), *Under the Udala Trees* (2015); "Jambula Tree" (2006), *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013) and *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013) have a similar didactic tone. Like all the texts he mentions, *Under the Udala Trees* acknowledges an emerging queer African continent. It emulates a possible queer African future "by voicing what has (intentionally) remained unheard, silenced, erased and forgotten" (p. 121). Like the earlier works reviewed, Hawley maintains that Ijeoma and Ndidi provide an optimistic expectation for a future queer Nigerian society. Here, the date of publication becomes very relevant since the novel was out-doored the year after Nigeria passed her strict law that

criminalises all queer persons and queer activities. So, the endnote advocates a possible hope for those caged in the homophobic Nigerian queer community.

Comparing the novel to *Hairdresser of Harare*, Hawley (2017) intimates that the Biafran setting of *Under the Udala Trees* shares a similar didactic overlay. However, the novel seems to have some of Huchu's relative light-heartedness. Also reminiscent of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), Hawley acknowledges that *Under the Udala Trees* views the Biafran war only off in the distance, through the lens of some private experiences and their relationships coupled with the traumatising effects they have on the characters even after the war. As is much expected, *Under the Udala Trees* "is a didactic rehearsal of those arguments, with a decided conclusion that love is love, and that is a much-desired artifact in a country with a horrific history of internal strife" (Hawley, 2017, p. 123). Hawley, however, leaves the discussion opened for future consideration.

On the other hand, Osinubi (2018) argues that Okparanta's debut novel, *Under the Udala Trees* (2015), permits the elaborations of new relations between African literary feminisms and African queer scholarship. Ultimately, there is the possibility that it fosters the recognition of "queer" literature's investment in delineating the interplay between sexuality and the constitution of political authority. He is of the view that Okparanta turns to Achebe because of her style and reference to his work. Osinubi attended to the significance of gender, sexuality and pleasure in the constructions of the female self in ways that are yet to be fully grasped. On this, Cruz-Guitérrez (2018) intimates that; Igbo and Yoruba authors construct female protagonists who are questioning their own

worth as they are blamed, denied compassion and discouraged from thinking their husbands are to be blamed. His understanding places the queer character in line with Butler's (1988) gender as performative. However, Cruz-Guitérrez observes that the societal mechanisms of controlling the character demonstrates little compassion for those yearning to perform their assigned roles yet, failing with this attempt. Tracing this pattern of line through the character, Ezi, in Unigwe's *Night Dancer* (2012) to Ijeoma in Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees (2015),* he observes that Ijeoma is a queer character pressured into a heterosexual marriage. However, the traumatic experiences in this marriage enables her recover her rebelliousness and just like Ezi, Ijeoma is able to break away from the performance of the normalised gender roles.

This continuous desire to contend the hegemonic positions is recurrent in Okparanta's novel. Accordingly, Okparanta (2015) and Unigwe (2012) seem to establish a platform on which Nigerian women may discover strategies that will enable them protest the various forms of marginalisation in the society. This reinforces the notion of third-generation female characters empowering themselves as they question and reappropriate some compromising establishments in their society.

In this respect, it can be argued that the establishment of an evolving feminist stylized discourse permits these characters the urgency to be re-established. Thus, the queer protagonist and her partner in *Under the Udala Trees* envisage the utopian Nigeria where there is a reconciliation of what is considered

the norm and the queer. Alternatively, this widens the scope of feminist and queer manifestations in Nigeria which need to be further explored.

Also, de Jesus Santana (2019), in his study, notes that *Americanah*, *Meio Sol Amarelo, Os Pescadores, Cidade Aberta, The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives, The Famished Road, Daughters who Walk this Path, Lagoon* and *Under the Udala Trees* are some of the works produced by Nigerians who deal with the realities of those who live in, lived in or have left their nation. His study takes into consideration a wide range of sexuality theories as he observes in the varied responses to queer life in African literary texts. He however does not carry out an intensive study, but only broaches on the topic in passing. The argument he raises is that the African concept of love and sexuality has been affected by globalisation. Although this study promises to analyze *Under the Udala Trees,* it becomes quite disheartening that the text is only mentioned in passing making the reader hunger for more insight. Hence, the current study becomes necessary.

Additionally, Cassano (2018) in her study examines the role of memory in literary texts. Particularly, she looks at the literary representations of the Nigerian civil war while emphasizing the individual as well as the collective memory production using *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Adichie and *Under the Udala Trees* by Okparanta as book ends. Her study outlines two stages of memory thus: literary characters' memory and writers' memory. She intimates that both authors do not restrict themselves to remembering just the "historical memory" (p 2) of their nation by considering their custom, for instance, through their use of the Igbo language and proverbs. She acknowledges Okparanta's homage to Achebe. This

is because, Achebe (1958; 1961; 2013) in his works leaves a positive legacy of post-colonialism that teaches fundamental lessons in "making African subjects" (Mbembe, 2006, p. 147). The reference to Achebe seems to foreground the theme of queer sexuality as African since Achebe's text is highly recognised as the stepping stone for almost all African novels.

David's (2019) historical perspective of both *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Under the Udala Trees* reveal a converging point between the themes of war and homophobia. It seems, the use of the Biafran war in most novels remains a yardstick for determining a character's state during and after the war. She posits that, writers often project characters whose chapters in the history books might have long been dismissed. This move of hers seems to be directed towards the portrayal of the effect of the civil war on the individual character and the community at large. Inevitably, this aspect is also intertwined with memory. So, erasing a particular character from the archives could mean overlooking their existence. It follows then that, arguing for the non-existence of a particular character in history also means the memories associated to such persons never existed. This underlines the presence of queer sexualities in the African continent, particularly Nigeria, judging from the fact that Okparanta intertwines it with the Biafran history. The focus of David's study is solely on the historical representations in the two texts, and in essence, creating room for a literary reading of the text.

Summarising the argument espoused so far, it may perhaps be concluded that the reviewed works mainly look at the import of Biafra on the character in

this bildungsroman. However, as earlier studies make it clear, every individual in the society comes along with their personal identity and this is shaped by societal decisions. The criticality of the motif of Biafran war means that it cannot be ignored in analysis. Despite the fact that this research also employs this theme, it serves mainly as a backdrop to further understand the protagonist's desire for a queer identity. Hence, an in-depth literary analysis on the self-definition of the queer protagonist in *Under the Udala Trees* becomes needful.

Review of Related Literature on *Men of the South*

The discourse of queer sexualities is one of the many subjects that has garnered a considerable amount of attention in the South African setting. Directly linked to this are the discussions on xenophobia and migrations into the country. As such, earlier studies on *Men of the South* do not isolate themselves from this topic. For instance, Omotoso and Fasselt (2015) engage a vast range of novels that center on the new season of migrant characters to South Africa and the theme of xenophobia in South Africa. Their discussion of these texts reveals that, "The so-called xenophobic attacks of 2008 seem to have prompted more writers to reflect on the issue" (p. 242). Hence, migrant issues are reflective in most modern South African writings including *Men of the South* (2010) by Zukiswa Wanner. However, tracing this "seminal subject" (Sabe, 2018, p. 1) becomes difficult because most literary writers thread this concept in sub themes, consequently depicting it as a less trivial issue.

Observably, *Men of the South* outlines two forms of migration which can be classified under what is termed "internal migration in Africa" (Akeju, 2013). In view of this, Omotoso and Fasselt (2015) consider the aspect bordering the implications of Tinaye's migration into South Africa in search of greener pastures. Notwithstanding, they forget a very significant part of the novel that holds the plot in line. And this has to do with Mzilikazi (Mzi)'s relocation from Cape Town to Johannesburg. There is a probability that this move is catapulted into a field for concealing his sexual identity from his immediate community, with the exception of Mfundo and Slindile (Sli), his two closest friends. Besides, Johannesburg seems to offer an "ideal home" (Ahlstedt, 2016) and a better chance for him to live his sexual identity to the fullest.

This gears off previous portrayals of queer in literary texts where the characters concerned move from their home country to America or Europe. These are places where asylum is made available for such marginalised identities (Gartner, 2015). The migration narration of the queer person possibly helps the reader to conceptualise the feelings of the character which in turn champions the understanding of the story being told. Consequently, in looking at the self-presentation of the queer protagonist, it becomes necessary to analyse the role this inter-city migration plays in the development of the queer protagonist.

In the context of *Reading bisexualities from South African Perspective* – revisited (2003; 2011), mention is made of the attitudes of various South African writers towards the queer characters, particularly the bisexual ones. Stobie (2011) moves on to list Wanner's *Men of the South* among the range of novels in this

study that appear more embracing of sexual fluidity. On this, Cowell (2011) comments that most of the countries that criminalise homo-sexuality are former British colonies or territories. Thus, South Africa is no exception. Although South Africa passed a bill in 1994 that protects the rights of queer individuals, Stobie (2011) indicates that homophobia persists in this country largely because South Africa seeks to maintain a cordial relationship with the other countries in the continent. Conceivably, it is this very homophobic attitude that compels Mzilikazi to move from Johannesburg to Cape Town where he is more relaxed in expressing his queer sexuality.

Observably, Wanner's (2010) queer text launches into the welcoming queer territory of *post*-post-apartheid South Africa created by Meeran and Lotz (Stobie, 2011). Stobie employs her work to accentuate some lessons learnt by queer characters which she defines as acrimonious. She stresses that other subjects such as: doubling in a cosmopolitan environment, raping innocent individuals, drug abuse and addiction as well as failure, irrespective of a promised hope are some of the issues the queer communities in South Africa often face. This generalisation of hers is lacking in the sense that it does not cover *Men of the South* which happens to be one of the books she studies. Stobie is more interested in a sociological perception of queer in the entire nation than on the literary analysis of the texts she proposes to study. This is premised on her argument that queer sexuality is often regarded as "un-African… and in many cases individuals with variant sexualities are targeted with rape, beatings and murder in South Africa especially in black townships and rural areas" (p. 322). There is an obvious

lack of literary appreciation in the text. In view of this, the current study will take a different trend by looking at the text with a literary lens.

A study which seems to depart a bit from the ongoing discussions is that of Phakhathi (2018). She picks her argument from the angle of authorship. Her study interrogates African texts that spell out young and upcoming African writers' perspectives on masculinity constructions. She limits herself to the new breed of men in *Men of the South* as well as men in some other texts who perform and transcend hegemony. In so doing, she chooses both male and female authored texts that speak to the issue of fair treatment and engagement with literature produced by young black authors for inclusive academic scrutiny.

Contradictorily, the female authors whose works Phakhathi (2018) studies use the very aspect of superfluity to draw on serious issues on contemporary masculinities that are useful in the contribution to gender studies. One possible suggestion generated here is; these authors are able to create successful authorial personae through the various narrative perspectives. It becomes necessary to consider the issue of migration and metropolitan spaces that have a direct bearing in shaping the queer character. Moreover, the simply artistic way by which they are able to situate their texts within the complexities of contemporary society is in congruence with Ogbazi's (2011) assertion that:

> Writers, therefore, take a lot of care in crafting their productions in distinguishing ways that will make them appeal to the tastes of the majority of their readers. It is an individual writer's responsibility to

> endeavour, while addressing the varied complex subjects of the 21st century, to make his/her production express and accept itself through its own intrinsic coercive aesthetic power (pp. 67-68).

Perhaps, it may be appropriate to argue that these two authors pick up a large reception. Thus, making it unavoidable to render some scholarly attention to both texts, particularly, *Men of the South.*

Dlamini (2016) stands in the same relational line with most other scholars towards Wanner's *Men of the South*. He concerns himself with the formation, transformation and interrogation of hegemonic masculinity in the writer's works. Dlamini identifies Wanner's principal theme as encompassing how modern black South African novels in English focus on variance in the creation of masculinities. Reading his study, it could be assumed that the narratives and issues that enhance the relationship between masculinity production and the income generation system of the labour force are representative of the country. However, to Dlamini these may vary depending on the socio-economic and political factors of the nation. In *Men of the South*, Wanner engages with a similar concept by introducing her readers to the historical background of Mzilikazi's external family. Wanner tracks the migration of Mzilikazi's father from KwaMntungwa, a fictitious Zulu village, to Johannesburg which happens to be one of the flourishing cities in the country. On this, Dlamini maintains that the mining companies in this city attracted quite a number of black South African men and women to relocate to the city in search of greener pastures. Notably, Mzilikazi's father first works in the mining sector, then he advances himself through

education to a point where he becomes a school teacher. During this period, he takes another wife in the city. Conceivably, the city seems to have provided him with the option to reconstruct himself. Dlamini, thus, seems to establish the theme of the ideal man as the provider and breadwinner which remains operational in the South African setting. The focus here is the construction of the ideal man as the breadwinner of the family. Though this theme is not the main focus of the current study, the construction of the ideal African man image is supported in the analysis.

The issue of domesticity looms large in some other studies on *Men of the South.* One such discussion is Lindsay's (2003) comparative study on *Behind Every Successful Man* and *Men of the South.* Contrary to Tamale (2004) who identifies domesticity as inhibitive to women's economic and social independence, Lindsay in her study demonstrates that most South African women benefit from some of the tenets of domesticity. In her argument, Lindsay maintains that the concept of the man as the breadwinner which seems to be the mark of an ideal of man and fatherhood construction, is exploited by women in their financial strategies. On this, it can be argued that these two texts of Wanner seem to demonstrate that the creation of ideal men must involve both genders. This argument stems from the fact that both men and women play active roles in defining masculinity in various economic and social domains. However, the current study deviates from this trend by considering how the queer characters self-construct their identities.

Also diverging a little bit from the apartheid era and migration, Andrews (2019) looks at the father roles in South African texts. He posits that these modern South African texts constitute what Frenkel and Mackenzie (2010) term "post-transnational" literature, thus painting a picture of the divergent trends in the representation of fatherhood. Wanner does not hesitate to present some of the negative strands of fatherhood in her texts. It is for this reason that Andrews intimates that the "traditional ideas of fatherhood are challenged by a series of failed or resisted fatherhoods: a stay-at-home father, a black gay father, and a Zimbabwean immigrant who conceives a child to gain citizenship" (p. 90).

Notably, the queer father in South African literature is mostly depicted as an outsider whose character trait seems incomprehensible. Simultaneously, he is also a character battling with the dynamic trends that are steeped in the complications of a nation in transition. While white queer characters seem to be flourishing, black queer characters in literary texts remain almost absent from South African texts. The few times they appear, they remain closeted to other characters and sometimes to the reader. Wanner's *Men of the South,* Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2013) and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) present prominent examples of daring queer characters. These characters add their voices in challenging the hetero-normative and Eurocentric portrayals of gender and sexuality in South Africa. Particularly, Mzilikazi launches a new breed of the queer father who leaves no suspecting traces of his queer sexual identity until he is openly frank with the reader after his friend discovers his sexual preference. *Men of the South* seems to betray the hegemonic heterosexual principles that are

connected to the father's territory. This could equally contradict the cultural, racial and gender expectations of the society. A further navigation into this argument will be carried out in the thesis.

Observably, it could be the case that Wanner seeks to hide any devastating effect *Men of the South* might have on the reader by presenting it in a light-hearted manner. Hence, it becomes appropriate to acknowledge the contribution of Omonzejie (2015) when she says that Wanner's novels incorporate the daily struggle of contemporary men in the country. Noting further, she writes that the issue of race seems elusive and has been very obviously effaced in this text. However, she erroneously argues that Wanner's two novels; *Men of the South* and *Behind Every Successful Man* do not interest themselves in any sexual revolution. Rather, she argues for a social rebellion for the economic liberation of South African women who happen to be in relationships which calculatingly attempt to exclude them from the job market. Although the issues discussed in Wanner's texts are cogent, Omonzejie classifies *Men of the South* under popular literature as a result of the extreme satirical representation in the text. Perhaps it suggests that after an era of struggle against apartheid, there is a tremendous desire to engage with everyday life as it is led by the general folk, an expression of enormous relief. Obviously, a careful consideration of Omonzejie's study reveals the need to further interrogate the queer protagonist's story telling line.

A critical consideration of the text is indicative of the artistic mode with which Wanner expertly interweaves themes plaguing post-apartheid South Africa by using the various characters in her texts. An example can be cited of Mfundo,

the major symbol of unemployment particularly in the case of men. This unemployed position of his has a great toll on his masculinity and subsequently, his relationship. This is in sync with Dlamini's (2016) insistence that Mfundo's dilemma is themed on his failure to perform the desired masculine role of a financial provider. As the analysis will show, his predicament as an unemployed character affords him a vital role of being more acceptive of his friend's queer sexuality.

In this section of the literature review, I have presented and explained how scholars have interpreted the Wanner's *Men of the South* which serves as one of the primary data for this study. The presentation of some existing analyses has shown how my current undertaking departs from or falls in line with existing knowledge. By extension, I have shown that there is an area of research that has not been given much attention, while showing the importance of critiques of this novel to my study.

Theoretical Review

This section of the thesis reviews some works on the theory that underpins the study. The queer theory is the main concept that underpins this study.

Spargo (1999) maintains that queer theory "is a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desires" (p. 9). Proponents of this theory argue against the classification of individuals' non-conforming sexual orientations into definite clusters such as gays, lesbians,

bisexual and transsexuals among others. This is because, it may perhaps be said that individuals' identities now encompass expansive components which may in turn make it quite exhausting to place all persons in one class, especially on the basis of a single shared characteristic (Tyson, 1999). Harper et al (1997) re-conceptualise queer theory "as a means of traversing and creatively transforming conceptual boundaries" by interrogating how people's sexualities, race and gender converge at a point.

Delving a bit into history, it is seen that the term 'queer theory' came to the lime light as early as in the 1990s. According to Jagose (1996), associating this theory with only lesbian and gay studies may not provide authentic results. This is because the theory also acknowledges evolving issues on identity like cross-dressing, hermaphroditic identity, gender ambiguity, gender corrective surgery, and many others. Additionally, the queer theory is cushioned with a relatively new definition of gender, sex and sexual identities which does not correspond to the existing normative discussions on gender studies. Instead, it "problematises the idea of fixed gender and sexual identities and challenges the basis for a unitary identity politics" (Beemyn and Eliason, 1996, p. 5). Hence, proponents of this theory are constantly interrogating the notion of identity stability in diverse forms. On this, Butler (2000) maintains:

> Because identities are constructed within, rather than outside discourse, they remain subject to the complex discursive interplay, strategic repositioning and repetitive regulation we have seen. The

> presence of the abject *Other* within hollows out the meaning of identity and makes it unfamiliar to itself (p. 114).

As may be observed, the various arguments on queer theory rest on the critics' perspectives. These multiple views seem to safe-guard the boundaries that define queer sexualities. Also, most proponents of this theory as well as some writers and society at large seem to have taken opposing stance on the "social policy toward homosexuals" (Posner, 1992, p. 291). It could be realised that, the contradictory views seem to regulate the current meanings associated to queer sexualities. This is based on the fact that the term *queer* and its variants have experienced some semantic adjustments which have bearings on the interpretations of queer sexualities. Neill (2009), for instance, explores the ethics and social dilemmas encompassing queer sexualities as he wrestles with these questions: "How could homosexuality be natural if it does not lead to reproduction?" and "How could it be moral if it is not natural?" (p. 5). His debates on queer identities are surrounded by "enormous tensions". But while the term 'queer' seems an appropriate descriptor, other expressions that could be deployed may compromise the interpretation of the various minority identities and what they represent (Whittington, 2012, p. 163).

The multifaceted queer concept continues to consubstantiate all sexualities that fall without the heteronormative standard. Queer, by extension, concerns itself with all sexualities outside the normative behaviours and identity which are defined by their binary opposites (Harris, 2005). In harmony with this claim, the queer theory seems to be an antagonistic orientation to the normative

comprehension of the production of bodies, and psyches are produced not just through individual practices, but through what Butler (1990) may term "matrices of intelligibility" (p. 17). For instance, a woman who is sexually attracted to another woman is rendered unintelligible and impossible whereas a woman who is attracted to a man is tentatively intelligible and possible in a heterosexual culture. In Butler's (2000) *Critically Queer* submission, the term *queer* materialises into "a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and future imaginings" (p. 19). This term was, at least initially, reinvented to refer to a subject other than the nineteenth century homosexual (Champagne, 2013, p. 1006).

Being apparently aware of the unsettled change, Butler (1990) contends that "it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage" (p. 19). Butler's contention rests on the term's constant waxing borders which affirm critics' assertion that queer can never be queer enough. To reinforce this proposition, Amin (2016) emphasises that, the sustenance of queer scholarship is dependent on constantly "queering and being queerer than" its previous usage, "never allowing its meaning or field of reference to settle" (p. 176). This further explains why the term remains multifaceted and still accommodates new entries in the changing trends of time.

The queer theory, as defined by Gieseking (2008), consists of a scheme of concepts which proposes that identities are not deterministic or they are constantly changing, especially in reference to people's gender, sex, or sexuality.

Riggs and Treharne (2017) add: "queer theory suggests that all bodies and psyches are offered intelligibility through their relationship with a particular set of norms" (p. 2). With this, the queer theory seeks to make the intelligibility of all marginalised sexualities possible.

Additionally, Harris (2005) insists that queerness in the works of theorists like Butler (1990) and Sedgwick (1993) is as much a semiotic as it is a social phenomenon. This draws in Foucault's (1978) *History of Sexuality* where he provides a germ and identity politics in a model of reverse discourse. Hence, to say that someone is queer indicates indeterminacy about their sexuality and gender. Meaning, one can only infer the sexuality of an individual based on his or her primary gender identification.

It is worthy of note that, Butler (1990) in her work, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, completely disentangles the link among gender, sex and sexuality. This she clearly does through the formation of the concept of gender performativity. As a matter of fact, Butler takes into consideration the overriding interpretation of the bodily sex. She also actively repudiates the institution of gender binaries, by focusing on the anatomical sex as produced by the multiple arguments on sexualities. Thus, it seems the supposition that an individual's sex is a natural occurrence validates the male and female gender binaries and heterosexuality as the model. This is because, it is believed that these two categories have a straight bearing on human organic sex variations. The notion of destabilised gender categories is further interpreted by Disch (1999)

thus; “Gender … is not an identity but a discourse that helps to effect the distinction between nature and culture on which it purports to reset” (p. 548).

Furthermore, the hypothesis that all persons are heterosexuals and that heterosexuality is the approved standard of sexual expressions seems to leave no room for any alternative sexualities. Butler’s (1990) intimation births the understanding that queer sexualities deviate from the stable abiding heterosexual terms. This may foster the legitimisation of numerous modes of bias like: homophobia, biphobia as well as transphobia, “against those subjectivities excluded from heterosexual discourse” (Tilsen and Nylund, 2010b, p. 4).

Granting that Disch (1999) compliments Butler’s (1990) understanding, he is quick in pointing to the fact that Butler’s heterosexual matrix represents her concept of cultural straightness. Added to that, Blumenfeld and Breen’s (2001) as well as Breen et al’s (2001) critique of Butler’s (1990) gender trouble identifies this work as an “experiential … vital link between her social concern and writing” (p. 1). This interpretation renders it an inappropriate fit in the global discourse of queer sexualities. On this very basic level, Lemon (1992) observes that Butler’s resistance of the binary genders as the most natural options, yields either a “biologically” or a “psychologically” essential justification of femininity and masculinity (p. 7).

Remarkably, the binary categorisation remains a precondition for the “heterosexualisation of desires” that further “institutes the production of discreet and asymmetrical oppositions between feminine and masculine” identities (Butler 1990 p. 17). Lemon (1992) shares Butler’s conviction with the rhetorical

question; "Can we be happy with an account of the categories 'male and female' which are purely 'regulatory' fictions" (p. 126). That indicates that these binary opposites constitute the social norms which prescribe the models of acceptable behaviour. These socially stratified oppositions foreshadow what Girard and Deceit (1976) earlier identified as the "object relations" that establish their social relations (p. 12). He tabulates that the mimetic character of the relationship of subject, model and object illustrates the triangular desire as not inherent in all mankind. But it is in parents, colleagues, as well as friends. These people comprise the models to be emulated in the society. The aforementioned views in total can be summed up thus; our world is populated by "models around us [which] perform norms that were previously mimetically acquired by being in direct exposure to" the *Other* (Janicka, 2015, p. 47).

Notably, this same conception stirs an unexpected dismay in some queer activists. For instance, Nayak and Kehily (2006) hold that, "Most disturbing for this latter group has been Butler's insistence on the impossibility of sexed identities and the recognition that gender norms are finally phantasmic impossible to embody" (p. 460). The whole new rubric of possibilities of resignation, according to Butler (1993), arise since the focus may be structured on contingent foundations. Thus, Dollimore (2018) contends: persons "may engage in acts of sexual dissidence in which the ontology of the subject itself is queried and thereby *queered"*. Yet, the idea of *Other* and *abject* do not fully obliterate the queer possibilities or render them obsolete. Such conventional depictions seem to satirise sexualities as a whole while rendering those that fall between the margins

of the male and female genders imitations that are mere transgressions. Nayak and Kehily (2006) underscore this point when they state:

> …identification is a partial, split and ambivalent process that, in the moment it announces itself as 'identity' (in common statements such as, 'As black man …, or 'Speaking as a feminist…'), conceals its incurable multiplicity and precarious contingency. In this respect, the act of identification is always an approximation, as Stuart Hall explains: Identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption. There is always 'too much' or 'too little' – an over-determination or a lack (p. 466).

The main understanding of the natural relationship that exists among a person's sex at birth, their gender identity and their sexual orientation originates from the early bio determinism (Hatzfeldt, 2011). Therefore, compromising the importance of this linear connection that exists between a person's sexual orientation and their bio determinism could provide the legitimization of a patriarchal matrixes. One may argue that this could create a restrictive spectrum of possible identities that is: heterosexual men and heterosexual women. Such conceptualisation not only renders heterosexuality as the acceptable form of sexual expressions, but also encourages the repetitive use of fixed gender roles that preserve the hegemonic discourse of society.

It follows from the above discursive point that, queer sexuality is considered a transgression from the standard which totally repudiates all alternative sexualities (Fineman et al, 2016). It may be further understood that the goal of queer theory is actually to deconstruct all definite bodily constructions and hegemonic ideologies that seem to underwrite the preservation of sexualities and gender roles as fixed and uncompromising. Also, through the concept of fluid and transgressive identities, the queer sexuality could be seen creating space for a flexible queer society "for a being-together animated by resistance, discord, and disagreement" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 148) among persons, while recognising the existing variations (Hatzfeildt, 2011).

Foucault (1978) provides a critical manifesto to the subject of sexuality. His work is mostly herald as the catalyst of all queer studies. And he earlier intimates that the "unnatural" mutual caress has always been tied to a specific dimension of sexuality which was condemned from the very moment it was characterized. To him, sexuality is rather a formulated mode of practice whose roots can be ascribed a historical, social and cultural interpretations instead of a biological one. Foucault situates his discussion of sexuality at the intersection of knowledge and power (Browne and Nash, 2016). These two concepts in Foucault's view are the "social phenomena" and hence, are available for objective analysis (Browne and Nash, 2016).

Spargo (1999) maintains that; "sexuality seems, like gender, to be simply there, but also to be somehow special, personal, as a matter of our innermost desires" who an individual desires to be, what they wish to have and how they

expect it to happen (p. 12). Thus, it can be likened to a property inherent in the individual. Considering this, it can be deduced that sexuality is not tied down to an inherent heterosexual imperative. However, one is at liberty to choose one's preferred identity as and when desired. Green (2010) also reiterates this argument when he establishes that sexuality is less something discovered than something cultivated and implanted. However, Foucault (1978) resists constructing an absolute description on the origins of queer sexual desire.

Rubin (1984) sequels Foucault's (1978) discourse of sexualities with her *Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexualities*. This insightful study traces the dynamics of contemporary sexuality politics. Rubin draws a map of sexualities where she places the truth of queer identities between "positions of Moral Majority and those of gay movement" (p. 167). She goes on to debunk the behavioural systems that stratify sexualities because as she recognises, those outside these parameters are most often repressed. Theorists, like Rubin, maintain that gender oppression cannot fully account for sexual oppression. As such, it becomes expedient to structure a better radical theory of sexual politics. This renders the queer theory an appropriate instrument to use because it addresses the possibility of alternative sexualities.

Of all theorists, Eve Sedgwick is acknowledged as one of the most influential personalities in queer studies (Hall, 2003). Sedgwick's (1990) groundbreaking work critiques the binary preoccupation of identity politics. She provides one of the most acknowledged definitions of what *queer* means, which reads:

> …the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, 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 (p. 73).

She observes that the values people ascribe to their social lives construct versions of the cognitive denial of the sexuality of same sex partners.

Likewise, Sedgewick (1990) maintains that the variance of heterosexuality and homosexuality is disjointed because homosexuality is mostly associated with the minority. According to Watson (2005), this claim was reified because same sex sexuality was constituted as secrecy. As a matter of fact, Sedgewick's (1990) understanding of queer sexualities introduces what will be termed "open mesh of possibilities (p. 110). Here, she observes that the characterizations of sexualities are largely dependent on the sex of the person an individual is romantically attracted to. Hence, this could fashion the presumption that the biological sex of an individual as well as the biological sex of who they are attracted to may be the most significant components of defining their sexual orientations.

Notably, some other scholars tried to widen the term 'queer' which could mean harnessing its elusiveness in order to expand its boundaries to cross the dominion of sexuality. For instance, Halperin (2019) sort to transfer *queer* and its meaning from referring to a person's gender identity or sexual orientation. The queer theory then is reconceptualised to be "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant … it demarcates not a positivity but a positionality

vis-à-vis the normative" (Alexander and Seidman, 2001, p. 297). These interpretations of sexual identities are geared towards recreating sexual identities. This is premised on the post-structuralist notion of non-essentialised "identities, considered as sites in becoming, both culturally constructed but also contextually determined, that are changing constantly through space and time" (Tilsen and Nylund, 2010a).

Review of Related Literature on Queer Literary Works

The fluid nature of the concept of queer theory faces some backlash in some literary works particularly African texts. In literature queer seems to be a more complex procedure, as it requires detailed character analysis and not the broad analytical approach that dominates sociological studies. Studies on queer sexualities in literature also largely deconstructs the theory. This section of the thesis reviews some studies on queer literary texts.

Queer sexuality is understood by many as a transgression to the culture, law and religion of most African communities, although there still exist some contrasting opinions. As such, some writers mostly portray the sub-plot of queer characters in heteronormative settings. Osinubi (2016) opines that homosexuality signifies the anus. This, according to him, functions as the ultimate *Other* because as the cardinal sign of the abject, it plays a largely symbolic role and can never become part of a public discourse of desire. Thus, he concludes by saying that, "whereas homosexual desire and same-sex intercourse may exist in African

societies, they may never become public" (p. 167). This argument rests on the shoulders of a quote from Mbembe's (2006) *On post colony: A brief response to critics* which states that "Homosexuality and same-sex practices thus belong to a very deep stratification of the sexual and unconscious of African societies" (as cited in Osinubi, 2016, p. 167).

Also, Mbembe (2006) opines that: "perhaps the most fundamental reason why Africans are uncomfortable with homosexuality is because of its connection to the anus" (p. 167). Even though he further explains that queer sexualities may not always be "reducible to anality". This may be because society associates some form of disgust to anality. Hence, the effect of making it the subject of public discourse could be paralleled to the recurring appearance of the anus on a public stage in what may be termed "a variety of "fantasmatic shapes" (p. 167). He adds that:

> As an interviewee – a leading politician from the western part of Nigeria – once told me during an interview, the sole reason for his repulsion to gay people is that he cannot come to terms with people who engage in sexual intercourse through 'Ile imi', a Yoruba adjective for the anus which literally translates as 'house of shit'.

Perhaps the Yoruba translation for the anus will be a perfect description for its reception in the continent at large. However, since the anus is mostly tagged with dirt and disgust, it could be the case that, individuals who satisfy their erotic

desires with other people's anuses may be perceived as abominations and possible candidates for excommunication.

In this vein, it may seem that coming out of the closet becomes a good metaphor widely used by homosexuals for the disclosure of their sexual orientation. Seidman (2004) is of the view that, "it is the power of the closet to shape the core of an individual's life that has made homosexuality into a significant personal, social and political drama" in most societies (p. 444). However, Butler et al (1991) in *Intimation and gender insubordination* argues that the coming out process does not free queer individuals from oppression. This is because, although such persons may be at ease to openly express themselves, getting into a heterosexual territory insights judgement upon their identity. For this reason, Cass (1979) earlier provided a six-staged theory which draws the individual and the society to a central point from identity confusion through identity acceptance to identity synthesis.

Earlier portrayals of queer characters in African Literature have mostly been cameos at best, clothed in the judgmental cloak of puritanical religions and cultural ethics (Al-Samman, 2008). Yet, it might be suggested that the problem regarding such identities on the continent is that, in the daily lifestyle of people as well as in the fictitious world, there may be opposing opinions as well as diverse portrayals of what may be queer. In view of this, Foucault maintains that queer sexuality, "on its own behalf", demands that its "legitimacy or naturality be acknowledged" (p. 101). For instance, the Malawian oral poet, Robert Chiwamba (2011) has to his credit, some poems which include: "You will die a painful

death" and "We Reject Homosexuality" that criminalise queer sexuality. Also, Al-Samman's (2008) study reveals that:

> The character Kirsha, the café owner in Zuqāq al-Midaq, despite being married with children and grandchildren, is unabashedly belligerent about his sexual orientation and his preference for male youths. At times the narrative offers candid insights into Kirsha's feelings for his male lovers and his frustration at society's moral judgements of him (p 278).

Yet, the narration falls short of portraying this character as one who requires compassion from both the reader and other characters. This character's fascination for a queer sexual identity is usually depicted as a social transgression. His lifestyle is equally portrayed as "a most irregular life, he had rolled in its dirt so long that it appeared to him a perfectly normal one" (Mahfouz, 1975, p. 31). In the process of these debates, one is likely to find that queer sexuality in this text "has often been aligned with the diabolical" (Al-Samman, 2008, p. 51). It therefore comes as no surprise when some characters in the text refer to queer sexuality as "the will of the devil" (p. 51).

Littlefield (2016), in exploring how homosexual characters in *Rainbow boys, openly straight and boy meets boy* use some queer vocabulary as self-references, maintains that the setting of a text has a very great influence on the various queer characters form, and define their sexual orientations. He argues that most of the heterosexual characters in this particular text may be honored in such

a manner that they are not compelled to confirm their sexualities in the same manner that queer characters will do. One explanation to this phenomenon could be that it is assumed every individual is naturally a heterosexual, thus a heterosexual character needs not affirm their sexuality. Nonetheless, it could be assumed that the modern queer characters are mostly interested in how their assigned genders introduce their sexual orientations to the readers. Conceivably, this impacts on what the queer character in *Men of the South* means when he uses other words like "fag", and "gay".

Unlike some earlier portrayals of queerness in African literature, emerging works seem to side with Tamale's (2013) argument that queer sexuality is not un-African. Some of these texts link the originality of queer sexuality to Africa itself. For instance, we have African novelists in the likes of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2006), Binyavanga Wainaina (2011), Monica Arac de Nyeko (2006) and Stanley Kenani (2011) who portray queer characters not as colonial import, while criticising homophobia in their fiction. On that note, McRuer (2010) contends how some African societies, despite the controversies and the heterosexual norms, still accommodate queer sexualities (as cited in De Souza, 2016). Besides, since queer sexuality is widely perceived as contradicting the African tradition and norms, some other writers decide to rather portray a sub-plot of queer characters in heteronormative settings.

To prove this, Adjei (2016) contends that heterosexuality is endorsed in Armah's novels. Adjei proves this by making references to the relationship between the likes of Koomson and his wife, Estella in *The Beautyful Ones are not*

yet Born as one instance. According to him, this kind of relationship in the text flourishes. Consequently, it could be the case that the queer sexual acts create a bizarre atmosphere in the heteronormative African setting. When a sexual encounter between two male characters in Armah's *KMT: In the House of Life* are introduced, Armah critically carves the European priest as the initiator of such intimacy in the novel's African setting. This move accentuates what has earlier been established in Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1997). In effect, there is usually an element of surprise on the part of the African character. This move certainly emphasises some critics' view of queer sexuality as disturbing the African order. It also places the grandmother in Maddy's (1984) play in the right position to demand; "Homosexuality? Wheyting be dat?" (p. 16).

Supporting earlier literary studies on queer sexualities, Murray (2013) Murray and Roscoe (1998) places queer literature in two categories. On the contrary, he identifies that most existing African literary works seem to cast queer sexualities as a by-product of active or passive; master or slave power relations between the indigenous Western colonial official and the indigenous African man; or as a result of pervasive and exploitative societal practices such as the exploitations of children. It is likely that a writer's presentation of queer characters in this way may be an artistic way of showing how characters with authourity may be exploiting the subordinate. Some vivid examples are seen in the rapport between Farah and Nlshan, his benefactor in Al-Samman's (1972) *Bayrut 75*. Also, Hatim's relationship with the financially underprivileged Abduh in Al Aswany's (2002) *The Yacoubian Building* and even the exploitative

episodes the disadvantaged boys of *Zuqāq al-Midaq* (1975) have to endure in the hands of Mahfouz's Kirsha can all be cited. All these conform to the binary pattern of an active and passive queer couple. It appears, this consumer dialectic dominates most queer encounters in contemporary African-Arabic literary texts. Hence, it seems to perpetuate the existing essentialist heteronormative paradigms. Contrary to these, the two texts for this study create space for the negotiation of queer acceptance within the African community. It is in light of this that an analysis of queer characters in an African novel is needful.

Additionally, some other emerging texts sympathetically render a stage for queer characters while portraying the character's true humane emotions. Possibly, this is focused on the essence of queer relations among characters and how different they are from heterosexual characters. For instance, a character like Khalil in *The Stone of Laughter* (1995), Siham in *I am You* (2008), Anyango and Sangu in "Jambula Tree" (2006) as well as Ijeoma in *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) seem to be fruitful in exploring the significance of the natural sexual alterations. Concerning the depiction of lesbianism, it could be argued that some literary texts remain victims of power in relationships which depict female queer-erotic desires as substitutes or preludes to the hegemonic heterosexuality. The queer episodes usually appear to be outlets from extreme patriarchal limitations or cultural gender differences. They could also be seen as reimbursing for absentee husbands those husbands who may not be capable of satisfying their spouses. For instance, this is exemplified in Marija's strikingly unusual erotic exploitation with Sisi in *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). A similar instance is depicted in the ephemeral

bond that exist between Suha and Nur, two characters in Al-Shaykh's (2010) *Women of Sand and Myrrh.* Representing queer in this style may undermine the validity of female body politics. This could possibly lock it in an everlasting role of a prelude to normative heterosexuality.

Moving on, it is worthy of note that, Osinubi (2016) in an attempt at situating Achebe's (1958, 1961, 2013) works within the emerging scholarship of African queer literature defends that; "queerness is not strictly pegged to queer desires; it manifests as variations within socially constructed norms" (p. 163). According to him, queer in Achebe's novels does not necessarily mean conceiving queer-oriented characters. Rather:

> as possibilities of situational nonconformity and improvisation variously incarnated in fluctuating psycho-social fields of sexual desire or performances within his models of sex gender systems (p. 2).

Though Achebe's fictions provide no specified embodiments of queer identities or incontrovertible same-sex erotic acts, Osinubi exacts an apprehension of proliferating figurations of the queer in these literary works which he claims are instantiated under diverse conditions. Although Osinubi carries out an extensive study, he leaves a gap in the area of how the queer characters use their voice to define themselves.

Moreover, in examining how some queer characters argue for a free range to explore their identities, Kaiga (2014) argues that Gurnah's (1987) *Memory of*

Departure "offers a unique opportunity to analyse homosexuality because of the multiple paradoxes in a narrative that engages in deconstructing the attitudes of its characters to matters such as homosexuality" (p. 62). This type of paradox may be seen in the depiction of Omar bin Said, the father of the protagonist, who is contrastively a homophobic queer character. A similar instance in this same text is the emphasis laid on characters who seem to wield a strong control over queer sexuality but their control over this sexuality may not endure accurate interrogation. This is largely because the religious canon that regulate most of the characters' beliefs may not necessarily encourage unequivocal viewpoints of the queer individuals. Using this ironic conjunction of the homophobic homosexual and the false epistemologies, Kaiga exposes the incoherence of the debaters and highlights the gendered violence used to impose conformity to an elusive morality that could be considered speculative.

Further, Kaiga (2014) places Gurnah's (1987) novel in a conversation of subjectivity and subjection, that is codified by Foucault (1978), Butler (1990) and Mbembe (2006) to demonstrate the means by which societal standards restrict Omar bin Hassan, a character in the novel, by denying him the discourse with which he may be able to comprehend his queer sexuality. On this, Butler (1990) clearly points out that the subject, which is the "*I*", may not be able to define its own self outside the immediate social setting. She claims that it may be an "*error*" to assume a contradictory stance in which the "*I"* could be isolated from any social context, "when it is espoused as a pure immediacy, arbitrary or accidental, detached from its social and historical conditions" (p. 330). Notably,

in every language, the first person pronoun is deictic. According to Diessel (2012), deictic words are a class of linguistic expressions that are used to indicate elements of situational and/or discourse context, including speech participants and the time and location of a particular speech event. Whoever uses the words "*I*", "*me*" or "*myself*" is using them as self-referents and this help realise if an action is away from a speaker or towards the speaker. The subject "*I*" may only be able to give a good statement about itself only in the larger context of the immediate society. Possibly, it is for this reason that the queer characters in the selected texts are given the platform to speak from their own point of view.

However, it is worthy of note that in establishing queer sexuality as a possible identity in Gurnah's novel, Kaiga (2014) further complicates it as an ethical phenomenon and an "index of gendered power relations" (p. 66). Building on his normalising apparatus of sexuality, it could probably be said that Omar becomes violently homophobic. One possible explanation to this is that his society controls the possible ways of interpreting sexualities. An example of this is by imposing normalised heterosexuality as well as utilising what Kaiga may term, "an unflinching yet hypocritical religiosity" (p. 68). Whereas Kaiga lays claim on deconstructing homophobia in identity politics, what he fails to do is to examine how the queer African characters inject their personal voices in the queer discourse. It is against this backdrop that the current study attempts an interrogation of how some queer African characters self-identify their sexualities.

Conclusion

This chapter of the thesis has reviewed related literature demonstrating that queer sexualities have sparked an interesting conversation in literary works. First, the empirical review was carried out under the broader themes of social and historical implications. In so doing, some concepts relating to the bildungsroman in the Nigerian setting and masculinities in the South African settings were explored. The review reveals that several studies cutting across various subjects in relation to the selected texts have been carried out. Evidently, though the available literature on queer identity in Africa seek to prove or disprove the alienation of queer sexualities to the African continent, quite a few of the literary works reviewed have been sympathetic towards queer characters. With regards to *Under the Udala Trees* and *Men of the South* which are replete with explicit queer scenes, one may gather the impression that the baton of publicising queer identities now lies in the hands of such novels. However, since one's sexuality has already been first established as a private affair, the queer characters at one point in time, remain closeted. Yet, the issue of the queer characters reconstructing themselves outside the box of the marginalised *Other* remains unexplored. This exploration is what distinguishes the present study from previous studies.

The empirical review was immediately followed by an examination of the theory underpinning this study. Then, a general review of queer sexualities in some literary works was undertaken. Subsequently, the next chapter presents the analysis and discussion.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IDENTITY CRISIS AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF IN *UNDER THE UDALA TREES* AND *MEN OF THE SOUTH*

Introduction

In this chapter, I consider how the queer characters in the selected texts use their narratives to self-construct their identities. This is motivated by the first research question: How do queer characters in the selected texts self-identify as queer in hetero-normative societies? The chapter is organised under four sub-sections. It will begin by tracing the pattern adopted by the queer protagonists in carving out a unique identity in their hetero-normative settings. Then an interrogation of the multiple perspectives of some other character's contribution to this identity formation process is discussed. While on it, the motive behind such an identity formation will not be overlooked.

Exploring Ijeoma's Queer Identity in *Under the Udala Trees*

Under the Udala Trees introduces to us what could be termed an unconventional perspective of queer sexuality in Africa. This is concordant with the queer critiques who often champion the acceptance of queer sexualities in the continent. Ijeoma, the protagonist of *Under the Udala Trees* identifies herself within the queer circle of humanity. Her attempt to place herself within the queer circle of humanity constructs her identity. This protagonist of *Under the Udala Trees* discovers her sexual orientation at an early age to be contradictory to what

is accepted by society as right and normal. Because of this, Ijeoma battles with herself and society in an attempt to fall in line with the stipulated norm. This is demonstrated in the subsequent parts of this section of the study.

Ijeoma's life story is set in some parts of Nigeria which makes an exploration of her queer life experiences an interesting venture. The story takes place at the beginning of the civil war in the 1960s when she is ten years old, going on to eleven. Notably, alluding to this Biafran war remains one common motif most post-colonial Nigerian texts (such as Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*) rest on while transmitting their varied pressing issues. The war story eclipses Ijeoma's love life and her world never remains the same. For instance, it may be argued that her father's untimely death becomes the initial action that prefaces her traumatic life changing experiences. Added to that, her mother who cannot afford the responsibilities of single parenting sends her to live with a grammar school teacher and his wife in Nnewi. It is during her stay with the teacher that she meets and falls in love with an orphaned Hausa girl named Amina.

Considering the fact that the novel has to work on many levels at once, it could be argued that this renders an intricate interrogation of the varied opposing forces in three main forms. These are: her demotion from a middle-class city school girl to a poor semi-orphaned house help; her queer sexual identity in a hetero-normative environment and; the taboo encompassing Igbo-Hausa alliances that constantly pull her. It appears that, the civil war that occurs at the initial stages of the narration, remains an important theme whose memory is transformed

into an apparatus that Ijeoma uses to justify her actions and preferences in the story. Coupled with her artistically frequent temporal rotations between the past and present, Ijeoma poses several rhetorical questions that seep her audience into rethinking about being overtly judgemental of her character.

Threading these questions together, Ijeoma tries to assess the effects of some possible repercussions of her father's continuous existence in her life. Hence, she wonders: If there had been no war, would Papa have died?; If Papa had not died, would Mama have sent her to Nnweri?; If Mama had not sent her to Nnweri, would she have met Amina?; And if not for the war, would she have discovered her queer sexual identity? The "if" conditional clauses she uses here depict parallelism and balancing of the events where she presents a protasis whose occurrence champions another happening. Consequently, the "sending off" becomes completive since there is an implied object that the reader deduces based on prior information. Bearing this in mind, it can be argued that their lives were "tamely moving forward" (p. 2) before the commencement of the war. All these completive sentences are geared towards foregrounding the theme of queer sexuality as an alternative.

Naturally, Ijeoma's first bonding in life is with her mother, another female who rears her right from conception through infancy to the period where they are temporarily separated. This falls in line with Rich's (2007) contention that whereas men have only one innate sexual orientation that draws them to women, their counterparts on the other hand, have two intrinsic orientations: the first erotic bond toward a woman; the second, toward men. It follows then that the

primary natural sexual bond for these two sexes is toward women which I think seems to be the case for most children who spend the greater part of their lives in the company of caring mothers. Following the Freudian (1977) theory, the new born girl is more likely to be sexually neutral. Hence, in Ijeoma's case, pre- and post-natal factors play a major role in determining her sexual identity. It seems her resistance to the existing compulsory heterosexual cultural measures urges her to invest her erotic energies in other women. Thus, it could be argued that she draws inspirations for her sexual orientation from her unfortunate childhood experiences and nurtures it on a tabula rasa.

Also, with the absence of her father during the peak of her developmental stage, her closest social interactions are largely with the few female characters who play significant roles in her life (the absence of a parent, Mzi's father neglects them but his mother dies and his step is very busy). These characters include: her mother, Amina and Ndidi. Overall, her motive is to link her gender as well as her socio-emotional development with the absence of her father. Prior to his death, Papa was her primary masculine example. His role was to put her at ease with other men throughout her life. Contrastively, Ijeoma does not grow up with this kind of example. She is negatively impacted by the sting of Papa's metaphoric neglect. This lays emphasis on the relevant role of her father's love in her life. Consequently, it appears Ijeoma dives into a narcissistic determination of being an object of love. She ends up with a partner who, according to her, best clones her father's rejection. Therefore, her choice of partner may be seen as an alternative to making up for the unhappy early childhood experiences.

Largely, this heroine argues for a sexual preference that has a direct bearing on her biological make-up who they encounter in their childhood have a direct bearing on their biological make up. It is realised that, Ijeoma, at a tender age, is well aware that she is not sexually attracted to men. By this assumption, she proves Devi (1977) right when she earlier declares:

> The human being is a sexual being. And the sexual life of humans has many facets. From the day of birth onwards, a child is open to all types of sexual stimulus, whether animate or inanimate, and as a person matures, various events and environmental factors influence him or her (p. 11).

Ascribing the etiology of Ijeoma's queer sexuality to her genes implies that her sexual identity is immutable. Hence, in Ijeoma's opinion, it is not an option, rather it becomes her way of life. Arguably, Khan and Haider (2015) agree with Freud (1977) on the concept that the daughter is created to divert her sexual cravings towards the father and "along these lines, she [advances] towards a heterosexual womanliness that is [climaxed with] bearing a child who [replaces] the inattentive penis" (p.2). This seems to suggest that Papa's absence has a damaging impact on his daughter's psychosexual development.

Nonetheless, it may be seen that Ijeoma's father establishes at an early stage of her life that she is not carved out to tow this heterosexual order. Moreover, he in turn lacks any such emotions for her. And this can be seen in manner by which he refuses to heed to her pleas. This is realised in the part of the narration when according to the protagonist, "he drew me close, and I leaned into

him, but I remained silent, unsure of how to respond" (p. 6). Like every good father who wants the best for his daughter, the narrator makes us understand that, "[Papa] let go of my hand and nudged me to go on without him" (p. 9). So sudden is the decision taken, simultaneously with the action, that the import is only realised later in the text when the protagonist battles with being in a heterosexual marriage. The sense of the father's responsibility to his daughter is spelt out clearly in the opening sentences of the fourth chapter. A clear illustration of this is also realised in his name, "Uzo", the "door" which reveals a wealth of information about him. This name conveys a deep inherent connotation for himself as well as his daughter.

Recognising that being her father is the most significant leadership role he will ever play in his lifetime, Papa paves "the way" by choosing to die during the bomb raid (p. 21) for Ijeoma to identify her preferred sexuality. The story gliding through the flashback of Papa's tragic death symbolises an end to the lives that were "tamely moving forward" (p. 4). So, at a time she needs her father the most, Ijeoma seems to assume they use their narratives to create the assumption that the opposite sex is not a necessary ingredient to complete an individual. This assumption of hers may be linked to her narrative style since she is determined to win the sympathy of her readers with regards to her choice of sexual identity.

In view of the above, Ijeoma presents the story of her father and her subsequent relocation to Aba in such a way that her sexual preference may be justified. For instance, we tend to feel the heaviness that surrounds Ijeoma and her father prior to the death of Papa, her father. Papa is at first optimistic about an

early successful end to the war. But none of his arguments seem to rest on a valid possibility. It is possible to argue that he runs out of motivation for the hope of ever having a peaceful nation. This turns out to be catastrophic for both Papa and his family. One could say that, Papa's hopes turn into a self-conspired deception as he begins to adapt to a rapid different form. In effect, his many words of encouragement shrink into a "monotone [as] he rambled on like that" (p. 8). Papa becomes both physically and morally weak to control the affairs of his family. He foreshadows a possible danger that his daughter may fall in. Therefore, in reverence of this bold step of her father, Ijeoma acknowledges that, the story of the death of her father is the sub plot within the main plot that sparks her greatest change. It is realised that, this change subsequently seeks to give a voice to the subaltern in her Nigerian setting. Perhaps, it is for this reason that the authour made Ijeoma the sole narrator of the story.

Observably, the issue of structuring a personal identity largely rests on the character in question who provides an in-depth account of her queer experiences. It is for this reason that Okparanta cleverly alienates herself from the narration when she claims:

> the writer knows exactly the territory and the terrain that he or she is dealing with, and you can't just fudge it because you don't want to deal with a certain topic. This character was born in a certain time period; she has that journey and she is stuck with it. I can't go changing her life. That's who she is, and that's how she came to me. She lived through things. I couldn't pretend her life didn't

> happen. I just did my best to follow her journey. She wasn't a character who came to me having been born in 2012 or 2016 (Lombardi, 2018, p. 25).

With this in mind, the first-person narrative perspective becomes a necessary tool in establishing the foundation for the queer narrative. It is possible to establish that Ijeoma is a full participant of the story whose position in the novel is emphasised by the narrative perspective used. Hence, we are presented with the written account of the protagonist's life from her childhood experiences to her adult life. The story of Ijeoma is portrayed as a conceptualised self-praise since she only focuses giving her audience that aspect of her life which in turn will attract the audience's sympathy. Consequently, the narrative style appears not to toe in the conformist line of previous texts that marginalise queer characters. In this case, the protagonist is given the sole right to tell her story in the manner that she pleases. The key aim of such a depiction perhaps lies with the understanding that the first-person narrator provides us with the authentic version of the story that may have previously been misinterpreted by conservative writers. Ijoema takes control of the story by presenting only the issues she prefers and present them in a convincing style. This may be because the main theme the text explores is a more personal issue. Hence, the result of her narration is reminiscent of a stream of consciousness. With this in mind, the narrator gradually folds in the element of surprise when she parallels tragedies of the Biafran war with her identity in a fickle plot that alternates between flashbacks and the present.

As the story unfolds, we are introduced to the landscape and the regular climatic changes that encouraged the inhabitants of the setting to feel relaxed. This leaves Ijeoma's audience with no other choice than to be fascinated with the personal 'self' Ijeoma presents and its unraveling profound mysteries. One of the instances where Ijeoma can be seen manipulating the story to her benefit is the bond she navigates between her father and the gramophone. With this, she justifies her queer actions by the intimate connection between her father and the radio-gramophone. This radio becomes the medium through which the much-anticipated news of victory during the Biafran war is transmitted. Also, beneath the calm appearance of this radio lurks the "voices" (p. 5) that spit the venom which intensified the Biafran war. Ijeoma's personification of this inanimate appliance actually reflects the simplicity and innocence of her propaganda echoed in the Bible lessons she later has with Mama. By this establishment, a stage is cleared for her to reminisce the time and dedication her father gives to this radio. However, it is quite ironic to find Ijeoma assume a calm position in the scene where she talks about the gramophone since she becomes aggressive in her assertion of a queer sexuality in her discussions with Mama. It appears the more Papa listened to the radio, the more it aggravated the general discord in the text. A finding worthy of note is that Ijeoma conjures an excuse for her queer preference with the following metaphor:

> Papa looked lovingly at the radio-gramophone. He cherished it the way things that matter to us are cherished: Bibles and old photos, water and air (p. 5).

Scarcely will you find a character appropriately laying a firm foundation for her queer sexuality in a conformist heterosexual society like Ijeoma does in the Nigerian setting of the text. She makes the reader is assume that the loss of Ijoema's father creates a void that could be refilled. However, as far as the setting is concerned, the alternative solution to this problem could possibly display the manner through which Okparanta contravenes narrative orthodoxy in order to reappropriate some of the conditions surrounding queer discourse in the Nigerian setting.

Listening to Ijeoma's account allows the reader to hook up with her right from the first page of the novel. This is because she makes it possible for her audience to inhabit her mind space. Also, she successfully capitalises on this narrative perspective in creating a brooding atmosphere of pity. Ijeoma moulds the plot to include certain intimate issues that are trivial to her coming of age. With this, she manages to sustain the development of her queer identity formation as the narration progresses.

Opening another phase, the impetus of queer African sexual identities originates from two main strands of public discourse which are duly represented in the text. Among these are the questions: "What is queer sexuality?" and "What constitutes queer sexual identity in Africa if there are any?" These two questions mean a great deal to Ijeoma. This is due to the fact that, in her opinion, it is not her fault that she is queer. She picks and chooses happenings in her life that support her queer self-construction. As it stands, her father's actions contradict the love he professes. When she realises this, she sighs "out of a sort of

disappointment" (p. 8). The obvious sense of Ijeoma's disappointment is perhaps aroused by the ensuing quotation:

> He seemed to have fallen into a trance. It wouldn't be much longer before there was no more Biafra left to seize, he said… He looked toward the parlor window, his eyes even more glazed over … – all those many years of hard work – a new regime where Biafrans would be considered lesser citizens – slaves – like the rumors claimed, was too much for him to bear (p. 8).

The density of the saddened situation the protagonist wallows in is intensified by her repetitive predictions. Unfortunately, Ijeoma injects her emotions and purpose into her judgment of Papa. In this context, her limited perspective does not seem to play a fair game with the other characters, especially with her parents. The corollary is that the reader is not allowed to hear their versions of the story. Thus, backgrounding Papa possibly contradicts her earlier claim on the significant relationship between Papa's story and hers.

Ijeoma further capitalises on the first-person point of view to create a shroud of mystery around her sexual identity. Thus, it can be suggested that the story typically becomes self-indulgent as it drowns in a constant self-referencing and an acute sentimental feedback. Her arguments may perhaps be unreliable because she is primarily carving an identity for herself. By using the first person point of view which happens to be supported by the queer theory, Ijeoma she is able to submerge the readers further into this new world of hers. For this reason,

she may perhaps be understood to be speaking out of bias. However, considering the fact that Ijeoma is at a confused stage of her life, this narrative perspective comes in handy as it makes the reader understand the actions and decisions she makes.

Okparanta allows the reader to identify with the initial action of the plot, part of which is relayed in these simple lines:

> First he pulled me along with him, the way he usually did when it was time to head to the bunker. But then he did something that he had never done before: at the junction between the dining room and the kitchen, he stopped in his tracks. There was something corpse-like about him, the look of a man who was on the verge of giving up on life. Very pale. More than a little zombie-like (p. 9).

As straightforward as these lines are, we get an immediate sense of the emphasis Ijeoma attributes to Papa's role in the text. The reader sees the urgency attached to this particular scene in which case the narrator foreshadows Papa's death from this description. Unfortunately, we are given only what the protagonist sees. That could be the same as saying that the politics of constructing a substantial arc compels Ijeoma to tell us only what she sees, believes and thinks. This, therefore, suggests that the first-person point of view works best here as it foregrounds the protagonist's objectives. As has earlier been stated, Ijeoma takes full control of the flow of the story and she lets us in on certain vital issues of her life as and when she chooses. She also determines how this information is presented. So, in

her opinion, Papa finds it hard to sustain his regular relationship with his daughter. Therefore:

> He let go of my hand and nudged me to go on without him. But I would not go. I remained, and I watched as he went back into the parlor, took a seat on the edge of the sofa, and fixed his gaze in the direction of the windows (p. 9).

The unresolved personal tension of Papa is simultaneously reflected in Mama's sense urgency thus:

> Mama ran into the parlor, hollering, calling out to us, '*Unu abuo, bia ka'yi je*'" You two, come, let's go! "You don't hear the sounds? *Binie!* Get up! Let's go!"
>
> She ran to Papa, pulled him by the arms, and I pulled him too, but Papa continued to sit (p. 9).

The changeover at this crucial point of her life is marked by crisp and quick statements that may at a first glance be considered snippy. These short sentences her parents use in communicating to each other seem to ramp up the events in an intense feeling of the action. In effect, this keeps the suspense and conveys the necessary information in a gripping and interesting way, so that the reader can skim through for the relevance of the situation. Thus, the short sentences allow Ijeoma's audience time to think and respond to the import of her message on her identity formation process. They also enable the reader have a better grip on the connection of Papa's story to the story of Amina. Ijeoma's sentence constructions further hint on what is about to happen in the novel.

Hence, it seems Ijeoma places the reader in her mind, allowing for an intimate awareness of her general feelings and thoughts. That is why she is able to say this about Papa: “In that moment his body could have been a tower of hardened cement, a molding of ice, or maybe even, like Lot’s wife, a pillar of salt” (p. 9).

The main character is able to communicate effectively on how every moment of her last encounter with her father feels. Interestingly, the reader realises that Ijeoma is able to deliver an accurate account of the sight, sound, as well as the touch of things and actions around her. All these are done through a prism of shattered hopes, rising fears and despair. These are then transported to the readers directly with maximum impact while effectively creating a strong sense of empathy in the readers. Further putting the scene in the reader’s mind with her rhetorical analogy, Ijeoma uses the similar paired simile where she connects her comparison of Papa’s voice first to “the feel of sand paper” and subsequently to “the sound of a crate being dragged down a concrete corridor (she uses lots of imagery mainly for emphasis” (p. 9). These descriptions of Papa further mark the turbulence in their lives while adding a lyrical touch to Ijeoma’s story. So, we are left with no other option than to look at both Papa and his daughter in a new way. However, in order not to sound overtly judgmental, Ijeoma allows the reader the option of deciding which of the descriptions will be more appropriate with her use of the “either … or” coordinator.

Added to the above, Ijeoma’s misery, urgency and forlorn nature are vividly enumerated through Mama’s consistent plea. This plea emphasises Ijeoma’s disappointment and rejection. Notably, various symbolic representations

are invoked through Mama and Papa's simultaneous use of code switching in this particular scene. For instance, he says; "*Unu abuo, gawa.* You two go on, ... I'll be all right. Just let me be." (p. 9). Here, the language switch communicates the family's ethnic alliance. On this, MacSwan (2004) intimates that code switching is a speech style in which fluent bilinguals move in and out of, at least, two or more languages. This is mainly according to the situation of the characters' utterances. The cultural influence in their language affects the conceptualisation of their identity. It seems Ijeoma's parents implement this strategy to make their final communication as a heterosexual couple more effective. By so doing, they are describing modes of thoughts whose equivalent may not necessarily be identified in the English way of life. Moreover, their ability to communicate their thoughts, emotions, and opinions at that moment is truly remarkable of the changing time. Hence, we seem to gain cognisance of the occasion as informal, where Ijeoma employs this to conveniently emphasise the turbulence in her sexual preference.

The sub-plot of Papa's life story is informally closed with the proverb: "The saying goes that things congealed by cold shall be melted by heat. But even in the heat of the moment, he did not melt" (p. 10). First, the use of this proverb contains Ijeoma's arguable point that marks the end of any promising heterosexual relationship in her life. It also accords a vivid description of how Ijeoma inherited her stubborn attitude to heterosexuality. With this proverb, it can be argued that, Ijeoma gives up all hopes of ever convincing Papa to get into the bunker with them. Observably, the bunker also has a deep resonance as a

metaphor to Papa's dying days. In here lies an emotive dark dimension, one that instead of repelling the enemy from the family, rather disintegrates the bond they share. It also serves as one of the many secret, strong underground rooms built during the Biafra war and it served as shelter against bomb attacks. Being locked away in the safety of the bunker could allude to the physical disconnect between the father and his nuclear family which is intensified by the sending away. There seem to be a straight paradigmatic shift of the bunker as a habitat of peace and quiet to an encasement of tension, anxiety and fear, so that Ijeoma resorts to prayer, asking God to "Please make it so that the bomber planes don't go crashing into [Papa]" (p. 13).

A further exploration of Ijeoma's Biafran experiences in relation to her sexuality indicates a purgative process that perhaps probably seeks to repurpose her life. However, as she develops into a young adult, she battles with her mother's expectations and her queer identity. Ijeoma's mother, being a product of the heterosexual society, seem so invested in her quest to balance her daughter's life. Consequently, she supports society's many views on why her daughter's sexuality should not be queer. Moreover, she is of the view that war has a way of changing people. Comparatively, Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana* reiterates this point with an overview of the traumatic experiences the citizens of Rwanda went through during the war period. This change is precisely what possibly compels Mama to lament: "Oh, is it because I left you, is it because I let you see your dead father's body…" (p. 87). Nevertheless, Ijeoma is often seen arguing for a queer sexual inclination.

On the whole, the analysis of this section indicates that the narrative perspective allows the protagonist to give the readers her first-hand experiences. These include what she saw during the Biafra war, what she felt and thought about the war as well as what she did or said about the war. Thus, it may be concluded that the first-person narrative perspective positions Ijeoma, the protagonist, as the sole eyewitness to the plot of the story.

Carving a Queer Identity in *Men of the South*

Another trend of the queer identity construction process that is closely linked to that of Ijeoma is encountered in *Men of the South.* In this text, Mzilikazi (Mzi), the protagonist, also discovers his queer sexual identity at an early age. Mzi further asserts this queer identity by drawing a link between his sexuality and the culture of his South African setting. Born in KwaMntungwa in the mid-seventies, Mzi and his two younger siblings are relocated to Johannesburg after the untimely death of their biological mother. Life in the city is contrasted to the communal living back in his mother's home. His description of the daily city life experiences is synonymous to a clockwork routine lifestyle. This is on account of the fact that the entire family had to rush through their daily activities. Therefore, there is not much time to spend with their father and their new mother. Consequently, aside from providing for their basic needs, Mzi and his younger siblings are virtually left to care for themselves. Thus, taking a cue from this brief childhood introduction, it can be argued that, the poor father-son relationship may be one contributing factor to Mzi's queer orientation. It might also be suggested

that he perceives his father's attitude towards him as rejecting. As a result, Mzi fails to fully identify with his father's position as his immediate masculine role model. One possible reason for Mzi's failure to identify with his father may stem from his disappointment in his father's oversized ego. For this reason, it appears Mzi characterises his homosexuality as a defensive detachment from one little hurt boy who needs a true companionship.

Though his father is very strict, Mzi is able to establish a strong bond with both his biological mother and his step mother. This, to an extent, is also in sync with the Freudian (1977) concept that human beings are biologically determined to be attracted to their opposite-sexed parents. This attraction may be considered an incestuous wish on the part of the child in question. A critical evaluation of Freud's proposition [state the proposition] in Mzi's life indicates that this young character does not grow up to find himself in an incestuous competitive relationship with his father. Hence, it may be said that Mzi parallels his identity with that of Ijeoma in *Under the Udala Trees* where he also lays claim on a queer biological construct. In this instance, he appears to argue that sex is rather a continuum that emerges from an individual's genetic makeup. This seems to mean, an individual may either be born queer or heterosexual. This carpets his argument for a same-sex attraction as an inherent alternative. Unfortunately, Mzi grounds his queer sexuality on a weak logic because he provides no evidence of which particular genetic make up is responsible for which sexual orientation.

In contrast to Mzi's view, his father believed that sending his two older children back to school was the best way of helping them overcome their

bereavement. Reading the text, one finds that Mzi does not spend too much time plotting how he would pass his first days as the new boy in school since:

> The boy who took us around turned out to be in my class and later I found myself sharing a desk with him. His name? Mfundo Dlamini. His mother was also a teacher at this school, and soon we were constantly together, sharing the discomfort of being children of authority figures. But I would probably have been friends with Mfundo anyway (p. 100.)

Mfundo happens to be the only boy who seems to truely appreciate Mzi. At school, Mzi is nicknamed "Hamlet" (p. 100) not only because he has a tragic life which is in congruence with the Shakespearean character, but he also comes from a very remote place that qualifies for the title, 'Hamlet'. He finds some companionship in Mfundo because, "Only Mfundo insisted on calling me by my name and made me feel welcome" (p. 100). Moreover, these two young boys share a similar discomfort of being children of school authority figures since the each have one parent working as a teacher in the same school they attend. It seems the two characters become friends largely out of chance than choice. They grow inseparable, while enjoying each other's company. After each school day, these two boys walk home together, do their homework together and share almost everything together. As he notes, "it was a pretty fun and normal childhood in those abnormal days" (p. 101). Just like Ijeoma in *Under the Udala Trees*, Mzi calls these days abnormal because it is during these times that he begins to discover his queer sexual identity (abnormality characterizes the queer sexuality

in the normal herterosexual environment). It could be argued that the repetition of the abnormality of Ijeoma and Mzi's identity development is contrasted to the normalcy of their heterosexual cultural settings.

Further highlighting the abnormality in a flashback, this narrator soliloquys: "I think I had a bit of a crush on Mfundo back then … but it was not … Mfundo that I had my first sexual experience with" (p. 101). However, we find him making a contradictory statement right away when he confesses in an afterthought that: "Well, actually it was, I suppose. In a roundabout way" (p. 101). Mfundo, on the other hand claims to be a full-blooded heterosexual. This stems from the fact that, the heterosexual intercourse is usually the preferred mode of self-expression in their cultural setting. It is in this setting that the two best friends share their first sexual experience with a very beautiful girl who only had "eyes (p. 102) for Mfundo.

A queer reading of this sexual episode places Mfundo on a level of the queer continuum. First Mfundo, who is "always a giving soul" (p.102) insists on a "ménage à trois" encounter that would include himself, the girl and his best friend. This suggestion leaves Mzi, who cannot go asking girls out, in an excited mood. Notably, by referring to his friend as "a giving soul", Mzi resorts to sarcasm as a verbal irony in mockery of his friend's professed sexual identity. His humorous comment could possibly leave readers in suspense, as we grow more concerned about how his friend's seemingly slippery slope attitude to minding this heterosexual gap goes.

An aspect that goes unnoticed is the style in which Mzi recounts this episode. For instance, his capitalisation of the verb phrase "DID IT" (p. 102) is very relevant in the sense that it serves not just as "a typographical sign" but more importantly as a psychological marker that immediately captures the attention of the reader to focus on the inappropriateness of the scenario (Ncube 2013, p. 70). By definition, it is possible to say that Mfundo also has a sexual expression that goes contrary to the traditional heterosexual norm. This episode is strategically foregrounded as the curtain raiser of Mzi's identity discovery. It is therefore not surprising to find that even in his adult age, Mzi still "remember[s] it well" (p. 103). In the first place, Mzi clearly states:

> We had spent some minutes before she arrived masturbating in the toilet and laughing because we did not want to come quickly and risk our reps (p.103).

Critically interrogating the above quote, their masturbation scene may perhaps be identified as another variant of queer sexualities. This is because the two friends are indulging in a mutual solo sex [but not with each other] that does not involve a woman. On this Georgiadis and Kringelbach (2012) illuminate: "the intense social interaction [of masturbation] amplifies the pleasure gained from sex, which may be related to the evolution of face-to-face sexual interaction" (p. 52). Moreover, having sex with their individual selves could be synonymous to a boy having sex with another boy. Observably, the two young friends play a critical role in enhancing the life satisfaction and psychological well-being of each other. In effect, the physical arousal they get from each other's separate act tend to mark

them on the same queer scale. Notably, Anderson (2008) elaborates on this social condition, describing it as a one-time rule of homosexuality. Corroborating this, Scoats et al (2018) add that:

> Here, any same-sex sexual act or desire is perceived to mark that person as gay, regardless of sexual history, sexual identity or sexual desire. And because this cultural notion has been established as an either/or binary, the rule has traditionally erased bisexuality, heteroflexibility, and such concepts as 'mostly heterosexual' from cultural consideration. When a one-time rule is in cultural operation, one is either 100% straight, or 100% gay (p.5).

This brings into focus the moral willingness for the acclaimed heterosexual Mfundo to engage in an erotic pleasure with his male friend. The encounter they have suggests that these characters promote a more complex version of heterosexuality than is generally accepted in their cultural setting. The deviant nature of this act is perhaps the reason why we may categorise Mfundo under the term "mostly straight" (Savin-Williams and Vrangalova, 2013). So, Mfundo's wobbly bobbly identity is summed up in the following:

> One of the most fundamental and widespread misconceptions concerning homosexuality is that the human race is divided into two distinct sections, heterosexuals and homosexuals. Also, that sexual interest in one's own sex precludes a similar interest in members of the opposite sex. Nothing could be further from the

> truth. One homosexual experience does not determine that a person is homosexually oriented. A person may be predominantly heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual in his or her orientation (Devi, 1978, p. 12)

Unfortunately, Mzi is left hanging at what may be termed the obligatory queer sexual identity since Mfundo entertains no trace of erotic feelings for him.

It may be the case that this possible positive halo appears to extend over matters of the heart for Mzi. Initially, their encounter appears to be less about the pursuit of erotic gratification than about the homosocial bonding experience. The experience is rather centered on consuming a first time recreational sexual experience together. Interestingly, we find that the two earlier engage in what Scoats et al (2018) call "bromances" (p. 23) by watching "Scope" (p. 103), one of South African's weekly men's magazines together in preparation for this big day. During their triangular sexual encounter, Mzi has more connection with his friend than with the woman, whom he considers a complete stranger. She only helps mitigate any feelings of discomfort Mzi may have in expressing his love for his friend. Therefore, it becomes easy to fall into an imaginary romance without having to admit exactly is what is happening.

In this case, it may be assumed that Mzi's brain is his largest sexual organ. Commenting also on such linkage, Friedman (2000) points out in this regard that: "The brain is a sexual blank slate until it comes into contact with sex hormones, which partly organise the brain sexually" (p. 569). And as McCormack (2012) has also shown, part of being in a bromance means comfort in mutual nudity – a

requisite for male-female-male ménage à trois [tripartite sexual exploits]. Another evidence of the bromance Mzi shares with Mfundo is depicted by the following scene:

> She started kissing Mfundo and took off his clothes. I watched. Then, when she had given and received what she thought was enough foreplay, she asked Mfundo to put her legs on his shoulders and do it from the back while she leaned on the edge of the bed and gave me my first blow job (p.103).

Mining in this terrain, we notice that Mzi is aroused by certain cues that could symbolise a potential direct sexual encounter with his best friend. This lies beneath his immediately coherent narrative line of waking fantasy. However, he is able to disguise the story that carries his hidden desires without his friend finding out. Thus; "I looked at Mfundo as I began losing myself" (p. 103). Beyond doubt, this eye contact could be interpreted as the non-verbal communication that links Mzi's intimate emotions and love for Mfundo in the form of "associations" (Olds, 1994, p. 581). So, the scene where he locks eyes with Mfundo symbolises an incredible source of intimacy for this narrator. Hence, it is possible to say that while Mfundo is busily having fun with the woman, Mzi on the other hand confesses:

> I have never loved him more than I did then. Then she changed partners and we spent an idyllic afternoon of brotherhood (p. 103).

Comparatively, a similar instance is reiterated in Bellassai's *Everything is Awful: And other Observations* (2017) where the queer character discovers his sexual attraction to his best friend, which is indeed queer. The same is reflected in Reeds' *Definitely, Maybe, Yours* (2015) where Craig, a queer identifying character falls in love with a straight guy who has just suffered an emotional breakdown.

Coupled with the knowledge of what turns Mzi on, this sexual experience could be seen as improving Mzi's self-esteem. In effect, he meanders his way through some developmental stages in order to acquire a queer identity that is fully integrated within his overall concept of self and identity formation. According to Levine (2003), identity formation can be conceptualised as an ongoing psychosocial process during which various characteristics of the self are internalised, labeled, valued, and organised. It follows then that Mzi's identity may be an organised cognitive self-construct with regards to the social categories. For him to achieve a full integration of his preferred sexual expression into the self, Mzi ensures some level of consistency in his behaviour. This sense of consistency "allows for at least the illusion of a stable identity" (Eliason, 1996, p. 35). However, his developmental strategy is saturated with the overarching theme of normalcy in his daily life encounters.

A closer look at the text indicates that *Men of the South* is one of the fictions that generate spaces for a multi-dimensional first-person narrative style. The writer adopts the episodic plot structure while she connects the fragmented parts through the main characters. One relevance of the adopted style is that it

enables the readers to grasp the various thematic concepts from divergent angles. It could be noted that the entire text is constructed in three elaborate but schematic plots that are all interlocked with the story of Mzi's sexual orientation. By blending the three narrators' voices, Wanner creates an overlap with the time periods, while duplicating salient events.

Mfundo Dlamini sets the stage with his first-person voice. Like his best friend, he is also struggling in his own way for the acceptance of his new masculine role in a prejudiced society. It appears his life story is being milked with a twist that remains unpredictable to the reader. In such a case, the reader needs more than just the initial action to understand the narrations of Mfundo. The style he adopts seems to be grounded in his artistic way of life. However, he does not drag certain issues on forever, but quickly navigates his audience out of any suspense with his quick revelations of Mzi's sexual orientation. Mfundo tries to act the role of the omniscient narrator who should know every aspect of his friend's life. But then in his prelude to the sub-plot of Mzi's sexual identity, he acknowledges his own limitation thus:

> Sometimes you think you know a person better than you know yourself – or at least as well as yourself – and then one thing happens and you realise: perhaps you know nothing (p. 26).

Mfundo uses the metaphor of an "LG" advert to depict how well and normal everything was before the "unravelling" (p. 26) started. Preferably, his position implies that the audience should be able to engage empathically with the character without sharing their literal point of view. Mfundo's first-person voice

seems to keep his account in the "here and now" and does not allow for enough critical distance (Nikolajeva, 2014, p. 88). In this case, Mfundo, the narrator here, assumes the position of the third person as he gives us a detailed revelation of what he knows about his friend. Although Mzi has been with Mfundo all through their lives in Johannesburg, his sexual orientation remains unknown to Mfundo. This makes the development of this aspect of the plot a gradual process of unmasking Mzi's sexual identity.

The style Mfundo adopts is in sync with the cool composure he espouses in recounting the incidence surrounding the disclosure. Mfundo begins to list the clues that previously escape him. However, his main concern is Mzi's marriage. He sees Mzi's wife as "a stuck-up, overly ambitious, pretentious and a Bible basher to boot" (p. 26). She does not seem to be the perfect match for his friend. In contrast, she becomes the heroine like Carmel in Evaristo's *Mr. Loverman* (2014), while her husband plays the role of the villain who uses his wife as a shield against society's scrutiny of his sexual orientation. Mfundo uses his first person narrative perspective to expose how his friend manipulates the social structures for his own good. The revelation becomes quite important because the reader is getting a witness's account of the queer protagonist's story. Mfundo's perspective further bridges some of the gaps the queer protagonist might leave in his personal narration. An instance of this is realised when he interrogates his friend about the marriage, Mzi proudly asserts:

> …we all have to grow up, and I think Siyanda is it. She is stable, has a good job, and I am sure she will make a good wife and mother. That is all that matters, isn't it? (p. 27).

Mzi buttresses his answer to Mfundo with a rhetorical question that should have provided Mfundo with the cue. However, Nayar (2011) affirms that closeted gay men "must participate in a social masquerade: hiding out from gay-bashers, squelching deeper libidinal desires, concealing the true nature of who they are from the spouses behind whom they take sanctuary [both Ijeoma and Mzi take sanctuary behind heterosexual marriages]" (p. 238). This is certainly what Mfundo sees his friend doing with his marriage to Siyanda. Now, a sense of guilt lingers over the head of Mfundo while the reader is equally left in an atmosphere of pity for Siyanda, Mzi's wife. Also, Mfundo is remorseful for not getting the hint when his friend "laughed without quite laughing" (p. 26), a contrastive move that indicates that something was not quite right. Every action of Mzi was contradicting the kind of feeling he was supposed to be having as a soon-to-be-married man. Even to the extent that Mfundo notices that his face seemed to be more excited about their first sexual experience than about his marriage. To this, Mzi emphatically agrees: "As if I could ever forget" (p. 27). It is at this point of their lives that Mfundo realises Mzi might have "perhaps [been] turned on by [him] and not the girl" (p. 28). So, we are presented with a double emphasis which plays its role well in this episode. Mfundo unreservedly reckons "the shocker" (p. 25&27) as the perfect caption for this narration. Notably, some emotional processes are very often expressed in line with Mfundo's body

movements and reactions. And he consciously appeals to the readers' senses while consistently referring to the incident as though that is what orchestrates his own life. Even with this realisation, Mfundo still has:

> …to play the laid-back artist and act like it was the most natural thing in the world. Or almost natural to find out that the man you had grown up with and had been best friends with for over twenty years was, to put it politely, same-sex oriented (p.27).

The tempo of this part of his narration is synonymous to the suddenness with which the actions occur. Mfundo's account of Mzi's sexuality is inconsistently alternated between flashbacks and the present. Additionally, the underlying excerpt abounds in some discourse modes which intersperse between his description of thought and that of speech. They construe Mfundo's true state of mind as at the time of narration. This allows the reader to infer the depth of shock he must have been in at the time of the encounter. Thus, we may perceive Mfundo's voice as a prelude to, Mzi's queer sexuality.

Further, Mfundo's use of the indicator "think" informs the reader about the overall content of his homophobic mental activity. Thus, contradicting his laid-back artist charm, Mfundo becomes highly judgmental with prejudiced statements like; "And with the most unlikely candidate" (p. 28) as well as the rhetorical question; "And worse, to find out it had been going on since before his marriage?" (p. 28) while repeating; "Then you realise you don't know a person at all", to emphasise his state of shock and disappointment in his friend. Mfundo's

first statement begs the questions*: who is the most likely candidate?* and *who sets the parameters for this candidacy?*

Notably, Mfundo's narration broods on themes surrounding masculinity in contemporary South Africa. He sees queerness as something far from him since his best friend shows no tell-tale signs of being queer. Although being out in South Africa is feasible, this story lays emphasis on how Mzi has been able to hide his identity under the umbrella of being masculine. In view of this, Mfundo speaks against the closet while destabilising the politics of sexual identities. His reaction towards his friend's queerness advances towards the maintenance of the hetero-normative boundaries of gender and sexual identities. He goes on to constitute Mzi's partner as a lesser individual, unfit to be associated with his cosmopolitan friend. He openly shows his disgust thus:

> I mean … Tshepo! Tshepo is that thuggish guy in the hood whom everyone knows, who insults anyone who seems like a softie by calling them is'tabane, and worse, has tons of babies with different women to whom he refers as bitches. But bisexual? And with Mzi? (p. 28).

Mfundo poses these questions as a result of the effect the shock has on him. These self-evident questions lay emphasis on the theme of homosexuality in the African community being discussed in the novel. They are further used as an impressive persuasive device in the text. Additionally, the reference made to Tshepo's masculinity categorises him as part of an *invisible* population who stay in the closet in order to survive the intolerable homophobic scrutiny. Hence, it could be

argued that concealed out of shame and a desire for privacy, the closet protects its contents from exposure and harm. Interestingly, Tshepo uses his thuggish attitude and vulgar diction as a form of protection and secrecy. His attitude could be paralleled to that of Barry in *Mr Loverman* who would always resort to ridiculing effeminate men due to his own character flaw. When the puzzle becomes clear, Mfundo does not hesitate in reacting out of spite. He concludes with the exclamation, "Eish" (p. 28), which bags all his emotions of surprise, annoyance and resignation in succession.

A clear image of Mfundo's human interest version opens up a chapter that steadily unfolds the coming out process of his best friend. The term "coming out" according to Scott (2018) is appropriated "to refer to homosexual's escape from isolation" (p. 2). Observably it is the metaphor of Mzi's staying in the closet that gives Mfundo the power to define his friend's queer sexuality as deviant. The closet can thus be viewed as "an ideational repository for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and queer individuals whose erotic desires or sexual identities remain hidden or undisclosed to others" (Davis 2015, p. 960). Notably, both Tshepo and Mzi express their sexual orientation in "private spaces" (Brescoll et al, 2013, p. 703). They equally try to conceal the content of their closet in public spaces where negative consequences might accompany any queer expressions with the predictable stigmatised reception. This is precisely what Mfundo cannot phantom:

> And you think I am an artist and should have known too with Mzi. But I swear there was no indication. Sure, Mzi had been a little timid with the girls in our early days. That's why I needed to share

> my first sexual experience with him. But when he started at UCT he became the neighborhood stud and could take his pick of the girls (p. 28).

Reflecting on the incident that led to finding out about his friend, Mfundo remains doubtful about the general attitude of Tshepo when he singles out Mzi to help him do *something*. To satisfy his curiosity he says, "I was going to have a shot of whatever it was that they were having, then take some crates and go and buy some more beers with Sli" (p. 29). However, the scene that greats him tends to be repelling than inviting:

> Mzi and Tshepo were naked and locked in an embrace. When they saw me, the two of them acted like the proverbial deer caught in headlights. And I just stood there in a minute trying to register what I was seeing. It took a while for me to get over my shock, but then I closed the door and tried to walk back as steadily as I could (p. 29).

This episode symbolises the unplanned outing of Mzi's sexuality and the disintegration of the safe existence he had hitherto led in the confines of the closet. It may be the case that Mfundo's close association to Mzi influences what he produces in reconstructing the politics of queer identities. Mfundo ridicules the sexual act by foregrounding the hetero-normative nature of their society. He admits knowing some gay men but had never anticipated ever having to deal with a close encounter. He likens his knowledge of his friend's queer sexuality to "learning that someone close to you is HIV positive" (p.29). However, Slindile

(Sli), Mfundo's girlfriend, comes in to serve as a check to his homophobic attitude. She does this by bringing up the sad realities that may possibly end their priceless friendship. It is for this reason that Mfundo comments: "Sli is always good with the control thing" (p. 29).

The contradictory reactions of Mzi's two best friends remain what he terms "freaking train smash" (p. 116). Apparently, Sli's cool response is mainly because she had developed some form of "gaydar" (p. 116) having lived in Cape Town for many years. Therefore, she knows the signs that indicate a man may be queer oriented. One of these is illustrated by the fact that she always catches Mzi checking out other guys. Notably, the text demonstrates that coming out should involve participants in an understanding social context. The three friends hold a trialogue that alludes to Mugabe's declaration that "God created Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve" (p. 116). This subject is reflected in Mama's curative approach which has earlier been discussed in *Under the Udala Trees*. However, Mzi's confession brings in the subject of his marriage to Siyanda. Mzi tells his friends he proposed to Siyanda right after his first encounter with Tshepo. The proposal was necessitated out of the need to assert his manhood and "to tell [himself] and everyone that [he] was not gay" (p. 117). This attitude of his casts him as a "bloody cold …[and] self-obsessed" character (p.117).

Overall, this probably sums up an atmosphere of friendliness and innovation on the part of the writer, while providing a possible air of hope under the existing prejudices of South African life [could be linked with Okparanta's detachment. The reader observes that Mfundo is able to maintain the suspense

because what appears to be odd to him is not telegraphed until the third chapter of his narration. He only gives us a sneak peek into the life of Mzi. With our appetite wet, we become very eager to meet this best friend of his.

Further interrogating Mfundo's narration, we find him consistently using the phrase: "You think you know someone" (p. 30) to emphasise his opinion about his friend. At some points, he concludes the phrase with; "And then you realise you don't know them as well as you thought you did." (p. 30). These are employed as a kind of refrain that gives a lyrical tone to his narration. He tries to blanket his homophobic attitude with this rhythmic occurrence that is typical of his laid-back artist charm. Above all, he uses this story as a self-nemetic intermission that prefaces his own devastating life story with Slindile. Mzi becomes Mfundo's character foil because he is successful in all aspects of his life. Everything seems to work out perfectly well for Mzi while his friend struggles as a failure in the work industry as well as to keep a balance in his love life. This does not prevent Mfundo from shrouding his conversations with Mzi in stereotypes. He leaves his audience with no other option than to raise brows over his attitude when it is compared to his earlier queer sexual experience.

Judging by the fact that Mfundo may be a bit biased towards his friend, Tinaye is brought into the picture to render his version of Mzi's queer identity story. It is from his perspective that we are allowed to learn more about the world outside of the confines of Mfundo's first-person perspective. Tinaye Musonza is a British-born Zimbabwean who has relocated to Johannesburg after gaining a master's degree from Oxford. He works at AfriAID as a colleague to Mzi until

Mzi relocates to Cape Town. Tinaye does not know much about Mzi. He is more interested in highlighting issues relating to himself and mentions Mzi only in passing. Even with that, it is only when he cautions Sli not to "let any red-blooded heterosexual male overhear [her] referring to them as 'like a brother', no matter how platonic [their] relationship is" (p. 183) that he gets to know he has made an error by believing Mzi to be heterosexual.

Just like Mfundo, Tinaye is equally shocked at the revelation because, there is nothing queer looking about Mzi's appearance. This, however, does not stop him from questioning Mzi's masculinity thus: "He doesn't seem gay" (p. 183). This statement illuminates some of his homophobic attitude. However, Sli continues to act as the check on Tinaye as well. She chooses to use what may perhaps be assumed to be a more polite diction such as; "same-team inclined" (p. 183) in reference to her friend's sexual orientation. Sli happens to be the only one who had earlier suspected Mzi is queer oriented mainly because of her profession as a medical doctor and her "feminine intuition" (p. 183). She is able to really dig into Mzi's actions while allowing the reader to empathise with him. Sli's calm composure does not go unnoticed as Tinaye comments: "Sli answered as though this was the most normal conversation in the world" (p. 183). The repeated use of the word "normal" by Mfundo and Tinaye serves to lay emphasis on the absurdity of the impressions that Mzi makes in their presence and the erroneous categorisation of his sexual preference. This discussion is equally illustrated in Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010) where Vimbai represents the ideals of heteropatriarchal Zimbabwe in her interrogation of Dumisani's sexual orientation.

Like Mfundo and Tinaye in *Men of the South*, Vimbai consistently employs the word "normal" in her diction whenever she backlashes Dumisani for faking the impression of a heterosexual man.

Notably, each of the two heterosexual male characters in *Men of the South* attaches some level of stigma in their consideration of Mzi's sexual orientation. Herek (2009b) defines stigma as "the negative regard, inferior status, and relative powerlessness that society collectively accords to people who possess a particular characteristic or belong to a particular group or category" (p. 441). Hence, it may be argued that the reaction of Mfundo and Tinaye seems to "spoil" Mzi's "normal identity". These two characters consciously or unconsciously, capitalise on such phenomenon to discredit their friend's sexuality. On this, Goffman (1963) asserts that society stratifies people and their attributes in such a manner that it distinguishes what is deemed normal or ordinary (p. 3). Thus, when Mzi presents some characteristics that stray from what his society accepts as normal, he may be discounted in the audiences' minds from a whole and usual character to a tainted one.

An interesting finding in this text is that by creating a closeted queer male protagonist, Wanner places her revealing writing in concordance with the recurrent themes in present day South Africa. This may be because although the country has laws in favour of queer sexualities, an open discussion of such topics is hardly encountered. Also, discussing the closeted queer African character in an open writing like this proves Robinson (2006) right when he earlier said that, it is "a perilous undertaking" (p. 3). This mainly rests on the fact that the treatment of

alternative sexualities in this text, by Wanner is evident of a daring effort at challenging some negative attitudes towards queer sexualities in her country. She does so by artistically allowing her characters to give their individual opinions on this issue.

Bearing in mind the queer critic's view that "heterosexists shouldn't be allowed to define gay and lesbian experiences" (Tyson, 1999, p. 336), Wanner's other two narrators; Mfundo and Tinaye who cannot give a duplicate account of Mzi's sexual orientation summarize it in a chapter of five and two pages respectively. They leave the readers in suspense, making these readers yearn to meet this character in person. The readers' desires are met when Mzi takes over. In this section, the writer critically interrogates the politics of legitimate forms and expressions of gender and sexuality duly recognising Tyson's (1999) view that "The act of defining the terms of one's own self-reference is a powerful move that says, among other things, 'We're not afraid to be seen!'" (p. 317), the writer gives Mzi the sole right to fully define his identity. This is done through the power of storytelling where the protagonist is given the opportunity through the first-person narrative technique. Therefore, by interrogating the politics of legitimate forms and expressions of gender and sexuality, Mzi gives enough bites of his sexuality in the manner he chooses.

It becomes clear that the role of this protagonist as the narrator is especially important for the understanding of his identity. This is because he serves the dual functions of being the voice of truth and a mediator, operating not only as the link "between different perspectives in the text" but also as the

intermediary between the text and the reader (Armstrong, 2002, p. 308). Mzi opens his narration in a soliloquy with an introduction of himself. He presents himself as the *experiencer* who has detailed exclusivity. This means he is privy to the surrounding events. The man we meet in this part of the novel is strong willed and brave. With the stigma attached to queer individuals, Mzi characteristically defies all odds to tell his audience that; "If there is anything like a 100% Zulu boy who is cosmopolitan, I am he. I am also a 100% gay" (p. 85). This is premised on the queer theory which stipulates that the act of defining the terms of one's own self-reference is a powerful move for attaining recognition. Thus, Mzi is able to give the impression of having a special standing as a supreme commentator with an all-encompassing perspective nowhere else available in the novel. He stresses the repetition of the first-person pronoun; "I" which underscores the position of the authority and privilege he negotiates within the hetero-normative society. Comparatively, *Men of the South* deviates from previous texts like "Jambula Tree" and *The Hairdresser of Harare* that are grounded in a strong theme of victimising the queer experience in Africa. This text depicts a character who seem to serve as an indication that queer people have always existed and like "Mr. M_", the minister's husband, in *The Hairdresser of Harare*, some of them navigate safe spaces in the community without being persecuted.

It is quite interesting to note that like Ijeoma in *Under the Udala Trees*, Mzi subscribes to an inherent queer identity. The concept of the naturality of his sexual orientation may perhaps be best illustrated by the following words: "There was no uncle who gave me sweets when I was a child, touched "it" and told me it

would be our little secret like they always show in the movies" (pp. 86-87). He moves on to denounce the stereotypical description of queer men's outlook by pointing out that:

> I am not your archetype of a gay man. I have nothing purple in my wardrobe. My best friends are a straight woman (normal for gay men) and a straight guy (absolutely not normal). I have worked for nongovernmental organisations, but their point of focus was not gay rights. I cannot stand house music. I do not talk with a lilt or a lisp. I use Zambuk and not gloss for my lips… I did not grow up playing with dolls (pp. 86-87).

By this, Mzi subscribes to the complicit masculinity which counters the traditional hegemonic masculinities. There probably is a larger conflict around how he describes himself in the novel and how others see him. For instance, he presents himself as a conservative homosexual, yet he does not appear to be one. How he sees himself foregrounds the contradictoriness of mapping his outward appearance onto his sexual orientation. His identity is steeped in the Zulu culture whose proponents may not hesitate to knock the queerness out of him. It must be noted that Wanner alludes to one of the greatest Zulu kings, Mzilikazi (meaning the great road) of Khumalo in the history of Southern Africa, by naming her non-conforming character after him. Unlike this historical figure, Mzi maneuvers a different space that defeats Mugabe's stinging "attack" on the rights of gays and lesbians (Dunton & Palmberg, 1996; Gloppen & Rakner, 2019; 2020). King Mzilikazi happened to be a former lieutenant to Shaka Zulu. He rebelled and fled

to found the Ndebele nation, present day Zimbabwe. His very masculine nature is carried through the name to Mzilikazi Khumalo in Wanner's novel. Indirectly, being named after this warrior is synonymous to saying that a man can be macho looking and still be sexually attracted to other men. Mzi muses over his *Zuluness* when he maintains:

> I am also a rural-born, kasi-bred Zulu man who can stick- fight and slaughter with the best of them. In order words, reincarnate him and I could probably out-Zulu Shaka Zulu. So no more talk of homosexuality being un-African, if you please (p. 87).

The concluding sentence to Mzi's comment above seems to be a rebuttal to the earlier accession that queer sexuality is a colonial import. By definition, Mzi seeks to create a possible image of African sexualities which could be as varied as the individuals who inhabit this space of the globe. Mzi seems to be divorcing masculinity from sexual orientation which to the typical African should not be the case. In so doing, he places himself as the road to attaining a possible *queer-embracing* society. Therefore, the trajectory politicisation of Mzi's queer sexuality illustrates some relevant patterns we see in his life. It also deconstructs the heterosexual logic of intuitively recognising queer bodies with the aim of fitting them into gender hierarchies and making them "hyper-visible", thus "abnormal" (Dlamini, 2018, p. 16). First of all, Mzi learns to wield a stick the correct way from his uncle and all his school mates revere him for his prowess. He further presents himself as having a very attractive masculinity. Moreover, he works with an NGO that has got nothing to do with his sexuality. The flamboyant

Mzi defeats what Pope et al (2000) describe as the Adonis complex. This is largely because he does not necessarily stylise his body image to look manly enough. instead, he strategises an extremely complicated double-faced life which enables him conceal his queer identity so as to avert stigmatisation from his immediate community. This may be equally understood as a denial of the self. Hence, Mzi re-enacts Connell's (1992) very straight-gay identity which drops him from the required Zulu masculine radar. His ego dystonic sexuality poses much threat to both himself and his wife, on the one hand, and his friends on the other hand.

Moreover, Mzi grows from being a shy type to the neighborhood stud who could take his pick of the girls in the community. As he switches from liking another male to exploring heterosexuality, Mzi reflects on the queer critiques' assertion that identity remains fluid. This underscores the possible hope to get socialised within the appropriate mode of agency.

After university, Mzi returns to Johannesburg where he gets a job as a Senior Communications Associate at AfriAID. He is one character who leaves the audience very conflicted by taking them on a back-and-forth ride mostly because; on the one hand, he is a very decent young black South African man who soon climbs through the ranks till he gets to be the first black Communications Manager, thus, making him "a big hit at the job" (p. 106). Mzi gets more popularity via the media than anyone ever had. He is the first black to own a town house in Rembrandt Park. He also assumes a personality that makes him the pride

of every parent and the girls love him more. With his little sister having sorely disappointed their parents, Mzi becomes the only successful child in the family.

Although Mzi's character flaw is his queer sexuality, he still continues to prove himself a fascinating character who is admired by the readers. Hence, one would think that his privileged position in the society compels him to remain silent about his sexuality. As a good son, he takes it upon himself to make some grocery contributions for the family on weekends. Notably, Mzi marks this period as the time during which he consciously begins his journey to a "gay self-discovery" (p. 107). He finds himself a very unsuspecting partner. This phenomenon rests on a different but related strand of queer sexuality in *The Yacoubian Building* where Hatim Rasheed, the queer character, attaches himself to Abduh because he is married and very masculine looking. This is to make the neighbors assume Abduh is only a house help. But theirs is an open secret because Hatim is noted for luring poor men into his bed. Like Mzi, Hatim is equally successful in life. He is a respectable Editor-in-Chief of *Le Caire*, a French newspaper in Cairo, who is fluent in four different languages. The difference between these two characters is that, Hatim is openly gay in an extremely homophobic Arabic community while Mzi remains closeted.

There seem to be some identifiable factors that seem to further complicate Mzi's character. First, his unreliability as a trustworthy character is a prime theme in this text. He also creates a scenario that offers him the platform to speak without external interruptions. Hence, Mzi is able to deceive almost all the other characters in his fictional world with his make-believe heterosexual appearance.

He further manipulates his audience into exhibiting potential empathic response. Judging from this attitude, it could be argued that Mzi clearly justifies the abnormality of his sexuality with his intellect. Yet he is not well prepared to face the prejudice attached to the minority community within which he finds himself.

Notwithstanding, Mzi is able to maintain a very engaging and meaningful read with his sophisticated theme of perspectival powerplay in a queer sexual relationship. Commenting on the issue of power play, Hanson et al (1999) are of the view that:

> In this respect power entails both the physical and legislative features that inculcate those discursive forces which assign a name of their own choosing to every creature in the garden, that presume they know what sex is or ought to be, what pleasure is or ought to be, and what role sexuality might play…in social relations more generally (pp. 4 & 5).

This protagonist uses a chronologically fractured plot that takes the reader to and from the narrative line. As he gives snippets of the relevant aspects of his life, he takes us through flashbacks of his relationship with Tshepo. Like Mzi, Tshepo is steeped in his *tsotsi* manners and macho lifestyle. On the average, it is their very masculine appearances that attract these two characters to each other. So, for as long as they act in accordance with the African traditional masculine traits, that is, being strong and domineering while maintaining regular masculine sexual role as the penetrator, they both remain *real* men in the eyes of the community. The question of consistency in playing the manly role looms large on

the audiences' minds especially in relation to the gendered powerplay in their queer sexual relationships.

Observably, their position corroborates with Ratele's (2008) argument that sex is sanctioned to "reaffirm aggressive heterosexual masculinity and to assert control" (p. 156). However, the conflict ascribed to their identity warrants attention. Moreover, a probable unfortunate truth is that at a point in time, one of the partners is suggested to be effeminate since naturally, there cannot be a simultaneous dual penetration between a couple. So, it may be concluded that neither men can have a full claim of being the *man* in the relationship. Overall, this is evident of a relationship between equal powers of sort. As *real men*, they are at liberty to have sexual relations with women and not be considered queer.

Notably, the depth of information Mzi gives allows both the author and the reader to dive more deeply into his character. Thus, the reader is exposed to the narrator's inner thoughts and experiences. However, Mzi seems to skew the accuracy of the story he is telling in his favour. This means that, it is up to the reader to determine whether to accept everything he says or not. Hence, the viewpoints of the other two characters become necessary in forming an opinion that could truely represent Mzi.

Conclusion

Some brief concluding remarks on this chapter points to the unique self-image the queer protagonists in the texts try to create. The queer protagonists highlight the relevance of the first-person narrative perspective to their queer

identity formation processes. This could mean that the protagonists are positioned as the primary eyewitnesses to the plot of the stories. It is also realised that telling their own experiences gives them the voice and platform that enable them reconstruct their identities with minimal interruptions. This is especially critical as it helps the reader navigate the narrators' identities within the context of the social relationships as exemplified in the texts.

A related trend further reveals that the text, particularly *Men of the South,* becomes more dramatic when third parties are allowed to comment on the queer character. This emphasies the importance of the multiplicity of voice where the other two narrators' comments on the queer character seem to affirm their own heterosexual identities. The multiple perspectives further give the reader another angle of a basic need for truth-telling since the other two narrators seem to fill in the gaps that might have been left in Mzi's narration.

Moreover, as the narrations move on, it becomes easy to extrapolate the essence of the overarching theme of queer sexuality which is crucial to the development of the plot. Other themes that support the main theme were touched on during the discussion in this chapter of the study. One of such themes is; the theme of war and homophobia as depicted in *Under the Udala Trees.* Another is; the theme of normalcy in the daily lives of the two queer protagonists. An exploration of these themes is perhaps indicative of the fact that these queer characters seem to be motivated by a desire to realise their place as normal human beings with alternative sexualities.

CHAPTER FOUR

"TO BE FREE OR EXILED…": READING QUEER COMPANIONSHIPS IN *UNDER THE UDALA TREES* AND *MEN OF THE SOUTH*

Introduction

Chapter three examines the self-image the queer protagonists present to the readers by focusing on their use of the first-person narrative perspective and the multi-voiced narrative. The current chapter, in an attempt to answer the second question of the study, examines the queer intimacies presented to the reader in the two selected texts in order to identify the symbolic representations and metaphors imbedded in the narrations.

Breaking Boundaries for Queer Companionship: The Case of *Under the Udala Trees*

Introduction

The theme of the desire for a queer companionship looms large in *Under the Udala Trees* since the protagonist makes it one of her main quests. It is possible to say that the companionship a character seeks may be informed by the kind of identity they subscribe to. Reading this text, one is likely to observe that Ijeoma's personal life experiences, coupled with the exposure she gets are the main ways through which she defines her identity. In this way, figuring out her sexual orientation may prove to be a confusing process that spans a long period of time. One clear instance is when she catches herself fantasising about other girl's bodies long before she has her first queer erotic encounter. Still, her liking for

women is unclear at the initial stages of her development. Although Ijeoma actually has an affinity with women, what holds her back is that, she is unable to explain her feelings. At first it may seem she is just having one of those regular female peer-to-peer envy. The following passage is evidence of this:

> Something about the way their bodies swayed as they walked. Their skin was dark as cacao, which made me think of my own light skin, … As I looked at the girls, I found myself thinking and that maybe in time, with age, the sun would darken my skin enough that I would be something else that made me think: their chests. They actually had chests. Mine, on the other hand, was hardly a chest at all, more like two tiny balls of pounded yam, flattened, each about the size of a tablespoon, not even enough to fill a palm. Maybe it was a side effect of envy, or maybe it was a side effect of the awe I felt for them … (p. 34).

In this extract, Ijeoma consistently repeats the indefinite pronoun "something" or the phrase "something else" which becomes a substitute for the unexceptional feelings and identity she initially has no name for. With this, she is able to foreground the overall theme by alternating the reader's attention between what is being said and how it is being said. It seems Ijeoma feels "too shy and inadequate" (p. 35) in the presence of the girls passing by. This could be likened to having a transient infatuation on them. It is also possible to say that, her conflicted feelings serve as subtle tell-tale signs of her queerness.

Advancing further, the first queer companionship Ijeoma first builds is with Amina, another queer character in the text. Amina's appearance in Ijeoma's life is symbolic of Ijeoma's gradual transformation to a queer self. It is through her encounters with Amina that she becomes conscious of her queer sexuality. Amina initially appears as a rhetorical "shadow" (p. 104) in the sense that she follows the protagonist closely wherever she goes. Also, Amina's experiences of the effect of the Biafran war reflects that of Ijeoma. Hence, it could be the case that this shadow is employed as a communicative artefact that spells out the insecurity of Ijeoma's queer life experiences.

Amina, as Ijeoma's shadow does not seem to be merely an obstruction to the passage of light in Ijeoma's life. Rather, she simply becomes a symbolic representation of Ijeoma's hidden queer identity while manipulating her every move. To some extent, the defining property of Amina as Ijeoma's shadow is the resultant deviation by both characters from societal expectations. Although it becomes meaningful at this point of the narration, the deviation may no longer necessarily intrigue readers as we are earlier provided with subtle indications which foreshadow what is to be expected. It could be argued that, the narrator cleverly inserts this rhetorical shadow as a way of inviting her audience to construct her desired meaning from the story. So, instead of the shadow being the usual reflection of the caster, it is introduced to reveal the caster's "other self" – her hidden sexual identity. It also symbolises the queer indications from which Ijeoma might have been running away. Like the shadow, Amina becomes an

aspect of the lifestyle she cannot simply shed. This is depicted in the following monologue:

> [Amina is like] a shadow following me… It crossed the roads with me, hopped over the puddles with me. It appeared to tap the leaves with me, or at least it stood close behind me as I did. I stopped in order to allow the shadow to pass me … Instead it sat across from me (p. 104).

Although she is referring to Amina, we notice that Ijeoma's use of the pronoun "it" does not necessarily refer to Amina as a human being. Rather, her use of this pronoun symbolises her queer identity.

It is observed that the description of Ijeoma's first encounter with Amina, who is just about her age, is symptomatic of the two girls' transgression with the patriarchal rules. When they first meet, Ijeoma looks at Amina the way a heterosexual man will normally admire a woman. The admiration process begins even when Amina still appears as a shadow to her. The shadow only becomes a person when Ijeoma eventually settles on a rock to absorb her full image. She perceives Amina's personality in a subtle nonverbal manner where she first refers to Amina's facial features. Ijoema does not hesitate in identifying the bright eyes which shone "like a pair of light bulbs" (p. 104). Instantly, she realises they are compatible. Her ability to perceive another female in such a manner is what allows her to be attracted to Amina even before they have any meaningful verbal communication. According to her:

> She had a skin as light as mine. Yellow, like a ripe pawpaw. She wore a tattered green pinafore that was bare at the sides. Her hair hung in long clumps around her face, like those images of Mami Wata, hair writhing like serpents. But there were no serpents on her. She looked too dazed or disoriented, or simply too exhausted, to speak (p. 104).

By choosing these particular expressions to refer to her object of admiration, Ijeoma communicates her perspectives on the other girl, just like a heterosexual man would admire a woman. This is the second instance where she admires another girl. At this point, we know that her admiration has nothing to do with envying dark-skinned girls or girls with more developed features than her as she had earlier presumed. Her attraction to Amina is in tandem with Alvarez and Jaffe's (2004) argument that people are most strongly sexually attracted to their lookalikes in physical appearance.

The manner in which Ijeoma refers to her object of admiration seems to construct it, and through constructing this object, the same reference constructs reality. This is in sync with Heinämaa's (2017) assertion that:

> This notion is intuitive, and it neatly fits our commonsense conception of human affairs… We tend to love things and persons that we consider good and beautiful (or superb, terrific, cool, etc.), and we tend to value and appreciate the things and persons that we happen to love (p. 1).

Therefore, in this same instance, Ijeoma draws a circle around the situated sexual identity to which both girls belong. By this, she further *illegitimises* the notion that there is a man and woman gender binary. Therefore, the understanding is created to the effect that it should not always be the case that because there is a man, there should be a woman; or since there is a woman, there should evidently be a man in all amorous relationships. On this, Nietzsche argues that there is no being behind doing, effecting, becoming; the doer is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything (as cited in Butler, 2002, p. 34). So, in this novel, the action of admiration is what matters and not the admirer or the admired. Thus, Ijeoma's conceptualisation of the female body as performative, by challenging the dichotomisation of gender, functions to empower subjects who are stigmatised because of their nonconformity to strict and dichotomous traditional gender rules. This constructed reality becomes the true identity of both Ijeoma and Amina, and later on, Ndidi.

Alternatively, this admiration episode is further interpreted as Ijeoma's practical efforts in helping both her and Amina reconstruct their sexual realities that subvert the heteronormative standards of their society. The two girl's transgression is further witnessed in the way they stare at each other. Besides, Ijeoma admits an intimate attraction towards this new girl as she confesses: "The moment our eyes locked, I knew I would not be leaving without her." (p. 105). Notably, starring admiringly at a fellow female in a heterosexual environment to date remains a prerogative of the masculine gender. Therefore, by deviating from this designated norm of the authoritarian heterosexuality, the two girls hamper the

moral economy of socially outlined sexual exchanges based on their assigned gender roles. On this, Courtois (2018) in his study sees eye to eye with Berger (2008) when the latter remarks that:

> *men act* and *women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. […] The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight (Berger, 2008, p. 47, as cited in Courtois, 2018, p. 126).

Nevertheless, it is realised that the two girls' subconscious minds work in unison while forming special opinions about each other without they realising it. In like vein, they simultaneously move their plastic-slippered feet around the muddy earth while sitting on the rock. The description of their feet emphasises the disorder their queer acts may bring to the natural flow of things. It is observed that they both initially act coy but constantly sneak peeks at each other. Something in the way each of them looks and acts at that particular time triggers their emotions, causing an amorous attraction. Thus, Ijeoma, being convinced that Amina must be her destiny, decides on not going back home without her and she is able to convince the grammar school teacher to accept Amina. This foreshadows the beginning of the *abominable* act the two characters are yet to commit.

In contrast to Ijeoma's perception of Amina, the grammar school teacher likens her to "a street urchin, a homeless little imp" (p.106). Overall, he becomes a precognition agent who understands that Amina is an offensive intrusion to the progressive flow of Ijeoma's heterosexual life. Connotatively, Amina could be

seen as the *mythonymic* character who defines the onomastic space of something devilish – the dark side of Ijeoma's identity. She could also be seen as a small demon who leads the otherwise decent Ijeoma into doing exactly the wrong thing for the sole reason of proving how possible it is for queer acts to take place. Hence, the description the grammar school teacher attributes to Amina is probably intended to be more of a caution than an offensive use of words.

Just like in Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" (2006*), Under the Udala Trees* allows for a concrete object such as the tree to represent an experience that is intangible and hard to describe. Strategically, the narration of the queer love between these two girls commences under an udala tree. So, in analysing the queer love in this novel, it becomes necessary to take a consideration of the symbolic representation of this tree in the Nigerian context. The udala, also known as udara (*Chrysophylum albidum*), according to Agukoronye (2001) is a popular fruit tree in the community square. It is:

> a kind of native apple tree, which for the Igbo symbolises fertility and the spirit of children. The udala is therefore a public fruit tree, especially for children who visit it early in the morning when it is in season to pick the fallen ripe fruits. During the day, in such seasons, it is common to see children sit under its shade singing and calling on it to let its fruits fall for them. If several children go to an udala stand and only one of them picks up a fruit, it is never eaten alone, but is shared between friends. This is the spirit of

> sharing, camaraderie and the innocence of children, which the udala symbolises (p. 95).

Metaphorically, the two girls sitting under an udala tree can be read as appropriately providing strategies to conceive a justifiable space for queer sexual desires. The activities performed under this tree by the Igbo community express companionship, love as well as sharing and caring. Coincidentally, the protagonist in this novel is an Igbo girl who is strategically united with a Hausa girl. These two girls acquire the spirit of sharing that is graphically demonstrated in the subsequent episodes of the text. Also, Ijeoma here sees the udala trees to be witnessing the evolution of her life. They provide her with a delicious temptation to deviate from the accepted standard.

Correspondingly, Ijeoma's belief in the significance of the tree and its members, doubling as symbols of life, growth, motion as well as progress and as a deity, is foregrounded by the fact that, she compares her object of love to a water goddess. On this, Jell-Bahlsen (2008, p. 30) intimates that the concept of the "mother water" goddess, *Mammy Water*, is more than of a divinity. She embodies and manifests important aspects of womanhood in typical Igbo culture and society. This double description further foregrounds an ordained encounter between the girls.

Added to the above, Okwuosa et al (2017) opine that Igbo mother water goddess controls both the entry and the exit of every member of the community into and from the physical world. She is recognised as the goddess of the crossroads so she sits at a vantage point to control the membership of this world.

This goddess is responsible for challenging the pact of destiny made between one's body and soul which is witnessed by the Supreme Being. The goddess is also believed to endorse the destinies of her true worshippers. With these explanations, the understanding that could be established is as follows; *Under the Udala Trees* implicitly touches on the theme of queer sexualities as beyond human choice. Also, Ijeoma sitting under one of the trees and acknowledging the fair skins of both her and Amina as well as the long flowing hair of Amina is symbolic of her veneration to this deity. Consequently, the tree becomes one of the strategies for normalising her queer sexual desires.

One understanding this text creates may be that the history of a possible queer Africa is erroneously tied to colonial influx. This is because the narration negotiates an identity that deals only with the attraction between indigenous Nigerian women and not one between whites or a white and an African as portrayed in Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1997) and Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* (2005). In support of this, Okparanta, in an interview, indicates that these earlier narrations seem to complicate what is largely recognised as the indigenous tradition because:

> Nigerians had things like women marriages, which were completely financial arrangements, as heterosexual marriages were. Which is to say, marriage in itself was just a financial arrangement until it became about love – but that was later on. My grandmother married a woman. Why then did we get rid of our tradition? Which is to say that the novel [*Under the Udala* Trees]

> is also complicating things in the sense that it's bringing up topics that, again, we as Nigerians don't consider our own, though we all know that gay and lesbian Nigerians certainly do exist, and that they are in fact part of the culture (Lombardi, 2018, p. 20).

In line with this, Olanisebe and Adelakun (2013, p. 200) argue that Ajibade (2013) has earlier proven from Yoruba oral tradition that homosexuality is as old as the Yoruba nation. However, though this practice is evident in some oral traditions, it was not encouraged because it was largely regarded as unnatural.

Moving on, the text demonstrates that the queer bond between the protagonist and Amina is not solely based on the sexual exploits they undertake. It is rather birthed from a series of companionship that they both derive from nowhere else other than from each other. For instance, as has earlier been proven, Ijeoma is half orphaned and separated from her mother, whereas Amina is the only surviving member of her immediate family. The two girls are presented as characters who lack any form of parental love. Moreover, their foster parents only regard them as "more help" (p. 106) to the household chores. The situation they both find themselves in helps them to develop stronger queer ties. Strategically, Amina appears in Ijeoma's life just when the war is ending. It is well known in their larger Nigerian setting that the Hausas were killing Igbos. However, the theme of the innocence of children in times of war is highlighted by these two characters' amorous attractions. Certainly, the key aim of their actions is perhaps to underscore the significance of the theme of love as an ultimate measure to reconciliation. A similar instance is realised in Veronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of*

Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda (2002) where one of "The Seven Wonders" (p. 108) is presented as a symbol of reconciliation between the Hutus and Tutsis due to his mixed parentage. The comfort Amina and Ijeoma provide for each other lies basically in the companionship they share which is echoed by the narrator in the ensuing words:

> That evening, Amina and I peeled the yams together, rinsed them together, our fingers brushing against each other's in the bowl. I doused the wood with the kerosene and lit the cooking fire, and she set the pot of yams on top to boil… We rinsed ourselves off together on the cement slab… At the end of it all, I carried my lantern and led Amina into my hovel, where I offered half of my mattress to her (pp. 106-107).

The above extract could be interpreted as one of the metaphors in the text where half of her life becomes Amina's.

Ijeoma goes on to demonstrate how possible it is for two women to engage in complete sexual intimacies. Explaining this further, the two queer characters are on the same level of emotional and physical attraction rendering each erotic encounter a spontaneous occurrence. The two girls are less inclined to conform to the heteronormative gender pairings of their society. Their first erotic act begins with a mundane bath they take together, and then they move on to tagging at loose ends of their braids. Once the feelings are in zone, it becomes easy for them to experience physical sexual arousal. In a sharp contrast, the "decaying flesh" which was earlier presented in the form of "decapitated bodies" (p. 48) that

metamorphose into an anticipated pleasure. This is evident in the following excerpt:

> We took in with our fingers the curves of our flesh, the grooves. Our hands, rather than our voices, seemed to be speaking. Our breaths mingled with the night sounds. Eventually our lips met. This was the beginning, our bodies being touched by the fire that was each other's flesh (117).

The embodied expression of female sexual pleasure in *Under the Udala Trees* thus becomes a cue for experiencing gratifying desires. The narrator reinforces the beauty of what they both experience at that particular time by falling on her oral tradition. Thus, she takes cognisance of the proverb; "the wood already touched by fire isn't hard to set alight" (p. 117). The initial spark that attracts the girls to each other explodes into a pleasurable desire for both of them which takes place in a quotidian scene:

> I went closer to her, ran my fingers through her braids. Those were the braids that I plaited for her just that morning I held her face in the palms of my hands and pretended to inspect her hair. I nodded and smiled. She smiled back. I ran my hands up and down Amina's braids some more, up and down her arms. And Amina did the same to me… (p. 117).

The erotic encounter in this episode is one of the affectionate manifestations of the love they had earlier silently developed for each other. The

protagonist contrasts this intimate experience she shares with Amina to the kiss she shares with Chibundu, her husband, when they were still little kids. Describing it, she cleverly chooses her diction to denote her total resentment for any heterosexual encounters. In the manner now being indicated, Ijeoma calls the kiss she and Chibundu share "A clumsy kiss" which she equates to "taking a spoonful of chloroquine when you had malaria" (p. 233). She goes on to stress that; "There was hardly another option, so you just did it. The first spoonful and then the next, and then the next. If not, things would only get worse" (p. 46). With this, she proves that the kiss was just to relieve Chibundu from an awkward situation created by the pair. It is so obvious she honestly knows the latter kiss did not feel as good as it did with Amina. Although that was a platonic kiss, Ijeoma grows up to still resent the mere thought of it. The opportunities provided for heterosexual intimacies between Ijeoma and Chibundu attest to the belief that may be held by some that her body was not made to accommodate heterosexual intimacies. In contrast to the longing she has for Amina and subsequently, Ndidi, Ijeoma later in her adult life detests the mere touch of her husband, Chibundu. All her encounters with him are presented as unendingly exhausting journeys.

Observably, Ijeoma's inherent same-sex desire is stressed in every stage of the story. Her narrative strategy interweaves excerpts of the attraction of her and Amina with the mundane descriptions of merely being together, talking, cooking, bathing, doing dishes as well as sharing a bed. According to Fratuer (2019), "This intimate moment of a shared everyday task is part of the process of re-humanisation after being left behind by their parents" (p.72). It is more explicitly

expressed in some other activities such as going to the market together as well as braiding each other's hair. Metaphorically, a queer interpretation of these female activities in the text depicts other instances of companionship. The importance of these routine activities related to the erotic pleasure, is for instance described by Osinubi (2018) and Courtois (2018) in their discussions of erotic desires. Just as Iya Tope in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (2010) finds true happiness in braiding Segi's hair, so do these two characters find solace in braiding each other's hair. This creates the necessary atmosphere for them to discuss pertinent issues relating to marriage. Their love just happens to be there, like a *natural thing* that seems so perfect to the extent that Amina is able to propose marriage to Ijeoma. Contrastively, Ijeoma in this same dialogue hints on her awareness of their conservative heterosexual traditional system which shuns upon queer love. Thus, she observes: "But that's not the way marriage works, you know" (p. 118). Even with this knowledge, she does not hesitate to outwardly express her feelings towards Amina. Ijeoma recalls an expression of profound love between her and Amina thus:

> In the near darkness, our hands moved across our bodies. We took in with our fingers the curves of our flesh, the grooves. Our hands, rather than our voices, seemed to do the speaking. Our breaths mingled with the night sounds. Eventually our lips met. This was the beginning, our bodies being touched by the fire that was each other's flesh (p. 117).

Notwithstanding, the description of this first encounter ends abruptly leaving the reader in suspense. Their next erotic encounter is strikingly preceded by a discussion of dreams which were alluded to the story of Jacob's beloved son, Joseph in the Bible, who was sold into slavery by his brothers because of the prophetic dreams he had. The dialogue they engage in connects their erotic love with faith. Ijeoma concludes that the moral lesson behind this story is that life is cyclical, and one may never always have straightforward results. This way, a person is able to learn from past mistakes while adapting to present conditions. Joseph's story becomes a metaphor for Ijeoma's own situation. This is because, she has "to go through all that wahala" (p. 123) before her dream of maintaining a queer relationship and lifestyle is achieved. The two girls conclude this discussion with the ardor for "each other's flesh" (p. 117) which, according to Courtois (2018), brings Ijeoma to a state of euphoria. The explicit descriptions of the sexual encounter coupled with the human experiences of longing and the sense of joy the girls realise could perhaps be understood as a means of establishing a normalised queer love. The urge to explore each other's body encourages them to dive deeper than they have ever dared:

> Amina was so close to me now that I felt an urge to lean in and kiss her. I began with her forehead. I took a stop at her nose. Soon I was at her lips, then at the crook of her neck, which was exposed by her loose nightgown… She cupped her hands around my breasts, took turns with them, fondling and stroking and caressing them with her tongue. I felt the soft tug of her teeth on the peaks

> of my chest. Euphoria washed over me. She continued along, leaving a trail of kisses on her way down to my belly. She traveled farther, beyond the belly, farther than we had ever gone. I moaned and surrendered myself to her. I did not until then know that a mouth could make me feel that way when placed in that part of the body where I had never imagined a mouth to belong (pp. 123-124).

This second encounter Ijeoma has with Amina also depicts a desire that is narrated with passionate attachment. Unfortunately, an adult character, in the person of the grammar school teacher, interrupts and Ijeoma is sent to Aba to live with her mother. This particular encounter signifies the conception of Ijeoma's subsequent traumatic experiences. The appearance of the teacher in this episode hits all three characters like a blow. The appearance causes them all to be surprised while creating tension in the atmosphere. Hence, the actions that follow are in quick successions. The teacher does not hesitate to draw a concrete link between their sexual exploits and what the Bible has to say about it. His authoritarian wrath is reinforced by the reference he makes to the Bible:

> He walked over, pulled us off the mattress one at a time, slapped us on our cheeks. […] He must have noticed the Bible on the table when he grabbed the lantern, because he turned back to the table, set the lantern back down, and grabbed the Bible. Pointing to it, he cried, "**An abomination**!" (p. 125).

The teacher inflicts both physical mental pains on the girls by first pulling them off the mattress and slapping each of them on the cheek. With this, he snatches the spirit of camaraderie and the innocence of children, which the udala symbolises, from them. The painful situation Ijeoma finds herself in remarkably manifests itself in the fragmentation of the entire text by virtue of the repetitive feelings of guilt, anxiety, and nightmares, which immediately follow each moment of her sexual pleasure. For instance, she recounts a dream she has about her daughter and the udala trees thus:

> In my dream, I saw Chidinma dressed in a yellow dress with a sequined bodice and a hem of lace. On her hair was a ribbon, which the wind lifted gently from her head. Around her was a circle of gray and beige stones, big stones, about the size of cement blocks. Set atop of each stone was a tall, white wax candle, seven or eight of them in total, their flames burning blue and orange and yellow, and flickering this way and that in the night. Her expression was mournful and sad, and there was a paleness to her face. She stood under one of the udala trees, … I approached Chidinma with horror, and as I did, I saw that she was standing with her feet not quite touching the earth, like a ghost floating above the ground. How could it be? I lifted my eyes to check. I saw, dangling from the udala tree, a wiry rope leading to the wiry noose that was tied around Chidinma's neck. Somehow I had at first failed to see it, but I saw it now, extending down from the

> branches of the udala tree, and Chidinma, my child, dangling from it. I made to run for her, but my legs were heavy, as if they were being pulled down by wet mud. I forced them to move, keeping my eyes on her. I saw the moment when she lifted her eyes to me. She was wearing that familiar expressionless look on her face, and then her lips curved into a slight smile, something sinister, nothing like anything I had ever seen on her. A book appeared in her hands. It was my papa's old Bible—that small one from long ago, with the black leather binding and yellowing pages. As she hung from the tree, she began reading from the Bible. I listened to the words that she read, but I could not make them out. I was too late. By the time I reached her, her eyes had fallen closed. Her skin was still warm, but a coldness was setting in (pp.189-190).

This dream and other dreams Ijeoma mentions in the text seem to create the impression that she and her daughter are choking under the weight of her [Ijeoma] being queer in a African society that is steeped in tradition and superstition. The mere fact that her daughter is reading from the Bible her father left creates a contradiction between Ijeoma's interpretation of her father's name as paving the way for her queer sexual identity and what the Bible he left her actually represents. Ironically Ijeoma comments: "sometimes a decision comes upon us that way – in a series of dreams, in a series of small epiphanies… something from somewhere in the distance. It is not quite noticeable" (p. 190).

With all these dreams and understanding, Ijeoma still subscribes to a queer identity.

As may be interpreted, this painful awareness only manifests itself when the adult characters caution that erotic love between partners of the same sex is sinful. At that instance, the mental agony the girls are experiencing is marked by an allusion to Adam and Eve who are credited with the primary cause of the sinful nature of humanity:

> We were naked, and we felt our nakedness as Adam and Eve must have felt in the garden, at the time of that evening breeze. Our eyes had become open, and we too sought to hide ourselves. But first we had to endure the grammar school teacher's lecturing. There he went, pacing back and forth in our little hovel, going on and on about our shame, his eyes furious, his mouth opening wider and wider (p. 125).

Now being fully aware that they have sinned, the two girls consciously launch into the same world of thought as the adult grammar school teacher. Immediately, they want the slightest chance to sneak into the hiding of their clothes just as Adam and Eve did after eating the forbidden fruit. Their feelings of guilt are conditioned by the cultural context within which they find themselves. Ijeoma's distress here is in sync with the fear of an authoritarian Christian God. Meanwhile, the implicit relation between Ijeoma and Amina versus the Biblical

Adam and Eve suggests a space for refuge. This is because it is possible the sin in connection to Adam and Eve remains inherent to all human beings. It further restores Amina's and Ijeoma's humanity, even after conducting the weighty sin of same-sex love making.

Nonetheless, Ijeoma still expresses the innocence of their love by declaring before the small tribunal that comprises the grammar school teacher, his wife as well as Ijeoma's mother that: "Amina and I, we didn't think anything of it" (p. 128). The girls' innocence is reinforced by the fact that these same adults who are now condemning the act are the very people who indirectly orchestrated it by making the girls do everything together. Observably, this possibility re-echoes an earlier statement which is made by the protagonist's father in the short story, "America" (2013) that: "When a goat and a yam are kept together, either the goat takes a bite of the yam bit by bit or salivates for it" (p. 91). Although the goat and the yam are two different entities, the emphasis here is on the awareness created in the context of the girls' amorous relationship. This seems to be a reversal of Plato's analogy of the cave. Comparatively, the adult interference of young queer amorous love in *Under the Udala Trees* is paralleled in Monica Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" (2006). However, unlike these two texts, the protagonist in "America" defeats the adults' protest and stands a greater chance to freely live with her partner in a queer embracing society. Notwithstanding, it could be argued that the queer character's goal in *Under the Udala Trees* is overpowered by the African moral conscience.

"God Who Created You Must Have Known What He Did": Normalising the Queer Character in *Under the Udala Trees*

A common understanding held by some individuals is that the Christian religion plays a vital role in the ongoing arguments on queer sexualities. The understanding then, seems to be mostly invoked by conservatives and rebuffed by some liberals. This argument is reiterated in the works of some scholars such as: Melendez and LaSala (2006), Klinken (2017), and Endsjø (2020). Notably, the Bible, which is a sacred book of Christians and some other religions, is understood by many to provide some instances of prohibition and condemnation of queer sexualities. On that, the reader finds in Okparanta's novel an attempt at relaying the dominant discourses that remain topmost among the debates on queer sexualities.

In relation to the above, Mama who strongly believes that her daughter is being possessed by a demonic spirit is determined to "straighten [Ijeoma] out" (p. 129). Her attempt at exorcising her daughter rests on her use of the Bible and some prayer sessions as a means of altering Ijeoma's sexuality. In so doing, Adaora, Ijoema's mother, identifies some verses in the Bible that demonise this queer sexuality. Mama's curative approach creates space for Ijeoma to draw a link between her sexual preference and her Christian background. With these, Ijeoma considers the Bible to be a narrow reflection of the heteronormative cultural belief on the one hand. And, on the flip side of the coin lies her mother's interpretations which Ijeoma recognises as pigeonholed. Ironically, Ijeoma's own understanding of queer sexualities also seem to be pigeonholed since she only focuses on the

man-man and woman-woman relationships while ignoring those between siblings, mother-son and father-daughter among others. Meanwhile, the queer theory makes room for all possible sexual orientations.

Mama's *normalising* method begins from Genesis with the creation story. She is of the view that, this story will help Ijeoma realise God's masterplan for the organisation of the gendered humanity where a man becomes one flesh with a woman. In this fragment, the meaning is therefore generated that woman and woman, or the alternative man and man amorous relationships are each considered unique individuals who can never be joined together as one flesh. Attempting to do so breaches the Biblical laws thereby orchestrating the cosmic order. The underlying factor of this argument is that "if God wanted it to be otherwise, would he not have included it that other way in the Bible?" (p. 68). This exposition makes Ijeoma remorseful but anytime she opens her mouth to seek forgiveness from God, it appears the words are forever stuck in her throat. Consequently, Ijeoma is submerged in turmoil which is profoundly expressed in the following words: "The session must have lasted all of fifteen minutes in total, but the discomfort of it made it feel as if it had lasted for much longer" (p. 68).

In questioning Mama's understanding, Ijeoma provides alternative interpretations of these Biblical stories. To her, the creation story does not necessarily mean a definite existence of binary relationships. Her probing indicates the existence of alternative possibilities that are each feasible:

> 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. 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? (pp. 82-83).

Her choice of the word *possibilities* is indicative of the existence of alternative sexual preferences that are not explicitly stated in the creation story. Moreover, her use of the *if* conditional clause lays more emphasis on the possible existence of such alternatives. She gives a detailed interpretation of this *assumption* by adding that the Adam and Eve creation story could have only meant that the bond between this pair was possible because of the strong companionship they shared, and not necessarily because they were a man and a woman. As noted by Frateur (2019) "The stress on companionship corresponds with the interpretations of the theological concept of *Imago Dei* (Image of God) described by van Klinken and Phiri" (p. 45). Unfortunately, Ijeoma doesn't seem to be arguing for these other possibilities. She limits her arguments only to the man-man and woman-woman kind of sexual relationships. Ijeoma's arguments create a loophole with more questions about queer sexualities that she needs to address than pander the line of least resistance using the card-sticking approach.

In considering the Biblical stories as the use of mere allegories to correct her sexuality, Ijeoma wonders who Cain might have married if the only people in existence then were Adam, Eve, Cain himself, and his brother, Abel. If he had

married any of his relations, then this remains queer to her African culture because incest is prohibited in most African settings, particularly one between direct siblings. Additionally, Ijeoma's consistent use of the *if* clause demonstrates that the actions in each case can only be fulfilled provided a certain condition is met. She uses these clauses mainly to question the literal heteronormative interpretations her mother is giving her. Instead of either accepting Mama's opinion or finding any clarification, Ijeoma doubts the usefulness of the Bible studies: "It was turning out that all that studying was not actually doing any good; if anything, it was making it a case between what I felt in my heart and what Mama and the grammar school teacher felt" (p. 82). In effect, Mama's judgmental approach causes Ijeoma to interpret these stories in ways that allow her space to live as a queer yet, religious character.

In a similar vein, Ijeoma does not hesitate to question Mama's understanding of the Sodom and Gomorrah story in the Bible. This story remains one of the passages used in support of, or to contest against queer sexualities. The passage contains the story of the destruction of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Traditionally, Sodom and Gomorrah are known and described as cities that God destroyed because of their sin of queer sexuality. Ijeoma recounts Mama narrating the story as follows:

> Two angels had come to visit Sodom, and Lot had persuaded them to lodge with him. But then came the men of the city, knocking on Lot's door, demanding to see the guests. *Bring them out to us, that we may know them.* But Lot refused. Instead, he offered the men

> his two virgin daughters, for them to do to the daughters as they wished, so long as they did not harm the guests, so long as they did not do as they wished unto the guests (p. 73).

In an attempt to rebut this Bible story, Ijeoma tries to persuade her mother that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is as a result of inhospitality and not queer sexuality. She draws on the ideas of scholars such as Bird (2000) and Cain (2020) to argue that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were punished not because of their sexual perversions but mainly because of their *inhospitality* to strangers who happened to be guests of the two cities. She presents this in the form of two rhetorical questions in succession to her mother thus: "God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. It couldn't have been because they were selfish and inhospitable and violent? It has to be the other thing?" (p. 49). These rhetorical questions are more of statements presented to her mother in the form of questions which may be Ijoema's own way of not offending her mother with her contradictory understanding of this story. The protagonist is rather surprised by the decision of Lot to risk the welfare of his family members in order to safeguard his guests. She connects this interpretation of hers to the subsequent story of the Levite and the damsel Mama narrates. Instead of seeing how it relates to her as intended by Mama, Ijeoma rather broods over "the terrible image of the rape, of the poor damsel lying unconscious at the doorstep, and then being flung over the donkey by the Levite. The terrible image of the Levite cutting her body into

pieces" (p. 80). She believes that the men offering up the woman to be raped is an indication of cowardice on their part.

This draws in the cases of queer sexually-identified persons the grammar school teacher had heard of, where the victims were stoned all the way to the river to be drowned. This story represents some of the inhumane homophobic attacks experienced by queer people in the setting of the novel. At the point that this story is being told to her and Amina, both girls think about the prospective damages that will be inflicted on their bodies and the fear of the possible river drowning should anybody get wind of it. Consequently, they begin to cry primarily because of the fear planted in them by the grammar school teacher. Later in Aba, Ijeoma listens to a similar narration of homophobic attacks that Ndidi, her new queer partner, tells her concerning the horrific killing of two homosexuals who were caught in the act and she shudders. This foreshadows a similar encounter that awaits them at the church which served as their secret meeting place. Ijeoma goes with Ndidi to a nightclub meant for lesbians. Remarkably, the building chosen for this club is a church called "FRIEND IN JESUS CHURCH OF GOD" – "FOUNTAIN OF LOVE" (p. 190). The stress on love and refuge the Christian community offers a society does not go unnoticed in this context. In effect, these marginalised people seem to find refuge in this building which secured their secret. Commenting on the safe space the church provided, Ogoti (2019) is of the view that it also controlled sound that could have attracted arsonists and homophobes.

The narrator at this point re-appropriates the church to symbolise hope and comfort for people with queer desires. Hence, it could be argued that Ijeoma strategically uses the concept of the church as "that holy construction of a place that was responsible for keeping our faith and hope intact" (p. 43). On a few occasions, she presents scenes of herself seeking solace in a church building.

However, the metaphor of the church as a safe place is defeated by the temporal security it provides them. This temporality is marked by the fact that; the church is located in an isolated place outside the town, they meet at night and also, they encounter a mob raid not long after Ijeoma joins them. Ijeoma experiences an emotional pain during the mob raid when the mob decides to purify the place by setting it on fire. During the raid, almost all the women except Adanna, another queer character, manage to escape the mob. The narrow escape of death takes a toll on all the surviving women while pointing to the vulnerable state which had engulfed them.

A link can be drawn between the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah – to which the text refers – and the burning of the queer hideout in Aba. Both settings undergo some form of physical destruction. However, in the case of Aba, the majority of these individuals survive and only one perishes. Despite the traumatic experience, Ijeoma and Ndidi, her new queer partner, agree to keep a low profile in order to prevent raising any suspicions that may cause their personal destruction as well.

The relationship Ijeoma maintains with Ndidi creates the understanding that Mama's curative approach simply backfires. Instead of reforming Ijeoma,

Mama fortifies her to strongly hold on to her queer sexual identity. However, in order not to make her mother feel bad, Ijeoma is compelled to lie, for the first time, to her mother when she is asked if she still thinks of Amina in *that way*. Since Ijeoma knows that the nonverbal communication is perceived to be more believable than the verbal communication, she chooses to look straight into her mother's eyes without blinking and shake her head authoritatively in response to Mama's question. Her choice of response is informed by the fact that both characters had been through a stressful situation. Also, Mama's teachings had placed Ijoema in a vulnerable position that demanded no other than a positive response. At the end of it all, she comforts herself with the fact that she had not "*spoken*" the lie (p. 92).

Ijeoma meets Amina again in a boarding school where they pick up the pieces of their romantic relationship. However, Amina soon begins to fear the morally inappropriateness of being queer and subsequently ends the relationship. The novel being read in the light of the construction of a queer self indicates that, this action of Amina further slows down the creation of an absolute queer identity by the protagonist. During their secondary school education, Amina tries to be different at different times. Her alternation between queer sexuality and heterosexuality is made possible because of her awareness of the heterosexual desire to straighten all queer individuals. The dynamic nature of her sexuality is likewise supported by the queer theory's concept of sexuality as a dynamic range of desire. It is also through the notion of gender as destabilised that the possibility of recreating sexual identity is allowed. This is premised on the post-structuralist

concept of non-essentialised identities, considered as sites in becoming, both culturally constructed but also contextually determined, that are changing constantly through space and time (Tilsen and Nylund, 2010b, p. 8).

Based on culture and what is deemed appropriate, Amina finally decides to reject her queer identity after being haunted by a succession of scary dreams with hellish scenes. She experiences some form of mental trauma that manifests in her body. No amount of comforting words convinces Amina to maintain her queer identity. The fear she develops for the wrath of God finally breaks the bond the two ever shared. After school, Amina gets married to a man whereas Ijeoma, who feels hurt and betrayed, goes back to Aba to live and work with her mother.

It is in Aba that Mama coerces Ijeoma to get married to Chibundu. Ijeoma gives in out of fear and frustration and after Ndidi, Ijeoma's second queer partner, had convinced her to try being with a man. Ndidi happens to be the only person with whom Ijeoma now feels fulfilled. So, she is heartbroken with this suggestion. Her mood at that time is realised in the ensuing monologue:

> How could she imply that it was that simple – that I should just go on and order myself to try things out with a boy? […] My heart and soul and mind were centered around her. She was the one I wanted, and she was enough for me. She was the one I loved, the one who had a hold on my heart (p. 215).

Thus, Ijeoma's queer identity construction process continues to drag along at a snail pace.

The setting changes from Aba to Port Harcourt when she gets married to Chibundu. This is where she endures some years of uncertainty in her unhappy marriage. All through this period, Ijeoma is mindful of the fact that she is not romantically and sexually attracted to her husband. She sees Chibundu to be a domineering husband who wishes to have his conjugal rights. This domineering attitude of Chibundu can be traced to Oko, the husband of Esi in Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story* (1994) and Akobi, Mara's husband in Darko's *Beyond the horizon* (1995). Shefer et al (2010) explain that the sexual prowess of such domineering African men is one major way of articulating their masculinities in society. Ijeoma's traumatic experiences as Chibundu's wife are marked by a succession of nightmares. As such; when she conceives her first child, Ijeoma is afraid God will punish her for her sins by making her have a child with "harelip" (p. 228). It turns out that her innocent daughter is not punished for her mother's sins.

Nonetheless, her marriage to Chibundu could be attributed to the implication of the metaphor of the *kai kai* drink Ndidi had once offered her. On this, it may be concluded that Ijeoma sampled heterosexual marriage and she did not "like its taste" (p. 251). Also, one may perhaps agree with Ndidi when she admonishes; "You are focusing on the wrong sense" (p. 251). In effect, it is possible to say that rather than unite them, her sexual experiences with Chibundu become the barrier that eventually separates them. It is after Ijeoma miscarries their second child that she eventually decides to leave, taking her daughter along with her. She goes back to her mother who finally comes to terms with her

daughter's sexuality. Here, Mama is portrayed as an emphatic dynamic character as she comes to acknowledge that; "God who created you must have known what he did. Enough is enough" (p. 323). Consequently, Ijeoma feels at ease and resumes her queer relationship with Ndidi.

Her reunion with Ndidi is accompanied by some amount of fulfilment that must not go unnoticed. This fulfilment is sharply juxtaposed in the story by the experiences of apprehension and confusion which Ijeoma endures in her husband's house. The contrast is achieved by her description of the way each partner unzips their clothes. In the case with Ndidi, Ijeoma experiences an intense craving that could only be expressed thus: "In one swift motion, she unzipped her skirt at the side zipper. The skirt loosened, and she brought my hand inside. She wore no undergarments, not even a slip" (p. 200). This is in contrast to the moment Chibundu unzips his pants thus:

> He made a sudden movement with his hands, and I watched as he began tugging at the front of his trousers. Then came that dreaded sound: just the sound of a man undoing his zipper, but it was as if a sharp object had somehow been jabbed into my ears. A roomful of alarm (p. 235).

Clearly, Ijeoma underscores her resentment for heterosexual couplings by literally connecting the mere act of Chibundu undoing his zipper to an image of great physical pain being inflicted on her.

It could be realised that *Under the Udala Trees* remarkably represents explicit erotic experiences of Ijeoma, sometimes with herself and most often with her female lovers. In such scenes, the narrator parallels the bodily pleasure to a sense of desired accomplishment. This simultaneously unveils the secrecy with which queer love in the Nigerian setting is discussed, while stressing all forms of eroticism as an essential part of life. The descriptions of the various queer sexual encounters are presented as a source of physical empowerment to the protagonist. The self-empowerment Ijeoma realises could be linked to what Lorde (1984) earlier describes as the understanding of control over the body and sexuality. This position of Ijeoma further contradicts Mama's belief that "A woman without a man is hardly a woman at all" (p. 181). However, right after each encounter, Ijeoma often metamorphoses into a period of traumatic anxiety. Comparing her queer erotic encounters to the two sex scenes she has with Chibundu, Ijeoma establishes a kind of strength that is inherently hers. She places herself on an equal scale of power with her queer partners. She and her queer partners develop an ability to share their erotic feelings with mutual respect which bridges any gap that may have perhaps existed among them. As such, no one partner is domineering. This idea contests the oppression Ijeoma sometimes suffers in her heterosexual marriage, where she is objectified for masculine pleasure. In this case, her worth is valued by the male child her husband expects her to have.

At the resolution, Ndidi imagines the utopia that promises hope for queer sexualities in their Nigerian setting. She does so by giving a vivid description of this *perfect world*. About this scene, Courtois (2018) maintains that the utopian

moment of imagination stimulates the likelihood of faith for a future social order that embraces all forms of love. He further interprets the repetition of the conjunction "and" in the list of Ndidi's offered options of love as a hope for endless possibilities. The pair become a symbol for other possible queer couplings in the future. Thus, Okparanta's novel could be seen as staging a platform that makes it clear that queer sexuality is not alien to the pre-colonial through to post-colonial Africa. So, in support of her efforts, she hopes, (in an epilogue to the novel) that her work will give a voice to the marginalised sexualities in Nigeria. The crust of this novel is the underlying theme of anticipation of a possible justice for these marginalised *Others*. Thus it may be said that Ijeoma's generation is a mode in generation, so how does her sexual behaviour become traditional?

Unpacking the Nuances of Mzilikazi's Self-identification for Companionship in *Men of the South*

It may be commonly understood that individuals are inherently social. Thus, the associations they make may be largely influenced by the cultural settings within which they find themselves. The culture of their societies may also influence the various meanings they ascribe to their identities. Therefore, unpacking the meanings queer people ascribe to a phenomenon in their lives establishes an interesting understanding of the topic under study. As such, it is worth mentioning that throughout his first-person narration, Mzi continues to lay emphasis on his queer sexual identity with the statement; "I am attracted to men as men are attracted to women … put a naked, logical Sli next to a naked, gay

guy, and no question about it – I will pick the gay guy (pp. 85-86). With this confession, one could deduce a sense of loneliness [as a queer identifying man in a heteronormative society] that this character hides under his robust Zulu physique. He tries to remain closeted and also, he depicts masculine features which seem to defeat the preconceived notion of gay men being effeminate. This attitude of his towards his sexuality is a result of the environment within which he finds himself. When he finally discovers he is queer oriented, he rather presents his sexuality as one alternative to finding true happiness in life.

Sidelined to the sexual rights stipulated by Runeborg and Anderson (2010) that; one is free to choose his or her sexual orientation since it remains the individual's own business, Mzi is dismayed by the fact that he cannot have a sexual identity void of society's heteronormative scrutiny. So, he wonders: "And why is my sexuality such an important factor? Why can't I just be a guy and keep my sexuality my own business? I would" (p. 86). His use rhetorical questions in the form of hypophora comes in handy since it allows him the opportunity to anticipate his audiences' concerns on the subject under discussion. Also, the continuous use of monologues enables the establishment of a tense atmosphere. Consequently, the reader is likely to entertain a mixed feeling of excitement and fright, particularly when this same protagonist pushes forth his laments in an attempt to emphasise the queer assertion that; "we're proud to be different" (Tyson, 1999, p. 336). In all, Mzi is advocating that his society should let him be. On the contrary, his wishes may never be fulfilled since "society has made it their business to talk about gay men's sexuality" (p. 86).

Mzi often breaks the fourth wall by either speaking to the audience directly in an aside or soliloquy since he cannot trust any of the other characters to keep his biggest secret safe. Thus, he is constantly striving to maintain a normal appearance within his heteronormative setting. This queer character moves through some phases of development in order to acquire a queer identity that is fully integrated within his overall concept of self. As such, he skillfully takes the reader through a mirage of incidents (aside from the first tripartite sexual experience) that lead to his queer self-actualisation. Inasmuch as it might be true, Mzi first of all finds himself in a state of a dilemma during the initial stages of being aware that queerness is of significance to him. He actually becomes increasingly aware of both his explicitly conscious and unconscious inclination towards anything related to queer sexuality. This cognisance manifests in his thoughts, actions as well as his emotional and psychological response when his *tsosti* friend starts stroking him in the middle of the night. Thus, Mzi acknowledges that:

> I had never done anything like this before, but what I do remember is that I enjoyed it, so I pretended to be asleep – I did not want him to think I was gay. And then again, up until then, I had never questioned my sexual orientation (p. 108).

The excerpt above illustrates the first direct erotic encounter with another man that spells out his coming out of the closet. Notably, the public declaration of an individual's queer sexual identity is part of the 'coming out' process. It could form the subject of a wealth of (auto) biographic fiction and is perhaps the central

area of most queer persons' lives. There, however, remains the greater interest in what coming out means to the character in question. Hence, the manner in which the discovery happens and what drives the process forward are the underlying features of his main concern. It could be said that his disclosure falls in line with the general argument that coming out for queer individuals begins with the person being unaware of their sexual orientation. In this story, Mzi's coming out process could be alluded to the road to Damascus experience. Here, the protagonist experiences a single moment of *recognition* of his "true" self, like a gestalt shift in which the label of the derided other is applied to his whole being for a complete self-identity. This may perhaps be indicative of the long and winding road to self-actualisation he embarks on. Along this path are series of realignments in the perception of who he is, evaluation of his personality, and commitment to the new identity which is driven by his affirmation; "I am 100% gay" (p. 85). Prior to his friend finding out, Mzi never entertains the thought of ever having to tell anyone about his queer sexuality. This is based on the assumption; *why answer when you have not been questioned*? Moreover, "it had happened once. No one needed to know, though. Besides, [he] had a girlfriend" (p. 107). These components amount to his keeping the queer experience to himself with the aim of falling back in line with the heteronormative order.

In view of the above, it is perhaps possible to ascertain that Mzi's traditional Zulu masculinity encourages men to strictly indulge in heterosexual couplings. This makes it difficult for Mzi to fully accept the possibility of having an erotic attraction to other men. He is constantly denying this aspect of his life

with the statement; "I did not see myself as gay," (p. 107). However, with all his masculine features, Mzi appears to be vulnerable to queer erotic acts. He often zooms into a state of turmoil right after each act while considering the encounters as a calamity that has befallen him. Taking his actions into consideration, one cannot overlook the fact that the "modern social and cultural shifts in the dynamics of sexuality and gender make it mandatory for men to be more restrained in their sexual expressions" (Gordon, 2018, p. 106). The ultimate mode of sending such a restrictive indicator across is to tag some aspects of male sexuality (such as same-sex intimacies or desires) as shameful. Therefore, in analysing Mzi's sexuality under this context, it is understandable to find him entertaining what may be termed *queer shaming [new term, Ijeoma also experiences same]*. This stigmatised shame associated with Mzi's first same-sex erotic encounter is echoed in his post-coital dysphoria that is spelt out in the following revelation:

> After it had happened, I was so ashamed of myself, I felt so unclean, I was so afraid of the overwhelming emotions that I panicked. Surely, real men were not supposed to do stuff like this? (p. 108).

His style of phrasing the preceding question in a declarative form is an emphatic way of simultaneously expressing his surprise and doubt at his own behaviour. In this extract, Mzi begins questioning the sanity of his identity. Noticeably, he has to deal with what Waldo and Kemp (1997) term "identity management." It may further be understood that the feeling of guilt compels him

to choose words, as well as take some initiatives that could have *straightened* his transgressive behaviour. Yet, he seems to make his audience understand that it rather reduces the internal conflict of knowing who he actually is. Instead of having a sense of relief at this point, Mzi rather feels more alienated from the *normal* persons in the society. This is because, unlike the protagonist in *Under the Udala Trees*, Mzi is well aware of the stigma associated with his queer sexuality. As used here, stigma refers to a pattern of serious social prejudice, discounting, discrediting, and discrimination that an individual experiences as a result of others' judgments about her or his personal characteristics or group membership (Goffman, 1963; El Banna and Murphy, 2009). Hence, having a concealable stigma could mean that the various routine self-disclosures could place one's self at a heightened risk for negative sanctions. This perception further informs the chain of rhetorical questions that follow Mzi's confession to his two best friends: "why did this have to happen to me? … why could I not just be like other men and be content with being attracted to women? ..." (p. 115).

The protagonist constantly entertains the thought of belonging to a marginalised society. This thought of belonging, coupled with the fact that Mzi is so full of himself, enables him keep an appearance to the extent that the stigma takes no direct toll on him. However, there still remains the conflict about his desirability of such an identity. In effect, the reader finds him increasing contact with the unsuspectingly queer Tshepo who equally hides his sexuality under the cloak of "one of the *tsotsi* types famous in the hood for a father to many neighborhood kids and for his macho lifestyle" (p. 107). The appearance these

two queer partners put up may defeat the general concept of gay men typically being effeminate. Subsequently, the mutuality of Mzi's disclosure proves difficult to maintain in this relationship.

One way he connects with Tshepo is to pick a nickname for him that ironically means 'I know what I am into'. Mzi chooses to call him Down Low Friend (abbreviated to DLF). He uses this as his symbolic interpretation of the shady aspect of his life and what keeping a discreet relationship means to him. Additionally, it creates the space for him to lighten the mood in context. The use of Tshepo's original name with all its associated public dirt usually means business to Mzi. So, his use of DLF also underscores his sense of belonging to a stigmatised group. On this, Galinsky et al (2003) are of the view that a stigmatised group revalues what was a negative label by appropriating the term to connote a positive label.

Moreover, it could be argued that the unrealistic sexual experiences Mzi engages in with Tshepo seem to largely be a product of the genre. In this instance, sex between the two characters happens much faster than one between the straight couple in the text. In such cases also, the speed with which the queer characters get together and the lack of reality in the sexual acts themselves could possibly be rated low by the audience. Nevertheless, with Tsepo, Mzi forsakes the reality of emotions for a pretty picture. Yet, he longs for a real male partner, someone he can love and who will love him back.

Further relying on the technique of aside, the reader is made to see how this sexual experience affects Mzi's self-image. At this point, it becomes essential that he embraces his queer sexual orientation. This is largely due to the fact that his general identity statements contribute effectively to his self-love and self-esteem. Obviously, embracing his own sexuality is not a very easy task to perform as it presents a conflict between his desires and the heterosexual ideals. Dealing with such a frustration and allowing time for his friends to adjust is parallel to dealing with what may be termed an approach-avoidance conflict with its associated stereotypes. Part of Mzi's confused state is perfectly recorded in the following words:

> Worse, after it had happened, I started finding myself drooling over other men's arms – and backs and then shaking myself and cursing myself inwardly for it" (p. 108).

Drooling over other men's arms indicates the various signs that betray him as a queer oriented person. Gradually, he begins to tolerate this desire for other men while maintaining his secret encounters with Tshepo. Thus, Mzi's coming out of the closet, as with most other queer persons, does not just end with this one-time involvement. It includes a range of occurrences that contend with a considerable amount of emotional and physical risks (Swan, 2002). His method of coming out of the closet [simply put, coming out (Cass, 1979)] is understood to be a form of "self-disclosure" (Herek, 2009b) that involves a life-span developmental process that has to do with telling his friends about his stigmatised self. By this definition, the reader may not be interested in the queer character's physical appearance like

weight and height since they constitute those traits that are often clearly apparent to the casual witness.

Navigating the stages of self-disclosure necessitates Mzi's consideration of both the costs and the benefits of the entire procedure. Apparently, he does not find a full self-disclosure very necessary. On this, Cain (1991) notes that just as there are reasons why people opt to disclose, so there are functions that keep people in the closet. For this reason, it is possible to say that although Mzi does not want to mingle work with his personal affairs, his primary reason for being closeted is his father. According to Herman (1993), at the most extreme level, people may stay in the closet through social avoidance. Therefore, in an attempt to pass, Mzi has to keep away from situations where people may find out about his queer involvements. This parallels a basic finding in the text; namely, his coming out evolves naturally from the normal flow of events in the story. Also, this particular scene inculcates the element of surprise since no one ever anticipates such an occurrence. As such when it happens all three characters are engulfed in a mood of shock and some amount of discomfort. All these translate into an intense silencing [censorship]. The silencing in this context is birthed from the one already existing between Mzi and Tshepo.

Despite the associated demerits, the text reveals some benefits of Mzi's disclosure. Perhaps, key among these is the removal of the stress that may have resulted from keeping this identity a secret. This could mean, disclosing his queer identity serves the therapeutic purpose of enhancing his self-esteem. The resultant of this is his being bold enough to assert a Zulu-queer sexual identity. So, it may

be concluded that Mzi's disclosure resolves some of his internal conflicts. A finding worthy of note is that, Mzi's accidental disclosure seems to be one way of advancing the anti-prejudiced agenda he champions at the beginning of his narration. In a parallel fashion, there seem to be no evidence that proves that the awareness of his sexuality completely erases the discriminatory character of Mfundo toward queer persons.

A closer look at the text reveals that the setting of the story unearths the theme of queer sexuality which often exists at the fringes of society as an abomination. This makes it impossible for Mzi and Tshepo to ever discuss their sexual relationship. Mzi records this as follows; "We never talked about what we were doing" (p. 108). It becomes evident that the bond they share is not as definable and easy to pin down as the love that exists within that unit. As he further recounts:

> What I did tell him was that I was considering getting married. He thought it was a brilliant idea. If I were married, no one will suspect a thing. Besides, Siyanda was right for me. She loved me, was intelligent, educated and beautiful … my father liked her. Was that not enough of a reason to marry her? (p. 108).

The above paragraph points clearly to the fact that Tshepo's queer experiences makes him well aware of the ins and outs of being queer. This puts him in a better position to advise Mzi to get himself a wife. A similar instance is reverberated in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* where gay men hide behind the mask of being in

flourishing heterosexual marriages while seeking sexual pleasures outside the confines of the heterosexual walls.

By definition, the flamboyant Mzilikazi is an exclusive queer-identifying man who enters into a heterosexual coupling, which is the most outward appearance of most romantic unions, out of the need to clown his sexuality. This phenomenon is mirrored in the novel, *Mr Loverman* where Barry masks his identity by *dressing up* in the heterosexual puritanical cloak for fifty years of his life. The same incident also appears in *The Yacoubian Building* (2002) where Hatim, the queer character, hides his identity under the watchful gaze of the local observers. Like Barry, Mzi manipulates the system in the exploration of his sexuality against the normative society. Moreover, the internalised homophobia Mzi harbors makes it easier for him to consider a *mixed-orientation marriage (approach avoidance)*.

In his bid to hide his sexuality, Mzi settles for a woman who is right for him and appreciated by his father. The aura of heterosexuality he creates around himself persists for a long while although there are instances where his queer identity escapes through the way he admires other men. Thus, the narrative paints a picture of a man in constant fear of the normative yard stick that continually monitors his every move. Reacting to this, Mzi unsuspectingly picks up the exigencies of the homophobic culture and imprints Siyanda. Thus, cast in the role of the narrator, he is biased in his description of Siyanda's mood and reaction [which are?] about their impending marriage. Also, it could be realised that throughout the narrative, Siyanda is denied the voice that allows her to speak from

her own point of view. Her husband rather speaks for her, a strategy that foregrounds Mzi while backgrounding her in the margins of the narrative. This gives her the perfect image of a used woman – a character who is not integral to the plot of the story. The focus here is more on the narrating character to the exclusion of some other significant characters. Therefore, since the narrative technique allows Mzi the opportunity to tell his story because he is a *man of the south*, it does not afford the same platform for the female characters, who equally play significant roles to the development of the main characters, to give an in-depth account of their side of the story. The out-turn is a stultifying string of information that may not necessarily be true. For instance, the reader is likely to question the trustworthiness of the statement; "to be honest, she was more serious about us than I was about her, and prior to that first gay experience, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to be with her long term" (pp. 107- 108). By this argument, it is possible Mzi generates an internalised homophobic attitude that catapults him into a mixed orientation marriage. He sees this as an alternative to the heterosexual being. He shows readers that Siyanda is not just happy about their impending marriage but she is actually over the moon and bursting with pride, particularly when Mzi figuratively puts "a big rock" (p. 108) on her finger.

Metaphorically, Mzi becomes an accessory that elevates his wife to the rank of a respectable married woman. The novel implies that marriage is more or less a way to make both men and women *feel complete.* Hence, Siyanda's decisions seem to revolve around getting that *perfect* husband. Further, Siyanda considers being married to Mzi as an achievement mainly because many men in

the country at that time hardly ever marry their partners. Most other long-term relationships appeared to be what Mzi describes as "a vat-en-sit" (p. 109). An example of such cases is the relationship between Sli and Mfundo. Mzi associates a wide array of negative meanings to Siyanda's emotional and physical expectations of their union. By this projection, Siyanda is subjected to the continuous filtration of her story through the male voice.

Still, Mzi chooses to maintain a relationship of convenience with a woman towards whom he has no sexual attraction for. Thus, starting a very long falsehood that inevitably leads to an unhappy ending. Undoubtedly, his marriage to Siyanda effectively makes her a *tongqi*, a term used exclusively in China to refer to women who are married to closeted gay men (Zhu, 2018, p. 2). In relating to his marriage, Mzi faces several issues such as needing to *pass* as a heterosexual. This bores down to self-denial of his queer attraction as one means of dealing with what I term the approach-avoidance conflict where the queer character hides under the guise of being married to a woman and fathering a set of twin girls to practice his queer identity. He thinks that perhaps, adopting a heterosexual lifestyle will help *correct* his sexual identity. In effect, he falls short of either an honest queer or a true heterosexual identity during his married life.

Thus, it could be said that Siyanda is presented as an anti-heroine, a character most would root against. This may however point at an advanced style of writing used by Wanner to hint at Mzi's ability to elicit the sympathy and support of the other characters as well as readers, while projecting himself as a victim of circumstances. This by no means is a suggestion that both Mzi and his

wife are part of society and will do what must be done to survive. In doing so, Mzi deceives a woman who also deems it obligatory to be a Mrs. Both characters fail to properly assess each other. In effect, one (Mzi) cheats whereas the other allows herself to be cheated. The deception is the result of a weight that compresses each partner into the heterosexual marriage box.

Mzi continues to build up a self-loathing apparel that compels him to outwardly act negatively towards homosexuality in an attempt to appear distinguished. For this reason, he provides a series of other scenes that exemplify instances of verbal self-deprecating irony. These illustrations are recognised on grounds of saying one thing but intending them to be the other. His outward attitude towards queer sexuality probably rests on the shoulders of a self-protective function. Hence, remaining in the closet serves as an important aspect of Mzi's life. Evidently, this moves in tandem with his internal conflict. Based on this, Mzi points out that; "In the past weeks, I had come to terms with my sexuality, but I was not ready for my father to know about it. Perhaps I would never be ready for this in this lifetime" (p. 122). His fear of victimisation from family members and a lack of acceptance from his socially conservative father are highlighted in his father's outburst when:

> a clip about same-sex marriages having finally been permitted in South Africa by the Constitutional Court came on, and a look of disgust came over his [father's] face as he said, "Voetsek! Ngqingili! Do they realise that this is Africa, coming to pollute this continent with their Eurocentric ideas? (p.122)

His father poses this rhetorical question mainly for the effect, rather than to elicit an answer. The question is actually intended as a cue to start a discourse that puts across the speaker's opinion on the topic at hand. He believes that since his son works with the NGOs that advocate for the rights of humans, he should be in a better position to tell that "these people" are infringing on their rights by introducing "these unAfrican ideas to this country" (p. 122). He goes on to criticise the Constitutional Court by stressing that the country is a Christian one. This provides the reader with a clear example of verbal irony that projects the protagonist's attitude in this tense atmosphere. Also, as the two engage in a dialogue on a serious theme in the country, Mzi manages to slip into an internal dialogue where he projects the hypocrisy of his father who talks about:

> What is or is not African when he could not find it in him to embrace other Africans unless they were South Africans. Or talking of Christianity, at that, when he himself had not been to church since [Mzi] was in standard 5 (p. 123).

He parallels his own hypocrisy to that of his father. This may be because although Mzi is not ready to fully come to terms with his sexuality, he fails to do what he terms "the right thing" (p. 123), by telling his father what may be wrong with that point of view. Mzi goes further to provide the reader with a clear example of a self-criticism. Here, he provides a commentary that bitterly refers to him as a well-educated adult who still fears his father in the same way he did when he was barely a young boy in his hometown. This is indicative of a sharp contrast between his physical and mental condition as a man who is over thirty

years still feeling like a little boy. The context created thus lies within the text and the reader's common knowledge concerning what has previously been revealed about his identity. Moreover, the contradiction of his dual self plays an important role in reflecting the general hypocrisy that surrounds the two characters. Their ability to ironise themselves further creates the paradox that perhaps nothing in their society is really as it appears to be. This excerpt further reflects the prevalence of verbal irony in the context of his relationship with his father and both men's general attitude towards queer discourse. The most evident of this lies in the statement: "That day I had nodded in agreement and mumbled something about the evil of gayness" (p. 123). The context on the basis of which the reader is able to identify this irony lies in the knowledge of the expression; "mumbled something", its canonical meaning and usage, as well as the reader's ability to infer from previous knowledge and understanding of the main protagonist's sexual orientation. Thus, the conventionally anticipated reaction of Mzi could have been in defense of queer persons. On this basis the verbal irony may serve as an instrument of narrative satire. This equally enables Mzi's audience to visualise his tone of voice.

As the story unfolds, the need arises for Mzi to boldly tell "[Siyanda], tell [his] mom, and perhaps try to find a job out of town so everything cools down – and hope to God [his] father doesn't find out" (p. 118). Interestingly, it could be argued that Mzi's perception that his external relatives generally lack the sensitivity and the desired knowledge to accept queer preferences makes him settle for selective disclosure. This is foregrounded in some of his repetitive

dialogues which are stated in the subsequent parts of this discussion. After several failed attempts, Mzi finally manages to break the news to his wife that he is one of "*those people*" (p. 119), a phrase first used by Siyanda. The manner with which he finally comes out is a demonstration of the bulk of the secret on him. This is contextually motivated by an attempt to refer to queer persons as the *Others* in the society, while associating the phrase with a notion of relative distance. It becomes interesting then that Siyanda sets the pace for a necessary evaluation of the situation that allows the discussion of this serious theme.

Pursuant to this consideration, the revelation makes Siyanda feel inadequate. The knowledge of her spouse's true orientation makes her feel bereft of a credible measure of what may be real or imagined. Like most other identity issues, the realisation of the deception behind this marriage is compounded with some psychological pains they both must contend. For her reaction, she climbs onto Mzi and starts punching him till she is exhausted. This scene suggests that the attendant shame and guilt coupled with all other queer gravitated negativity is projected onto his wife. Mzi is compelled to apologise to his wife for lying to her and to himself for so long that he "had even had children with her in an attempt to be *normal*" (p.121). His ability to have a set of twins with Siyanda implies that he still needs a heterosexual encounter to earn the name 'father'. However, Siyanda thinks about Mzi's confession and attributes it to Satan trying to cause them "upheavals" (p. 120). She equally believes the only solution to their problem is for Mzi to undergo some prayer sessions that will "get the devil out of [their] marriage" (p. 120). This corroborates Adamczyk and Pitt's (2009) assertion that

people are led to take on a homophobic attitude out of the fear that there is some divine reprobation that awaits them.

Like her husband, Siyanda has to either find her own true path or dare come out to the public. She first proposes to be his co-addict by involving herself in a bigamous relationship with Mzi and his gay partner, so long as he did it in private. This would have rather necessitated a feeling of inadequacy in her. Nonetheless, Mzi insists on finding the truth of his life, void of any interference, by getting a divorce and relocating to Cape Town. This compels the disappointed Siyanda to opt for an annulment – her reward for being a cover story that protected his integrity – so that no record of their marriage will ever exist anywhere. The decision she takes is probably logical since the expectations she has of a marriage to a man she views as perfect are never met. Mzi portrays the broken-hearted Siyanda to be relatively quick at making this final decision. Later in the novel, we find her all happy with her new life. And this could possibly prove Mzi right when he earlier claimed Siyanda was more interested in the appearance and the benefit of the marriage provides her than being truly interested in the marriage itself.

It is interesting to note that the love and sexual pleasure that Mzi seeks from other men may be an attempt at normalising his queer self. Unfortunately, his inability to completely come out of the closet builds up tension and nervous energy within him. As such, the couple agrees he relocates to another town where he can feel free to explore his true self. His wife also gets the opportunity to go about her regular activities without the questioning eyes of people who know

them. On the whole, the success of his coming out probably lies in the reception of his identity by the heterosexual individuals who are close to him.

Notably, Mzi's relocation seem to be a positive decision. This may be because Cape Town celebrates difference while necessitating the atmosphere Mzi has long been searching for. On this, Matebeni (2009) is of the view that Cape Town has notoriously turned into the gay capital of Africa in the midst of all the intense homophobia. This town provides him with the luxury of not having to negotiate any form of belonging. The relieve Mzi feels in this town is manifested in his comment below:

> For the first time in ages, I am really and truly free. I do not think anyone can ever understand this type of freedom unless they have been married to an abusive partner and the partner had just died. Or, like me, they have been living a lie and have finally become true to themselves. Living a lie was what my life and marriage in Johannesburg had been (p. 127).

This excerpt is illustrative of the fact that, now he is free to be the person he had always been looking forward to. Society has created a psychological cage within which he remains trapped for a substantial number of years. A case he seems to have finally freed himself from when he fully accepts to be queer oriented. This freedom reaches its peak when he meets Thulani. Although Mzi is now happy to be free, his life is still determined by the fact that he cannot just go "prowling gay clubs for prospective partners" (p.128). Therefore, the freedom he seeks might be

perceived as an illusion because of "society's skewed expectations of what an African man should be like" (p. 127).

All the same, Mzi admits to acting like "a kid in a candy store. Or a child with authoritarian parents sent to boarding school" (p. 128) when he gets to Cape Town. With this new attitude, he still remains very cautious enough not to mingle work with his private lifestyle. The day Mzi decides to stop searching for a true long-term partner is the day he meets "*him*" (p. 133). The two new partners seem to act like true lovebirds. Thulani, his new partner, appears to have all the qualities Mzi wants in a partner. First of all, he is a man, neatly dressed, and extremely attractive enough to cause Mzi's mouth to stay opened with astonishment. What makes Mzi like him more is the fact that, Thulani provides him with something more than the "thug womaniser" (p. 28) Tshepo had been. The first time Thulani pays Mzi a visit seems like a real first date. Mzi is all flirty with Thulani and uses the metaphorical phrase "cocky little shithead" (p.137) for his new found love. Ironically, it is this same feeling that makes Mzi appreciate his new partner the most, thus foregrounding his earlier statement that: "this one, I wanted to cherish" (p. 135). Although they do not live together, the two men act like a typical heterosexual couple will do: cooking together, brushing against each other in the house, and just cuddling. One may observe that Mzi's sense of completeness is articulated in the interactive erotic encounters he has with Thulani. This is further expressed in the connection they both have towards each other. Mzi is able to discuss issues he has never mentioned to his two best friends with Thulani. His appreciation of Thulani implies that Thulani is that perfect

person he had spent all his life looking for. Thulani seems to provide Mzi with an assurance of hope; the hope that Mzi's children will definitely accept him for who he is. Additionally, Thulani proves very supportive when Mzi's father dies.

A retrospective report on the death of his father probably lifts the burden of having to disclose his identity to his father off Mzi's shoulders. Thus, putting his feelings and thoughts together, Mzi seems to create a situational irony in the sense that, although he now finds freedom, total happiness eludes him. In this case, Mzi is likely to agree with Grace in Okparanta's short story, "Grace", when she points to the fact that: "happiness is like water, … We're always trying to grab onto it, but it's always slipping between our fingers" (p. 68). Moreover, Mzi seems to have developed slender fingers "with lots of gaps in between" (Okparanta, 2013, p. 68). Unfortunately, it seems that what Mzi actually wants is not what he can do but what society can do in his favour. In effect, although Thulani wants to be by his side all through the funeral, Mzi will not have that because as he emphatically points out: "Being gay in the township is hard enough but try letting your rural relatives know that and … Hey, you know…" (p. 146). He does not portray himself as the kind of queer activist who will go about "wearing a T-shirt with '100% Zulu Gay' written on it" (p. 147). The context is thus created by the reader's common social experience and the presumption that Mzi's decision to remain discreet is impacted more by the fear of loss rather than any prospect of potential gain.

As he watches Thulani efficiently organising things for him, he wonders why their feelings for each other remain an anomaly for black society even in the

twenty-first century. Several series of unanswered questions keep running through his mind, the most important of which is: "Would we ever be free to love or would we always be exiles in our own land?" [Ndidi's utopia seems to provide the best solution to this problem] (p. 148). Perhaps, Thulani would have been in a better position to answer this question and help Mzi overcome his fears. However, Mzi does not seem ready to lose all the social grace he has accumulated over the years.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to assess some of the literary representations which give meaning to the queer relationships in the texts. In doing so, the chapter was organized under three thematic structures with each section focusing on one of the texts. Interestingly, it was found that the romantic attractions developed between the queer characters in each of the texts are not entirely connected to their queer erotic experiences. They are mainly cultivated from a series of companionship they share with each other. This creates a special bond between each queer couple in the texts. The comparison they make between the heterosexual couplings and their queer experiences may perhaps establish companionship as a necessary ingredient for most romantic relationships. In view of this, I also tried to look at some metaphors like the kaikai drink as used by Nididi, Ijeoma's second queer partner in *Under the Udala Trees* and Mzi, in *Men of the South* who is used as an accessory that elevates his wife's social standing. I further considered some other

literary representations and their contributions to the understanding of the portrayal of queer characters in the two texts.

This chapter further revealed that in an attempt to be seen as normal, both queer characters indulge in heterosexual marriages. Their heterosexual marriages are mainly geared towards avoiding the stigma attached to queer sexualities. The researcher also tried to pay attention to some of the descriptions these protagonists associate to both their heterosexual marriages and their queer relationships.

The discussion further focused on the way the queer characters in the texts subconsciously form special erotic opinions about each other in the same manner as heterosexual couples will do. The queer characters demonstrate how possible it is to have a queer erotic sexual encounter. This they do by providing some graphic queer erotic scenes in the narrations. It was realised that even though the queer characters seem to feel satisfied with their queer partners, they lack the ultimate sense of fulfillment. This may be because they cannot freely express their sexuality in the public space of their heterosexual settings.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the queer companionship and some literary representations queer sexualities play in Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* and Wanner's *Men of the South.* The present chapter draws the curtain on the entire thesis. In this chapter, a summary of the thesis is presented. This is followed by highlights of the key findings and the recommendations for further research.

Summary of Research

This study focuses on queer sexual identities in the novels of Chinelo Okparanta and Zukiskwa Wanner namely: *Under the Udala Trees* and *Men of the South* respectively. The selection of the texts is informed by the target characteristics that drive the research and which are exclusive to these two novels. The prime concern of this study is to examine how the queer characters in these two novels self-construct their identities and the various roles they play in the texts. In doing so, the study also touches on how some of the other characters in the text perceive these queer characters. The analysis in chapters three and four is carried out by mainly looking at the first-person point of view employed in the two texts as well as some literary representations of queer sexualities in the texts. The thesis also considers the queer protagonists' monologues and their dialogues

with other characters in the texts, their dramatic actions, their sexual encounters and their various significance.

The theoretical framework for the study has been queer theory as explained by scholars such as Gieseking (2008). The choice of this framework is justified by the fact that it is all embracing of any form of sexuality other than the normative heterosexuality. Hence, it validates the existence of queer oriented persons in the society as portrayed in the two texts for the study. This approach is found to be more appropriate in answering the research questions which are:

3. How do the queer characters in the selected texts self-identify as queer in heteronormative societies?

4. What literary representations do queer sexualities play in the texts under study?

The works reviewed in chapter two reveal that scholars who have attempted to study these two texts were mostly concerned with other thematic concepts. Specifically, works on *Under the Udala Trees* focused more on the novel as a bildungsroman while the discussions on *Men of the South* were sidelined to issues on masculinities in the South African setting. In view of this, this study interrogates how the queer characters in the two selected texts reconstruct their identities outside the context of the marginalised *Other*.

Summary of Research Findings

Regardless of the genders of the two queer protagonists in the selected texts, it was noticed that there seem to be a great deal of overlap in the meanings they associate to their sexual identities. Hence, the analysis of the texts brings to light some similarities between these protagonists' identity construction. An important finding in the research is the relevance of the narrative voices in the identity formation processes of the queer protagonists. While the first-person narrative perspective allows the queer protagonists to give the readers a first-hand information of their personal experiences, it appears to be quite biased in the depiction of the other characters. Therefore, the multiplicity of voices as used in *Men of the South* give the reader some relevant details which the queer protagonists might have omitted.

Another major finding in this study is that, the queer characters in both texts link their queer identities to their biological make-up. They trace the conception of this sexual orientation to their childhood days when their whole lives and bodies are still at the developmental stages. Though they both subscribe to an innate queer sexual identity, neither of them is able to strongly argue for a "born that way" identity. Thus, parking the etiology of their queer orientations to the genetics suggests that queer sexuality may be equally immutable and intractable. In this case, they seem to present their queer sexualities as who they are rather than one of the possible options. It was found that the queer characters mostly base on this argument in order to establish the theme of queer sexuality as something beyond human choice.

Moreover, the protagonists of the two texts seem to create a link between the absence of their fathers during the peak of their developmental stages and their queer sexual orientations. Explaining further, it was found that the queer protagonists perceive their fathers' attitudes towards them as rejecting. In effect, it could be suggested that these protagonists fail to fully identify with their fathers' position as their primary masculine role models. Also, the physical and social disconnect between the fathers and their children created vacuums that needed to be refilled. It is largely for this reason that both protagonists characterise their queer sexualities as defensive detachments from little hurt children who yearn for true companionship. Hence, it may be concluded that the queer preferences they make are probably alternative solutions for their unhappy childhood experiences. This lays emphasis on the relevance of the fathers' care and affection in the lives of their growing children. Unfortunately, both fathers in the texts die without ever getting to know about their children's queer sexualities.

Further, their identity construction processes are strongly connected to other specific early childhood experiences that are gender non-conforming. These experiences may be equated to some environmental and psychological influences that compel both characters to find other characters of the same sex to be sexually appealing than the opposite sex characters. Consequently, it could be said that the awareness of their queer identities significantly begins with the necessary ingredient which is; an admiration for another boy (in the case of Mzi) or for another girl (in the case of Ijeoma). They keep this feeling hidden for a while until they find characters who are equally queer and with whom they are compactible.

The process they undergo seem to defy the proposition of an ingrained queer orientation. It probably proves that the characters' identities may be their own discoveries, based on some attractions they exhibit towards people of the same sex. That notwithstanding, the texts present the queer sexuality as enhancing the psychological well-being and self-esteem of the characters concerned.

Another finding worthy of note that cuts across both texts is that the storylines of the queer families they establish seem to reverse the recurring heteronormative love plots in both novels. That is to say; the two queer protagonists engage in heterosexual marriages as a camouflage to their queer sexual identities. However, when it blows up in their face, they gather the courage to come out completely and accept their queer identities.

The queer protagonists' intention is probably to play both parental roles with the help of their queer partners to the children they have in their heterosexual marriages. Such a substitution of a queer couple for a heterosexual couple may repeat similar traumatic experiences the protagonists earlier had due to the absence of one or both of their own heterosexual parents. It was observed that while Ijeoma's daughter grows to accept her mother's identity, Mzi's hope lingers on Thulani's assurance that his children will grow up to be more accepting of their father for who he is and not define him by his sexuality. This might serve as Mzi's primary advocacy in the text.

Correspondingly, Ijeoma and Mzi use their first-person narrative perspectives to show the reader how they are able to manipulate the other characters into accepting their queer sexualities. Their outward appearance or

attitude towards queer sexuality seem to rest on the shoulders of a self-protective function. Besides, being in the minority could disarm them of any power and will to influence the expected outcome. To highlight this idea, Ijoema seeks a moral approval of her queer sexuality by suggesting the possibility of alternative interpretations to the Bible stories Mama reads to her.

Another major contribution realised in this study is the attention the various narrators pay to proving how possible it is to have a queer erotic encounter. They emphasise this proposition with graphic depictions of sex scenes where each queer partner seems to be fulfilled. This possibly foregrounds the queer assertion that romantic and sexual attraction should not always be pigeonholed to the opposite sex. At the same time, they seek to prove that African sexuality is as varied as the individuals who inhabit the continent. The sex scenes are presented in such a manner that espouses the theme of equality among the queer couples in both texts. It is observed that in heterosexual romances, the concern is often the case that one character seems to wield all of the power in the relationship and thus, the interactions between the couple might not truly be equal in a way that both parties can enjoy. On this, it appears the two queer protagonists place themselves as symbolic to the hope of attaining a possible meaningful queer African society.

Additionally, while the queer depictions in the texts seek to establish some thematic concepts, they equally reinforce some literary representations which help in the overall development of the plot. One major literary device connected to the queer sexualities in both texts is the metaphor. This is mostly used to explain the

protagonists' shift from the generally accepted heterosexual identity to their preferred queer identity. The metaphor is also used to explain some major decisions and actions these two characters take. For instance, Ijoema in *Under the Udala Trees* uses the story of Joseph in the Bible as a metaphorical representation of all the troubles she undergoes in affirming her sexualities. Like Joseph, she learns from her past mistakes while acclamatising to her current conditions. In another instance, Mzi's metaphorical description of Thulani as his ideal partner in *Men of the South* becomes the same reason for which he chooses to maintain a queer relationship with this new partner of his.

Recommendations for Further Research

The lack of resources caused partly by the Covid-19 break and also by the financial demands meant that I had to focus on conducting a queer analysis of two texts: one from South Africa and another from Nigeria. Though, a look at texts from each of the various regions of the continent would have helped my undertaking. This is mainly because, the closure of universities and public libraries meant that I had to operate within smaller circles and limited contact with materials that may have helped in this course. Also, money demanded by potential research assistants who could have aided in this venture was also beyond my current financial standing.

Moreover, the time that would have been needed to complete a task of such demanding nature would have seen me go beyond the planned schedule between

my supervisor and I. The scope of the research was therefore tweaked to fit into said schedule.

One significant area of interest that has been generated from this research is conducting a queer analysis of all the texts of one particular African writer to know the trend they adopt in their depictions of queer sexualities and what informs such portrayals. For instance, a researcher could examine the portrayal of queer characters in the works of a writer like Chinelo Okparanta in order to draw a valid conclusion about her style of writing on issues of queer sexualities.

References:

Achebe, C. (1958). *Things fall apart*. London, UK: Heinemann.

Achebe, C. (1961). *No longer at ease* (Vol. 3). Nairobi, Kenya: East African Publishers.

Achebe, C. (2013). *Arrow of god*. London, UK: Penguin.

Adamczyk, A., & Pitt, C. (2009). Shaping attitudes about homosexuality: The role of religion and cultural context. *Social Science Research*, *38*(2), 338-351.

Adichie, C. N. (2006). *Half of a yellow sun*. New York, NY: Alfred a Knopf Incorporated.

Adichie, C. N. (2014). *Americanah*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Gyldendal A/S.

Adjei, D. O. (2016). *Sex and sexuality in the novels of Ayi Kwei Armah.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of English, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana.

Ajibade, G. O. (2013). Same-sex relationships in Yoruba culture and orature. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *60*(7), 965-983.

Ahlstedt, S. (2016). *The feeling of migration. narratives of queer intimacies and partner migration.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden.

Al Aswany, A. (2002). *The Yacoubian building. Trans. Davis Humphrey.* London, UK: HarperCollins.

Al-Samman, H. (2008). Out of the closet: Representation of homosexuals and lesbians in modern Arabic literature. *Journal of Arabic Literature*, *39*(2), 270-310.

Al-Shaykh, H. (2010). *Women of sand and myrrh*. London, UK: A&C Black.

Alvarez, L., & Jaffe, K. (2004). Narcissism guides mate selection: Humans mate assortatively, as revealed by facial resemblance, following an algorithm of "self seeking like". *Evolutionary Psychology*, *2*(1), 177-194.

Agukoronye, O. C. (2001). Landscape practices in traditional Igbo society, Nigeria. *Landscape Research*, *26*(2), 85-98.

Aidoo, A. A. (1994). *Changes: A love story*. Accra, Ghana: Sub.

Aidoo, A. A. (1997). *Our sister killjoy*. Harlow, Uk: Longman Publishing Group.

Akeju, D. O. (2013). Africa, internal migration. *Community Level Intervention for Preeclampsia and Eclampsia*, 1-4.

Alexander, J. C., & Seidman, S. (2001). Culture and society: Contemporary debates. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Amadiume, I. (2015). *Male daughters, female husbands: Gender and sex in an African society*. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd.

Amin, K. (2016). Against queer objects. *Feminist Formations*, *28*(2), 101-111.

Anderson, E. (2008). "Being masculine is not about who you sleep with...:" heterosexual athletes contesting masculinity and the one-time rule of homosexuality. *Sex roles*, *58*(1-2), 104-115.

Andrews, G. (2019). The queer son and the declining patriarch in Post-Apartheid South African literature: The subversive symbol of water in Mark Behr's Kings of the water. *Journal of Literary Studies*, *35*(2), 85-104.

Arac de Nyeko, M. (2006). Jambula Tree. *African Love Stories: An Anthology*, 164-177.s

Armstrong, P. B. (2002). The Narrator in the closet: The ambiguous narrative voice in Howards End." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies 47*(2), 306-328.

Barakat, H. (1995). *The Stone of Laughter*. trans. Sophie Bennett. New York, NY: Interlink.

Beemyn, B. and Eliason, M. (1996). *Queer studies: A lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender anthology*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Bellassai, M. (2017). Everything is awful and other observations. New York, NY: Atria Books.

Berlant, L., & Warner, M. (1998). Sex in public. *Critical Inquiry*, *24*(2), 547-566.

Breen, M. S., Blumenfeld, W. J., Baer, S., Brookey, R. A., Hall, L., Kirby, V., ... & Wilson, N. (2001). Introduction: "There is a person here": An interview with Judith Butler. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, *6*(1-2), 7-23.

Bezhanova, O. (2014). *Growing up in an inhospitable world: Female bildungsroman in Spain*. Spain: Asociación Internacional de Literatura y Cultura Femenina Hispánica.

Bird, P. A. (2000). The Bible in Christian ethical deliberation concerning homosexuality: Old Testament contributions. *Homosexuality, science, and the" plain sense" of Scripture*, 142-176.

Blumenfeld, W. J., & Breen, M. S. (2001). Introduction to the special issue: Butler Matters: Judith Butler's impact on feminist and queer studies since Gender trouble. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, *6*(1-2), 1-5.

Brescoll, V. L., Glass, J., & Sedlovskaya, A. (2013). Ask and ye shall receive? The dynamics of employer-provided flexible work options and the need for public policy. *Journal of Social Issues*, *69*(2), 367-388.

Browne, K., & Nash, C. (2016). Queer methods and methodologies. *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of gender and sexuality studies*, 1-5.

Butler, J. (1988). Performate acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre journal*, *40*(4), 519-531.

Butler, J., Abelove, H., & Barale, A. M. (1991). Imitation and gender insubordination. *Inside/out: Lesbian theories, gay theories*, 13-31.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble, feminist theory, and psychoanalytic discourse*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "sex."*. New York, USA: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2000). Critically queer. In. P. du Gay, J. Evans & P. Redman (Eds). *Identity: A reader* (pp. 108-117). London, UK: Sage Publications.

Cain, R. (1991). St igma management and gay identity development. *Social work*, *36*(1), 67-73.

Cain, F. L. (2020). Functionalisation or classification? Public perceptions on sodomites in The Old Bailey Proceedings. *Trent Notes on Linguistics*, *2*, 1-12.

Carrier, J. M., & Murray, S. O. (1998). Woman-woman marriage in Africa. In Murray, S. O., & Roscoe, W. (Eds.). *Boy-wives and female husbands: Studies of African homosexualities* (pp. 225-226). New York, NY: St Martins Press.

Cassano, D. (2018). The Biafra war: Cultural memory in two novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chinelo Okparanta. (Master's thesis, Dalarana University Center for African Studies). Retrieved from https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1232746/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *4*(3), 219-235.

Clifford, J. (2001). The female "Bildungsromane" of Beatriz Guido. *Hispanófila*, (132), 125-139.

Champagne, J. G. (2013). Foucault and queer (Un) historicism. *PMLA*, *128*(4), 1005-1006.

Connell, R. W. (1992). A very straight gay: Masculinity, homosexual experience and the dynamics of gender. *American Sociological Review* 57(6): 735–751.

Courtois, C. (2018). "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: It is abomination!": Lesbian (Body-) Bildung in Chinelo Okparanta's Under the Udala Trees (2015). *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, *40*(40.2), 119-133.

Courtois, C. (2019). "Revolutionary politics" and poetics in the Nigerian bildungsroman: The coming-of-age of the individual and the nation in Chigozie Obioma's the fishermen (2015). *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*.

Cowell, N. M. (2011). Public discourse, popular culture and attitudes towards homosexuals in Jamaica. *Social and Economic Studies*, 31-60.

Cruz-Gutiérrez, C. (2018). Infecting mind/body dialectics: Self-emancipation through insubordiNation in Chika Unigwe's Night Dancer. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1-15.

Darko, A. (1995). *Beyond the horizon*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

David, S. T. (2019). *Biafra as third space: Reading the politics of belonging in Nigeria-Biafra Civil War Literature*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University. Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Davis, A. K. (2015). Epiphenomenology of the closet: Feeling and fashioning sexuality in everyday life. *Sexualities, 18*(8), 959-979.

Da Costa Santos, G. G. (2013). Decriminalising homosexuality in Africa: Lessons from the South African experience. *Chapter, 11*, 313-37.

De Lauretis, T. (1991). *Queer theory: Lesbian and gay sexualities*. Indiana University Press.

Derrida, J. (2017). The law of genre. In *Acts of literature*. London, UK: Routledge.

Devi, S. (1978). *The world of homosexuals*. Connecticut, USA: Lawrence Verry Incorporated.

De Jesus Santana, R. B. O silêncio como sintoma do trauma colonial: uma análise do romance Hibisco Roxo, de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. *Ancestralidades, Conquistas e Resistência em Tempos de Intolerância, 16(A), 1-20.*

Diessel, H. (2012). 90. Deixis and demonstratives. In Diessel, H. (Ed.), *Handbücher zur Sprach-und Kommunikationswissenschaft/ Handbooks of*

Linguistics and Communication Science (pp. 2407-2432). Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter Mouton.

Dibia, J. (2005). *Walking with shadows*. Birmingham, UK: Black Sands Books.

Disch, L. (1999). Judith Butler and the politics of the performative. *Political Theory*, *27*(4), 545-559.

Dlamini, N. (2016). Negotiating legitimacy and normalization of queer desires in Sello Duiker's The quiet violence of dreams. *Journal of the African Literature Association*, *10*(1), 68-79.

Dlamini, N. (2018). Domesticity and queer desires in Zukiswa Wanner's Men of the South and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's The thing around your neck. *Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa (JGIDA)*, *7*(Special Issue 1), 27-43.

Dollimore, J. (2018). *Sexual dissidence*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Duiker, K. S. (2001). *The quiet violence of dreams*. Cape Town, SA: Kwela Books.

Duiker, K. S. (2013). *Thirteen Cents: A Novel*. Ohio, USA: Ohio University Press.

Dunton, C. (1989). "Wheyting be dat?" The treatment of homosexuality in African literature. *Research in African Literatures*, *20*(3), 422-448.

Dunton, C., & Palmberg, M. (1996). *Human rights and homosexuality in Southern Africa (No. 19)*. Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute.

Ekotto, F. (2005). *Chuchote pas trop: Roman*. Paris, France: Editions L'Harmattan.

El Banna, A., & Murphy, S. A. (2009). Identity stigmatization. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities & Nations*, *9*(1).

Endsjø, D. Ø. (2020). The other way around? How freedom of religion may protect LGBT rights. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 1-20.

Evaristo, B. (2014). *Mr. Loverman*. Brooklyn, NY: Akashic Books.

Fatheuer, T. (2011) *Buen Vivir: A brief introduction to Latin America's new concepts for the good life and the rights of nature. Heinrich Böll Foundation Publication Series on Ecology*. Berlin, Germany: Heinrich Böll Foundation

Ferriss, S., & Young, M. (2006). *Chick lit: The new woman's fiction*. London, UK: Routledge.

Fineman, M. A., Jackson, J. E., & Romero, A. P. (Eds.). (2016). *Feminist and queer legal theory: intimate encounters, uncomfortable conversations*. London, UK: Routledge.

Fraiman, S. (1993). *Unbecoming women: British women writers and the novel of development*. Columbia University Press.

Frateur, A. (2019). "Adam and Eve, not Eve and Eve"?: Towards a Space for the Christian legitimacy of female same-sex love in Chinelo Okparanta's Under the Udala Trees. (Master's dissertation, Ghent University).

Retrieved from https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/789/853/RUG01-002789853_2019_0001_AC.pdf

Frenkel, R., & MacKenzie, C. (2010). Conceptualizing 'post-transitional' South African literature in English. *English Studies in Africa*, *53*(1), 1-10.

Friedman, R. C., & Downey, J. I. (2000). Psychoanalysis and sexual fantasies. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *29*(6), 567-586.

Freud, S. (1977). *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis*. New York, NY: WW Norton & Company.

Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: 3 volumes*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Galinsky, A. D., Hugenberg, K., Groom, C., & Bodenhausen, G. (2003). The reappropriation of stigmatizing labels: Implications for social identity. *Research on managing groups and teams*, *5*, 221-256.

Gartner, J. L. (2015). *Incredibly queer: sexuality-based Asylum in the European Union: Transatlantic Perspectives on Diplomacy and Diversity*. New York, NY: Humanity in Action Press.

Georgiadis, J. R., & Kringelbach, M. L. (2012). The human sexual response cycle: brain imaging evidence linking sex to other pleasures. *Progress in Neurobiology*, *98*(1), 49-81.

Gieseking, J. (2008). Queer theory. *Encyclopedia of Social Problems.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Girard, R., & Deceit, D. (1976). The novel: Self and other in literary structure, trans. *Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, 1965)*, 2-3.

Gloppen, S., & Rakner, L. (2019). The perfect enemy: From migrants to sexual minorities. *CMI Brief*.

Gloppen, S., & Rakner, L. (2020). LGBT rights in Africa. In *Research Handbook on Gender, Sexuality and the Law*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Green, R. (2010). Sexual preference for 14-year-olds as a mental disorder: You can't be serious!!. *Archives of sexual behavior*, *39*(3), 585-586.

Goffman, E. (1963). Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Gordon, A. M. (2018). How men experience sexual shame: The development and validation of the male sexual shame scale. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, *26*(1), 105-123.

Gooren, L. (2011). Is there a hormonal basis for human homosexuality?. *Asian Journal of Andrology*, *13*(6), 793.

Gurnah, A. (1987). *Memory of Departure*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Hall, D. E. (2003). Introduction: What "Queer Theories" Can do for You. In Hall, D. E. (Ed.), *Queer Theories* (pp. 1-18). London, UK: Palgrave.

Halperin, D. M. (1997). *Saint Foucault: Towards a gay hagiography*. Oxford, Uk: Oxford Paperbacks.

Halperin, D. M. (2019). Queer Love. *Critical Inquiry*, *45*(2), 396-419.

Harris, W. C. (2005). Queer eye on the prize: The stereotypical sodomites of summer. *The New Queer Aesthetic on Television: Essays on Recent Programming*, 20-42.

Hanson, E., Moon, M., Barale, M. A., & Goldberg, J. (1999). *Out takes: Essays on queer theory and film*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Harper, P. B., McClintock, A., Muñoz, J. E., & Rosen, T. (1997). Queer transexions of race, nation, and gender: An introduction. *Social Text*, 1-4.

Hatzfeldt, S. (2011). Queer deconstruction of heteronormative identity: Imponderabilia. Retrieved from http://imponderabillia.socanth.cam.ac.uk . On October 4th, 2019.

Hawley, J. C. (2017). In transition: Self-expression in recent African LGBTIQ narratives. *Journal of the African Literature Association*, *11*(1), 120-134.

Heinämaa, S. (2017). Love and admiration (wonder): Fundaments of the self-other relations. *Emotional experiences: Ethical and social significance*, 155-74.

Herek, G. M. (2009b). Hate crimes and stigma-related experiences among sexual minority adults in the United States: Prevalence estimates from a national probability sample. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 24(1), 54-74.

Herman, N. J. (1993). Return to sender: Reintegrative stigma-management strategies of ex-psychiatric patients. *Journal of contemporary ethnography*, *22*(3), 295-330.

Herzer, M. (1986). Kertbeny and the nameless love. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *12*(1), 1-26.

Huchu, T. (2010). *The hairdresser of Harare*. Johannesburg, SA: Jacana Media.

Jackson, R. L., Drummond, D. K., & Camara, S. (2007). What is qualitative research? *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, *8*(1), 21-28.

Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Janicka, I. (2015). Queering Girard – de-freuding Butler: A theoretical encounter between Judith Butler's gender performativity and René Girard's mimetic theory. *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, *22*(1), 43-64.

Jell-Bahlsen, S. (2008). *The water goddess in Igbo cosmology: Ogbuide of Oguta Lake*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Khan, M., & Haider, K. (2015). Girls' First Love; Their Fathers: Freudian Theory Electra Complex. *Research Journal of Language, Literature, and Humanities 2 (11)*, 1-4.

Kaigai, K. (2014). Sexuality, power and transgression: Homophobia in Abdulrazak Gurnah's memory of departure. *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*, *1*(1-2), 59-70.

Kenani, S. (2011). *For honour and other stories*. Cape Town, SA: eKhaya.

Klemperer, M. (2007). Home-grown chick lit. *The Witness Online*, *12*(03), 1-5.

Klinken, A. V. (2017). Culture wars, race, and sexuality: A nascent Pan-African LGBT-affirming Christian movement and the future of Christianity. *Journal of Africana Religions*, *5*(2), 217-238.

Leavy, P. (2014). *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Leith-Ross, S. (1939). *African women: A study of the Ibo of Nigeria*. London, UK: Faber & Faber, limited.

Lemon, J. (1992). Popular culture and the 'crisis of masculinity'. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Sciences in Southern Africa*, *11*(2).

Levine, C. (2003). Introduction: Structure, development, and identity formation. *Identity: An International Journal of theory and research*, *3*(3), 191-195.

Lindsay, L. A. (2003). Money, marriage, and masculinity on the colonial Nigerian railway. *Men and masculinities in modern Africa*, 138-55.

Littlefield, J. (2016). *Understanding homosexual identities in modern young adult literature: An analysis of rainbow boys, openly straight, and boy meets boy*. (Master's Thesis, East Carolina University). Retrieved from https://thescholarship.ecu.edu/bitstream/handle/10342/5341/LITTLEFIELD-MASTERSTHESIS-2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Lombardi, B. (2018). "Where paradise will hopefully one day be": An interview about sexuality, home, and diaspora with Chinelo Okparanta. *The Black Scholar*, *48*(3), 17-26.

Lorde, Audre. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches by Audre Lorde*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.

Lyonga, F. (2014). Un-African? Representations of homosexuality in two contemporary Nigerian films. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, *5*(4), 783-801.

Mahfouz, N. (1975). *Zuqāq al midaq* (*Midaq alley, tran)*. Doubleday, NY: Trevor Le Gassick.

Macswan, J. (2004). A minimalist approach to intrasentential code switching. In Horn, L. (Ed.), *Outstanding dissertations in linguistics, a Garland series*. New York, NY: Garland Publishing.

Maddy, Y. A. (1984) *Big Benin*. Leeds, UK: Gbakanda.

Mansour, E. (2008). *I am you (Ana hiya anti). Trans. Samar Habib.* New York, NY: Cambria Press.

Martin, K., & Xaba, M. (2013). *Queer Africa: New and collected fiction*. Oxford, UK: African Books Collective.

Matebeni, Z. (2009). Sexing women: Young black lesbians' reflections on sex and responses to safe (r) sex. *From Social Silence to Social Science. Cape Town, HSRC*, 100-116.

Mbembe, A. (2006). On the postcolony: A brief response to critics. *African Identities*, *4*(2), 143-178.

McCormack, M. (2012). *The declining significance of homophobia: How teenage boys are redefining masculinity and heterosexuality*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McRuer, R. (2010). Compulsory able-bodiedness and queer/disabled existence. *The Disability Studies Reader*, *3*, 383-392.

Meghani, S. A., & Saeed, H. (2019). Postcolonial/sexuality, or, sexuality in "Other" contexts: Introduction. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 55(3), 293- 307.

Melendez, M. P., & LaSala, M. C. (2006). Who's oppressing whom? Homosexuality, Christianity, and social work. *Social Work*, *51*(4), 371-377.

Migraine-George, T., & Currier, A. (2016). Querying queer African archives: Methods and movements. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 190-207.

Morgenstern, K., & Boes, T. (2009). On the nature of the bildungsroman. *Pmla*, *124*(2), 647-659.

Mukherjee, K. (2017). Governmentality and creation of the sexual subaltern: Exploring "queer" narratives from Kolkata. *Symbolic Volence in Socio-educational Contexts*, 97.

Murray, S. O., & Roscoe, W. (1998). *Boy-wives and female husbands: Studies of African homosexualities*. New York, NY: St Martins Press.

Murray, S. O. (2013). Conceptions about and representations of male homosexuality in the popular book and movie: The Yacoubian building. *Journal of homosexuality*, *60*(7), 1081-1089.

Nayak, A., & Kehily, M. J. (2006). Gender undone: Subversion, regulation and embodiment in the work of Judith Butler. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *27*(4), 459-472.

Nayar, S. J. (2011). A good man is impossible to find: Brokeback Mountain as heteronormative tragedy. *Sexualities*, *14*(2), 235-255.

Nicholas, L. (2019). Queer ethics and fostering positive mindsets toward non-binary gender, genderqueer, and gender ambiguity. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, *20*(2-3), 169-180.

Nigeria. (2019). *Country policy and information note Nigeria: Sexual expression and gender identity or expression Version 2.0*. Nigeria: Home Office.

Nikolajeva, M. (2014). Memory of the present: Empathy and identity in young adult fiction. *Narrative Works: Issues, Investigations & Interventions*, *4*(2), 68-107.

Ncube, G. (2013). "The festering finger?" Reimagining Minority Sexuality in Tendai Huchu's the hairdresser of Harare and Abdellah Taïa's une

mélancolie Arabe. *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, *25*(1), 66-75.

Neill, J. (2009). *The origins and role of same-sex relations in human societies*. USA: McFarland.

O'Flaherty, M., & Fisher, J. (2008). Sexual orientation, gender identity and international human rights law: contextualising the Yogyakarta Principles. *Human Rights Law Review*, *8*(2), 207-248.

Ogbazi, I. F. (2011). The African female writer and her craft: aspects of Yvonne Vera's peculiar feminist vision. *Ogirisi: A new journal of African studies*, *8*(1), 67-90.

Ogoti, V. R. (2019). Soundscape and narrative dynamics in Chinelo Okparanta's "Under the Udala Trees". *Journal of the African Literature Association*, 1-15.

Okanlawon, K. (2018). Cultures of public intervention regarding LGBTQ Issues after Nigeria's same-sex marriage prohibition act (SSMPA). *College Literature*, *45*(4), 641-651.

Okparanta, C. (2013). *Happiness, like water*. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Okparanta, C. (2015). *Under the udala trees*. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Okpewho, I. (1976). *The last duty*. London, UK: Longman.

Okwuosa, L. N., Onah, N. G., Nwaoga, C. T., & Uroko, F. C. (2017). The disappearing mammy water myth and the crisis of values in Oguta, South Eastern Nigeria. *HTS Theological Studies, 73*(3), 1-8.

Olanisebe, S. O., & Adelakun, A. J. (2013). Re-interpreting "Sodom and Gomorrah" passages in the context of homosexuality controversy: A Nigerian perspective. *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, *3*(2), 191-209.

Olds, D.D. (1994). Connectionism and psychoanalysis. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association 42*, 581–611.

Omonzejie, E. (2015). Repealing traditional patriarchy in two male-authored narratives. *Journal of the African Literature Association*, *9*(2), 152-187.

Omotoso, Y. and Fasselt, R. (2015). "I'm not Afropolitan – I'm of the continent": A conversation with Yewande Omotoso'. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature 50*(2), 231-246.

Osinubi, T. A. (2016). Micro-politics of buttocks: The queer intimacies of Chinua Achebe. *Research in African Literatures, 47*(2), 162-185.

Osinubi, T. A. (2018). The promise of lesbians in African literary history. *College Literature, 45*(4), 675-686.

Osman, D. (2013). *Fairytales for lost children*. London, UK: Team Angelica Pub.

Piaget, J. (2007). *Çocukta dil ve düşünme (Language and thinking in children): S. Esat, Trans*. Siyavuşgil, Ankara: Palme.

Piantato, G. (2016). How has queer theory influenced the ways we think about gender?. *Working Paper of Public Health*, *5*(1).

Phakhathi, B. (2018). *Representations of masculinity in selected post-2000 South African fictional narratives* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Vendana). Retrieved from:

http://univendspace.univen.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11602/1174/Dissertation%20-%20Phakhathi%2c%20b.-.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Pope H., Phillips, K. A. & Olivardia, R. (2000). The Adonis complex: The secret crisis of male body obsession. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Posner, R. A. (1992). The radical feminist critique of sex and reason. *Conn. L. Rev.*, *25*, 515.

Ratele, K. (2008). Masculinities, maleness and (illusive) pleasure. *Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre*, *1*, 155-256.

Reeds, L. (2015). *Definitely, maybe, yours.* New York, NY: Interlude Press.

Rich, A. (2007). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. In Parker, R. G., & Aggleton, P. (Eds.), *Culture, society and sexuality: A reader* (pp. 225-252). London, UK: Routledge.

Riggs, D. W., & Treharne, G. J. (2017). Queer theory. In Gough, B. *The Palgrave handbook of critical social psychology* (pp. 101-121). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Robinson, D. M. (2006). *Closeted writing and lesbian and gay literature: Classical, early modern, eighteenth-century*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

Rubin, G. (1984). Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality. In Parker R. G. & Aggleton, P. (Eds.), *Social perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader* (pp. 143-178). East Sussex, London: Psychology Press.

Runeborg, A. and Anderson, C. (2010). *Sexual rights for all***.** Stockholm, Sweden: Swedish International Development Cooperation.

Sabe, B. A. (2018), Migration in African literature: A study of some selected Hausa novels. *Katsina Journal of Linguistics and Literary Studies,* 1-14.

Salem, R. A. (2013). The representation of homosexuality between text translation and movie adaptation in Midaq Alley and The Yacoubian building. (Master's thesis, The American University in Cairo). Retrieved from http://dar.aucegypt.edu/handle/10526/3756

Savin-Williams, R. C., & Vrangalova, Z. (2013). Mostly heterosexual as a distinct sexual orientation group: A systematic review of the empirical evidence. *Developmental Review, 33*(1), 58-88.

Scoats, R., Joseph, L. J., & Anderson, E. (2018). "I don't mind watching him cum": Heterosexual men, threesomes, and the erosion of the one-time rule of homosexuality. *Sexualities, 21*(1-2), 30-48.

Scott, D. T. (2018). 'Coming out of the closet'–examining a metaphor. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, *42*(3), 145-154.

Sedgwick, E. K. (1990). *Epistemology of the closet*. California, USA: University of California Press.

Sedgwick, K. E. (1993). Queer performativity: Henry James's the art of the novel, GLQ*: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, *1*(1), 1-16.

Shefer T., Stevens G. & Clowes L. (2010). Men in Africa: Masculinities, materiality and meaning. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*,*20*(4):511–518

Swan, T. A. (2002). Coming out and self-disclosure: Exploring the pedagogical significance in teaching social work students about homophobia and heterosexism. *Canadian Social Work Review/Revue Canadienne de Service Social*, 5-23.

Seidman, S. (2004). *Beyond the closet: The transformation of gay and lesbian life*. East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press.

Shank, G. (2002). *Qualitative Research. A Personal Skills Approach*. New Jersey, USA: Merril Prentice Hall.

Shoneyin, L. (2010). *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. London, UK: Profile Books.

De Souza, B. (2016). Homosexuality in African fiction: Characterisation in homophobic culture, law and religion in selected short stories. (Thesis, Chancellor Colledge, Zomba).Retrieved from

https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/63216942/BEN_SOUZA_BEd_Thesis.pdf

Spargo, T. (1999). *Foucault and queer theory*. Cambridge: Icon books.

Stobie, C. (2003). Reading bisexualities from a South African perspective. *Journal of bisexuality 3*(1)33-52.

Stobie, C. (2011). Reading bisexualities from a South African perspective – Revisited. *Journal of Bisexuality, 11*(4), 480-487.

Sullivan, N. (2003). *A critical introduction to queer theory*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Tadjo, V. (2002). *The shadow of Imana: Travels in the heart of Rwanda*. London, UK: Heinemann.

Tamale, S. (2004). Gender trauma in Africa: Enhancing women's links to resources. *Journal of African Law*, *48*(1), 50-61.

Tamale, S. (2013). Confronting the politics of nonconforming sexualities in Africa. *African Studies Review*, *56*(2), 31-45.

Tilsen, J. & Nylund, D. (2010a). Resisting normativity: Queer musings on politics, identity, and the performance of therapy. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, *2010*(3), 64.

Tilsen J. & Nylund, D. (2010b). Counselling ideologies: Queer challenges to heteronormativity. London, UK: Ashgate Publishers.

Tyson, L. (1999). Critical theory today. New York, NY: Library of Congress.

Unigwe, C. (2012). *Night dancer*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House.

Waldo, C. R., & Kemp, J. L. (1997). Should I come out to my students? An empirical investigation. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *34*(2), 79-94.

Wainaina, B. (2011). *One day I will write about this place: a memoir*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Graywolf Press.

Wanner, Z. (2006). *The Madams: a wildly provocative novel*. Pacific Grove, CA: Oshun Books.

Wanner, Z. (2010). *Men of the South*. Cape Town, SA: Kwela.

Wanner, Z. (2011). *Behind every successful man*. Cape Town, SA: Kwela.

Wanner, Z. (2013). *Maid in SA: 30 Ways to leave your Madam*. Johannesburg, SA: Jacana Media.

Wanner, Z. (2014). *London, Cape Town, Joburg*. Cape Town, SA: Kwela.

Watson, K. (2005). Queer theory. *Group Analysis*, *38*(1), 67-81.

Whittington, K. (2012). Queer. *Studies in Iconography*, *33*, 157-168.

Zhu, J. (2018). 'Unqueer kinship? Critical reflections on 'marriage fraud' in mainland China. *Sexualities*, *21*(7), 1075-1091.