

SEXUAL RIGHTS ADVOCACY IN SELECTED AFRICAN FICTION

BY

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DEDICATION

To God, the One who gives songs in the night;

Dad, God's masterpiece; and

Mum, God's touch of love and gentleness.

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CERTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Victimhood, in sexuality discourses in African literature, has, over time, become attached only to women while men have been presented as perpetrators. This perception has dominated feminist and masculinist studies, with little attention paid to men's victimisation and sexual rights advocacy. This study, therefore, investigates the representation of sexual rights in African fiction to ascertain African writers' responses to these rights. This is in an attempt to show that all individuals have sexual rights, can be victimised in given contexts which are capable of defining/redefining their Otherness, and can seek or gain liberation.

The study applies aspects of the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories which account for sexuality, otherness and the suffering generated in the clash of the self with the "Big Other". Ten texts – Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, *Two Women in One*, *She Has No Place in Paradise* and *God Dies by the Nile*, Calixthe Beyala's *Your Name Shall Be Tanga*, Diane Case's *Toasted Penis and Cheese*, Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name*, J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail* and Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* – are purposively selected for analyses. The texts are subjected to literary and critical analyses to examine the contexts of sexual rights violation of the self by the "Big Other", the victimisation generated by this violation, and the writers' contrived solutions to eliminate it.

All the texts share a common denominator – sexual violence and its attendant psychological trauma and physical damages – but, specific texts show that the rights of men, women and children are violated in specific contexts that define their Otherness. Socio-cultural practices and beliefs encourage the violation of rights and victimisation in all the texts, while religion generates same in all of El Saadawi's and Dibia's texts. While women are victimised in all the texts, men are victimised in *God Dies by the Nile*, Case's and Dibia's texts. The role of the perpetrator is played by both men and women in texts by El Saadawi, Beyala, Case and Dibia, whereas only men are the perpetrators in Coetzee's, Abani's and Vera's. While Abani centres on the trafficking of the girl-child for the purpose of sex work, El Saadawi shows that the boy-child can be raped and children are violated when made to suffer for their parents' sexual offences. All the texts, in different ways, create avenues for bridging the gap between the self and the "Big Other" and the elimination of suffering. Coetzee's and El Saadawi's uphold the provision of professional institutions to seek redress for the sexually violated while Dibia's and Case's highlight tolerance and respect for every individual's sexual identity and orientation. All the texts favour the taking of responsibility for sexual actions and religious and socio-cultural re-orientation through sexuality education.

African prose fiction writers create sexual rights awareness through their representations of contexts of sexual rights violation, victimisation of male and female genders, and sociologically-grounded solutions to the violation. This awareness, if extended to real world situations, would ensure better understanding and protection of every individual's sexual rights.

Key words: Sexuality, Otherness, Sexual rights violation, Sexual identity, Gender

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- APA – American Psychological Association
- CBS – Central Bureau of Statistics [Kenya]
- CREA – Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action
- DSM – Diagnostic and Statistical Manual
- FGM – Female Genital Mutilation
- FGM/C – Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
- GLAAD – Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
- HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- ICPD – International Conference on Population and Development
- IPPF – International Planned Parenthood Federation
- LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual
- LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual and Questioning
- MDGs – Millennium Development Goals
- MOH – Ministry of Health [Kenya]
- MSM – Men-Sleeping-With-Men
- NGOs – Non-Governmental Organisations
- SM - Sadomasochism
- STIs – Sexually Transmitted Infections
- UN – United Nations
- UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
- UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
- UNHCR – United Nations High Commission for Refugees
- UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
- UNO – United Nations Organisation
- USAID – United States Agency for International Development

VVF – Vesicovaginal Fistula

WHO

–

World

Health

Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Power, authority and importance are not resident with any particular group of people at all times. They operate on shifting grounds and the focus on them in any group of persons, and even what informs their bestowment are informed by different factors and in varying degrees. The group that occupies the position of power, authority or importance becomes the centre while others remain in the margins until the grounds shift again to permit another group to come to the limelight. What this implies is that lives in the margins are tailored to suit or conform to the dictates of the centre, in most cases, without considering what the margins would have preferred. Life at the margins, therefore, becomes that of struggle for importance and relevance, a need to break out of the limiting definitions or codes of behaviour prescribed by the centre, a struggle to retain and maintain identity or sometimes that of protecting and defending ideologies and things held dear which are treated otherwise by the centre.

In the area of sexuality, different categories of people can be either at the centre or the margins. At the centre, these groups can exist: men/boys (in patriarchal societies), women/girls (in matriarchal societies), adults, the rich, the educated and informed, and the heterosexuals while at the margins are found women/girls (in patriarchal societies), men/boys (in matriarchal societies), young people (including children), the physically challenged/deformed, the poor, the uneducated and uninformed, and the homosexual (gay/lesbian), bisexual including the transgender and transvestite.

A look at sexuality and literature, African literature in this case, reveals a remarkable interplay of power relations between the centre and the margins. Since the centre holds the power, the margins, in most writings that are sympathetic to their position, are moved to the centre through the writers' focusing of attention on their plight and devising ways of alleviating or removing their sufferings or providing a form of acceptance for their practices which the centre would not accept. This is a form of advocacy and writers are involved in it through their exploration of the various aspects of sexual rights, using the characters in their novels to draw attention to the life of suffering occasioned by the denial of these rights at the margins, and by repositioning them at the centre by adopting a sympathetic stance which

enables them to win the hearts of the readers as they journey with characters in texts through sufferings that they overcome or are swallowed up by. This is a rather new (emerging) trend in African fiction in the sense that this has not always been the case for African writings to show any commitment to the promotion of sexual rights. Earlier works did not have such concerns and were not bothered with whether their characters promoted, enjoyed or were denied sexual rights. Perhaps, this was because these early writings were more interested in making anti-colonial statements. As a result, works like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Camara Laye's *The Radiance of the King*, John Munonye's *The Oil Man of Obange*, Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana*, Alex la Guma's *A Walk in the Night*, while they have elements of sexuality in them, do not bring them to the centre but leave them at the margins with the people in the margins suffering from neglect and forced compliance to the centre. Other works like Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger* and *Black Sunlight* while they centralize sexuality only do so as metaphors for analysing colonial and nationalist struggles without paying attention to sexual rights. These works cannot be said to be references for sexual rights advocacy. Most of the early works of female writers which are feminist in temper, while addressing the rights of women, often times do so to the detriment of men. And, sexual rights do not favour the rights of women over those of men but seek to rescue whoever, man, woman or child, is marginalised.

Sexual Rights: Towards a Definition

Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language (1986) sees rights as "something to which one has a just claim as (a) the power or privilege to which one is justly entitled (as upon principles of morality, religion, law, or custom)... (b) a power, privilege, or condition of existence to which one has a natural claim of enjoyment or possession" (1955). Various questions are raised by these definitions. Firstly, the concept of justice or what is just is not universal. Secondly, the yoking together of power, privilege and natural claim is problematic. These terms are defined by the *Encarta Dictionaries* as follows: power refers to the "ability, strength and capacity to do something; physical force or strength; control and influence over other people and their actions; authority to act or do something according to a law or rule". Privilege is the "restricted right or benefit: an advantage, right or benefit not available to everyone" while claim is to "demand something as entitlement: to demand officially something that somebody has a right to or owns". These definitions go to say that what is seen as rights are highly dependent on a group or groups of people's interpretation

of what is right/wrong, acceptable/unacceptable; what is to be enjoyed/denied; who should/should not exercise or be denied these rights. This is from the angle of power and privilege. Again, when B.M. Bass' (1990) definition of power as the capacity/potential to influence and bring about targeted desired behaviour is taken into consideration, the structure of dependency which power affords becomes clear. E.A. Ward (2001) considers power to have formal and personal bases, and splits formal power into coercive, reward and legitimate powers. One reacts to coercive power out of fear of the repercussions of noncompliance, and gives in to reward power in order to gain the positive benefits accruing to compliance. Robbins and Judge (2007) add that legitimate power can coerce and reward but is fundamentally backed up by authority and, therefore, accepted by members of a group. From the foregoing, the idea of equality which is championed by rights is difficult to establish since the word *power* affords some individuals and even the state/society the room to coerce and elicit obedience through reward systems that may/may not take certain individuals' choice(s) into consideration. From the angle of "natural claim", rights become endowments which an individual is born with, not given to, with the onus lying on this individual to both exercise the rights and recognize his/her denials of them.

Underlying the definition of rights is the dichotomy of the dominant/dominated, majority /minority, and marginalised/centralised which brings the issue of victimhood to the fore. Usually, the centre, majority or dominant has little or no problems that require the invocation of rights because their interests are protected to a high degree, but the margins, minority or dominated need recourse to rights to limit the excessive powers, victimisation and intrusion of the dominant as well as to expand their space. This makes the language of rights revolutionary.

Considering these streams of arguments arising from the inclusion of power in the rights definition, the definition of rights in the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* (2009) becomes more suitable, but not without its challenges: "legal or moral recognition of choices or interests to which particular weight is attached" (463). Rights, as seen in this definition, draw on the principles of morality, religion, law and custom, and since these are not uniform across borders, differing, and most times conflicting, interpretations are to be expected. The 1948 United Nations' Charter made the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* binding on all member states of the United Nations (UN), thereby imposing a measure of universality on the dignity and rights of all human beings in its thirty articles. The rights described include,

amongst others, right to life, liberty and security; recognition and equality before the law; equality in dignity and rights without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status; and freedom from interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence. The declaration meant that member nations had to review their national constitutions to reflect these rights but because human rights also consider differences in culture, religion and such identifiers, there is room for member nations to make these amendments within limits that are non-discriminatory and do not throw away the respect for these identifiers.

A number of ideas come to the mind whenever sexual rights are mentioned, from gay and lesbian movements and protests (with all of the controversies surrounding them) to bra-burning women fighting gender wars in a widely acclaimed men's world. These ideas have a place in sexual rights discussion but are too narrow to be used as summarizing headlines. Sexual rights are those rights (provided for under Human Rights) which deal with issues on human sexuality. Richardson (2000) outlines a framework for interpreting sexual rights which groups sexual rights discourses into "conduct-based, identity-based and relationship-based rights claims" (105) which take care of

- 1) Seeking rights to various forms of sexual practices in personal relationships (e.g. campaigns for sexual freedom and safety)
- 2) Seeking rights through self-definition and the development of individual identities (e.g. the right to be lesbian and gay; female sexual autonomy)
- 3) Seeking rights within social institutions: public validation of various forms of sexual relations (e.g. interracial and same-sex marriages) (108).

She, however, sees this framework as "merely an intellectual tool to help make sense of the different ways of interpreting sexual rights" (108). It is also obvious from the examples she chooses to mark out what each of the three groupings is focused on that her framework is entrenched in controversial issues and not in the sexual wellbeing of individuals.

World Health Organisation's (WHO's) (2004) working definition defines sexual rights as embracing "human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights document and other consensus statements" which include:

...the right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to:

- The highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services;
- Seek, receive and impart information related to sexuality;
- Sexuality education;
- Respect for bodily integrity;
- Choose their partner;
- Decide to be sexually active or not;
- Consensual sexual relations;
- Consensual marriage;
- Decide whether or not, and when, to have children; and
- Pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life.

The responsible exercise of human rights requires that all persons respect the rights of others.

The WHO definition, carefully examined, is basically centred on violence prevention and sexuality issues relating to health, giving the false impression that sexual rights are health programmes whereas they surpass health issues. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) (2008) is more encompassing and specific, further clarifying the WHO's working definition in their *Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration*. IPPF (2008) identifies sexual rights as human rights and "constituted by a set of entitlements related to sexuality that emanate from the rights to freedom, equality, privacy, autonomy, integrity and dignity of all people" (16). Sexual rights, IPPF continues:

are specific norms that emerge when existing human rights are applied to sexuality. Sexual rights protect particular identities, but reach beyond this and protect all people's right to be allowed to fulfil and express their sexuality, with due regard for the rights of others and within a framework of non-discrimination... Their application is of particular importance to the poor, marginalized, the socially excluded and under-served, whether such characteristics are historical or recent (16).

Their ten-point article enumerates the following sexual rights:

1. Right to equality, equal protection of the law and freedom from all forms of discrimination based on sex, sexuality or gender;
2. The right to participation for all persons, regardless of sex, sexuality or gender;
3. The rights to life, liberty, security of the person and bodily integrity;
4. Right to privacy;
5. Right to personal autonomy and recognition before the law;
6. Right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression; right to association;
7. Right to health and to the benefits of scientific progress;
8. Right to education and information;

9. Right to choose whether or not to marry and to found and plan a family, and to decide whether or not, how and when, to have children; and
10. Right to accountability and redress.

The implementation of these articles must be informed by the general principles underlying and incorporated in them:

1. Sexuality is an integral part of the personhood of every human being. For this reason, a favourable environment in which everyone may enjoy all sexual rights as part of the process of development must be created;
2. The rights and protections guaranteed to people under age eighteen differ from those of adults, and must take into account the evolving capacities of the individual child to exercise rights on his or her own behalf;
3. Non-discrimination underlies all human rights protection and promotion;
4. Sexuality, and pleasure deriving from it, is a central aspect of being human, whether or not a person chooses to reproduce;
5. Ensuring sexual rights for all includes a commitment to freedom and protection from harm;
6. Sexual rights may be subject only to those limitations determined by law for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and the general welfare in a democratic society; and
7. The obligations to respect, protect and fulfil apply to all sexual rights and freedoms.

A study of these rights and the principles behind them reveals their protection of the interests of all human beings and then, in more specific ways, the marginalized groups and Otherness. Jacqueline Sharpe, president of IPPF, recognizes marginalized groups such as “young people, transgender people, sex workers, men having sex with men, people who are gay, lesbian or bi-sexual, child brides and girl mothers... girls and women who are vulnerable to or have been subjected to gender-based violence, including traditional norms such as female genital mutilation and discrimination based on male preference” (2008: i). Sexual rights, however, are not limited to the protection of these groups only.

The ten-point rights are summarised to give a general idea of what they contain. Article 1 declares the entitlement of all human beings to be treated equally with the state and society having a duty to create the enabling environment in which to modify social and cultural practices that group human beings using the idea of superiority/inferiority of sexes, genders or gender expressions. No form of discrimination based on sex, gender, social status, religion, race, or any grounds is permitted for/on any human being with regard to access to facilities, goods, services and conditions. The article also recognizes the evolving capacity of the child.

Article 2 embodies the entitlements of all to active, free and meaningful participation in and contribution to the development and implementation of policies that determine their welfare without barriers or prejudices that exclude or restrict the participation of persons based on ideas of gender and sexual propriety. Young people are also seen as having something meaningful to contribute and therefore share responsibilities for policy and programme development. Public and political offices are open to all persons – both holding offices and performing public functions, and having access to the services of these offices. The sexual and reproductive health of individuals, their HIV status or conditions related to it, and marriage do not act as barriers to the participation of individuals under this article.

Article 3 appears to be, to this study, the most important, comprehensive and controversial of the 10 because of its wide coverage. It protects the freedom of all persons to the exercise of their sexuality free of coercion or violence. Lives and bodily integrity should not be threatened or endangered to “avenge the honour” of a family. Sexual history or behaviour, gender identity or expression does not form the basis for judicial or extra-judicial killings or corporal punishment. Lives and health of women are not to be risked through denial of medical treatment and women are not to be condemned to forced maternity. The article guarantees freedom from harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation and forced or early marriage, freedom from all forms of violence – physical, verbal, psychological or economic abuse, sexual harassment/violence, rape, all forms of coerced sex within/outside marriage, in armed conflict or in detention, violence created by stigma and discrimination based on sex, sexuality, gender or HIV status (this also covers sex workers of all genders, real/alleged sexual activity outside marriage and all migrants). Consensual sex does not attract arbitrary detention or sanctions and no person’s sexual choices, practices or expressions justify or excuse violence, abuse or harassment.

Article 4 preserves all persons from arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home, papers or correspondence and the privacy essential for the exercise of sexual autonomy; where sexual autonomy encompasses the individual’s ability to make decisions about his sexuality, sexual behaviours and intimacy without arbitrary interference. There is provision for confidentiality regarding medical records, sexual health services and care and HIV status as well as protection from arbitrary disclosures or threats of the same within the framework of permissible limitations without discrimination. The disclosure of information regarding sexual

choices, sexual history, sexual partners and behaviours and matters related to sexuality is under the control of the individual.

Article 5 recognizes all persons – irrespective of their sex, gender, sexual orientation or identity – before the law. It also recognizes their sexual freedom which includes control and free decisions on matters related to one's sexuality, choice of sexual partners, experiencing full sexual potential and pleasure within a non-discriminatory framework with regard to the rights of others and the evolving capacity of children. The article also grants all persons access to identity papers reflecting their self-defined gender identity (including birth certificates, passports and electoral records).

Article 6 permits all persons to exercise freedom of thought, opinion and expression regarding any aspect of sexuality without arbitrary intrusion or limitations based on dominant cultural beliefs, political ideology, discriminatory notions of public order, public morality, public health or public security. There is freedom of thought, conscience and religion and right to hold opinions without interference. There is right of all persons to explore their sexuality, to have dreams and fantasies free from fear, shame, guilt, false beliefs and other impediments to the free expression of their desires, with full regard for the rights of others. There is removal of restrictions for all persons, particularly women, to the expression of identity or personhood through speech, deportment, dress, bodily characteristics, choice of name and other means. There is freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas with regard to human rights, sexuality and everything surrounding or pertaining to it through any legal medium and regardless of frontiers, taking into consideration the rights and evolving capacity of children. Finally, it provides for peaceful assembly and association in diverse formations within the framework of social order in which the rights and freedoms of all can be fully realized.

Article 7 deals with sexual health and is also related to reproductive rights, which is related to sexual rights in that reproduction is an aspect of sexuality but not the end of human sexuality. Hence, reproduction is not the end target of all sexual activity as very few of what falls under sexual activities have direct relationship with reproduction. Article 7 provides for all persons to have access to sexual health care (prevention, diagnosis and treatment of all sexual concerns, problems and disorders), to insist on safer sex (for prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease), to access information about any sex-health related matter including services and researches. This article also covers the rights of sex workers to insist on

safer sex practices with all partners and clients, and those of persons in armed conflict or forced displacement to access sexual and reproductive services.

Closely related to Article 7 is Article 8 which entitles all persons to sufficient education and information to ensure that any decisions on sexual and reproductive life are made with full, free and informed consent. Emphasis is made on young people's right to access information that enhances sexuality, sexual rights and sexual health and for everyone to have access to this information in an easy-to-understand language. Information to be accessed include when, how and with whom to have sex and when sexual behaviour will become reproductive.

Article 9 provides for consensual marriage, rights to family-related social welfare and other public benefits such as those regarding employment and immigration, independently of the family form they have chosen to found. It also provides for rights to have access to information, education and the means needed to be able to decide whether or not and when to have children, the number of children and their spacing; the right to decide whether or not to have biological or adopted children as well as to safe, effective, acceptable and affordable methods of fertility regulation, reproductive technologies and treatments. All persons have the rights to all reproduction related services irrespective of marital status and all women have the right to information, education and services necessary for the protection of reproductive health, safe motherhood and safe abortion which are accessible, affordable, acceptable and convenient to all users.

Article 10 provides for everyone to enjoy their sexual rights for which it holds the state, its appointed appropriate bodies and non-state actors responsible. States are accountable for how they implement and ensure the realisation of sexual rights, and are to ensure that third parties do not violate the sexual rights of citizens. Everyone has access to information that will help them to seek redress for violation of their sexual rights and the right to hold non-state actors accountable for their actions which impact on their ability to enjoy their sexual rights.

In all the articles, there is an implication of responsibilities because the individual is expected to behave responsibly. Shaw (2006) says that this expectation from the individual is based on the assumption that s/he has the relevant knowledge, skills and resources to do so which is also dependent on the responsibilities of others like researchers, health professionals, religious leaders, national and donor governments. The evolving capacity of children is also taken into consideration, a clear indication that sexual rights have the interests of children/the youth as a marginalized group at heart. UNICEF (1989) in *The Convention on the Rights of the*

Child defines a child as "a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" while the *American Heritage Dictionary* (2007) also identifies "child" as describing the relationship with a parent or authority figure. The UNICEF placement of the child under the age of eighteen with provision for laws of different nations to specify otherwise is a bit challenging since some countries hide under this loophole to abuse children. Closely related to this is the age of consent and age of responsibility which also differ for different countries and laws. Islam, for example, and, by implication Islamic countries and countries operating the Islamic laws, place the age of responsibility at forty (International Community of Submitters, 2002) whereas for Canada and the United States of America, it is twelve. For Britain, the age of responsibility is ten. This means that a child can be held responsible for its actions if it commits a criminal offence at ten in Britain and he can be taken to the court and punished for his offence – usually minor punishments like being sent to the remand homes and special correctional institutions such as juvenal halls. The age of consent which revolves around what age a child is legally old enough to consent to sexual act is fluid just as the age of responsibility, with variations ranging between fourteen to twenty years. For these reasons issues revolving around protection of the vulnerable child suffer major setbacks.

Realising Sexual Rights

As enlightening and liberating as sexual rights and the principles behind them are, they are not without their challenges. Sexual rights are most times negatively influenced by socio-cultural, religious, political and economic factors which determine the nature and perception of sexual relationships, sexuality and sexual behaviour.

Socio-culturally, sex, sexuality and issues surrounding them are seldom openly discussed in most cultures. They are often treated as taboos and as such a lot of people do not know their rights or when they are being denied or trampled upon. This makes it difficult for them to seek redress. The ones that know these rights sometimes face the challenge of being labelled extremists by the society that sees them as treading on forbidden grounds. The society and culture stand as the "Big Other" which determine what is "morally acceptable" or not, thereby placing all sexual behaviours and activities that do not conform to the perceived standard on the margin in need of fighting for. Again, some traditional/cultural practices arising from a society's beliefs militate against the realisation of sexual rights. Examples of such practices include female circumcision (Female Genital Mutilation – FGM), honour killing, polygamy,

the relegation of the girl-child to the background as a result of the belief that she is inferior to the male child, the objectification of women and treatment as second class citizens. Also, many cultures in Africa believe it is unacceptable for women to express their sexual desires, thus making them vulnerable and limited to just accepting what is dished out to them by their counterparts. This also prevents them from seeking redress when they are oppressed as well as taking steps to cater for their sexual wellbeing, satisfaction or even taking measures to guard them against sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy by asking for the use of things like condoms or going for other birth control measures which may require the assistance of a resource person. In the cases of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, much of the stigmatisation and judgemental attitude towards the affected individuals arise from the socio-cultural perception of pre-marital or extra-marital affairs. These people, instead of the compassion they deserve, are denied a lot of things, including appropriate medical services, because society tends to see them as deserving the conditions they find themselves in. A lot of people forget sometimes that HIV/AIDS is not always sexually transmitted. Again, the traditional and, in some cases, religious practice of polygamy which, when seen from the perspective of having multiple sexual partners, exposes one to the same dangers of promiscuity, is not frowned at in most African societies.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is defined by WHO (1998, 2006) as consisting of “all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons” (2006:1835). It is categorized into the following kinds: No FGM – no evidence of any genital mutilation; FGM I – excision of the prepuce, with or without excision of part or all of the clitoris; FGM II – excision of the clitoris with partial or total removal of the labia minora; and FGM III – excision of part or all of the external genitalia and stitching or narrowing of the vaginal opening (infibulation). WHO (2008) estimates that about 100 to 140 million girls/women worldwide live with FGM with the practice being prevalent in Africa, Asia and Arab countries. Performed without any form of anaesthesia and generally under unsanitary conditions with the girls/women usually held down or tied, FGM comes forth as a barbaric practice and an act of violence. Even when some women claim to have gone in for FGM willingly, their reasons, when examined are found to be conditioned by societal beliefs which make these women accept violence on their persons as a way of becoming acceptable to their societies. Studies (WHO, 2008; The Donors Working Group on Female Genital

Mutilation/Cutting, 2008; Yoder and Khan, 2007; Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) [Kenya], Ministry of Health (MOH) [Kenya] and ORC Macro, 2004; and Jaldesa, Askew, Njue and Wanjiru, 2004) show the reasons behind FGM in countries where they are practiced to include the enforcement of the cultural value of sexual purity in females by controlling female sexual desires, thereby ensuring virginity before marriage, marriageability and fidelity throughout a woman's life; the fear of facing shame and/or exclusion. The reasons provided for FGM in its entirety lean towards the deprivation of the rights to sexual pleasure, the objectification of women and marginalization as a result of their sex. When a male is circumcised, it is not for the same reasons as a female. While men are circumcised to affirm their maleness (Shweder, 2009) or follow the injunctions of Allah and His prophet, Mohammed (Asmani and Abdi, 2008), women are circumcised to be acceptable to men (because men will refuse to marry them if they have not undergone FGM), or to make them objects that stick to one man (fidelity) and are devoid of excessive sexual appetites. Nothing in this direction is counted as a topic worthy of consideration for the men. Therefore, one can say that the same society that does not approve sexual voracity in women does so for men by keeping silent on what it expects of them. Hence, a woman's virginity is expected to be preserved by FGM while nothing is said or done to preserve the man's virginity and it is not a prerequisite for him to obtain a wife. In some cultures (the Igbo of Nigeria, for example) that consider male circumcision compulsory, the man may be looked at as incomplete or unfit for "manly" roles but, he is, to a large extent, not put to shame or excluded from his social relations as a result of not being circumcised. The reasons for FGM are strongly attached to the Islamic requirement on the woman to be chaste and morally upright because she is considered unclean or unlawful if she is not circumcised. Ibrahim Lethome Asmani and Maryam Sheikh Abdi (2008) debunk these attachments to Islam by providing what they term the position of Islam on FGM. First, they claim that the view of FGM as an Islamic requirement stems from the fact that in many Arabic speaking countries and regions that are predominantly Islamic, the words used to refer to FGM are connected to Islam. This, to them, does not necessarily make FGM an Islamic practice. Second, they assert that there is no verse in the Qur'an, Sunnah or Hadith that states that women should be circumcised; rather what is found are verses that practitioners use in supporting FGM:

However, there are verses that proponents of the practice use to support their stance. Quran 16:123, for example, reads, "...follow the milat (religion) of Ibrahim." In this verse, Muslims are urged to do all that Prophet Ibrahim (AS) did, including male circumcision, among many other

actions that form part of his milat. However, in the context of circumcision, this verse only applies to male circumcision since there is evidence that Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was circumcised at the age of 80. (Asmani and Abdi, 2008: 6)

They also add that “Proponents of FGM/C as an Islamic practice argue that because there is no explicit disapproval of the practice by the Prophet (PBUH), the act is allowed (mubaah), which gives it an Islamic basis” (7). But they are of the opinion that the law of sacredness of the human body which does not permit any of its unjustifiable use or abuse rules out FGM. Asmani and Abdi (2008) may have done justice to exonerating Islam from being directly responsible for FGM but the fact remains that the leaders of any religious sect have a great responsibility in interpreting what the sect believes in and upholds, and until the leaders come out openly to state in clear terms that the assumptions of the proponents of FGM using Islam as a shield are false, Islam cannot be said to have nothing to do with FGM. Luckily, Christianity, which Africa is also greatly influenced by, approves circumcision for only men which leaves the focus on traditional religions and Islam.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has become, according to Fuambai S. Ahmadu in an interview with Richard A. Shweder (2009), a term universally favoured against female circumcision with the bias that women are through it subjected to male barbarism and domination. F.S. Ahmadu makes a case in support of FGM and projects its cultural significance in Sierra Leone where she comes from. For the Kono (a minority population of the eastern part of Sierra Leone), female and male circumcision is celebrated for what it stands for in the people’s beliefs: an avenue of reaffirmation of either femininity or masculinity. The clitoris is believed to be the male part of the woman which must be excised for her to ascend the full status of womanhood and for the male, the hood of the penis represents femininity and needs to be removed for the fullness of manhood to be attained. As a result, much celebration follows FGM amongst the Kono as it is an act of initiation into the cult of women believed to be “a potent emotional and psychological reminder to men that it is women who give birth to them and mothers who, after God, are the natural origins or raw elements from which all human creation, culture and society are derived” (Shweder, 2009:14). F.S. Ahmadu’s argument which emphasises the inability of some literatures to substantiate claims on the adverse effects of FGM on women’s sexuality and childbirths fails to provide ones that show the improvements on these areas which have been brought about by FGM, except that it is a celebrated cultural belief. Her example of a Kono woman that claims to have all the sexual

satisfaction available to women with no FGM in a bid to discredit the findings that FGM places a limit on women's sexual satisfaction stands discredited. This is so when her method of disqualifying submissions of other scholarly findings on the subject on the basis of the lack of replication is applied. For example, Auvert, Taljaard, Lagarde, Sobngwi-Tambekou, Sitta and Puren (2005) show that male circumcision has been found to have reduced by 60% the occurrence of HIV/AIDS infection in circumcised males than in the uncircumcised which is a pointer that for the male, circumcision can be encouraged. Such literature on the benefits of circumcision for the female is nowhere to be found. WHO (2006) has also discovered that women with FGM are significantly more likely than those without FGM to have adverse obstetric outcomes with risks seeming to be greater with more extensive FGM. These outcomes and risks include Caesarean section, postpartum haemorrhage, extended maternal hospital stay, stillbirth or early neonatal death, and perinatal deaths in the ratio of one to two in a hundred deliveries. Other risks arising from FGM include psychological trauma, death, infection, chronic and acute pain, menstrual/urethral complications and possibly the inability to conceive.

As seen in the case of Islam and FGM, religion and some religious practices militate against the full actualisation of sexual rights. In Africa, the effect of the traditional religions, Christianity and Islam weigh much on individuals. Most cultural practices are embedded in traditional religions while, for Christianity and Islam, literature provides evidence on how they limit people's sexual rights. Long (2005) emphasises the clamp down of the church on the expression of homosexuality and identifies the stance of the Vatican against contraception as being part of the backbone to the promotion of narrow sexuality education for young people which focuses on abstinence only and the focus on pro-life movements. These have increased the cases of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, increase in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

The political and economic spheres are interdependent with the socio-cultural factors obtainable in any country. The laws that guide a nation are those that protect what the people believe in and stand for. Therefore, the laws have a way of offering a shield against the attacks of sexual rights' movements on practices which are rooted in traditional beliefs. The political debates on legalising abortion, gay marriages and prostitution are born out of a mixture of morals and sentiments arising from socio-cultural and religious beliefs. These issues only became debateable because the affected marginalised groups dared to organise themselves and

protest against their unfair treatment without which their oppression will still be the generally accepted order of the day. *The 1988 Nigerian Population Policy* which states the endorsement of the patriarchal family as prerequisite for development is another example. A policy like this in itself is discriminatory as far as sexual rights go because it fails to recognise that family ties do not necessarily centre on the male-female relationships which have the male as family head. It overlooks cases of single parenting with the mother as head of the family and the fact that unmarried women can decide to adopt children and form families with them. It also disregards the formation of family by the homosexuals and the possibility of this kind of family needing or wanting children who they can eventually adopt.

In the economic sphere, activities people are involved in are highly gendered and gender is the socio-cultural assignment of roles to individuals based on their biological sexes. It is discovered that most women are found in the domestic services which do not pay much but require much exertion of energy and attract much abuse from employers (Agustin, 1988). The economic dependence of women on men most times makes them susceptible to abuse and the denial of their rights. This is not to say that only women are dependent on men and therefore open to abuse. The economic dependence of any human being on another opens the dependant up to treatments that s/he may not like as what is in existence becomes a power relationship with the more economically powerful wielding power while expecting compliance from the less economically endowed. Going by this, it is obvious that children and some men too are conditioned by their economic status to suffer the denial of their sexual rights. Abuses that can arise from the economic factors include sexual harassment in work places, rape, non-consensual sexual relationships for economic benefits or to avoid threats of losing jobs, promotions or other favours. The economic status of individuals also enhances or inhibits their level of education which directly touches on their right to wholesome and proper sexuality education. This might discourage them from gaining access to or acquiring information on researches on sexuality and its surrounding topics as they affect their lives. It also discourages them from seeking proper assistance from resource persons and medical personnel in the cases where specialised services are required.

Sally Griffin (2007) notes that rights can be claimed and defended at different levels – individual, couple, community and social – which bring about tensions and conflicts. Her example of the issue of family planning versus sexual and reproductive rights reveals that family planning programmes emerged from state concerns about population growth and

developmental planning for the wellbeing of the citizenry which encroached on the individual rights of the citizens to freely choose on the number of children they want. Hence, in countries like China and India, where Coale and Bannister (1994) identify family planning by government coercion, the individual rights are trampled on. Their study also reveals the preference of the male child to the female which has made sex-selective abortion popular in these countries. Similar to this is the Nigerian family planning rule that prescribes four children for each family. This is reflected in government provision of social services for parents and only four children, leaving any additional ones to the mercy of the parents as a way of making parents comply with the rule. Another case in point is the leaning of the Catholic Church and conservatives on the right to religion and/or community rights to enforce morality in their defence against denying individual rights like those of homosexuals (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

Sexual Rights, Women's Movement and LGBT Movements

Because different articles of sexual rights correspond with women's rights and the homosexuality (gay and lesbian) rights, there is a temptation to overly summarise it to be synonymous to the rights of these two groups. Feminism as a movement has greatly changed the way sexuality is viewed all over the world. Feminist movements focus on female control over their bodies and what use it should be put to, emancipation through resistance of male dominance, economic empowerment and education as instruments of self-discovery to women who are almost becoming comfortable with their assigned role as objects for male use. This begins with foundational opinions from works like Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* which examines the objectification of women and their subjection to male dominance. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* identifies the place of economic empowerment in liberating the woman psychologically and giving her a sense of fulfilment. Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* sees patriarchy as breeding violence by forcing men to suppress their emotionality for fear of being branded feminine. It also sees rape as a patriarchal instrument for enforcing docility and control over women, and homosexuality as the failure of patriarchy for which reason it is repressed. Amongst the African Americans, the women have seen their needs as being different from those of the white women since their own marginalisation has been twofold. First, they are, like their white counterparts, oppressed by the patriarchal structures, and second, as blacks (race). bell hooks (1984) notes the annoyance of some black women at being presumed by the

whites as being unaware of male tyranny and women's oppression until white feminism had made it a topic for discussion. These women do not need a theory to be told that they are being oppressed because it is their everyday living and hence the need for Black feminism arises. Alice Walker's womanism, a subset of black feminism, while highly promoting sexual and non-sexual relationships amongst women (Walker, 1983: xii), goes a step further to seek the integration of the wellbeing of men into the movement and hence Walker, in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, defines her womanism as: "a call to adult mature, responsible (and courageous) behavior... beneficial to both women and men, and necessary... for the survival of all African Americans by keeping creativity alive" (2003: 2580).

Various strands of feminism have arisen to cater for what the proponents have called the differences between the female concerns of the West and those of the African women. Kohrs-Amissah's review of African feminism, according to Miriam C. Gyimah (2003), believes that the failure of western feminism to capture the experience of the black women is as a result of the masculinisation of colonisation and the feminisation of the colonized people. As a result, African women (including the African American women) have had to modify the word "feminist" in order to articulate their own concerns fully, hence, the creation of concepts such as African feminism, Black feminism, Womanism (by Alice Walker), Stiwanism (coined by Ogun-dipe-Leslie as an acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa), motherism (by Catherine Acholonu), personism (Ifeoma Okoye calls herself a personist) and femalism. Most of the feminisms propounded by African women are accommodative in orientation, making space for men and children as important parts of the woman's life. Some of them promote lesbian relationships while some frown against them. Some, like motherism, promote motherhood (not just biologically) as a means of fulfilment, but all advocate the equal treatment of women with their male counterparts.

The Beijing conference of September 1995 is remarkable in the international scene for the bold entrance of lesbian and gay rights into the politics surrounding the recognition of sexual rights. Petchesky (2003) traces the idea of international human rights' applicability to matters of sexuality and reproduction as considered by feminist organisations in both the North and South in the 1980s which also strongly identified violence against women in the 1990s. Françoise Girard (2007) recognises that while these arguments and recognition of marginalisation of the women and people of the same sex relationships have been raging over

ages, the action of the thirty five women from the Lesbian Caucus who flew the banner reading: “Lesbian Rights are Human Rights” on September 8, 1995 at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, sent an indelible message to the delegates in attendance from 189 countries all over the world. As a result, paragraph 96 of that 1995 Beijing Platform for Action negotiated the rights of women to control their sexuality. This was a step forward on the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria in which feminist human rights activists successfully obtained clear statements on the urgency of human rights of women, especially in the area of violence against women, including discrimination against lesbians. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) of 1994 in Cairo, Egypt succeeded in getting reproductive rights recognised and reproductive rights of ICPD included rights to sexual health, without looking at it only from the disease and malfunction angles but incorporating positive experiences around pregnancy, parenthood, sexuality and relationships (UN, 1995). This in a general way brought sexual rights into the picture and separated it clearly from the birth control and family planning sphere from where it had been viewed. So, the 1995 Beijing Conference only broadened what sexual rights entailed alongside reproductive rights which had become more developed than the more sensitive sexual rights. Petchesky (2003) also has it that at this time, feminists were not thinking much of pleasure but were focused on violations (including sexual violence and abuse, oppression and economic exploitation). It was more of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual (LGBT) movement, she says, that brought up the arguments for pleasure, not feminists. By 2000 when the UN General Assembly did not include sexual and reproductive rights in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), according to Griffin (2007), there was a huge disappointment. This was remedied in September 2005 when world leaders reaffirmed sexual and reproductive health and rights at the World Summit on realizing that the MDGs cannot be fully realized without these rights. So “in September 2006”, Griffin (2007:1) states, “the UN General Assembly finally adopted the ICPD goal of universal access to SRH as a target of the MDGs as a result of the advocacy by international and national NGOs”. By this time, WHO (2004) had come up with a working definition of sexual rights. This has been further modified/developed by IPPF (2008). Going by these precedents, it is easy to see why gay rights and feminism come to mind whenever sexual rights are mentioned.

Feminist literary studies have been found by Theodora Akachi Ezeigbo (2000) to have an impact on students: “Many of them restructure their perceptions of gender issues and some become more sympathetic towards women and their predicament in our patriarchal society. A few may remain indifferent (or even chauvinistic), yet they show an awareness of the inequities in society and women’s subservient position, though they may explain it away as God’s plan for humanity” (48). It goes to show that feminist movements have in many ways created the background for the introduction and acceptability of, as well as fears that militate against, sexual rights. Part of the awareness engendered by feminists and feminist literary studies is that the focus on women has inversely awakened the men to the realities of the areas where they too are oppressed and marginalized by the women and society at large. Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA) (2006) acknowledges that in India, “The women’s movements emerged as the space where many of the debates around sexual rights come to a head” (16) and that this has raised fears in certain quarters as to the future fate of realising sexual rights:

(a) a fear that sexual rights – like many earlier rights-based and legal efforts at feminist and social change around sexuality – will end up inadvertently reinforcing essentialist identity categories or understandings of women’s bodies and sexualities, and (b) a fear that rights language lacks the ability to embody a deeper understanding of women’s sexualities and the contexts in which they make sexuality-related decisions (16).

CREA (2006) also reveals that the fight for sexual rights has brought about a celebration of “new visibility” for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual (LGBT) movements and “has made many gay activists pause to consider the implications of the politics of identity and community-formation that has accompanied these new found spaces” (18). However, in the course of CREA’s (2006) interviews, some people’s opinions hold that although sexual rights have afforded the world of spaces to speak of “differences that were not hierarchies” (19), it is tasking to negotiate these rights because “Rights are so trapped in the language of non-discrimination and violence that...it brought its own baggage to any inclusive and more interconnected idea of sexuality” (19). CREA’s (2006) observations in India hold true in Africa and all over the world where much of the resistance that faces the realisation of sexual rights is because of the negative perception that people have about women movements and gay movements. However, behind this negative perception is the undeniable fact that these

movements have succeeded in creating awareness of rights denied and the factors behind these denials. It is only a matter of time before the negative perceptions will change, and they will change since sexual rights are human rights and not ideas championed by groups of individuals with personal or group interests.

Statement of the Problem

Sexuality in most African prose writing dwells in the margins. Most writers shy away from detailed exploration of sexuality and its workings. This gives the impression that when sexuality is encountered, it is an accidental occurrence. Subjects surrounding sexual rights, when they are raised in texts, are not foregrounded with the aim of advocating the sexual rights of the marginalised in the texts. The sexually marginalised are left in the margins where they are either ignored or simply serve as objects that help the centre to demonstrate their use or abuse of power. The global trend towards rights movements, especially in the area of sexual rights demands that newer and perhaps, stronger voices be added to the very few existing texts and critical works that have brought sexuality and sexual rights to the centre. Again, victimhood, in sexuality discourses in African literature, has, over time, become attached only to women while men have been presented as perpetrators. This perception has dominated feminist and masculinist studies, with little attention paid to men's victimisation and sexual rights advocacy.

Objectives of the Study

This work studies the movement of sexuality from the margins to the centre. Using selected African prose fictional texts that centralise sexuality, the study examines the writers' representation of, response to and framework for sexual rights advocacy. It investigates the contexts and degrees of enjoyment or denial of sexual rights in the selected texts, and the writers' use of their exploration of the issues surrounding sexual rights in commenting on and drawing attention to the suffering of the marginalised. This is in an attempt to show that all individuals, both male and female, and not just female, have sexual rights, can be victimised in given contexts which are capable of defining/redefining their Otherness, and can seek or gain liberation. The study explores the contribution of African prose fiction writers to the global move of ensuring that all human beings are not discriminated against and maximally enjoy the humanity expressed by their sexuality. It also interrogates eroticism; sexual identities and

orientations; the relationship among sexuality, language, morality and politics; and its symbiotic relationship with society.

Scope of Study

Texts of male and female writers which focus on sexual rights are selected from different regions of the continent: Nigeria, Cameroon, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Egypt, to establish a balanced view of sexual rights in African fiction. No text is chosen from East Africa and four of Nawal El Saadawi's texts are chosen to represent North Africa because of the literary drought in these parts of the continent. The study is not tied to any time frame in African literature because sexual rights and the sexual universe are ever evolving; rather, texts that treat themes relevant to the illustration of the workings of sexual rights are selected. Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, *Two Women in One*, *She Has No Place in Paradise* and *God Dies by the Nile*, Calixthe Beyala's *Your Name Shall Be Tanga*, Diane Case's *Toasted Penis and Cheese*, Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name*, J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail* and Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*, are the selected primary texts for analyses.

Significance/Justification of Study

Through the selected writers' representations of contexts of sexual rights violation, the sexual victimisation, marginalisation and violation of men is given a space in literary criticism. Children are also recognised as having sexual rights. Thus, sexual rights, victimhood and oppression are deconstructed from being the domain of women to that of all human beings. The sociologically-grounded solutions to the various forms of sexual violation position the selected writers as advocates of sexual rights.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A study on sexual rights, going by *Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration*, covers a very wide range of topics which this chapter looks at via the following subheadings: sexuality; sexuality as part of a changing discourse; sexuality and politics; sexuality, morality and religion; sexuality and identity; sexual violence; and sexual pleasure (eroticism).

Human Sexuality

Human sexuality refers to feelings, behaviours, experiences and expressions of humans as sexual beings. It covers various sexually-related aspects of human life, including physical and psychological development, attitudes, thoughts and customs associated with the individual's sense of gender, relationships, sexual activities, mate selection, reproduction, and so on. In every sphere of human existence involving the sexes, the issue of sexuality comes up. It is not surprising, therefore, that it is viewed with much contradiction and confusion. Hence, A.O. Arowojolu (2009) states:

Human sexuality practices or behaviors are complex and are achieved in interpersonal and intra-personal acts. They involve a wide range of activities, such as strategies to attract a sexual partner, interaction between individuals, physical or emotional intimacy, and sexual contact... What is termed sex varies with individual and cultures. What many term sex may not be seen as so by others.... Similarly, attitudes vary with the location and with whom different sexual practices occur. A considerable proportion of interpersonal sexual acts are forced or non consensual and may not be for pleasure. Having sex may be viewed as a hard or dangerous work, societal duty, and a way of obtaining shelter, food, drugs, or an act of theft. It could be a means to defile or subdue a person, an act of political defiance, method of warfare or a way to get good grades at work or in school (8).

Arowojolu (2009) recognises human sexuality as multifarious, part of a changing discourse as well as generating oppositional ideas, opinions, arguments and reactions. This diversity in sexuality has made Carroll (2005) to conclude that “while sexual intercourse is common in the animal kingdom, sexuality is a uniquely human trait” (3). This, Carroll (2005) says, is because “While many of our fellow creatures also display complex sexual behaviors, only human

beings have gone beyond instinctual mating rituals to create ideas, laws, customs, fantasies, and art around the sexual act” (3). It is obvious then that plants and other animals have what is also called sexuality, although Carroll (2005) chooses to call it sexual behaviours. The point of difference is that humans, other animals and plants do not negotiate all aspects of their sexuality using the same patterns. Some patterns are similar while others differ. However, it is the human sexuality that is of concern to this study, therefore all discussions of sexuality in this work refer to human sexuality.

Because sex is a basic instinct requiring intimacy, unlike the other basic instincts like hunger or sleep, and sexuality is intrapersonal and largely interpersonal, the society has developed structures that regulate the conflicts that arise from it in the course of interaction. Hence, the rules, laws, rituals, moral values that surround sex and sexuality are ways of explaining, attaching meanings, providing reasons for, controlling, curbing or promoting various aspects of sexuality. These vary according to individuals, groups, societies, cultures, age/socio-economic/educational brackets and religious affiliations. UNESCO (2009) makes the following assumptions about sexuality and though they call them assumptions, they are basically true:

- Sexuality is a fundamental aspect of human life: it has physical, psychological, spiritual, social, economic, political and cultural dimensions.
- Sexuality cannot be understood without reference to gender.
- Diversity is a fundamental characteristic of sexuality.
- The rules that govern sexual behaviour differ widely across and within cultures. Certain behaviours are seen as acceptable and desirable while others are considered unacceptable. This does not mean that these behaviours do not occur, or that they should be excluded from discussion within the context of sexuality education (2).

A full discussion on sexuality cannot overlook any of these strands/dimensions. Other segments of this chapter explore the points raised by UNESCO (2009).

Sexuality as Part of a Changing Discourse

The sexual universe – behaviours, attitudes, feelings, expressions, experiences, customs, etc., which are considered sexual – is both historically and regionally determined, hence, sexuality must be seen as part of a changing discourse. Over time and in different regions, conflicts have always existed on the freedom of and restrictions on the exploration of

sexuality; what sexual practices are acceptable and natural; sexual identities (heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual); and to what use or abuse sex could be put. Even as part of a changing discourse, the sexual universe is an essentially political one and the derived sexual meanings attached to behaviours and actions control and shape human relationships in the society just as each society sets rules, both written and unwritten, that determine what is permissible or not in their sexual universe. Society and sexuality can therefore be said to have a symbiotic relationship with each influencing and determining what is obtainable in the other.

The degree to which an action is counted as offensive changes with time, situation and place. For example, seventeenth century Britain (Plymouth, especially) recorded punishments from courts for fornication and adultery ranging from public floggings to wearing bold badges on conspicuous parts of garments declaring offenders as such ([http://www.mayflowerfamilies.com/colonial life/morality and sex.htm](http://www.mayflowerfamilies.com/colonial%20life/morality%20and%20sex.htm)). Surely, this is not twenty-first century England where 13-year olds get the 15-year olds pregnant and the national attention it draws is that which generates official documents asking parents to do sex education for their children at early ages, keeping morality out of it. The personae's voice in T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" (1922) which makes judgments of the society lady as morally loose, promiscuous and foolish for terminating a pregnancy (lines 148-164) will today be run out of court in any state that has legalized abortion. Also, the position of this voice in lines 215-256 where it analyses loveless sex/prostitution, will not be welcome in countries where prostitutes are the highest taxpayers.

Carroll's (2005) elaborate study of the evolution of human sexuality captures the changes in the perception and treatment of sexuality over the ages. In the course of the evolution of man, when the primate human ancestors adopted the upright posture, sexuality also changed as this upright posture changed to a great extent the basics of mate selection by shifting emphasis from the sense of smell to visual stimulation. With humans in the upright position, the female breasts became pronounced, visible and possible to manipulate during sex; the male penis also became visible and positioned in the front, making face-to-face intercourse possible; and the entire sensual aspect of intercourse was enhanced because more body area is in contact in face-to-face intercourse than in the rear entry that was in practice before the evolution of the upright posture. With the establishment of civilisations, laws and legal codes came into practice, but had the tendencies of stating mostly what was forbidden. Hence,

ancient Mediterranean texts and pictures and carvings show evidence of sexually transmitted infections and cures for them, menstruation and the laws surrounding it, male circumcision which was first performed in Egypt, contraception (Egyptian women inserted sponges or objects into the vagina to inhibit conception) and prostitution (which was common with the availability of temple prostitutes which Egypt was the first civilisation to eliminate as part of temple worship, though it was still common in its streets). Egypt also condemned adultery. The ancient Hebraic (Hebrew) laws recorded in the Bible established the sanctity of marital sexuality and proscriptions against non-procreative sex acts such as adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, bestiality and incest. The ancient Greeks were sexually permissive with homosexuality successfully institutionalised amongst the upper class – pederasty (sexual contact between adult males and post-pubescent boys) was in practice where the young boys (usually the penetrated) exchanged sexual services for mentorship of the older person (usually the penetrator). Socrates was supposed to have enjoyed the sexual services of all his male students. Ancient Roman civilisation (5th Century B.C. to 7th Century A.D.) had very permissive sexual rules. Wives encouraged their husbands to have slaves of either gender for the purposes of sexual release. Boswell (1980) adds that early Romans had very lax and permissive attitudes towards homosexual and bisexual behaviours which were legal until the 6th Century. Carroll (2005) however comments that in both Greece and Rome, adult males who took the passive role/position in homosexual encounters were viewed with scorn while the same role/position is acceptable when taken by youths, foreigners, slaves or women. This duality in the perception of actions depending on who is performing it goes to show that even in the same society, the interpretation of a sexual act is fluid. In ancient Asia (China and India), Carroll (2005) finds a long history of sexual freedoms and even disciplines that teach people how to maximise their sexuality. It is not surprising that the ancient sex instruction manuals, *Kama Sutra*, *Ananga Ranga*, and *The Perfumed Garden* are Asian. Carroll (2005) continues that with the advent of Christianity in the West, St. Paul, Saints Augustine, Jerome, and Thomas Aquinas who condemned sexuality, saw abstinence as the most exalted state and outlawed almost everything except marital intercourse for procreative purposes, by the Middle Ages, the church generally associated sexuality with sin. Although the Renaissance Age saw sexuality as beautiful and the Enlightenment praised sexuality as one of the highest forms of pleasure, these tendencies declined during the Victorian Age in England. In the United States of America, the Puritans brought strict Christian views but these were challenged as America

grew, especially as the church's power began to diminish after the Revolutionary War and as slavery had effect on the post-Revolutionary America. By the nineteenth century in America, a number of movements focussing on sexuality had risen and were countered by strong voices arguing for religious and chaste morality. These were followed by the social hygiene movements that arose in response to the high sexually transmitted infection rates. By the twentieth century, three major trends – sexology (scientific exploration of sexuality), feminism, and gay liberation – had appeared in America which greatly influenced sexuality discussions.

Carroll's (2005) focus appears to be the West, with attention paid to Africa only in the study of ancient Egyptian sexuality texts and the Eastern sex manuals. She does not extensively explore the global growth or the evolution of sexuality. But, going by the much that she says about Africa, which is the focus of this study, it is evident that some of what is on ground today were obtainable in the ancient civilisation. What appear to have changed are the methods of negotiation in areas like contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), circumcision (which has now included female circumcision and has acquired a religious undertone). Adultery and prostitution are still frowned at in both Egypt and other parts of Africa. Some strands of what she observes in other ancient civilisations have been traced in some African cultures. Colonialism, Christianity, Islam, Feminist and LGBT movements too have had their share of changing the face of sexuality in Africa.

David H. Barlow and V. Mark Durand's (2002) study recognizes that there has been a clear change toward sexual expression and fulfilment in men and women over the ages beginning from the 1960s and 1970s and that while "sexual revolution may be largely a creation of the media, focusing as it does on extreme or sensational cases", it is also clear that "the sexes are definitely drawing together in their attitudes and behavior, although some differences in attitudes and core beliefs remain" (311). The inhibiting/restrictive "*double standard*" has disappeared, in that women, for the most part, no longer feel constrained by a stricter and more conservative social standard of sexual conduct" (311). It becomes clear from this study that the society sees and weighs sexual actions differently based on the gender of the actor. The norm which is gradually becoming obsolete is that while men do not generally feel inhibited or embarrassed and are given to liberality in sexual behaviours, women are prone to conservatism, self consciousness and a great level of embarrassment in both the sexual behaviours and discussions. Inversely, Ottosson (2007) reveals homosexuality in some African

countries to be legal for women and illegal and attracting weighty punishments for men, a case of double standard for same practices. Steven Robertson (2006) also records that the report of sex offences commissioned by the Mayor of New York City in 1937 agreed that boys and girls may be victims of sex crimes but while girls can be raped, “boys, of course, cannot be raped, but they may be victims of carnal abuse or of sodomistic [sic] acts” (357). This gendered definition of sexual violence on the young person which prefers girls to boys has been reconfigured in the mid-twentieth century, Robertson (2006) states, as a result of the change in the perception of victimhood which de-genders the victims by simply looking at them as children, and the changed treatment of young male victims of sexual violence as being feminised. However, it must be said that this idea of feminisation still prevails in sexual violence against adult males and has acted as a major reason for under-reporting of cases of violence against them (UNHCR, 1995). Again, the age of the perpetrator and especially, that of the victim, the psychological and mental health of both and other intervening variables go a long way in redefining the treatment of sexual violence, which makes the location of violation fluid.

James M. Henslin’s (2009) extensive study on incest is revealing: some states in America count marriage between first cousins as incestuous and therefore illegal while some others do not; the Arunta, a tribe in Australia think of certain clans as being “blood” relatives, and marriage between people in those clans as incest; the ancient Egyptians, the Incas of Peru, and the old kingdom of Hawaii *required* brother-sister marriages for their high nobility; the Thonga, a tribe found in parts of Zimbabwe and Zambia, permit a hunter to have sexual intercourse with his daughter before he goes on a lion hunt; a tribe in Central Africa, the Azande, permit high nobles to marry their own daughters; and among the Burundi of tropical Africa, when a son is impotent the mother is supposed to have sex with him in order to cure his impotence. Henslin’s examples which he draws from various authorities go to show that situations, place and time are determiners of what make up a society’s sexual universe as well as their rightness or otherwise. He states:

This, in short, is the *social* aspect of our sexuality: Although we have a built-in biological sex drive, our membership in groups shapes or gives direction to this drive. Because different groups have different expectations--and different values, beliefs, and patterns of behavior--sexual behaviors, and even desires, vary from one group to another. This principle

applies not only to different groups around the world but also to different groups *within* the same society. Consequently, sexual desires and behaviors differ by gender, race-ethnicity, age, religious orientation, and social class.

An exploration of some other sexual practices apart from incest that have metamorphosed over time shows this difference. Homosexuality in Africa, for instance, has had controversies on its origin – whether the practice is originally African (in existence before colonial influence) or learnt by Africans as a result of colonial contact. Amory (1997) rejects any claim to an Africa devoid of homosexuality before her colonial contact and insists on “a long history of diverse African peoples engaging in same-sex relations” (2) and colonialism as the introductory point of homophobia in African societies. Desai (2007[1997]) and Phillips (2001:7) also support these claims and believe that the stand of the missionaries on homosexuality is widely responsible for the homophobia brought to Africa by the West. Another instance is the woman-woman marriage amongst the Igbo and the Kalabari of the Niger Delta of Nigeria (Amadiume, 1987 and Uchendu, 2007) which is not a homosexual (lesbian) relationship involving sexual activity but which permits a woman to marry another for the purposes of rendering services to the female husband in the form of child bearing (usually from a male chosen by the female husband) in cases where she is childless or in need of male children, companionship, farm aid, house help, etc. This practice, Uchendu (2007) notes, although still in existence in a subdued way has gradually found itself on the verge of extinction as a result of colonial and missionary interventions which more or less excommunicated parties to this kind of marriage. This shows how religion contributes to the changes in the sexual universe of a people.

A closely related area of difference is the institution of marriage which exists in every society in the world but yet has widely varying customs from culture to culture. Mackay (2000) states that 60% of marriages in the world are arranged. Parents and families arrange marriages for their children for reasons like traditional prescription, establishing and maintaining family ties/friendships/values/status, and financial/business family partnerships. While this practice still prevails to a large extent in most traditional societies and some industrialised ones, individual mate selection based on love and other personal reasons is the trend in today’s civilisation and is upheld by the sexual rights. This is not to say that sexual rights go against parental involvement in choice of marital/sex partner where the partners are agreed on and consent to parental decisions without any form of coercion. So, where sexual rights draws the

line to parental involvement is where one party does not, or even the two people involved do not, want the union or where one of them (usually the female) is underage. Arranged marriages basically take away the right/freedom of choice and are therefore often seen as forced marriages. Many parts of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, Moore (1994) states, still arrange marriages. Because of the poor economies of countries in these regions, Hinshelwood (2002) has noticed the evolving of the practice of selling young girls (between the ages of eight and twelve years old) for a “bride price” by families in need of cash. These girls may stay with their parents until they reach puberty or with the husband, depending on the terms of agreement. Child marriages are against sexual rights because the child is vulnerable to many dangers and at this stage of life when it is in need of protection, parents seeking wealth expose them to abuses which most times lead to debilitating diseases like Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF) and even Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Although it must be said that bride prices are not basically money paid for the purchase of human beings (brides), it is obvious that Hinshelwood (2002) obviously is more familiar with the dowry-giving cultures, what Hinshelwood (2002) is against is the hiking up of this bride price by parents in need of money and the age of the child brides. This “sale” more or less reduces the human worth to that of a commodity exchanged for cash to solve other needs. Apart from the arranged marriages, there are issues of polygamy (polygyny and polyandry), open marriages, same-sex marriages and divorce. In many parts of Africa and the Middle East, polygyny – marriage of one man to many women – is obtainable. It is also practised in most Islamic countries since the Koran permits four wives to one man, although a woman can only be wife to and have sex with one man. Polygamy (polygyny) was in practice, although with much resistance, in France until it was annulled in 1996 (Simmons, 1996). Carroll (2005) shows evidence of polyandry, which is rarer than polygyny, in Tibet where a woman may marry several brothers at the same time to avoid cutting up the inherited property. O’Neil and O’Neil’s (1972), Bergstrand and Williams’ (2000) and Rubin’s (2001) studies give light on what is called open marriages or swinging, whereby some married couples encourage their partners to have extramarital affairs or to bring other partners into their marital beds in order to have sexual variety, adventure or enhanced sexual life. Sex in this kind of marriage is treated as a separate entity outside of the marriage serving the purpose of strengthening the marital bond if enhanced with sexual delight from other quarters (Rubin, 2001). Bergstrand and Williams (2000) also report happier marriages and higher life satisfaction amongst swingers (couples in open marriages) than non-swingers

(couples not in open marriages). Same-sex marriages have also found its way into the list of kinds of marriage with Denmark being the first country to legalise it. Same-sex marriage, more than any other marriage-related argument perhaps, has generated the most uproar all over the world. Today, the battle still rages but many countries are bending their laws to recognise same-sex marriages in the West – Ontario, Canada in 2003 and Netherlands and Belgium (Altimari, 2003) – while in Africa, Nigeria in 2011 for example, bills motioning for this are thrown out of the house by the legislature with a fourteen-year sentence for gay practices. This goes to show that homophobia which is felt all over the world is more concentrated in Africa. With the changes in patterns of living all over the world, a lot of people are opting to be single and the number of married couples is on the decline while the spate of divorce is on the increase both from heterosexual and homosexual marriages. Reasons for divorce are as varied as the number of couples getting divorced; they range from infidelity and incompatibility to boredom and falling out of love with one's partner. Christianity tends to view divorce with more distaste than Islam since in Islam all it takes to be divorced is for one partner to say "I divorce you" three times to the other partner in the presence of a witness. Christianity on the other hand, especially the Roman Catholic Church, believes that God hates divorce and as much as possible, couples should stay married till death parts them, even when they are not happy in the marriage. In some traditional African societies, marriages may be dissolved for reasons of childbirth, maltreatment of the spouse, general dislike of either of the couple by family members.

Sexuality and Politics

Politics, according to Microsoft *Encarta Dictionaries*, deals with power relations in a specific field and refers to "the interrelationships between the people, groups, or organizations in a particular area of life especially insofar as they involve power and influence or conflict" where power means, amongst other things, strength, control and influence, authority to act, capacity to do something or persuasiveness.

The twenty-first century is an age when sexuality cannot be presumed to be non-political or neutral. Political activity and sexuality have become so intertwined that the sexual universe determines, to a large extent, how power is wielded. As a consequence, developments have arisen to significantly change all areas of political life, from electoral politics and local

government to public policy and international relations. Political debates and analyses today explore issues that are sexually salient and controversial – the girl-child interests, women empowerment, gender balance in power relations, employment based on gender quota allocation, conceptions of citizenship and nationality linked to gender and sexuality, the legislation about the age of consent (especially in sexual relations), prostitution and trafficking in women and children, the international politics of birth control (who has the final say over a woman's body and which methods of birth control she should use), abortion and sexual harassment, sexuality in the military and of course, the ongoing raging debates on homosexual relations.

The relationship between sexuality and politics, as clear as it may be in some quarters, remains under debate in some other quarters. For David Steinberg (2002), "Sex is one of the most important, ongoing metapolitical issues of our time, right up there with the economy, the environment, foreign policy, race, or labor relations". He adds that, "even as the media names and sensationalizes each specific sex-related issue, there seems to be no interest in (or willingness to) identify sex itself as a political matter, no interest in connecting the dots (a popular term these days), in noticing there's a sex-political forest out there, not just a collection of sex-political trees". The lack of attention paid to sexuality as a politically important universe has brought about much of the confusion encountered in its discussion which brings on a peculiar hysteria that leaves humanity ill-equipped to deal with fundamental issues of sexual politics, Steinberg (2002) continues. Issues that have sex at their core are not seen as such and are therefore not addressed appropriately. The fear of politicizing sexuality has contrarily produced amazing results which Steinberg (2002) sums up thus:

We need to understand and point out to others that when people talk about making abortion illegal, when people talk about abstinence-only sex education in the schools, they are, not insignificantly, also talking about their fear of sex. We need to understand and emphasize that when people talk about shutting down strip clubs or restricting pornography on the Internet, they are, not insignificantly, also talking about encouraging governmental interference with basic sexual self-determination. We need to understand and show others that opposition to gay marriage, police raids of s/m [somasochism] clubs, and attempts by alcohol and beverage control boards to shut down swingers conventions are all, not insignificantly, attacks on various forms of sexual diversity.

Perhaps most importantly of all, we need to begin to develop the sense that all of us who favor full and free sexual expression share a common cause and a common identity, separate from, and compatible with, our identification with specific sexual orientations and interest groups -- that we are part of a general movement that goes beyond single issues to challenge the underlying antisexual paradigm that has long been the root of the sexual confusion and harmful public policy that we know so well.

Many countries have policies against sex as a trade or prostitution but, going by the arguments of some radical women activists, like Nawal El Sadaawi, for example, it is hard to draw a line where this trading with sex starts and stops. Mark Liberator (2004) shares this opinion about sex too:

Within the sanctity of marriage, balancing acts must be performed to ensure each member of the team is getting what he or she needs. From cleaning the house, buying new furniture, displaying one's affection and releasing stress, sex gets caught up in the mix and can sometimes become a bargaining chip...Sex, like everything else, is up on the table for 'sale' within marriage and other relationships. It is not a foreign concept to anyone who has ever been in a sexual relationship over an extended period of time. Usually there is no direct exchange of money, but natural exchanges in a give-and-take situation do occur when things are normal and healthy. So long as there are no heavy demands and freedom of choice exists, sex is a commodity of sorts.

Kim Voynar (2009), in commenting on Steven Soderbergh's film, *The Girlfriend Experience*, notes that prostitution does not just involve the sale of the body, male and female, in exchange for money, goods, services or security, but is an activity involving as many as are in the workforce of any country. He opines:

All of us who work for a living are making a trade, an exchange of perceived value, and very often we find ourselves doing things to make a living that go against what we really want or value...We're all of us whoring out ourselves in one capacity or another, exchanging our bodies, our minds, our talents, our time for the security of being able to pay the bills. If we're lucky, we're whoring ourselves out doing something we also happen to love, or at least enjoy.

There is a position in Voynar's (2009) opinion which assumes that prostitution/sex work is a profession which people go into unwillingly or do not enjoy. Agustin (1988) reveals that quite a good number of sex workers are not forced into it and are there because they enjoy the trade. Her study exposes the politics behind rescue missions for migrant sex workers in Europe and projects these rescuers as further extending the boundaries of marginalisation of sex workers

by stigmatising them as bad and in need of deliverance instead of “rescuing” them since their major concern is not the welfare of these workers but in creating a good public image for their organisations. She reveals that countries that have sex workers legally registered as well as paying taxes have recorded a reduction in the hazards arising from abuse of the trade. Also, bodies that have invested their energies in getting migrants sex workers legal papers under domestic services have recorded more success than those that are after getting them off the streets.

Daniel Ottosson’s (2007) world survey of laws prohibiting same sex relationships between consenting adults reveals that, in forty out of the fifty three countries of Africa, homosexuality (male-male and female-female) is semi-legal only in Egypt and Democratic Republic of Congo with punishment in these two countries ranging from fines to imprisonment based on interpretation of the act. In all the other 38 countries, male-male homosexuality is illegal, female-female homosexuality is legal in fifteen out of the thirty eight countries (in Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and unclear on whether it is legal/illegal in Swaziland. Punishments range from fine, imprisonment with or without corporal punishment, labour camp to death sentences. This shows African state laws to be a key source generating and supporting homophobia. It will be noted however that death sentences are prevalent in Islamic countries or Islamic provinces of countries that are not entirely Islam, a pointer to the interplay of religion and politics. On the other hand, a country like South Africa has been described by Kovac (2002:90) as “one of the most gay-friendly nations in the world” as a result of its liberal laws concerning homosexuality and homosexual practices.

Sexuality, Morality and Religion

Morality refers to the generally accepted standards of what is right or wrong, the extent to which a behaviour is judged as right or wrong, and ethics. It varies from society to society; what is right in one may be wrong in another. Even what makes up the moral universe of a given society changes over time. There is no universality of morals – the universe of a moral is only within the society that upholds it. Who determines or generates what becomes accepted as right or wrong in any given society deserves critical attention: the rulers or the ruled, rich or

poor, the old or the young, the male or the female, and so on. Richard J. Mouw (1998) sees morality as “a worship of brute power” (218). This implies that it is given to a group to generate what makes up the moral climate of their environment while others in the same location are meant to either accept it willingly or be forced to accept it as the norm. Also, if there is a change of/in the dictating group, it affects what makes up the moral codes of a given society. There is a relationship here between an individual’s sexual behaviours, identity and orientation(s) and his/her society’s perception, acceptance or disapproval/rejection of same. The latter to a great extent determines the former. The restriction on the expression of sexuality arises from society’s awareness of how powerful the sex drive could be; hence the effort to tame it, knowing that it cannot be suppressed.

In a patriarchal world like ours, it appears that much of what is on ground as to what is morally acceptable as far as sexuality goes is tilted to please the patriarchs. Hence, the debate going on about homosexuality, prostitution, birth control and related topics of conflict find anchor in morality, a set of codes originating from the patriarchs for their convenience. Sexual pleasure becomes adultery, fornication or prostitution depending on who is filing the offence – usually, an aggrieved husband, father or guardian whose position is threatened or questioned by the act. Birth control becomes controversial because it is a power tussle over who controls the woman’s body: the woman or the man whom society sees as the owner of the female body. Homosexuality (gay and lesbianism) too is frowned at most importantly because of its threat to patriarchy by the independence it bequeaths: women can do away with male dominance in an area that matters much to men; an area through which a woman is assigned the role of “pleasure giver”. Without this pleasure giver, the gay man who finds pleasure with a fellow man is looked down on by the society that had already given the woman a secondary place. Homosexuality on the side of the male is frowned at firstly, because this male is seen as abnormal in desiring the secondary place of the woman who is a second class citizen and secondly, in his refusal to exercise the authority given to him by the society to dominate the woman. On morality and sexuality, Anja Merret (2007) says:

The moral issue of sex is not discussed often. It is shown as being part of life. Moral issues are left to the discussion of being faithful to ones partner. The question of abortion elicits a heated discussion amongst pro-lifers and those in support of allowing women the choice whether to continue with a pregnancy or not. If one were to take away the moral issue, and put all girls

onto birth control, the issue of abortion would not ever need to come up. Would birth control make any difference in the levels of sexual activity? If it's not immoral would it matter?

Religion also plays a big role in determining what is obtainable in the moral universe of any religious society. In Africa, the influence of Christianity and Islam has gone a long way in determining what constitutes the right and the wrong. In matters of sexuality, both religions have impressive lists of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. The Christian *Holy Bible*, which leans mainly on the aforementioned Hebraic laws, is replete with examples and injunctions against some sexual practices which it sees as bad like fornication/adultery, homosexuality, bestiality and incest, and in most cases have punishments prescribed for offenders. Deuteronomy 22:13-29 pronounces death by stoning for a woman whose husband discovers not to be a virgin on having sexual contact with her, death for both the man and woman caught in adultery, death by stoning for both victim and perpetrator in the case of rape in the city where it is assumed that the victim (engaged/married woman) did not cry out for help. However, if the rape occurs in the countryside where it is assumed that the engaged/married woman cried out without being heard, only the man is to be stoned to death. If a man is caught in the act of raping an unmarried and unengaged woman, the penalty is for him to marry her without the option of ever divorcing her as long as they both live. It is obvious that the Bible believes that women are always victims of rape and men, the perpetrators. Alongside this erroneous belief is another: that not crying out for help makes the victim compliant and a consenting partner. Deuteronomy 22:30 forbids a son to have sexual intercourse with any of his father's wives while Deuteronomy 23:17-18 forbids prostitution, sodomy and the bringing of money earned from prostitution into the temple either as offering or payment of any kind of vow. The latter scripture recognises that both males and females can be sex workers and goes a step ahead to condemn anal intercourse as a sexual activity. Similar to this is Exodus 22:19 which pronounces death for anybody caught indulging in bestiality (sexual intercourse with an animal/beast). Deuteronomy 23:2 states: "A person begotten out of wedlock shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall his descendants not enter into the congregation of the Lord" (AMP). This, by implication, institutes marriage as the acceptable avenue for procreation. Hence, children born outside of the institution of marriage suffer marginalization having been labelled unholy/unacceptable by religious doctrine. This has far-reaching implications. Adherents of this religion go to a great

length to ensure that their children are acceptable and may enter into unwanted marriages to give the unborn baby the recommended foundation or secretly settle for badly administered abortions. Leviticus 18: 22-23 condemns both homosexuality and bestiality and sees them as detestable practices. Romans 1:23-27 (written by St. Paul in the New Testament, but which shows a great influence of the Hebraic perception) sees homosexuality (lesbian and gay alliances) as unnatural/abnormal, vile, degrading, shameful, and sexual impurity that dishonours the body. This being the case, it is not surprising that the issue of ordination of openly gay bishops and clergy in the Anglican Communion has brought about a split in the church giving birth to a fragment like The Church of Nigeria which has refused to be a part of The Church of England. Ben Anderson (2007), citing the case of Most Reverend Peter Akinola, “primate to 17 million Nigerian Anglicans and head of an African bishops’ group with a total flock of 44 million” (128), recognises the role of religious heads in the control of how homosexuals in Africa are treated. He states that Most Reverend Peter Akinola’s “public outrage at the US Episcopal Church’s 2003 ordination of openly gay bishop V. Gene Robinson has lead[sic] to his cross-continental absorbance of 15 dissident congregations from that Church” (128).

Islam, on the other hand has similar prohibitions and sentences for sexual “offences”. *Qur’an* 4:22, like Deuteronomy 22:30, forbids a Moslem to marry or have sex with any woman who has been married by his father. *Qur’an* 4:23 also forbids incest of any kind and any sexual relationships with women with whom a man has blood ties or close family relationships:

"4.23": Forbidden to you are your mothers and your daughters and your sisters and your paternal aunts and your maternal aunts and brothers' daughters and sisters' daughters and your mothers that have suckled you and your foster-sisters and mothers of your wives and your step-daughters who are in your guardianship, (born) of your wives to whom you have gone in, but if you have not gone in to them, there is no blame on you (in marrying them), and the wives of your sons who are of your own loins and that you should have two sisters together, except what has already passed; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

The following verses from *The Holy Qur’an* condemn sex amongst/between the unmarried and recommends that they be flogged in public as well as forbid fellow religious adherents to marry them:

"17.32": And go not nigh to fornication; surely it is an indecency and an evil way.

"24.2": (As for) the fornicatress and the fornicator, flog each of them, (giving) a hundred stripes, and let not pity for them detain you in the matter of obedience to Allah, if you believe in Allah and the last day, and let a party of believers witness their chastisement.

"24.3": The fornicator shall not marry any but a fornicatress or idolatress, and (as for) the fornicatress, none shall marry her but a fornicator or an idolater; and it is forbidden to the believers.

This being the case, the right to privacy which should surround sex is taken away, making it a free-for-all affair. Why should “fornicators” be flogged in the presence of witnesses, or even at all? Who observes this act of fornication and does the reporting? It is obvious that this person who spies out the “fornicators” interferes with their rights to privacy and, since it is not a case of rape, is preventing them from fully enjoying their rights to sexual pleasure and freedom to sexual expressions. Further damage is done by these verses because they stigmatise the individuals and may prevent them from settling down in marriages as they are already branded as impure and unfit for “respectable” marriages. These are punishments that are added to the fear of spending eternity in hell as *The Holy Qur'an* 25:65-68 warns. In the sphere of sexual relationships involving married persons, Islam has a different kind of punishment. The Shari`ah prescribes death sentence by stoning for the man and woman found guilty of or caught in adultery. Although proving adultery under Islam law requires of the accuser to produce four eyewitnesses – people of good reputation with truthfulness and honesty – to the actual act of sexual intercourse, a country like Nigeria which practises Shari`ah laws in some of her states appears to have overlooked this factor in the 2002 case of Amina Lawal. Again, nothing is done to her male counterpart which makes the punishment for adultery, at least in Nigeria, to appear like a set of laws directed at punishing women for activities performed with men. This does not mean that Islam approves of every male sexual practice since it also prescribes a death sentence for male-male homosexual activities in twelve Islamic states in Nigeria (Ottoson, 2007). Nigeria is not alone in stoning adulterers to death. The *Kuwaiti Encyclopedia of Islamic Jurisprudence*, quoting Ibn Qudamah, claims that Muslim jurists, Companions, Successors and Muslim scholars are unanimous on this punishment which is supported by traditions and the practice of the Prophet. This punishment is on the extreme and grossly goes against sexual and human rights, even when it hides behind the right to practice the religion of one’s choice.

The African traditional religions are not left out of the scene of sexual rights. A number of practices that militate against the enjoyment of these rights arise from traditional religious practices. Examples include the preference of the male child over the female, some practices surrounding some rites of passage like circumcision (for both male and female), the dehumanisation of women in the event of their husbands' demise, betrothal of young girls to boys or old men they do not even know and may grow up not wishing to live with as husband and wife, the expectancy that every marriage must produce children without which it is counted as a failure, the settlement of the dowry or bride price which may generate some kinds of violence on both the men and women, and insistence on virginity of the bride as a mark of honour to her family and condition for her acceptability to the husband. Unfortunately, Christianity and Islam support some of these practices in their own different ways, making it difficult to separate which has what origin, for which reason a practice like FGM has been strongly linked to Islam and Asmani and Abdi (2008) have put up an argument to defend Islam.

Of interest to this study is the way in which religion and morality have influenced sexuality education in not just Africa, but all over the world. Parents rarely talk about sex to their children and leave the job of breaking the sexual news to the school Biology or Elementary Science teachers. This is as a result of the repression and inhibition that people generally feel in talking about sexual matters which is deeply entrenched in morality. So, the ones that do talk at all mostly emphasise the laws/rules guarding against perceived wrong practices. Most parents, and people generally, talk about the genitals to their children in metaphors and hence, establish the notion that there is something wrong with calling the sex organs by their names. Sexual rights advocate that the right information be given at every point in time on sexuality to people that seek and need it. There is provision for giving sexuality education to the young and underage persons using the language appropriate to the age of the child. The two religions under focus in this study, Christianity and Islam, encourage conservative approaches to sexuality education. With the chains of laws in place against various forms of sexual practices, the idea of right and wrong is deeply entrenched in the minds of people belonging to these religions. Even in the perception of the natural/biological workings of the body, like erection, wet dreams, menstruation and breast enlargement, offering factual explanations that are devoid of morality proves difficult. Both Islam and the Hebraic

culture that pervades in the *Holy Bible* see the woman as unclean when she is menstruating and prescribe thorough cleansing after the end of the menstrual flow. This in Islam is also extended to the seminal fluids from the man which make him “unclean” for worship until he has performed ablutions to purify himself. This belief is not limited only to these groups since Nik Douglas and Penny Slinger (2000) state: “The taboos associated with menstruation are practically universal. They exist in both primitive and sophisticated cultures, from India to China, Japan, the Pacific Islands, North and South America, Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Europe” (282). United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2009) notes that

Few young people receive adequate preparation for their sexual lives. This leaves them potentially vulnerable to coercion, abuse and exploitation, unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Many young people approach adulthood faced with conflicting and confusing messages about sexuality and gender. This is often exacerbated by embarrassment, silence and disapproval of open discussion of sexual matters by adults, including parents and teachers, at the very time when it is most needed (2).

To guard against this, sexuality education becomes a necessity and UNESCO (2009), bearing in mind “the impact of cultural values and religious beliefs on all individuals, and especially on young people, in their understanding of this issue and in managing relationships with their parents, teachers, other adults and their communities” (2), recommends sexuality education which it defines as: “an age-appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching about sex and relationships by providing scientifically accurate, realistic, non-judgemental information” (2). The importance of effective sexuality education, UNESCO (2009) continues, lies in the “structured opportunities for young people to explore their attitudes and values, and to practise the decision-making and other life skills they will need to be able to make informed choices about their sexual lives” (2). Despite the laudable intentions of UNESCO in advancing sexuality education, it has met with resistance from religious bodies and moralist/conservative bodies which see sexuality education as providing young ones with inappropriate information, even when these bodies do not have any programme directed at providing what it would see as the appropriate ones. Family Watch International (2009) vehemently kicks against this UNESCO document and warns parents to beware of the corruption which UNESCO in

collaboration with UNICEF, UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) and WHO, are easing into families under the guise of education programmes and ends their document on this note:

The Guidelines undermine parental rights and state that “teachers are likely to be the most skilled and trusted source of information” and “have a responsibility to act in the place of parents.”

These Guidelines ultimately will increase the very negative consequences of sexual behavior in youth they claim to prevent. So as defined by UNESCO, “comprehensive education on human sexuality” is very dangerous indeed (2).

If the parents who Family Watch International calls upon to take action gave the required appropriate sex education, there may not have been the need for the UNESCO document which acted on the ignorance perceived in the youths on sexuality and related matters, so, the consolation this group can take will be to equip parents with the kind of information it thinks proper and to ensure that they give it to the youths. Churches and mosques instead of emphasizing the laws on prohibited behaviours should invest in sexuality education which will in turn see to the reduction in the frequency of some of the behaviours they consider inappropriate.

It is usually a difficult thing to change people’s perception of a thing if it is entrenched in their religious beliefs. This is because most religions propagate the belief in the after-life and hence, individuals believe that their behaviours have effects that outlive their existence here on earth. When the power of immediate rewards or punishments accruing to deeds are taken away, the fear of living an unpleasant life in the after-life or the hope of receiving some rewards there is enough to keep up some practices that violate sexual rights. It is easy to see that for the religious, the sets of rules upheld by their religious affiliations make up what constitutes morality and moral codes for them. Africans being a deeply religious people, it might be hard for now to find an African country which will take the kind of step Britain has taken in declaring, in *The Sunday Times* of February 22, 2009, her intention in a proposed new government leaflet that parents should avoid trying to convince their teenage children of the difference between right and wrong when talking to them about sex. Of course, even liberated Britain has had attacks from moralists on this document.

Sexuality and Identity

The first question asked when a baby is born in almost all cultures of the world is usually: “Is it a boy or a girl?” Society is bent on assigning definitions to the individual from the first day of existence, hence the classification as boy or girl. Along with this assignment goes what Judith Butler (1990; 1993) sees as the cultural understanding of masculinity and femininity, with the former uncompromisingly belonging to men/boys and the latter to women/girls specifically. While the society classifies strictly into male or female, some individuals refuse to come under these conventional labels. The question remains unsolved: who defines the individual’s sexual identity – the society or the individual’s biological make-up, psychology (feelings and perception of him/herself), sexual behaviour and/or orientation? Butler (1990) sees gender and identity as performative since she believes that what an individual does per time defines his/her gender and identity. Her perception grants fluidity to gender and identity, making it possible for an individual to talk of his/her identities. Azodo and Eke’s (2007: xii) summary of critical opinions on identity reveal three groups of thought, the first believing that “self and social identities are dependent on a culture’s view of gender”, the second believing that “gender should not limit individual capacity”, and the third believing that “gender is complex, intricate, and contradictory, at once everything that affects and impacts our lives or nothing at all”. If gender is at the root of identity and it affects every area of life, then there has to be a meeting point for the individual and the society without which conflicts would continually arise. Barry E. Wolfe (1995) divides identity into two aspects: personal identity and social identity. The first comprises an individual’s conception and perception of him/herself while the second is his/her community’s conception and perception of him/her. These two identities co-exist in tension, as Christopher Wemple and Suzan Stafford (2010) state:

Belonging in a group always involves a tension between our personal identity, our own sense of self, and our social identity which reflects the claims of our family or community through prescribed roles and behaviors. The lifelong process of working with this tension is often seen as a search for identity, and how we approach resolving this tension depends a lot on the type of belonging we are in.

Some individuals are lucky to be biologically male or female, accept themselves as such and have society think of and accept them as such. For some, their biological make-up does not

agree with their psychological perception of themselves or with the society's conception of them. There are still others who accept themselves as male or female, both or neither or somewhere in between and are spending their entire lives trying to resolve the tension between them and the society. Much of the tension arises either from the failure to live up to society's prescription for the sexes in general behaviour and, more specifically, in the area of mate selection. Many terms have come up in society's effort to classify individuals and contain their ever-increasing sexual metamorphosis: heterosexual, homosexual (gay and lesbian), bisexual, transsexual, celibate, transgender, or inter-sex (people born with ambiguous genitalia. Usually, parents choose which ones to remove/retain while some allow the child to grow up and choose which one(s) s/he wants to retain/discard).

“Sexuality and Identity - Movements of Affirmation” opines:

Recent sexual politics have been organised around a politics of identity and difference...sexuality has become central to knowing who we are, informing our sense of self and personal identity. Increasingly it has become an intrinsic part of our lived and expressed identities to a greater, degree, than say class, status, gender and ethnicity. Gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, queer, transvestite, transsexual, fetishist ...each group is distinguished by its own unique sexual tastes, preferences, styles and communities. All have appeared on the political stage to claim their rights and social space. We might say we have moved into an era of transsexualism & transgenderism in which sexuality and gender are increasingly loosened and detached from any referentiality to natural instinct or a sexed body.

Whether the human sexual orientation is biologically or sociologically determined is also under debate with the essentialists favouring the former and the social constructionists the latter. Henslin (2009) clarifies it for the two groups. For the essentialists he says: “So our sexual orientation--which becomes the center of our sexual identity--is inborn. We are born with a sexual desire for people of the opposite sex or for members of our own sex” and for the social constructionists:

...we construct our sexual identity. We are not born homosexual (having sexual preference for members of one's own sex) or heterosexual (having sexual preference for members of the opposite sex); rather, we *learn* these sexual orientations. As we learn them, we come to think of ourselves in these terms; that is, we *acquire* a sexual identity. As we do, we get a lot of help from others--from our family, friends, and peer groups. Even our culture is significant in this process of acquiring a sexual orientation and identity, for it provides the ideas and concepts that we apply to our self.

Essentialists brandish biological theories that claim that sexual orientations are caused by genetics (Bailey and Pillard, 1993; Bailey, Pillard, Neale and Agvei, 1993; Pattatucci, 1998; Pillard and Bailey, 1998; and Kirk, Bailey, Michael, and Nicholas, 1999), hormones (Dorner, 1976 and 1988; Hendricks, Graber and Rodriguez-Sierra, 1989; and Zuger, 1989), birth order (Jones and Blanchard, 1998; Cantor, Blanchard, Paterson and Bogaert, 2002; and Ridley, 2003), or simple physical traits (LeVay, 1991; Swaab and Hofman, 1990; Jensen, 1998; Gallo, 2000; Schuklenk, Stein, Kevin and Byne, 1997; Lalumiere and Blanchard, 2000; Williams, Pepitone, Christensen and Cook, 2000; and Brown, Finn, Cooke and Breedlove, 2002). While Mackay (2000) sees the same-sex activity which has been found in 450 species of birds and mammals, of which the killer whale is one, as an indicator that homosexuality is essentialist, Greenberg and Bailey (2001) even project that the ever-increasing research into the causes of sexual orientation may someday provide the possibility of parents selecting the sexual orientation of their children before they are born. That day has not come yet, so in the interim, constructionists on the other side of the divide are focusing on developmental theories highlighting a person's upbringing and personal history which include psychoanalytic theories (Freud in Friedman, 1986; Hooker, 1957), gender-role nonconformity theories (Green, 1987; Bailey, Nothnagel and Wolfe, 1995; Pillard, 1991), peer-interaction theories (Storms, 1981), behavioural theories (Masters and Johnson, 1979) and the sociological theories of interaction of biology and sociology (Bem, 1996).

There are also people who are torn between homosexual (gay and lesbian) and heterosexual identities. Some are not sure of where they belong and in the midst of the confusion declare themselves neither whereas a group exists that finds themselves attracted to their own sex at some points and to the opposite sex at other times hence, they declare themselves bisexual. The acronym LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) has been adopted to cover all these sexual orientations that differ from heterosexuality. Q – questioning – refers to the group of people who are not sure of where they belong and still question which or where they truly belong.

Swab and Hoffman's (1990) and LeVay's (1991) research results suggest that sexual orientation has a biological substrate (at least, in men) when they show that the part of the brain responsible for sexual responses is larger and more developed in the heterosexual than in the homosexual. Other physiological differences distinguish homosexuals from bisexuals and

heterosexuals: ear structure (Jensen, 1998), amount of facial hair, size of external genitalia, the ratio of shoulder width to hip width (Schuklenk, Stein, Kevin and Byne, 1997), handedness (Lalumiere and Blanchard, 2000), and finger length (Williams, Pepitone, Christensen and Cook, 2000). But, the problem with these findings is the inconsistencies of their findings and the fact that some gays do not like them as they seem to confer on them the status of abnormality or biological impairment/retardation which puts them on a list probably worse than the list of official psychiatric disorders in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) from where Carroll (2005) has it that they were removed in 1973 by the American Psychiatric Association after strong gay lobbying. Before then, Bell and Weinberg (1978) record, homosexuals were thought to be sexually irresponsible, having psychological problems that needed to be cured. But, researches in favour of the normalcy of homosexuals abound. Evelyn Hooker's (1957) study shows that homosexuality is not a psychological disorder by comparing groups of gay and straight men's life histories, personality profiles, psychological evaluations and discovering little or no fundamental psychological difference. Bell and Weinberg (1978) also reveal that homosexuality does not have a direct correlation with sexual irresponsibility and that homosexuals generally do not push unwanted sexual advances onto people nor do they seduce children. Their study also reveals that heterosexual men are more likely to sexually abuse children than homosexual men, and that the types of intimate relationships existing in heterosexual communities are similar to those amongst homosexuals. In other studies, Masters and Johnson (1979) discover that arousal and orgasm in homosexuals and heterosexuals are not physiologically different, and Perrin (2002) shows that children who grow up with one or two gay and/or lesbian parents do as well emotionally, cognitively, socially, and sexually as do children from heterosexual parents. Again, the roll call of homosexuals which includes personalities like Socrates, Leonardo Da Vinci, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Gertrude Stein (Carroll, 2005) place them a long distance away from being abnormal.

These remove arguments of abnormality from the homosexual discourses. What appears not to have been decided on is how individuals become/are homosexual since most of both the essentialist and constructionist findings are either contradictory or have no replicates. However, with these differing opinions gaining more and more facts to support their views every day, it is clear that people of differing sexual orientations will be received and judged

differently, irrespective of how they perceive themselves, based on the view of the society where they find themselves. And, the LGBTQs are everywhere, going by Mackay's (2000) estimate of scholarly opinions that between 3 and 4% of males are predominantly gay, 1.5 to 2% of women are predominantly lesbian, and about 2 to 5% are bisexual. This means that the tensions between sexuality and identity (individual and/versus society) will be unending so long as the LGBTQs exist.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence, according to Jejeebhoy and Bott (2005), is a term used interchangeably with non-consensual sex and sexual coercion. This makes the words *violence*, *coercion* and *consent* crucial in the identification of what can be termed as sexual violence. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (1996) defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”. The use of the two words “physical force” and “power” immediately brings relationships of inequality to mind when talking of violence. This more general definition of violence perhaps stemmed from the United Nations Organisation's (UNO) (1994) definition of violence against women in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”. Looking at the word “gender-based”, the first problem this definition of violence poses is that of establishing that the act in question is as a result of the victim's gender and not as a result of anything else. If it is established that the violence suffered is strongly gender-biased, then it stands as gender-based violence which is directly against the first article of sexual rights since the victim is made to suffer as a result of her sex (being female). This aspect of looking at violence also overlooks that it is possible for men to face violence as a result of their gender in which case it will also be gender-based violence and touching on sexual rights for men. A look at what gender-based violence encompasses in the declaration supports its coverage of a lot of points protected by the sexual rights: physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional

practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere; trafficking in women and forced prostitution; and physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs. Amnesty International (2005:2-4) recognise the above listed as forms of sexual violence.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (1995:4) defines sexual violence as “all forms of sexual threat, assault, interference and exploitation, including "statutory rape" and molestation without physical harm or penetration”. The form of sexual violence most referred to is rape, defined in many societies as “sexual intercourse with another person without their consent...committed when the victim's resistance is overcome by force or fear or under other coercive conditions” (UNHCR, 1995:4). Other forms of sexual violence identified by UNHCR (1995:4) include: “insertion of objects into genital openings, oral and anal coitus, attempted rape and the infliction of other sexually abusive acts...the use or threat of force in order to have sexual acts performed by third persons”. The study identifies the motivation for sexual violence as the desire for power and domination with the intention “to hurt, control and humiliate, violating a person's innermost physical and mental integrity” (4) and includes family members as perpetrators of sexual violence. Its listing of people most vulnerable to sexual violence include: unaccompanied women and lone female heads of household, children (given their high level of trust), unaccompanied children and children in foster families, refugees of all ages and both genders when in detention or detention-like situations, the very old, the infirm, and the physically and mentally disabled (4). In this study, women are treated as the victims and men as the perpetrators in recognition of the fact that the majority of reported cases of sexual violence among refugees involve female victims and male perpetrators and because women and girls appear to be the ones most often subjected to sexual violence while very little is known about the true incidence of sexual violence against male refugees other than in the context of detention and torture. This does not mean that men do not face sexual violence, but it is prevalent amongst women. The general agreement of the UNHCR document is that the actual extent of sexual violence and the damages it generates is not known because of under-reporting. A number of reasons are given for the reluctance to report cases of sexual violence. Most cultures and communities perceive sexual attacks as

shameful and therefore stigmatise the victims. Sometimes, they are ostracised alongside their family members, especially in communities where the virginity and chastity of the woman is considered to reflect the honour of their families. Such women may end up not marrying or not staying married and where they are perceived as the culprits, they may face punishment. In cases of mishandling of reports, there may be further attacks from perpetrators, trials and detentions and disintegration of families which increase the physical, emotional, intellectual and psychological devastation of the victims of sexual violence. In the cases of sexual violence against men, the problem of reporting is more compounded, first, because most establishments in charge of such matters are structured to cater for women and girls. Second, the men experience profound humiliation and count the assault as a slur on their virility and manhood. Third, the gender construction in most societies does not permit men to freely express or acknowledge their emotions, therefore the assaulted male may find it hard to really recount his experience. There is also the difficulty that arises from the discomfort with the subject which may be felt by the resource persons or officials in charge of taking such reports, their dismissal of the subject as a purely private matter, as well as the reluctance of authorities to identify and prosecute assailants and the fear of reprisals in cases where the perpetrator is someone in authority.

WHO's (2002) definition of sexual violence as "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim" (149) gives an extension to practices that fall under sexual violence by including unwanted sexual comments or advances and recognising that anybody can be perpetrator of sexual violence. But, perhaps the most comprehensive of definitions is Heise, Moore and Toubia's (1995) which sees sexual coercion as:

[the] act of forcing (or attempting to force) another individual through violence, threats, verbal insistence, deception, cultural expectations or economic circumstances to engage in sexual behaviour against her/his will. As such, it includes a wide range of behaviours from violent forcible rape to more contested areas that require young women to marry and sexually service men not of their choosing. The touchstone of coercion is an individual woman's lack of choice to pursue other options without severe social and physical consequence (8).

Going by WHO's (2002) and Heise, Moore and Toubia's (1995) definitions, sexual violence/coercion does not stop at just the act of coercion or violation but includes the intention/attempt to do such whether or not it is successful or not. Included are all cultural practices and/or expectations that condition the individual to behave outside her/his will in matters concerning sexuality. Challenges arise from Heise, Moore and Toubia's (1995) definition: if the society is patriarchal and frowns at homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality and necrophilia for example, where does the line of extricating coercion/violence start and end? One may want to argue on the violence on the lesbian and homosexual when they are forced by the society to behave heterosexually, but what about the desire for necrophilia and bestiality which a lot of societies frown at and thereby force the individuals with such tendencies to sublimate or face the law on being caught? Again, Robbins and Judge (2007) argue that in the case of subtle sexual harassment, interpretations of what make up sexual harassment may differ for different people as "sexual harassment is ... to some degree, in the eye of the beholder" (480). They give the example that "women are more likely to see a given behaviour or sets of behaviours as constituting sexual harassment. Men are less likely to see as harassment such behaviours as kissing someone, asking for a date, or making sex-stereotyped jokes" (480). While Heise, Moore and Toubia (1995) appear to champion the cause of women in their definition by using the woman's "lack of choice to pursue other options without severe social and physical consequence" as a key parameter for measuring sexual coercion, Ajuwon (2005), Caceres (2005), Njue, Askew and Chege (2005), and Marston (2005) recognise young men who have experienced non-consensual sex while succumbing to peer or societal pressure to prove their masculinity as having been violated.

Because of the different contexts in which sexual assault can occur, the variety of causes and complicating factors, over the years, various explanations have been given for it. Owen D. Jones' (1999) study of the psychopathology model sees rapists as mentally ill and as such could not control their sexual impulses. Based on this model, rapists over time were given medical treatment ranging from castration, psychotherapy, electric shock and hormone injection. With the challenge of the psychopathological stance in the 1970s by feminists and some activists, rapists were found not to be mentally ill and often to be known to their victims. With the psychopathology model discarded, the myth that men rape because of the inability to control sexual impulses still pervades. The "irresistible impulse" myth shifts the blame of rape

to the women on the understanding that since men have a difficulty controlling themselves, it is women's responsibility to avoid "provoking" a rape by not dressing provocatively or behaving in a promiscuous manner. Underlying the "irresistible impulse" myth is the patriarchal understanding of sexual roles where aggression is considered admirable in men and docility in women. This myth has led to debates on how to establish victimhood in cases of rape where a woman considered to have "provoked" a rape is not seen as having been "truly" raped. The connection between sexual assault and patriarchy has led writers like Susan Brownmiller (1975) to argue that rape is a tool of intimidation used by men to control and subordinate women while Patricia Weiser Easeal (1992) sees rape as an act of violence which uses sex as a weapon and is motivated by aggression and the desire to exert power and humiliate. UNHCR (1995) agrees with the motivation for sexual assault as being the desire for power and domination when it adds that it is a form of torture often meant to hurt, control and humiliate. Hence, it violates a person's innermost physical and mental integrity.

All these definitions, except for the WHO (1996) definition of violence which generally mentions the use of violence "against a group or community", do not consider the kind of violence generated by homophobia which Carroll (2005:336) defines as strongly negative attitudes and often violent reactions of people towards homosexuals or homosexuality. This is violence against a group/community for sexual reasons and is against sexual rights. American Psychological Association (APA) (1998) holds that hate crimes against the homosexuals are the most socially acceptable form of hate crime. This finds explanation when Berril and Herek (1990) and Brienza (1998) show that reporting a hate crime on the homosexual brings the victim the publicity which in turn may cause his/her loss of job, denial of public services or harassment by the police. For this, most hate crimes against the homosexual, just like rape and violation of boys and men, go unreported. Human Rights Watch (2003) attests to this. Another reason for the high rate of hate crime and homophobia against the homosexual is the fact that religious and moralist/conservationist groups and alliances feel justified that at least someone is sanitizing the society and cleansing it of evil. Even the Christian and Islamic prescription of death by stoning for some sex offences qualifies as hate crime. Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) (2000) also recognise that some kinds of music encourage hate crimes against the homosexuals while Anderson, Carnagey and Eubanks (2003) report that songs with violent lyrics increase aggression-related thoughts and emotions. However, Allen

and Oleson (1999) and Szymanski, Chung and Balsam (2001) discover that homophobia is not experienced by heterosexuals only but also by some homosexuals who internally harbour negative feelings about homosexuality – a conditioning generated by societal perception of their sexual orientation. This group of homophobic homosexuals, these researches state, have decreased levels of self-esteem and increased levels of shame and psychological distress.

UNHCR (1995) divides the consequences of sexual violence into physical, psychological and social consequences with the physical covering HIV infection, sexually transmitted diseases, mutilated genitalia, pregnancy, miscarriage of an existing foetus, abortion, menstrual disorder, severe abdominal pain and self-mutilation as a result of psychological trauma and extensive injuries if their genitalia are reopened by a sharp instrument or by the force of penetration itself in cases where women and girls have undergone extreme forms of female genital mutilation. Psychologically, victims may feel paralyzed by terror, experience physical and emotional pain, intense self-disgust, powerlessness, worthlessness, apathy, denial and an inability to function in their daily lives, deep depression leading to chronic mental disorders, suicide, illegal termination of pregnancy, endangering their lives, or abandonment of their babies. Cases of infanticide of children born as a result of rape have also been reported. The social consequences of sexual violence can range from rejection by the spouse and immediate family members, to stigmatization or ostracism by the community, further sexual exploitation, and/or severe punishment. They can also include deprivation of education, employment and other types of assistance and protection.

Sexual Pleasure/Eroticism

Much of what exists as the body of literature on eroticism, beginning from the ancient texts on sex have their focus on how best to maximise pleasure for the man with little attention paid to the woman's pleasure. Perhaps, because these texts are written by men, they emphasize what they know and feel about themselves and project what they think and believe is happening to/in the woman. Written by Vatsayayana between 100 A.D and 400 A.D for the nobility of ancient India, *Karma Sutra* is centred on helping couples ascend the highest imaginable peaks of sexual pleasure. Kalyana Mala's *Ananga Ranga* written around 1172 A.D. is focused on preventing the separation of husbands and wives which it believes occurs when there is a lack of variation in erotic pleasures available in a marriage which sends the husband

outside the marriage on exploration. Shaykh Nafzawi's old Arabic manuscript which was found in the mid-1800s in Algeria by a French officer, *The Perfumed Garden*, was written in the sixteenth century Tunis and explored sex positions, sensual foods, aphrodisiacs, types of men and women perceived as sexually desirable, and homosexual practices. The ancient Chinese Taoist pillow books (sex manuals), the most popular being the *T'ung Hsuan Tzu* written by the seventh century Li T'ung Hsuan, are explorations in understanding the mechanics of sex, acquiring uninhibited sexual expressions as part of living a long and full life, and harmonising sexual energies with nature, paying more attention to the balance created in nature as a result of the sexual act which is seen as effective when indulged in by spiritually aware/conscious partners. Without this spiritual consciousness, disorder is generated in the society. Anne Hooper's (2007a) and (2007b) adaptations of some of these Eastern sex manuals identify most of the recommended practices as being termed pornographic by the twenty-first century western world and incorporate women's feelings and their maximization of pleasure from the same activities given by the ancient writers which focused on the men. This creates a sort of balancing effect on the ancient prejudices and biases. The existence of these texts and others like them go to show that humans are not only interested in investing in the pleasures derived from sex but have taken pains to ensure that the activities and steps to attaining this pleasure are preserved.

“Sexual activities are not limited to only sexual intercourse or masturbation but include hugging, touching, erotic stimulations, kissing and oral-genital sex. Sexual pleasure is derived from any type of sexual activity and may occur during fore play and sexual fantasy...wearing of sexy clothes and telephone or cyber sex” (8), Arowoloju (2009) states. Patterns of human sexual activity from which pleasure is derived can broadly be divided into intercourse (involving penetration) and extracourse (occurring on the outside of the body without penetration). These include, but are not limited to, oral sex, anal sex, scatophilia (sexual arousal from making obscene telephone calls), voyeurism/scopophilia (sexual pleasure from watching others naked or while engaging in sexual activity), exhibitionism (pleasure from removing clothes and giving others a shock at seeing one's nudity), urophilia (pleasure derived from urine during sex), coprophilia (pleasure derived from faecal matter during sex), gerontophilia (pleasure from and between old people), necrophilia (pleasure from sexual activity with corpses), satyriasis/Don Juanism (excessive sexual desire in men), nymphomania

(excessive sexual desire in women), sadomasochism (pleasure from pain), paedophilia (sexual desire for children), pederasty (sexual desire for little boys), rape (sex without consent), incest (sex with family members), group sex (sex with more than one partner at the same time), autoeroticism (pleasure from self-pleasuring, including masturbation), fetishism (pleasure from objects), transvestism/fetishistic transvestism (sexual pleasure from dressing up in the clothes of the other sex. This differs from the cross-dressing of the transgendered person because the transgendered cross-dresses for reasons of gender identification and not for sexual pleasure as in the transvestite), bestiality/zoophilia (pleasure from sex with animals), frotteurism/frottage/toucheurism (pleasure from rubbing one's body against another's or from compulsively touching strangers), and celibacy. The list shows that not all pleasure-giving activities are perceived by individuals, the law, religious organisations and the society in the same way. While some are considered acceptable/normal and may not raise eyebrows when conducted in privacy with a consenting adult partner, some others are not, hence they are grouped under abnormality/paraphilia and have laws and punishments against their practice. Necrophilia and bestiality, for example, have laws in many countries prohibiting them and are seen by most as extreme cases of mental disorder or psychological maladjustment.

Rosman and Resnick (1989) give the motivations for necrophilia to include the desire to possess an absolutely compliant, unresisting and unrejecting partner, reunions with a romantic partner, sexual attraction to corpses, comfort or overcoming feelings of isolation, seeking self-esteem by expressing power over a homicide victim, and not being interested in conversation, while Anil Aggrawal (2010) adds these to the motivation: alcoholism, drugs, trauma, sexual inadequacy, harsh treatment, excessive criticism and neglect during childhood, sexual abuse during childhood, and temporal lobe anomalies. From these submissions, necrophilia appears to have a lot to do with psychological order/disorder of the necrophile but, whether it is a psychological disorder or simply a sexual obsession with the dead is debateable. Ehrlich, Rothschild, Pluisch and Schneider's (2000) report of the case of a young man legally convicted twice on a charge of defiling the dead shows the perpetrator as having a long record of psychiatric treatment for his sexual inclination. This, in a way, confines necrophilia to the domain of psychological imbalance whereas Boureghda, Retz, Philipp-Wiegmann and Rosler's (2011) report of another case of necrophilia shows the perpetrator as having no other psychiatric illnesses apart from his necrophilic tendencies. While this second report tries to link

necrophilia to a psychiatric disorder, it dissociates it from other kinds of mental illnesses. Necrophilia is not an emerging human sexual behaviour as Herodotus is quoted by Rosman and Resnick (1989) as having recorded it as existing in and being frowned at in ancient Egyptian civilization where very beautiful women and wives of important men were kept for up to four days before being handed over to the morticians for embalment to ensure that their bodies have started decomposing – a way of discouraging the sexual violation of their bodies. Also, Rosman and Resnick (1989) record that King Herod was rumoured to have had sex with his wife for seven years after her death.

The law in the *Holy Bible* pronouncing death on both man and beast that have sexual intimacy point to its existence in the Hebraic culture. Of course, laws do not precede offences but come after the performance of actions to term them offensive or prescribe regulations for them. Also, the Greek mythologies which are populated by hybrids of centaurs (half-man and half-horse), satyrs (half-man and half-goat) and minotaurs (half-man and half-bull), quickly bring to the mind that bestiality has been around for a long time. Also called zoophilia, Miletski (2002) reports the male dog to be commonest animal sex partner for both men and women who practice bestiality. Matthews (1994) discovers what he termed “species dysphoria” in zoophiles which is a feeling similar to what is felt by transsexuals who feel they are trapped in the wrong bodies. So, the zoophile feels s/he is an animal trapped in the human body for which reason they desire sex with animals of their perceived specie. Perhaps, it is possible for a person who has been meanly treated by others to think of himself as less than human, in which case the definition of self as having an affinity with a chosen species of animals may become possible. Seen from this angle, zoophilia is nothing less than a psychological disorder in need of treatment. However, zoophilia is legal in 23 states of the United States and was legalised in December, 2011 as legal for soldiers at the warfront where it is considered that they may not have other sexual choices. Zoophilia then becomes an alternative to human sexual affiliations and not a psychological disorder.

Attention needs to be given to actions/activities that increase the chances of sexually transmitted infections since sexual rights is interested in keeping sex healthy and safer (there is no safe sex, sex can only be made safer). Apart from total abstinence, which is becoming harder to maintain in this age where sex is in every form of the media, every other sexual activity involving more than one person runs a risk of infection. Even autoeroticism (of which

masturbation is the commonest) when it tends towards sadomasochism has its own hazards, though not of an infectious nature. Masturbation is a common sexual behaviour among adolescent males (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael and Michaels, 1994). Carroll (2005) has it that this decreases when they are having regular sexual intercourse while it increases in girls probably because “girls are less likely to reach orgasm during intercourse than boys and supplement it with masturbation” (221). On the whole, masturbation belongs to the class of what may be called safer sex since it does not involve exchange of body fluids which may carry infections. Actions like exhibitionism, scopophilia/voyeurism and scatophilia while they have no risk of STIs have a socially unpleasant nature and as such are seen mostly as forms of sexual harassment. While urophilia and coprophilia may sound/appear disgusting to non-initiates, it is relatively harmless when done between consenting adults. Fetishism and transvestism/fetishistic transvestism does not harm a second party and provided fetishes (the object of attraction like rubber and metal) are not wrongfully used to inflict pain, they qualify for safer sex. There is nothing wrong or abnormal with the elderly having or getting sexual pleasures, although it is generally thought that sex is something old people do not think about or get involved in. Sexuality continues into old age although some sexual responses may be altered by age like a drop in the desire for sex as when compared with what obtained at the individual’s younger age. Paedophilia and pederasty because of the ages of the objects of sexual attraction who are minors are unlawful. The same goes for rape and any sexual act that the partners are not agreed on or are coerced into.

Sexuality and African Literature

How much of sex we are having in Africa, what makes up our sexual universe, to what uses sexuality is put and how this is represented in our literature hardly call any academic attention, it would seem on the surface. On a second look, it becomes clear that sexuality plays a central role in human interactions and has been used in literature all over the world (Africa inclusive) to bend and shape reality and fiction. In the case of Africa, the evolution of sexuality becomes interesting when one appreciates the fact that colonialism and westernization have played major roles.

Traditional African literature (that is, of the Africa before the influence of colonialism and westernization) has always incorporated what Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike (1985)

term “the open and healthy treatment of sex” (159). Their choice of the word “healthy” is an indicator that they refer to those kinds of representations that African morality, as it were, approves of. This also connotes the existence of “unhealthy” treatments of sex elsewhere which the critics deem unfit for classification as African and raises the issue of morality.

The view of sexuality via the lens of morality in the continent, especially the kind occasioned by Christianity and Islam, has acted as a constraint to the ‘open’ discussion, discourses and studies on sexuality. Except in the gynaecological and/or related clinical/medical science fields, very few bother with the workings of sexuality, and when they do, it is either shrouded in mystery or used to make some biased political or religious statements. For example, feminist writers use it as an avenue to draw attention to gender imbalance. The female body is given much attention as an instrument of power, pleasure, or inflicting pain and is placed in comparison with the male body to the disadvantage of the latter. When this is not the case, the female body is strategically placed in a position that draws pity or outrage to its ill treatment.

In earlier writings – like those of Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Camara Laye, Alex la Guma – for example, what is found is poetic reference, most times indirect and stifled, bordering on reverence for the sacred. Even la Guma’s descriptive abilities are too reserved to give way to elaborate erotic details. In recent prose fiction writings, there is a shedding off of these perceived moral restrictions. It appears writers are saying ‘back to our roots’, but this time with a sprinkle of what Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike (1985) would be quick to term ‘unhealthy’. This metamorphosis embodies the subtle introduction of, and in some cases, the bold emergence of pornography. Consequently, voices previously considered as taboos (at least, while the churches and mosques still have a say) are gaining loud audibility. While one might be quick to push the blame on globalization and westernization which is felt strongly in the entertainment industry and the Internet where sex has become a major determinant of the sale of all brands of products from toothpaste to designer shoes, Femi Osofisan (2009) calls this metamorphosis “the re-discovery of our own traditions, long suppressed or distorted by the lingering after-effect of religious indoctrination in the old colonial pedagogical system” (48-49).

Sexuality is no longer a feminist topic. It has become a cultural and religious battleground and has gained a loud voice in politics – a voice which has always been there but has been stifled sometimes for political reasons and some other times from sheer ignorance of its controlling networking with other areas of existence. With ongoing debates all over the world on sexual identities and orientations; and diverse sexual practices/behaviours, sexuality education, sexual and reproductive rights, etc., the African writer processing his society in the course of art creation cannot escape being entangled in this sexual forest. The crucial role that sexuality plays in human interactions, demands that literary criticisms should be replete with explorations of its workings and the not the reverse which Carroll's (2005) observations of generally high discomfort in holding talks/discourses on sex explains. Azodo and Eke (2007) in their Preface to *Gender and Sexuality in African Literature and Film* acknowledge the difficulty writers and critics have in exploring the sexual forest, especially an area of difference like homosexuality, for which their reason is: "because African cultures do not yet readily and openly address these issues" (xvii).

The rights approach can be used to study almost any text, at least to ascertain the denial or otherwise of the sexual rights of the characters in the text. Going by this, existing African literature is revealing. Characters' sexual rights are denied or violated at various levels without the writers being concerned with the measure of suffering these characters pass through as a result or the writers making any effort to channel these suffering to the good of drawing attention to them in order to sensitise the society towards finding solutions to them. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for instance, captures a sexually uninhibited Ekwefi who leaves the first husband, Anene, who she married in the first place because Okonkwo was too poor to marry then, for Okonkwo because of the latter's prowess as the undefeated village wrestling champion. Ekwefi, after two years of marriage to Anene could not bear the marriage any longer and runs away to Okonkwo (28, 76). What happens between Ekwefi and Okonkwo is a matter of consenting adults choosing the life they want to live and it is even Ekwefi that goes out of her way to make herself available to Okonkwo; therefore, attention is turned to Anene who has rarely attracted comments from literary critics, especially the feminists solely interested in the subjugation and oppression of women only. Nothing is said about him after this incident: he is one of the many marginalised in Achebe's text. He does not possess the physical strength or charisma to keep his wife interested in him and therefore loses her to

another who does not think twice about the damage his power generates. While it can be said that Ekwefi is presented as having the freedom to choose who she stays with, her freedom and Okonkwo's position do not take Anene's rights and freedoms into consideration. Elsewhere in the text, Okonkwo objectifies her by beating her up for cutting a few leaves off a banana tree to wrap some food and narrowly misses shooting her dead afterwards for passing a comment about his poor marksmanship (27-28). A few pages before this, he had also beaten up Ojiugo in the Week of Peace for spending too much time at the hairdresser's when it was her turn to give him his lunch (21). His perception of women as prizes/objects to be fought for, won over and treated as one pleases and not human beings worthy of respect is captured in the excerpt: "Okonkwo cleared his throat and moved his feet to the beat of the drums. It filled him with fire as it had always done from his youth. He trembled with desire to conquer and subdue. It was like the desire for a woman" (*Things Fall Apart*, 1958: 30). Women elicit from Okonkwo the desire to conquer and subdue. Hence, the relationship he shares with them is that in which he understands himself to be the power broker whose job is to bring women in submission to his feet. It is from this angle that works like Florence Stratton's (1994) insist that Achebe assigns a very low status to the women of Umuofia.

Camara Laye's allegorical novel, *Radiance of the King*, is replete with the denial of rights of both men and women without making it a central issue – this would have displaced Laye's focus on anti-colonial arguments. Clarence is chiefly marginalised, not just because Laye wants to make an anti-colonial statement of presenting a European in African society to see how he survives (an inversion of what is obtainable in western presentations of Africans in their texts as being out of place), but because his status as a poor migrant/foreigner classifies him as vulnerable in his new environment. He is reduced to an object for the procreation of a special breed by the Naba without his knowing what he is being used for. In a manner, Clarence can be said to have been trafficked for sexual services since he is deceived into rendering these services and is also drugged to ensure he remains in a state of forgetfulness or half consciousness so that his sense of morality will not hinder his nightly performances. The rights of women in the harem are also violated. They all have sex with Clarence to please the Naba's whims of having half-castes. They are not given a voice in the text to share whether they are in agreement with their husband who uses his power to deprive them and Clarence the freedom to choose when and when not to have sex as well as the choice on whether or not to

have children. Though Clarence's anguish is felt in the novel, Laye's concern is not in presenting a character in need of rescue from the unpleasant experiences that violate his sexual rights but as one undergoing a new kind of education in preparation for a meeting with the King.

In John Munonye's *Oil Man of Obange*, the preference of the male child over the female is seen to influence the development of the plot significantly, but Munonye does not take it up as a cause. Although Jeremiah Oko loves all his six children, it is still Celia who has to be drawn out of school to look after the others and run the house on their mother's demise. Jeri also considers child marriage in trying to pawn off Celia to Mr Brown's nephew in the face of hardship. It takes Celia's vehement rejection of the idea to stop him in his tracks. It might be argued that Munonye escapes making it appear that he deliberately wants to show the denial of the rights of this female child in his novel when it is remembered that it is Celia who offers to drop out of school to look after everybody in the house and that she is not forced into doing it. But, an understanding of her immediate environment shows that she has been conditioned to make that choice because hers is a society that sees housekeeping as strictly in the female domain. The fact that Jeri even considers marrying her off at her tender age and is only sampling her opinion in the hope that she agrees is worrisome and makes him complicit in the society's stand on the female child as a source of income to the male members of her household. But again, Munonye's sympathies lie not with Celia but with Jeri, the oil man of Obange, and his struggles as a parent to raise his children in the face of hardship.

Alex la Guma's *A Walk in the Night* which mentions sexual and reproductive rights presents it in a lopsided manner which leaves the marginalised still in the margins: the man has the rights to his pleasures while the woman has the duty to take responsibilities that arise from them. Consider:

He said out aloud, "Again, for what you want to get that way?"

"Well, it isn't my fault", she told him

"No. It isn't your fault."

"You talk like it's all my fault. Whose fault is it then?"

He sat up and shouted angrily, "Christ, you could mos do something. Drink something for it. Pills."

"Maybe you ought to stop thinking of your pleasure every blerry night", she flared back.

"Well, I got a right. Don't I say?"

“Ja. That’s all you think about. Your rights” (Alex la Guma, *A Walk in the Night*. 1962:36-37).

Franky Lorenzo’s understanding of sexual rights is a set of pronouncements that empowers men to have sex whenever they want without considering the woman or rising up to the responsibilities that come with sexual pleasure. So, if a baby results from sexual intercourse, it is because the woman has not taken precautions when she knows that the man has the rights to sex every night. So far, these are texts from male authors. Most early female authors have not done better either.

Feminist writers have tried to inverse the fate of women in their writings and have even championed their rights (sexual rights included). But, because their focus is basically on women’s liberation, emancipation, and the end of all forms of violence against women, they have in most cases trampled on the rights of men in the course of their advocacy. Okolo’s (2009) deconstruction of Mariama Ba’s *So Long a Letter*, Zaynab Alkali’s *The Stillborn*, Buchi Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood*, Ifeoma Okoye’s *Behind the Clouds*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Attah’s *Everything Good Will Come* reveals a trend of oppression of the male species in the bid by these writers to champion the cause of women. What obtains in these texts is a crop of liberated women or women who struggle to attain this liberation at the expense of their male counterparts, and sometimes other women – a trend not supported by the rights approach. Sexual rights does not seek the inversion of marginalisation but for freedom without the oppressor becoming marginalised. If inversion was the objective of sexual rights, it would only be promoting the same things it seeks to eliminate. Buchi Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* is an example of how not to negotiate sexual rights. Nnaife is created with all the features found in the male writings in Emecheta’s bid to undermine his importance and x-ray the suffering female’s position in a male-dominated society: “Let him sleep with you. Please don’t let your people down....Even if you don’t find him loving. Many men can make love and give babies easily but cannot love” (*The Joys of Motherhood*, 75). The statement holds the opinion of men as virile baby-giving machines without feelings, while the woman’s options are either to submit herself for impregnation or to remain barren and be mocked by the society for her assumed unproductivity. The question of sexual pleasure for the woman (or even the man when deconstructed) in this text does not promote sexual rights. For the man, Emecheta creates spousal rape as his avenue to get this

pleasure: Nnu Ego is “raped” by Nnaife with his elder brother sleeping on a mat just a few inches close by. However, Emecheta remains silent on the fact that the men in the novel live in denial of sexual pleasure. Okolo’s (2009) deconstruction of the oppression of men by the women in the text reveals that virtually all the principal male characters are oppressed with Nnaife and Nwokocha Agbadi being oppressed through denial of sex. Sex becomes a weapon. Nfah-Abbenyi’s (1997) study of sexuality in *The Joys of Motherhood* reveals the use of sexual pleasures as a weapon of warfare against and amongst women. While Nnu Ego resents Adaku’s open display of sexual pleasure with Nnaife whom she tolerates just as a legal husband and father of her children, “Her reaction...displayed her own lack of sexual fulfilment” (81). Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) also points out that Agbadi’s senior wife, Agunwa, falls ill and dies the same night that her husband openly makes love to Ona, his mistress, in his courtyard. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) sees sex as belonging to the private sphere of human life and recognises that Agunwa’s death is as a result of the violation of this privacy – Agbadi transgresses by failing “to conform to, cultivate, and maintain those personal private spheres that belonged to his wives” (81).

Homosexuality has also been present in African fiction, though not given a healthy presentation in most places where it occurred. Chris Dunton’s (2007[1989]) “Wheyting be dat?” shows that between 1968 – 1988, African writers’ treatment of homosexuality is that of an alien evil western influence. Except in Wole Soyinka’s *Season of Anomy* and Mariama Bâ’s *Scarlet Song*, where it is not seen as an exclusively western influence though an unsatisfactory/stigmatised practice, other texts Dunton (2007[1989]) analyses – Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters*, Yambo Ouologuem’s *Bound to Violence*, Yulissa Amadu Maddy’s *No Past, No Present, No Future*, Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy*, Edia Apolo’s *Lagos Na Waa I Swear*, J.P. Clark’s *The Raft*, Kofi Awoonor’s *This Earth, My Brother*, Camara Laye’s *A Dream of Africa*, Dilibe Onyeama’s *Sex Is a Nigger’s Game* and Kole Omotosho’s *The Edifice* – assign the homosexual role to a westerner or, when the character is an African, directly link the practice to the West as a kind of deteriorative influence on Africa. Homosexuality serves other purposes in the other texts he analyses: an instrument of exploitation in the course of the Arab colonisation of Africa in Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*, a weapon for exploitation of the African people in Mongo Beti’s *Remember Reuben*, part of a pattern of systematic disintegration and identity disorder resulting from apartheid in Bessie Head’s *A*

Question of Power, and an abnormality developed in prisons in James Matthews' "A Case of Guilt". In all, Dunton (2007[1989]) concludes:

What remains conspicuous in all these works is the abstention among African writers, and even among the most searching and responsive of these, from a fully characterized and nonschematic depiction of a homosexual relationship between Africans... nonetheless, the practice of homosexuality within African society remains an area of experience that has not been granted a history by African writers, but has been greeted, rather, with a sustained outburst of silence. Whether this has been carried out within or beyond the limits of the stereotype, the identification of homosexuality with the West has helped defend that silence. An "official" history has concealed the reluctance of African writers to admit homosexuality into the bounds of a different kind of discussion (733).

Dunton's (2007[1989]) conclusion is, to a very large extent, echoed in the collection of essays in Azodo and Eke (Eds.) (2007) where the paucity of critical essays on homosexuality in African literature causes these editors in their preface to declare: "A volume such as ours, we reiterate, attests to the disquiet that African writers and filmmakers still feel in broaching a topic such as homosexuality, because it runs against the perceived norm" (xvi-xvii). To fill this vacuum, they call on critics "to continue to shake up and unsettle society, in order to subtly change values and reorient convention" and urge African writers to "take the risk of embracing difficult subject themes from which earlier African literatures...have shied away" (xvii). Jude Dibia's novels, especially *Walking with Shadows*, take this kind of recommended risk, running through incest, homosexuality and rape of a male by a female.

Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) identifies the place of fictional writing in affecting a social change: "Fictional storytelling becomes one agent of change, just as storytelling or folktale narration has been predominantly used for didactic purposes in traditional societies" (82). She notes that feminist writers have used this effectively to raise consciousness in women of their predicament and a revolutionary device for women who have no other avenue of making their voices heard by the society. Writers, both male and female, are again using their writings/storytelling in making a case for sexual rights.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs psychoanalysis in its analyses. The nature of the study selects aspects of psychoanalysis that are focused on the suffering of the individual in their body, in

their relationship with other individuals or as a part of the society which is justified for this study since sexuality, the rights that are related to it and its workings are psychosocial and are observable in both personal and social relations.

The Oxford Dictionary of Psychology (2006) defines psychoanalysis as “a theory of mental structure and function consisting of a loosely connected set of concepts and propositions, a theory of mental disorders, and an associated method of psychotherapy based on the writings of Sigmund Freud” (615), while Christine Leuenberger (2006) sees psychoanalysis as a “tool to make sense of the structure of the modern self and of modern society” (159). These definitions both recognise psychoanalysis as a theory, a method of therapy and a tool for interpretation.

Terry Eagleton’s (1983) summary of Sigmund Freud’s doctrines recognizes the overall human behaviour of repressing “tendencies to pleasure and gratification” (151) and replacing it with the “reality principle”. While this may be true of all human beings in that all have to let go of some measure of pleasure for the peaceful co-existence in the society or for some personal benefit, it is doubly established with the oppressed/victimised/marginalized. Firstly, they are repressed like everybody else, and then further repressed by the oppressive centre. Sublimation which Freud in Eagleton (1983) defines as channelling unfulfilled desires into “a more socially valued end” (152) is also doubly pronounced with the marginalized. Hence, a centre that approves of heterosexuality, for example, constricts the marginal homosexuals, bisexual and transgender to living in a manner that does not draw attention to their identity since it is offensive or not socially valued. It is not all unfulfilled desires that are successfully sublimated. Some others forcefully seek outlets from the unconscious and manifest in various forms of neurosis ranging from aggression and phobia to hysteria and in different forms of psychosis like paranoia or schizophrenia.

People at the margins, the oppressed and victimised, live a life of repression in order to conform or become acceptable to the centre and repression produces behaviours different from what the individual would rather be doing. Channelled into “positive” ends (sublimation), repressed energy becomes attractive to the centre while these energies, when they do not find positive ends, manifest in states like anger, shame, fear or guilt. If they are allowed to escape in their natural forms, the marginalized only perpetuate their marginalization. Hence, writers

advocate sexual rights to centralize the marginalized and are seen exploring their thought processes as they affect or inform their actions towards themselves and towards others who are also marginalized, as well as those at the centre.

While the concepts of repression and sublimation appear to be more concentrated on the individual's adjustment to conform to the dictates of his environment and society, Eagleton's (1983) summary of Jacques Lacan's work links up psychoanalysis with sociological theories. With Lacan, psychoanalysis ceases to be the Freudian "theory of the mind... a practice for curing those who are considered mentally ill or disturbed" (159) and "permits us to explore the relations between the unconscious and human society" (173). Lacan reinterprets Freudianism in terms of language – a predominantly social activity and in so doing, the unconscious becomes "a particular effect of language, a process of desire set in motion by difference" (173). This difference/otherness is occasioned through naming – language use and, John Storey (1993) adds, "the cultural repertoire we encounter in our everyday existence" (90). This goes to say that what is called the unconscious and the human behaviour stemming from it are informed by the environment (society). Eagleton (1983) captures the human relationship with this otherness through the unconscious manifesting in actions thus:

...our unconscious desire is directed towards this Other, in the shape of some ultimately gratifying reality which we can never have; but it is also true for Lacan that our desire is in some way always *received* from the Other too. We desire what others – our parents, for instance – unconsciously desire for us; and desire can only happen because we are caught up in linguistic, sexual and social relations – the whole field of the 'Other' – which generate it (174).

Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson's (1993) exploration of Lacan's use of language in establishing self and otherness reveals a system which is basically phallogocentric and therefore patriarchal: "Indeed, the 'phallus' (not the penis but its 'symbol') is, in Lacan's system, the privileged signifier, which helps all signifiers achieve a unity with their signifieds. In the symbolic domain phallus is king" (139). Avi Lubin's (2005) study in sacrificing the self for the "Big Other" in political trials which uses Jacques Lacan's theory of the "Big Other" claims:

...a political trial can remain legitimate as long as it is not dealing with a confrontation with the symbolic order on which the society (and the court itself) is founded and as long as the subject (or action) it is dealing with

does not threaten the symbolic order's (or the "Big Other") existence. When the symbolic order's existence is in danger, the court is bound to participate in an act of "sacrifice" that is intended to protect the "order." (367)

This goes to say that the society generates laws (symbolic order) to protect itself from crumbling. In other words, the centre generates myths and structures (symbolic order) to ensure its continuity and safeguard it from the encroachment of the margins. This explains why sexual rights are sometimes seen as controversial – the centre fears destabilisation and as such tries to maintain the status quo which in most cases does not augur well for the margins. The literary texts under analysis in this work are seen exploring the frictions, struggles and sometimes triumphs experienced by characters who dare to challenge the existence of the "Big Other" and establish their "Otherness" as legitimately deserving attention, especially, the kind not provided by the symbolic order.

Psychoanalysis also concerns itself with suffering. Freud (1966 [1930]) in his *Civilisations and Its Discontents* identifies three sources of suffering: our own body, the external world, and relations with other men (24). He also offers three palliative measures for suffering: "powerful deflections, which cause us to make light of our misery; substitute satisfactions, which diminish it; and intoxicating substances, which make us insensitive to it" (22). Lawrence W. Christensen (1999) relates Freud's ideas on suffering to depression and anxiety which surrounds loss of either self/other or objects making him to define suffering as "the anxiety and depression associated with the desire and longing for one's experience of self to be different than it currently is" (40) with this difference: "In depression the desire relates to a wish that the loss of self/other would not have occurred. In anxiety the desire is that the anticipated loss will not occur or that the current loss will not continue" (40).

Ronald B. Miller (2005) explores human suffering as "a complex process involving physical, psychological, and social elements firmly embedded in the moral realm" (299). Embedding the elements of suffering in the moral realm poses a number of challenges like who or what determines this moral since morality is not fixed but is, as sexuality, ever changing. But Shweder, Much, Mahapatra and Park's (1997) study of how human beings try to edify themselves through their sufferings shows that there is a lot that connect suffering to morality. People, in their opinion, do this edification by learning through them, blaming themselves for

it, seeing it as an index of moral failure and, therefore, a means of restoring moral balance/order when viewed as the harvest of what they have sown. Their study states that “To suffer is to experience a disvalued or unwanted state of mind, body or spirit” (120) which can be brought about, amongst other things, by “harassment, abuse, exploitation, ‘codependencies’ and ‘toxic relationships’... oppression, colonial (including ideological) domination, or adverse economic or family conditions... unfulfilled desires and frustrated intentions (for example, repressed wishes) or various forms of fear” (121-122). Their suggested therapies include “avoidance or aggressive counterattack... repair of interpersonal relationships... altering one’s life circumstances through social reform or achieving some local or immediate successes or gains... meditation, dialogue, therapeutic relationships, consciousness-raising and realistic goal setting” (121-122). While Shweder, Much, Mahapatra and Park’s (1997) sources of suffering agree with Freud’s, they are more detailed and pragmatic in the palliatives/ therapies recommended.

Using the Freudian theory of suffering and the Lacanian theory of the “Big Other”, this work examines the various shades of sufferings surrounding the characters in the texts for study whose sexual rights are violated or denied, the palliative measures they adopt to overcome or fight their way through and the writers’ use of suffering as a means of negotiating and advocating sexual rights of those living in the margins. It also adopts the Freudian author-centred and reader-centred methods of textual analyses. John Storey (2009: 97-98) sees these methods as exploring the author’s fantasies which are represented in the words and images he employs in the text as an avenue of reaching out to and touching readers who may be suffering the same arrested desires in order to offer them liberation. Because these psychoanalytical theories find expression in human interaction, the work also adopts a sociological approach in its analyses of texts, which is the study of how society influences the trends/behaviours found in the text for analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

NEGOTIATING THE RIGHTS OF THE SEXUALLY VIOLATED: NAWAL EL SADAawi'S *WOMAN AT POINT ZERO*, *TWO WOMEN IN ONE* AND *GOD DIES BY THE NILE*, YVONNE VERA'S *WITHOUT A NAME* AND J.M. COETZEE'S *DISGRACE*

Nawal El Saadawi: Biography

Egyptian feminist writer, critic, activist, physician and psychiatrist, Nawal El Saadawi was born on October 27, 1931 in Kafr Tahla, a small village outside Cairo, Egypt. She graduated from Cairo University as a medical doctor in 1955. Her medical practice brought her into close contact with the hardships, oppressions and violence faced by women and this inspired her writings. As a result, her writings cover topics largely related to women, such as aggression against female children, female genital mutilation, prostitution, sexual relationships, marriage and divorce, Islamic fundamentalism, patriarchal oppression, class oppression and imperialist oppression. Her activism and writings have caused her to be viewed as controversial and dangerous by the Egyptian government and have led to her imprisonment in September 1981, alongside other objectors to the Jerusalem Peace Treaty, by President Anwar al-Sadat. She was released later that year, one month after his assassination. Her time at the Qanatir Women's Prison formed the basis for her memoir, *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* (1983) and inspired the novel, *Woman at Point Zero* (1975). She has written other works of fiction and non-fiction among which are: *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* (1988), *Searching* (1968), *Women and Sex* (1972), *God Dies by the Nile* (1974), *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (1977), *The Circling Song* (1978), *Death of an Ex-Minister* (1980), *She Has No Place in Paradise* (1979), *Two Women in One* (1975), *The Fall of the Imam* (1987), *The Innocence of the Devil* (1994), *North/South: The Nawal El Saadawi Reader* (1997), *A Daughter of Isis* (1999) and *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* (2001). Her selected texts for study in

this work are *Woman at Point Zero*, *Two Women in One*, *God Dies by the Nile* and some short stories in *She Has No Place in Paradise* (“Man”, “Nobody Told Her”, and “The Picture”).

Synopses of El Saadawi's Novels

Woman at Point Zero

The novel is the fictionalised life account of Firdaus, a woman El Saadawi met at the Qanatir Prison in 1974 who had been sentenced to death by hanging for killing a man. After the death of her parents and siblings, Firdaus has to live with the uncle in Cairo where she gets a primary and secondary school education and comes out with good grades. She is married off to Sheik Mahmoud, a man above sixty years, on finishing secondary school to avoid sending her to the university where she will mingle with men. She leaves Sheik Mahmoud when she could not endure his battering, and falls into the hands of Bayoumi who also sexually abuses her with his friends. She settles down for full time prostitution having been taught the trade by Sharifa Salah el Dine after she has exploited her. Her search for respectability birthed by the comment of a customer who calls her an unrespectable woman sends her to take up a paid company job where she does not fare too well and ends up quitting when she falls in love with Ibrahim, the revolutionary, who leaves her for the company chairman's daughter. Firdaus goes back to prostitution with renewed vigour and makes the most out of her life attaining respectability and honour by using the money she makes from sex work to pay her way up the social ladder. Marzouk, a pimp comes after her money and forces her to part with much of the money she is making. She kills him when she cannot endure his treatment and ends up in jail for the murder. Firdaus is proud to have committed the crime she is accused of, refuses to sign an appeal to the president to revoke her death sentence and waits for her execution without fear.

Two Women in One

Eighteen year old Bahiah Shaheen, daughter of Muhammad Shaheen the superintendent of the Ministry of Health, is, to the world, a well-behaved hard-working first year anatomy (medical) student, but on the inside, she knows that she is a different person. She loves to draw and paint, does not accept the social order which allows men more freedom than women or the Egyptian government's poor treatment of her citizens. Her encounter with Saleem Ibrahim, another radical medical student, at an arts exhibition sets her on the road to self-discovery. The revolutionary in Bahiah comes to the fore and she starts an affair with Saleem. There is a

demonstration in the school for the government to free Egypt from slavery. Saleem and Bahiah alongside other students are arrested. Bahiah's father comes to bail her. Some other students are granted bail but not Saleem – he is too “dangerous” to be freed – and the pain of not knowing how long he will be held in detention weighs Bahiah down. Bahiah's father and uncles think education has spoilt their daughter and made her forget the propriety of womanhood. So, they pull her out of school and marry her off without her consent to one of her cousins, Muhammad Yaseen. She refuses to have sex with him on their wedding night and runs away the morning after before family members will come to inspect the bed sheets and her nightgown for bloodstains from the wedding night. She joins Fawzi and Raouf, two activists, in printing and sharing pamphlets and literature that castigate the government and call on the people to stand up for their rights. She gets picked up by the police again and on her way to the jail, she sees Saleem.

God Dies by the Nile

Aided by the Chief of the Village Guard – Sheikh Zahran, the village barber – Haj Ismail, and the Imam of the village mosque – Sheikh Hamzawi, the Mayor makes himself a dictator and a god in Kafr El Teen and descends on Zakeya's family. He first sets his eyes on Nefissa, desires her and with the aid of these three gets her to become a househelp in his house where he violates her and gets her pregnant. Nefissa runs away from Kafr El Teen to Aunt Nafoussa's in Al Ramla, a place Om Saber has directed her to. The Mayor and his son, Tariq, come up with the story that Elwau has something to do with dishonouring Nefissa for which reason she has run away. The story is spread around the village. Sheikh Zahran arranges Elwau's death and plants it on Kafrawi, Nefissa's father, as honour killing. Kafrawi is jailed and the Mayor's attention is turned to Kafrawi's youngest daughter, Zeinab. Haj Ismail arranges with a holy man at Sayeda Zeinab, a mosque in Bab El Hadeed that it is Allah's wish, as a prerequisite to cure her aunt, Zakeya, to have Zeinab become a sex slave cum househelp to the Mayor. Zeinab resumes the duties of Nefissa in the Mayor's house until she marries Galal, her cousin (Zakeya's son who has been thought dead in the war but returns after four years). Zeinab refuses to go to the Mayor's house after marriage because she believes it is what Allah will now have her do, but the Mayor thinks otherwise and orders the Chief of the Village Guard to bring her to him at all costs. Sheikh Zahran frames Galal for theft and has him imprisoned too. Nefissa goes in quest for her husband and is exploited by a man who sleeps

with her. She does not return to Kafr El Teen after that. The truth of the manipulations behind her family's tragedy dawns on Zakeya. She kills the Mayor, is imprisoned and spends her days telling inmates that she has buried god by the banks of the Nile.

El Saadawi's Structure for the Promotion of Sexual Rights in *Woman at Point Zero*, *Two Women in One*, "The Picture", "Nobody Told Her" and *God Dies by the Nile*

Although El Saadawi's works under study precede the Beijing Conference of 1995, they come after the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. And, since sexual rights are drawn from these rather general rights to attend specifically to sex and sexuality issues, her works which have enjoyed criticisms from feminist angles are treated as promoting and advocating sexual rights. In fact, she says of Firdaus, the heroine of *Woman at Point Zero* in the "Author's Preface" of the novel: "This woman, despite her misery and despair, evoked in all those who, like me, witnessed the final moments of life, a need to challenge and to overcome those forces that deprive human beings of their right to live, to love and to real freedom" (iii-iv). El Saadawi states her fight as that for the rights of humans and not just of women, and anyway, the rights of women are also human rights and much of the rights explored in her texts border on sexual rights, even when much of the criticisms on them see them as rights in support of feminist arguments. Her novels revolve around sexual rights topics: the sexual objectification of women, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and the need for sexuality education.

El Saadawi's fight against FGM is seen in the way she presents it in *Woman at Point Zero*, *Two Women in One* and *God Dies by the Nile*. In the first novel, Firdaus becomes aware of her clitoris at a very tender age because she feels a pleasure from some part of her body that she did not know (14) whenever she plays "bride and bridegroom" in the fields with the little boy, Mohammadain. She looks forward to her plays with him but these plays are terminated when she is circumcised. Firdaus is circumcised for no given reason in the text except that she asks her mother about who her father is: she is having difficulty in differentiating him from other men when they are arguing on their way back from the mosque in the similar looking flowing *galabeyas* and she is forced to ask the mother for clarifications. The answer she gets is first a beating and then, the circumcision (13). After the circumcision, she is no longer permitted to go to the fields but stays in the house doing house chores and tending the animals

at home (her father is a farmer). Firdaus' uncle, when nobody is looking, seizes the opportunity of her being at home to sexually harass her by touching her (toucheurism): "his hand would continue to press against my thigh with a grasping, almost brutal insistence" (14-15). She does not derive pleasure from this touch, not because she feels she is being harassed, but because her "pleasure point" is gone with the circumcision:

He was doing to me what Mohammadain had done to me before. In fact, he was doing even more, but I no longer felt the strong sensation of pleasure that radiated from an unknown and yet familiar part of my body. I closed my eyes and tried to reach the pleasure I had known before but in vain. It was as if I could no longer recall the exact spot from which it used to arise, or as though a part of me, of my being, was gone and would never return (15).

Firdaus summarises the predicament faced by all circumcised women in the domain of sexual pleasure and all through the text, this loss of something important and an effort to reconnect to the missing part is felt. With the clitoris gone, attaining complete sexual satisfaction is almost an impossible feat for the circumcised woman. Therefore, FGM becomes a practice that hinders the woman's exercise of her rights to sexual pleasure.

In *Two Women in One*, Fawziah, Bahiah's sister is circumcised. Bahiah is not and it is not by coincidence that El Saadawi chooses a protagonist that is not mutilated. She escapes genital mutilation by a stroke of chance, but recounts her sister's experience. Fawziah's cries still ring in her ears calling forth with them "a red pool of blood under her" (97) and the sharp razor in Umm Muhammad's hands "ready to cut that small thing between her thighs" (97). Fawziah is maimed for life and the only thing that saves Bahiah is the death of Umm Muhammad and her father's transfer to Cairo. At the times when Bahiah's distorted childhood sexuality education tells her that her clitoris "was harmful, that it had been forgotten or left inside her body by mistake" (98), she longs for Umm Muhammad to rise from her grave and come for her with the razor, but her sister's predicament is enough to wipe away this longing:

But the image of her sister Fawziah, limping and moaning as she walked, would flash through her mind. When the wound healed Fawziah could no longer run as she used to. Her steps became slower and when she walked her legs remained bound together: one leg would not dare to part from the other (98).

Fawziah has physical deformity to add to her woes of FGM and suffers the same kind of psychological wounds as Tanga, the protagonist in Calixthe Beyala's *Your Name Shall Be Tanga*. Tanga's brief account of her circumcision brings home the loss suffered by women who have been mutilated. First, the mutilation is done in an unhygienic environment – “underneath the banana tree” (12). A number of things could have gone wrong under such circumstances. She could have been infected by any number of harmful bacteria and the infection could have led to her death. Tanga calls the person who mutilates her “the clitoris snatcher” (12), a term that indicates that she did not willingly hand over her clitoris to be sliced off. It is forcefully taken away from her. Noteworthy is the fact that it is her mother, a fellow female, that lays her down underneath the banana tree and does all the celebration accompanying the mutilation. Why is FGM celebrated? To Tanga's mother, it ensures her daughter's ability to possess and retain a man: “With that, she'll keep any man” (12). So, in essence, Tanga's mutilation has no personal value to her but is an act she has to pass through for the benefit of a man somewhere: men are always on the move to the next best woman, and to keep them interested and focused on one woman, that woman has to be mutilated! Tanga records her feeling of emptiness resulting from FGM: “I fell heir to the **blood** between my legs. To a **hole** between my thighs. All that I was left with was the law of **oblivion**. Time passed, I was becoming accustomed to that part of me that **was gone**” (12) [emphases mine]. So, instead of her clitoris, she possesses a flow of blood from the wound, a hole between the thighs and the law of oblivion – all indications of absence of a cherished part. This absence is carried through life, so eight years later, Tanga still says to Hassan: “My genitals have been entombed underneath a banana tree eight years” (15). The losses and feelings of absence experienced by these circumcised women relate with Freud's (1966) and Christensen's (1999) correlation of suffering with loss of self or objects. Their sufferings are embodied in the depression resulting from the wish to get back their clitorises.

With Fatheya in *God Dies by the Nile*, El Saadawi also explores the role of sexuality education or the lack thereof, in FGM and female sexuality. Om Saber had circumcised Fatheya at the age of six and she grows up with the feeling that something in her was “unclean” and “bad”. She rejoices at being circumcised because her understanding of it is what she has been told: “...the old woman was going to cut the bad, unclean part off” (32). Fatheya's rejoicing is cut short when she bleeds for several days from the circumcision and still bleeds

during her menstrual period afterwards. The bleeding still gives her the feeling of uncleanness and the negative reactions of the people around her only serve to entrench these wrong feelings:

Each time she had her periods the people around her would have a changed expression in their eyes when they looked at her, or they would avoid her as though there was something corrupt or bad about her.

Later, when she married Sheikh Hamzawi, he too would shy away from her whenever she had her periods, and treat her as though she was a leper. If his hand inadvertently touched her shoulder, or her arm, he would exhort Allah to protect him from the evil Satan. Then he would go to the water closet, wash himself five times and do his ablutions again if he had already done them. In addition she was not allowed to read the Koran or to listen to it being read or recited. But once her periods were over, and she had taken a bath, and cleansed herself thoroughly, he allowed her to pray, and recite passages from the Koran (33).

This portrays how religion can influence negative and inappropriate sexuality education. Instead of schooling Fatheya on the female anatomy, the people around her (who it is possible do not know better because they have undergone the same wrong education) stigmatise her for experiencing the natural. In other words, she is made to feel bad about being female when she menstruates. The Islamic decree on purity and “legalising” a woman through FGM may have contributed to her acceptance of this practice which she also discovers does not remove the deep seated belief in her “impurity”. Sheikh Hamzawi’s reaction to her, being the number one man as far as religion in her community is concerned, speaks volumes on the contribution of religion to the treatment of women: they are evil and Satanic when they are menstruating and therefore one needs to ask Allah for protection if one comes in direct contact with them; they are contaminants at such times and therefore should not be allowed to pray or listen to others pray. It is possible for a holy place of worship and the congregation to be polluted by their presence and for prayers to be ineffectual if mixed with those of the “clean” faithful! This is not the only time religion is misused in the text to subjugate and expose characters to dangers of a sexual nature. The rite of *zar* performed by Kafr El Teen village for Zakeya is another example. The footnote (73) defines *zar* as “a form of exorcism meant to rid a person (usually a woman) of an evil spirit by means of a frenzied dance, accompanied by incantations and verses of the Koran” (73). Some questions arise from this ceremony: Why is it performed only on women, as if evil spirits find habitation only in women? Why does a human being have to be

subjected to the dehumanisation entailed in *zar* – being exposed to the touch (on and in every part of the body) by anybody in the village that wishes to? Why does the same Koran which forbids indecency serve as the tool for this kind of exorcism? El Saadawi emphasises this religious base of the rite to show how religion is used to curtail the rights of individuals, women in this case. Zakeya's condition after the *zar* does not change to show the failure of religion in righting wrongs which have their roots in wicked human practices. Another case of misapplication of religion is seen in Haj Ismail's manipulation of Zakeya and Zeinab in order to make Zeinab available for the Mayor's sexual pleasures. They are both tricked into believing that it is Allah's wish for Zeinab to become the Mayor's sex toy, if Zakeya is to be healed. Even, in the course of trying to visit Galal in the prison, Zeinab is sexually exploited by the man who offers to help her find a place to sleep in the mosque. After that, she does not return to Kafr El Teen again. It is the realisation of the trickery behind the misfortune that has befallen the family that makes Zakeya to hold Allah responsible for all their misfortunes. Allah is culpable because he is the instrument of unjust games, and since the Mayor is the figure generating the family's woes, he is Allah's equivalent. Therefore, for justice to be given, Zakeya kills him. This is El Saadawi's way of subverting religion. When God/Allah becomes an instrument of oppression, he loses his place as God/Allah and deserves to die. It is, however, seen that religion is not the only thing to be held responsible for the oppression of the marginalised in the text. Their economic status is also a contributing factor. Kafrawi's daughters became easy preys to the Mayor because they are very poor, and the excuse to make their lives better by engaging them in domestic services sounds plausible to the unsuspecting. If Zakeya had enough money for medical treatment, she would not have listened to Haj Ismail's direction to go on the trip to Sayeda Zeinab mosque to seek Allah's mind on how to get a cure. The money she and Zeinab used for that journey was even raised through the neighbours' contributions.

The objectification of women goes hand in hand with denial of access to information on sexuality. "The Picture" in *She Has No Place in Paradise* captures a protagonist, Nirjis, who lacks proper sexuality education and has to acquire it through the wrong means: watching through the keyhole as her father has sex with Nabawiya, the servant, on the kitchen floor while everybody else was asleep. At thirteen Nirjis does not know that she has buttocks and seeing Nabawiya's buttocks shaking as she washes dishes gets her curious. If she has been

given the right information, there would have been no need for the subsequent actions. “Nobody Told Her”, also in *She Has No Place in Paradise*, also advocates proper and appropriate sexuality education to be given to the girl-child in order to save her and her family the high price of ignorance. The protagonist in “Nobody Told Her” and her school mates are all ignorant on how the female body works or how a baby is made and, as a result, they live in fear of their bodies and cannot even detect when they are in danger or being harassed by their Mathematics teacher who makes a hobby out of impregnating young school girls.

In *Two Women in One* and in *Woman at Point Zero*, this objectification of women and denial of access to information on sexuality and issues surrounding it are also high and are tailored towards making a good bride out of the women who are often victims of forced marriages. Women in the texts are expected to be invisible, being in the neuter gender until they marry. Then, the reverse is expected of them – to turn to objects that make sexual pleasure available to their husbands. For this reason, nobody in *Two Women in One* is interested in Bahiah’s developmental and personality problems and no one in her family raises an eyebrow when she frequently announces in the house: “Who told you that I’m a girl?” (73). From the age of three, her mother forbids her to touch her genitals and she is taught to either ignore them or consider them as dangerous and frightening (74, 97). Hence, “When she undressed she looked with loathing at her sexual organs. She even hated God for creating them...She imagined that sexual desire was abnormal” (98). She is expected to walk like other girls, even when being a girl means being neuter until marriage, with “legs bound together, barely separated from one another” (76), giving her the feeling that if the legs separated, “something would stumble down like broken glass” (76) or “something valuable might fall” (77). This is a level of anxiety, a measure of suffering, which the protagonist passes through, a fear of what might happen in future. Bahiah and all the girls in her class sit at the back seats in the classroom, leaving the front rows for the boys who do all in their power to irritate the girls, or at least irritate Bahiah, with their ogling and arranged accidents geared towards giving the boys access to touching either female buttocks or breasts. These are sexual harassments which, it appears, irritate only Bahiah since other girls seem to have accepted them as the norm; after all, their breasts and buttocks do not exist. Because they are not properly informed on their sexuality, they are exposed to and are made to accept sexual harassment as normal. However, after eighteen years of restriction and being ignored sexually by her family, on the night of

Bahiah's wedding, she is amazed at the new layout of her wardrobe and the cosmetics which the family provides. They cause her to think:

Women's tools in their married life are all sexual. A girl moves from her father's house to a husband's and suddenly changes from a non-sexual being with no sexual organs to a sexual creature who sleeps, wakes, eats and drinks sex. With amazing stupidity, they think that those parts that have been cut away can somehow return, and that murdered, dead, and satiated desire can be revived (101).

It is amazing that the wedding which has this wardrobe preparation for the night is a forced one. Bahiah is not consulted at any point to ask for her opinion or consent. If she had been asked, the family would have discovered her love for Saleem with whom she has sexual relations. Marriage to her family is the next "sensible" thing for a girl to do after being bailed from the police detention for being part of a students' demonstration, before she does something really disgraceful. So, all the men in the family meet and decree: "We should take her out of school. Universities corrupt girls' morals... We should marry her off as soon as possible: marriage is the strongest protection for girls' morals...We already have a groom" (95). After the secret conspiracy, "they sold her to a man for three hundred Egyptian pounds" (99) and her father hands her over to the bridegroom. Bahiah fights back against the injustice done to her by refusing to allow the husband, Muhammad Yaseen, to touch her. She makes it clear to him that though the society accepts that she has been married to him, she is not part of the forced union:

'You're my wife', he said in his owner's voice.

'Who said so?' she asked in astonishment.

'Your father, myself and the marriage broker.'

'That must be the basest deal in history!' she shouted angrily (102).

Bahiah asserts her rights to be free by asking Muhammad to collect his money from her father and runs away to live the life she wants – being involved in liberation movements in Egypt. For Firdaus in *Woman at Point Zero*, the story is not much different. After her secondary school education, Firdaus is no longer wanted in the house by her uncle's wife who suggests that they marry her off to her uncle, Sheikh Mahmoud, a widower above sixty years old. He is a miser with a deformed face but, in their rating, good for Firdaus since they cannot afford to send her to the university. It is not that the money is not available but because they see the university as a dangerous place for girls where they are allowed to mix freely with men. And,

Firdaus being under the custody of her uncle, a sheikh and man of religion, must not be heard to have been allowed by him to mingle with men. This goes against Article 1 of *Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration* because Firdaus is discriminated against based on her sex – she is a girl. She is treated as an object to be disposed of to make money for the uncle and his wife – the major attraction of Sheikh Mahmoud to them is that he has a lot of money and they look forward to his parting with some of it as dowry in order to be associated with a man of Firdaus' uncle's religious status: "If he accepts to pay one hundred pounds that will be sufficient blessing from Allah. I will be able to pay my debts and buy some underwear..." (37). Firdaus' person is commoditised and anxiety sets in as she overhears this conversation between her uncle and his wife on how she is to be traded for a few pounds. The next morning, she runs away from the house, but the streets prove unfriendly to her when a stranger stares at her seductively and she returns by the evening to the uncle's house. She has not planned to eavesdrop on the couple's bedroom conversation, but the only place for her to sleep in the house is on a sofa against the wall of their room divider. This position gives her access to the sessions of sexual activities in the couple's bedroom. She follows the progress of the intercourse with her ears and imagines the actions that accompany the sounds emitting from the room. Hence, her uncle and his wife inadvertently introduce her to the real world of sex where she feels along without being part of the physical activity (39). Firdaus' experience at this point borders on that which is close to scatophilia (telephone sex). It is not clear if Firdaus' age at this point is below eighteen, in which case her exposure to this kind of sexual experience would be considered abusive, but at the point of marriage, she gives an idea of her age in relation to that of her husband: "He was already over sixty, whereas I had not yet turned nineteen" (43), which leads one to believe that she could as well be below eighteen at this point and being abused by her uncle and his wife. Objectively looking at the sexual relationship between Firdaus and Sheikh Mahmoud, there is nothing wrong with gerontophilia or with a person with a deformity having sexual urges or finding expression for them provided it is done with a consenting adult. This is why El Saadawi's focus is not on Sheikh Mahmoud's sexual needs which are legitimate, but on the fact that Firdaus is an unconsenting semi-adult "bought" for the purposes of sexual gratification. The same goes for Fatheya in *God Dies by the Nile* who is forced through beatings to marry Sheikh Hamzawi who hopes to tap her youth as a revitalising agent for his nonexistent virility while he looks forward to siring a son by her. While Sheikh Hamzawi's sexual needs are lawful, his method of securing gratification is not.

Objectification in *God Dies by the Nile* comes in the form of perception of women as pleasure givers or things that are 'edible.' The Mayor sees Nefissa and her younger sister, Zeinab, as food to be savoured and goes ahead to violate them, with much help from religion. On seeing Nefissa on her way to fetch water, he is carried away. Haj Ismail encourages the Mayor's lewd thought eliciting the response: "But the youngest is always the most tasty" (14) to which Haj Ismail replies: "You are right, your highness, the youngest is always the most savoury to taste" (14). This is followed by another reference to Kafrawi's daughters as "a bowl of cream" (16) and none of the men in his company – Haj Ismail, the Chief of the Village Guard and the Imam – discourages him. This depicts a set of men (and these are the crème of Kafr El Teen) who consider women/girls as edible things with savoury taste. It is not uncommon to find the use of food as a sexual metaphor in literature. John Varriano (2005) has studied the use of fruits and vegetables as sexual metaphors in Renaissance Rome and has observed a strong relationship between food and sex, drawing attention to the shapes, colours and sizes of different fruits and vegetables which make them good vehicles in conveying metaphorical meanings.

Unlike Bahiah in *Two Women in One* who walks away boldly from her husband the morning after the wedding without allowing him to touch her as a way of revolting against her forced marriage, Firdaus in *Woman at Point Zero* stays around for a while to receive unkind treatments and unwanted sex from Sheik Mahmoud until he degenerates to wife battering. Firdaus' first reaction is to go to her uncle, "a respected sheikh, well-versed in the teachings of religion" (44), for refuge believing that Islam forbids the ill treatment of humans and animals. She is shocked to be informed by the uncle that Islam recommends beatings from the husband as punishment for a wife who complains before she is sent back to her husband (44-45). Sheikh Mahmoud's second round of beatings after Firdaus is sent back to him by her uncle makes her run away from him, abandoning the marriage for the streets. Because Firdaus is denied the rights in Article 2 of *Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration* to participate actively in and influence decisions concerning matters that directly affect her wellbeing (in this case, her marriage), she suffers bodily and psychological damage. From wife battering, she faces multiple rapes from Bayoumi and his friends. Bayoumi works at a coffee shop and keeps her under lock and key where he and his friends rape her when they need sexual gratification (49-51). Her palliative measure for containing this treatment is resignation, until a female

neighbour notices the goings on and helps her to get a carpenter to break down the door. She runs away, falls into the hands of Sharifa Salah el Dine, a female sex worker who takes her on as an apprentice while exploiting her youth, beauty and secondary school education. Firdaus does not know how much her customers pay for her services but Sharifa obviously gets richer as no hour passes without Firdaus attending to a client. Fawzy, a client who has a shady relationship with Sharifa and wants to take Firdaus away from her to give him a son, opens Firdaus' eyes to this exploitation. She runs away from Sharifa while she is in an argument with Fawzy over her leaving. This goes to show that not only men violate women's rights; women deny fellow women of their sexual rights too. This is also evident in the fact that it is Firdaus' aunt that suggests to the husband for her to be given to Sheik Mahmoud in marriage while the husband does the execution. Again, it is women that wield the knife/razor that inflict the pain of FGM.

Firdaus becomes in charge of her own sex trade and at twenty five, she has an apartment of her own replete with all she wants, including a cook and housekeeper. She discovers the power that her work confers on her and the authority over own body which the trade makes available to her. She decides who to sleep with, when, how and at what price and she rejects anybody she wishes. El Saadawi focuses on the conferring of authority to this marginalised woman using sex work as her tool, not in a manner that promotes the sex trade but in that which promotes the sexual freedom enjoyed by the marginalised through this practice as against those approved of by the society, like marriage for example. Firdaus enjoys being in the centre until Di'aa, the journalist and one of her clients, calls her an unrespectable woman (70-71) which sets her on a search for respectability. The questions raised at this point are, one, if the sex worker is unrespectable, why does the society not see their clients in the same light? Two, how is it that most of their clients are people that society regard as respectable – medical practitioners, journalists, top-ranking politicians and business men? Three, what rights does the journalist Di'aa have to judge who is respectable and who is not? Four, who confers respectability on individuals, and using what criteria? It is clear that the life Firdaus lives as a sex worker is better than that which she lives while working in the company. The treatment she receives from people (society) too is better as a sex worker – she had social amenities available to her as a sex worker and did not have to queue up for hours before getting the chance to use the toilet or bathroom, and men did not look down on her as the poor

employee to be pitied; she did not have to chase buses, struggle to get on them and finally have to be squeezed with stinking bodies in them. She wonders at what is respectable in female employees living everyday of their lives with the fear of losing their jobs for which reason they permit themselves to be treated unfairly by their employees and sometimes sexually abused in order to get a raise at work. Every effort at the work place is geared towards retaining jobs or getting a raise in the salary. Having experienced the two lives of having the so-called respectable job and the unrespectable one of sex work, Firdaus comes to the conclusion: “I know [sic] knew that all of us were prostitutes who sold themselves at varying prices” (76). With her failed relationship with Ibrahim, a revolutionary worker at the company who deceives her into believing he loved her and goes off to marry the company chairman’s daughter instead, Firdaus seals her heart. A conviction sets in:

Now I was aware of the reality of the truth. Now I knew what I wanted. Now there was no room for illusions. A successful prostitute was better than a misled saint. All women are victims of deception....Now I realised that the least deluded of all women was the prostitute. That marriage was a system built on the most cruel suffering for women (86-87).

Firdaus sees sex for the sex worker as a revolution. Revolutionary men like Ibrahim “use their cleverness to get, in return for principles, what other men buy with their money. Revolution for them is like sex for us, something to be abused. Something to be sold” (88). The men that Firdaus hates most are those who preach at her and are on a crusade to rescue her from the “low life” she is living as a sex worker. Because none of them would raise a hand to help her if she were in a different situation – being cheated on and paid low wages in the work place, being molested or battered by a husband, father or brother, or when her heart is broken because she dares to fall in love – Firdaus sees them as hypocrites whose only interest in offering to rescue her from sex work is just to feel chivalrous, noble and elevated by reminding her that she is low (88-89). If their interest was in really rescuing her, then they should be attacking the institutions held in high regard by the society like marriage and Islam which are bent on extinguishing her and not her trade and means of survival. She waxes strong in her profession and even gets invitations from heads of state visiting the country which she refuses because they are couched in the lie that her acceptance of the invitation would be showing patriotism and oiling the wheels of international relations for her country. Her country has done nothing for her, so she owes it no patriotism, and besides, if the country feels her services are

worthwhile, the government should set up a means of according her protection, recognition and respectability. She has risen to affluence through self effort and can afford whatever she wanted with her money – honour, fame, services from all kinds of people (doctors, journalists, police officers, etc). Just like the prostitute, “Everybody has a price, and every profession is paid a salary. The more respectable the profession, the higher the salary, and a person’s price goes up as he climbs the social ladder” (91). Firdaus’ freedom is cut short with the appearance of Marzouk who forces himself on her as her pimp even when she does not need one. She revolts; she has worked hard to earn the freedom she now enjoys and no pimp will take it away from her. She kills Marzouk and with her head held high walks out into the streets and gets a customer, a prince, for three thousand pounds. The prince enrages her by incessantly asking her during sex if she felt pleasure and she beats him up. His cries bring in the police who arrest her and charge her for murder.

Condemned to die, Firdaus feels fulfilled. She is filled with pride to have unmasked the male domination and revealed the fear of losing authority which is behind their oppression, and even behind the oppression of women by women. She will not plead for pardon from the president for her crime because this will place her desires in the hands of a man. This freedom which she now demonstrates by deciding on dying fills her with pride as she waits:

This journey to an unknown destination, to a place unknown to all those who live on this earth, be they king or prince, or ruler, fills me with pride. All my life I was looking for something that would fill me with pride, something that would make me hold my head high, higher than the heads of everyone else, especially kings, princes and rulers (101).

So, in death, Firdaus triumphs over her suffering, losses, fears, patriarchy, rights denial and oppression. This does not say that El Saadawi upholds death for the marginalised women in Firdaus’ shoes, but, following Firdaus’ arguments about prostitution, the setting up of institutions that will cater for and protect the interests of the sexually-violated is highlighted. And their services have to be rendered nonjudgmentally and in a manner that does not imply or outrightly condemn the violated or her/his actions and activities.

Using *Zakeya* in *God Dies by the Nile*, El Saadawi advocates the equal treatment of the girl child with the male child. *Zakeya* has had ten sons and six daughters and all die except Galal. Her husband, Abdel Moneim, beats her up every time each of their sons dies as well as

each time she gives birth to a daughter (67). Wife battery, apart from going against Zakeya's rights, violates the rights of her daughters as they are exposed to violence as a result of their sex, a biological factor which is determined by their father and not their mother. However, El Saadawi must not be seen as an advocate for only women's and the girl child's sexual rights; she also creates a space in her novels for the sexually marginalised male and boy child as is seen in the case of Ashmawi in "Man" (in *She Has No Place in Paradise*) and in Haj Ismail's homosexual rape in *God Dies by the Nile*. Haj Ismail is raped by his older and stronger cousin, Youssef (51). Although El Saadawi does not dwell much on this homosexual contact, in the few lines it is given, it is clear that Haj Ismail is torn apart both physically and psychologically by the rape. Youssef is older and stronger than the ten year old Haj Ismail and therefore applies little force and physical strength in getting the frightened cousin to submit to him and prevent him from running away. After the rape, Youssef walks away but Haj Ismail

...lay there all day without moving, and when his father called out to him from the shop, he closed his eyes and pretended to be asleep. He heard his father's footsteps approaching, and his angry voice calling out again. He opened his mouth to answer, but no sound came out of his lips. A moment later a heavy fist landed on his back. He jumped to his feet and meekly followed behind his father to the shop... (51).

It is clear that the boy Haj Ismail suffers from shock and is traumatised by the experience. Unfortunately, he does not share his experience with his father or anybody else. Instead of letting his grief show, he pretends to be asleep and when the father beats him while he is still in shock, he *meekly* follows him to go about his day's chores. This palliative measure devised by the child raises a caution for parents to be on the lookout for strange behaviours from their children who may not be able to freely share their experiences except one shows a deep/keen interest in them. Haj Ismail's father is not sensitive enough and is deceived by his son's coverage of the crime committed by a cousin. Because this crime goes unreported, it is not formally addressed to prevent a recurrence. It is not surprising therefore that Haj Ismail turns out the way he is, becoming a pimp for the Mayor and using religion to lie in the process of procuring Kafrawi's daughters for the tyrant.

Biography: Yvonne Vera

Yvonne Vera was born on 19 September, 1964 in Bulawayo, Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. She grew up amidst colonialism and the vicious guerrilla warfare of the 1970s Rhodesia. Vera was fifteen when the guerrillas routed the colonists and Zimbabwe got her independence. She had her secondary education in Zimbabwe, travelled to Europe and encountered Western art and culture which motivated her to apply to York University in Toronto, Canada. There she majored in film criticism and literature, eventually earning a bachelor's degree, a master's, and a doctorate. She also married a Canadian. Her first work, *Why Don't You Carve Other Animals*, a collection of short stories, was published in 1992, followed in 1993 by her first novel, *Nehanda*, a historical novel based on Mbuya Nehanda's struggle to lead Zimbabwe out of the clutches of colonialism. Both books were shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Award Africa Region in 1993 and 1994, respectively. *Nehanda* received Second Prize for the Zimbabwean Publishers Literary Award for Fiction in English. Her other novels include *Without a Name* (1994) and *Under the Tongue* (1996) – a story of rape and incest which won first prize in the Zimbabwe Publishers' Literary Awards, was awarded the 1997 Commonwealth Writers' Prize (Africa region), and two years later won the prestigious Swedish literary award "The Voice of Africa". *Butterfly Burning* was published in 1998. Set in a black township of Southern Rhodesia in the late 1940s, it is a bittersweet love story between a young girl and her much older lover. *The Stone Virgins* was published in early 2003. In it, Vera tells the story of two sisters, Thenjiwe and Nonceba, living in the rural village of Kezi following the independence of Zimbabwe from Britain in the early 1980s. Her experiences growing up in the violence-ridden Rhodesia where men went off to war and most never came back and women faced all manner of abuses, kept recurring as a theme in her novels. Vera died of AIDS in April in 2005 in Canada at the age of forty. Her *Without a Name* (1994) is the focus of this study.

Without a Name: A Summary

Without a Name details Mazvita's search for freedom and self-realization in the city of Harare as she struggles to break free from the haunting experience of rape during the tumultuous civil war against Ian Smith's white minority regime of pre-independence Zimbabwe. She leaves Mubaira village and Nyendezi her village lover for the opportunities,

gaiety and anonymity of Harari, but being ignorant of the ways of the city, her dreams stop at Joel's doorstep where she settles as his live-in lover on entering the city. Mazvita discovers she is pregnant, does not want the baby but gives birth to it all the same and in desperation kills the new born child. She returns with the corpse to mourn it in her hometown.

Negotiating the Rights of the Sexually Violated: Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name*

The *Encyclopedia of World Biography on Yvonne Vera* records her reason for sticking with the traumatizing experiences of women:

Of the recurrence of normally private, painful themes in her novels, Vera told *The World and I*, "The position of women needs to be reexamined with greater determination and a forceful idea for change. In Zimbabwe, as perhaps elsewhere in the world, there is limited understanding of each moment of a woman's worst tragedy or her personal journey. Women have been expected to be the custodians of our society as well as its worst victims, carrying on no matter how hemmed in they feel and how abandoned in their need." By bringing the shameful, hidden tragedies that mar women's lives to the surface, Vera demanded that her culture change.

Going by this, Vera establishes her stance as a sexual rights activist. Article 3 of *Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration* protects all persons from all forms of sexual violence including rape even in the time of war. Vera's exploration of the various forms of displacement faced by a rape victim go a long way in discouraging the act as well as awakening the consciousness in readers to fight for the rights of the sexually violated. It is 1977 and Zimbabwe is experiencing a bloody civil war. Guerrilla soldiers are exchanging fire with soldiers of Ian Smith's white minority regime. The young black men who cannot join the guerrillas in the forests stay back to tend the land and of course are looked down on as weak alongside the ones who have gone off to the city to populate the springing up industries. The women stay back to watch the home front, watch their men go either to the war or the city with only a handful at home to tend the soil. It becomes unclear who the guerrillas are fighting when they return to the villages to wreak havoc on their own. Since, the population left in the villages is predominantly female, it appears the violence in the text is targeted at the women. There is nowhere in the text where the men are violated. Vera singles out the experience of one woman for her novel and goes on to show how a singular experience of violence can mar a life. Because Mazvita is not heroic, suffers terribly and is defeated in the novel, Liz Gunner and Neil Ten Kortenaar (2007) opine

that “Vera also resists many of the commonplaces of feminist antinationalism” (2) even when Mazvita’s rape by a nationalist soldier has been read by Grace Musila (2007) through the eyes of “women living on the extreme margins of society in contexts of colonialism, oppositional nationalism, and feminist discourses” (50).

Without a Name records the violation of a woman by a man. Vera applies Brownmiller’s (1975), Easeal’s (1992) and UNHCR’s (1995) concept of sexual assault as a tool for control, dominance and humiliation. There is no indication that the guerrilla soldier is mentally deranged; if he was, he would not be recruited into the army. There is no record of Mazvita knowing who he was before the rape or even afterwards, hence he does not have a name but is referred to as the stranger. The stranger who is part of a team of soldiers that burned down Mazvita’s village accosts her on her way to the river at dawn to fetch water and demands to have a drink from her calabash. He rapes her in the process. Mazvita cannot be said to have “provoked” this rape, although questions may arise on why she was out alone before daybreak, but such questions only give credence to the myth that men’s sexual impulses are uncontrollable and that they are likely to brandish their penises wherever they see unaccompanied women.

In another war novel like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, while soldiers like High-Tech rape when high on *wee-wee* (marijuana) joints and alcohol, someone like Ugwu, aka Target Destroyer, rapes in response to peer pressure, to prove a point to his colleagues that he is neither weak nor afraid to be part of a gang rape. Unlike *Without a Name* where there is an examination of only the violated female, *Half of a Yellow Sun* looks at a situation where the female is violated and the male can be classified as violated too. When opinions like those generated by Ajuwon (2005), Caceres (2005), Njue, Askew and Chege (2005), and Marston (2005) are taken into consideration, Ugwu stands as that male who has non-consensual sex while succumbing to pressure to prove his masculinity. Ugwu’s first reaction to being invited to participate in the gang rape of the bar girl is to “back[ed] away from the door” (365). He only gives in to taunts from other soldiers: “Target Destroyer is afraid... Target Destroyer, aren’t you a man?” (365) At the end of this rape, what Ugwu takes away with him is “a self-loathing release...while some soldiers clapped. Finally, he looked at the girl. She stared back at him with a calm hate” (*Half of a Yellow Sun*, 365). It is obvious

Ugwu does not feel triumphant but is ashamed of what he has done. With Ugwu, masculinity is explored alongside the patriarchal understanding as having a great measure of unrestrained violence and fearlessness. This is also evident in the projections made in *Without a Name*.

But, what happens when the woman is not the violated in a rape but the perpetrator? Jude Dibia's *Blackbird* explores the experiences of a female rapist and a male victim. Nduesoh finds her raping of Omoniyi exhilarating, liberating and a lease to a new life. She has lived under the anonymity that the lack of a pretty face bestows on women. Her marriage to Edward, according to her family who did not frown at the generation gap between them, was her only chance of ever getting married considering her looks. Edward's money and white colour confer on her a status she ordinarily would not have had. So when Edward's attention begins to get captured by beautiful women, especially Maya, Nduesoh knows she cannot allow anybody to take Edward, her source of power and social relevance, away from her. She seeks vengeance and reaffirms her existence, at least to herself, by raping Maya's husband, a man the text describes as beautiful. Nduesoh's satisfaction from the rape is multi-faceted: first, her victim is the husband of the woman Edward is trying to displace her with; second, he is handsome/beautiful and as such hers is the triumph of gaining power over the beauty which nature has denied her and for which she has suffered neglect from men (especially good looking men like her victim); third, the feeling of reversal of the traditional/patriarchal roles of who is in control of sexual acts confers on her "a true sense of freedom and control. And rapture" (220). In *Blackbird*, Omoniyi easily fills in the gap occupied by Mazvita in *Without a Name*. He is attacked in his place of discharging his duties as a housekeeper by a woman who is socially and economically more powerful than he is. The fact that his penis betrays him by having an erection makes the rape more humiliating for him, especially as Nduesoh abandons him the moment she is satisfied while his erection is still in need of satiation. After the rape, he does not mean anything to Nduesoh and it becomes his obligation to ensure that Edward does not slip away from Nduesoh's grip by his setting up structures to keep Maya on the leash. This sets off a chain of events that lead to several deaths and casualties in the text, including Nduesoh's death. It is noteworthy that much of the feeling of worthlessness which Omoniyi feels from the rape arises from the reversal of roles in the act: he has been made by a woman to feel powerless and "as helpless as a woman being violated against her will...How unlike a man he felt in her arms" (222). So, in essence, even in the exploration of this rape there is an

underlying belief that perpetrators of rape should naturally be male and the victims, female. This lends credence to acceptance of violence as an integral part of masculinity.

A study of the language employed in the rape scene in *Without a Name* denotes patriarchal power relations:

He had **claimed** her, told her that she could not hide the things of her body, that she **must** bring a calabash of water within her arms, and he would drink. He had tired of drinking from the river. She **must kneel** so that he could drink. He whispered as though he offered her life, in gentle murmuring tones unhurried, but she felt his arms linger too long over her thighs, linger searchingly and **cruelly**, and she knew that if there was life offered between them, it was from herself to him – not offered, but **taken**.... *Handvadzi*...he said. You are my sister... he whispered. He did not shout or raise his voice but invited her to lie still in a hushed but serious rhythm. His voice was monotonous, low, but firmly held in his mouth, in his arms. **He spoke in a tone trained to be understood, not heard.** Mazvita fought to silence his whispering. The task nearly killed her.... She longed to escape **the insistent cries of his triumph**.... Her longing for growth was deep, and came from **the parts of her body he had claimed for himself, which he had claimed against all her resistance and her tears.** So she held her body tight to close him out, to keep the parts of her body that still belonged to her, to keep them near to herself, recognizable and near. She allowed her arms to move ahead of her, and she ran through the mist, following her arms. She welcomed the stillness the silence brought to her body. It made her thoughts coherent, brought calm to her face. Mazvita was strong (28-29). (Emphases mine)

It is evident from the emphasised words in the excerpt above that the stranger does not seek Mazvita's opinion on the sexual experience and sees himself as being in a position of power for which reason he assumes the commanding tone in asking for water and for Mazvita to be still while he raped her. The stranger's power does not arise only from patriarchy because he is armed. The violence draws cries of triumph from him – he has vanquished and successfully subdued a woman who is not meant to “hide the things of her body” (28). This corresponds with J.M. Coetzee's protagonist in *Disgrace*, David, who tells Melanie, the student he has an affair with, that a woman's beauty is not meant for her alone but is meant to be shared. The question arises over the ownership and user-ship of a woman's body. The “thingification” of the woman in most African literature is reflective of the patriarchal system where the belief is that she is an object of pleasure to be possessed and used by the man when and how he wants. It is not surprising, therefore, that the stranger expects all manner of services from Mazvita –

fetching water for him to drink because he is tired of drinking from the river, as well as giving him her body simply because he wanted it. But, Gunner and Kortenaar (2007) see Vera's focus on the woman's body in her novels as an avenue to x-ray, using poetic lyrical language, the violence it receives:

Her lyrical language does not deconstruct ideology and problematize language, the usual expectation of feminist postmodern fiction, but promise direct access to a women's [sic] experience as located in the body and as expressed directly through orality....The insistence on the body is an insistence on pain. The interiority in Vera is interrupted by and focuses on incidents of extreme violence that refuse to be understood by common categories and resist meaning....Yet the violence is also heavily aestheticized. In some instances her prose forces attention on violence to the body in the finest, extended detail (3).

Musila's (2007:50) exploration of "the corporeality of the female body and the textured nature of its experiences as the manifest face of various discursive practices in women's lives" sees the body emerging in *Without a Name* as "a highly ambivalent site of both oppression and agency, as it negotiates its way around experiences which seek to limit its scope of action and freedom". Vera fully explores the dislocation experienced by Mazvita at, and on rising from, the rape scene. Being a woman, Vera captures the thought processes of the violated in a feminine way – a way characterized, according to Gunner and Kortenaar (2007:3), by "sensuous detail and emotional appeal, rather than by linear drive forward or character development" and a "tradition that privileges the lyric and personal...conveying a sense of interiority rather than reflecting a social and physical world outside the protagonist's perception...characterized by monoglossia rather than polyvocality". Emptiness lifts Mazvita from the ground after the rape and she wishes for "an emotion as perfectly shaped as hate, harmful as sorrow, but she had not seen the man's face. She could not find his face, bring it close enough to attach this emotion to it" (30). Because Mazvita does not know the stranger and had not seen his face in the morning mist, she transfers her hatred to things she can identify:

Instead, she transferred the hate to the moment itself, to the morning, to the land, to the dew-covered grass that she felt graze tenderly against her naked elbow in that horrible moment of his approach, transferred it to prolonged forlorn call of the strange bird she heard cry a shrill cry in the distance, so shrill and loud that she had to suppress her own cry which had risen to her

lips. The unknown bird had silenced her when she needed to tell of her own suffering, to tell not to someone else – certainly not to the man – but to hear her own suffering uttered, acknowledged, within that unalterable encounter. A cry, her own cry, would have been a release of all things she had lost. But she did not cry then and so it was as if she had lost her world. And all the many things that contained this loss, continued to remind her of her pain. She transferred the hate to something she could see, that had shape and colour and distance. The mist had taught her that morning is not always birth (30).

This captures her anguish, emotional and psychological transformations which would from that moment propel her actions all through the novel. She revolts against the land and nature because the bird's shrill cry which silences her passes the message of nature's connivance with the stranger to subdue and violate her without affording her the opportunity to mourn her circumstances. The mist too is part of this conspiracy because it does not allow her to give a face to her source of torment. The land that formed the barricade to her body's escape when she was pinned to the ground receives her hatred. She sees the stranger as an offshoot of the land:

...she hated the land that pressed beneath her back as the man moved impatiently above her, into her, past her. Mazvita sought the emptiness of her body. Afterwards, she did not connect this emptiness to the man because she thought of him not from inside her, but from outside. He had never been inside her. She connected him only to the land. It was the land that had come towards her. He had grown from the land. She saw him grow from the land, from the mist, from the river. The land had allowed the man to grow from itself into her body. Mazvita gathered the silence from the land into her body (30-31).

Because of the ghosts haunting her from the day she is raped, Mazvita fails to connect to anybody in the novel, not Nyendezi, Joel or her baby. The land has violated her, so, Nyendezi, her village lover cannot hold her back in Mubaira to till the land. She escapes to the city, Harari, to forget her past and start a new life. Vera's employment of irony in Nyendezi's argument when he begs Mazvita to stay is remarkable. Without realizing that the land has taken up a new meaning for Mazvita, Nyendezi makes a case for her to stay and work to cleanse the land while she maintains that the land has forgotten them and now dreams new dreams. Nyendezi deals her a crippling blow without realizing it:

“It is like that with the land. It holds and claims you. The land is inescapable. It is everything. There is no prayer that reaches our ancestors without blessing from the land. Land is birth and death. If we agree that the land has forgotten us, then we agree to be dead” (33).

Nyendezi spells out Mazvita’s fate as one who has agreed to be dead and cannot do anything about it. Surely, by the time Mazvita has sojourned in the city, discovers her pregnancy for Nyendezi (?) while living with Joel, gives birth to the baby and strangles it to death and is carrying the corpse tied to her back to Mubaira, she has made up her mind on dying after she has handed the corpse over to Nyendezi: “She had lost her freedom. Death was another kind of freedom, and she longed for it. Her death, that is” (44).

It is with Joel that Mazvita’s displacement is really felt. Shane Graham’s (2002) review of Vera’s *Without a Name* and *Under the Tongue* sees them as “explorations of memory and forgetting, with characters seeking asylum from the past” (167). Hence, Mazvita, flees her war-ravaged village where she has been raped to Harari the city where she hopes to banish memory and build up hope. She arrives Harari and without negotiation or any agreement follows Joel home on his bicycle and ends up staying with him for months. They do not talk about their past or future. Sharing means intimacy and Mazvita will not be burdened with the rituals that accompany intimacy. The nights spent with Joel mean nothing to her because she is detached from the experiences she passes through. She allows things to happen to her body while she does not partake of it. This is not the kind of sexual wellbeing advocated by sexual rights which recognizes the rights to consensual pleasurable sexual experiences. While having sex with Joel she closes her eyes and lets her mind roam:

Her eyes were closed. Joel saw her eyes close and imagined the closing was about him....But Mazvita was alone. Through the mist Mazvita smelt the stale grey blankets, the worn out mattress, the bell of a bicycle ring below the window, sewage water flowing across obstacles through a ditch beside the road, a man shouting angrily at a barking dog, a stone hitting one side of the wall (59).

The pleasure of the experience is lost on Mazvita and sex becomes a mere observance/performance for Joel’s benefit. If there is anything she gets from it, it is only her room and board with Joel. While Joel goes to work in the morning, she goes to the other side of the city to search for a job because she hates her dependence on Joel and feels uncomfortable when she

has to ask him for money. Her search is intensive because she has come to understand that in Harari, self-definition rests on economic empowerment. Only with a job can she fully enjoy the freedom offered by the city. With a job she can leave Joel or if she stayed, it will be with the understanding that she could leave whenever she desired. Vera uses this to direct the concerns of activists fighting for sexual rights that part of the programme for reabsorbing the violated into the mainframe of society's psychological flow has to consider empowering them economically. If this is not done, more harm will befall them as poverty leaves individuals vulnerable and prone to sexual violation.

Vera is also of the opinion that the violated should be given the opportunity to cry and let out their emotional constipation as a therapeutic measure. The silence that overtook Mazvita from the moment she was raped only leaves her the day she allows herself to cry. While having sex with Joel on one of the occasions, she cries and gets a release that reconnects her to her body. The silence in her body is defeated by the freedom generated by this cry which she was denied by nature on the day she was raped. However, in defeating the silence, the cry releases her into a dangerous and regrettable future, a future which she has prepared for herself in her moment of silence and detachment. This Mazvita that can now feel panics on realizing she is expecting a baby. The baby will spoil everything she has planned for her freedom in Harari (conception is a part of Mazvita's sexuality that she denies because it betrays her trust and hope for a better future). This coupled with Joel's hatred for the baby when it arrives at a time that clearly marks the baby as Nyendezi's (?) and not his increases Mazvita's hatred for it. She refuses to acknowledge the baby's entrance into her life and refuses to name it. Naming the baby will mean giving it a presence and space in her life. Carolyn Martin Shaw (2004) notes that:

Names—the naming ceremony, choosing a name, naming oneself, the power of English names, the weight of traditional names—are important in all of Vera's novels, as they are in Zimbabwe. More than reflecting the person, the name makes the person. But names are not stable; adults can change their names or allow others to name them. Women who choose their own names create themselves (46).

As a result of the importance attached to names and naming, Mazvita is relieved on recovering her name after the rape. She is consoled that even in the silence that envelopes her afterwards, she still has a name she could call hers. In trying to forget her past, she refuses to remember the

name Nyendezi calls her as this brings memories of a past she has left in search of freedom. For the same reason, she refuses to name her child to prevent it from taking a place in her life or in the world for that matter. Her fear is that naming the child would make her responsible in a binding way as she would be called Mama... after the child's name and she was not ready for the burdens which the name will occasion. This is relevant when the psychoanalytical relation of the individual to the Other occasioned by language through naming is brought into focus.

Joel asks her to leave his house. Mazvita in one moment of madness and as a final move to reclaim her freedom strangles the baby with Joel's tie like one in a dream who is not fully in control of her actions. On realizing what she has done, she wishes her actions could be reversed but it is too late, so her leaving Joel's house as he instructed is for Mubaira. She has not enjoyed the freedom she sought in the city, but, in taking a life, she has realized how strong she is: "She had accomplished a tremulous vision. She was capable of brave pronouncements, still. She would bury her child in Mubaira, then she would die. She would go to Nyendezi and give him his child. It was his child" (98). It is not clear if the baby is really Nyendezi's because the poetic language of the text and the fact that the protagonist is on a journey of forgetting a violent past blurs the baby's parentage. It could have been the baby from the rape experience which would explain why Mazvita is bitter towards it – a reminder of the past she is struggling to forget and for which reason she decides to think to herself that Nyendezi is the father. Musila's (2007) and Paul Zeleza's (2007) conclusions are that the child was conceived through the rape but the novel does not spell that out. Working along this axis explains a lot of things but raises the question: Is infanticide excusable if the baby is a product of rape or at any point in time? It is for reasons like this that Article 9 of sexual rights promotes the choice to have or not to have a baby, making it possible for victims of rape who conceive in the process to abort if they so choose. Mazvita's move in committing infanticide to free herself and reaffirm her possession of some sort of power when everything threatens to slip out of her hands removes all traces of humanity that she had managed to retain all through the novel. She appears to make the statement that if she cannot control conception, she can control who she permits to live through her and this kind of power almost removes the readers' sympathy from her. However, Vera only pushes this image to the reader in order to establish the destructiveness of violence and the way violence only begets more hideous violence.

Graham's (2002:167-168) comment on the plot, setting and narrative techniques used in *Under the Tongue* and *Without a Name* gives an opening into why *Without a Name* seems to attract interpretations that appear to be at opposite ends. Vera resorts to the use of "hallucinogenically lyrical prose, combined with her attention to the gritty details of township life" and "often lapse[s] into stream of consciousness dream poems, surreal and hypnotic" (168) which presents these novellas initially as: "seemingly plotless vignettes, which jump around erratically in time, but the narrative threads gradually cohere into a circling pattern—the narrative orbits around events that are perhaps too painful to describe directly". The effect is a fragmented and confusing narrative which reflects the unpredictability of the characters' situations (Graham, 2002: 167-168).

Mazvita shares a lot with Kadjaba in Beyala's *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* who is also a rape victim whose experience sets off a chain of ugly reactions. Beyala also employs the poetic language, so the rape of Kadjaba Dongo, Tanga's grandmother, is couched in mystery with only a few words in the scene to give a clue to what has happened to her and the consequences of this rape (24-27). Kadjaba Dongo, an Essoko princess is very beautiful and out of the reach of the many men that sought after her body until "One day they decided that the time had come to destroy her, to bury her underneath embers" (24). So, the men contrive a strategy to make her submit her body to them – rape. Resting on a mat underneath a mango tree while holding court, the plan hatches: her assailant comes

...veiled like a man of the desert....She didn't move, **rigid with curiosity**. He approached her, shored up her *pagne*, **penetrated her roughly**. Kadjaba **arched up under the shock, bit her lips**, then said: 'It's hot today.'

'Yes', the **rapist** agreed, pulling her skirts back down (24). [Emphases mine]

Except one is quick to note the choice of words used in the excerpt above, it might be easy to submit that Kadjaba gave in willingly to have sex with the veiled stranger. But, the highlighted words in the excerpt give away that she is a victim. The rape does not end with the first man. There are others on the days that follow the first encounter, and they all happen on the same spot until she becomes pregnant. All through her ordeals, she only feels along without questioning what happens to her. This is a pointer to the position of a woman in her society. Her voice, like that of the child in the same society, does not carry any weight that will make a

difference to her situation, even as a princess that holds court. She meets with hazards in the course of discharging her duties, living her everyday life. She does not have to do anything out of the ordinary to be raped, although she is viewed by the men as a sex object, attracting or provoking these rapes. Her society does not apportion blames to the rapists but to her for becoming pregnant, hence “Kadjaba reinvented silence...she no longer laughed...And she stopped lying in the sun so as not to have to hear any more” (25). This explains the culture of silence that encourages rape to endure. Until society casts its blame in the right direction, the victims of rape will remain silent and their suffering will continue with more people falling victims to rapists who are spurred on knowing they are protected by their victim’s silence and the society’s blame of the victim.

Kadjaba’s reaction to the birth of the baby (Tanga’s mother – Mother old one/ Ngâ Taba) from the rape is also similar to Mazvita’s in *Without a Name*:

Kadjaba cut the umbilical cord, spat on the ground three times to put an end to her fertility. She swore that no child’s cry would ever again come forth from her entrails....

This illegitimate birth poisoned Kadjaba’s maternal instincts. It invaded her, stripped her of everything that wasn’t herself, to the point where she stood in everlasting negation of others. She no longer washed, wore nothing but *pagnes* cut from floursacks, and military boots. And in order to break with everyone completely, she declared herself to be deaf and blind (25)

The baby, Mother old one, is raised by her grandmother and aunts and “grew up like a vagabond....eaten up by the feeling that this sadness, brought forth by her birth, would remain beyond her grasp forever” (25). It is not surprising that she grows up to be malevolent and maladjusted, seeking to inflict her pain and suffering on everything that surrounds her and even on herself. At thirteen, she pushes palm nuts up her vagina and draws blood in the process of pulling them out – a painful act which she believes “was a condition in which to forget about the pleasure invented and constructed in bed” (26). At other times, she visits her wrath on animals – grasshoppers, chicks, rats – which she pins alive to trees, nails to boards or drops in hot boiling water. This same malevolence is carried over to her children beginning with Tanga. Hence, child abuse becomes a chain reaction resulting from rape.

J.M. Coetzee: Biography

John Maxwell Coetzee, according to The Nobel Foundation (2003), was born in Cape Town, South Africa, on 9 February 1940. He received his primary schooling in Cape Town and in the nearby town of Worcester and his secondary education in a Catholic school run by the Marist Brothers in Cape Town. He entered the University of Cape Town in 1957, and in 1960 and 1961 graduated successively with honours degrees in English and Mathematics. In 1963 he married Philippa Jubber (1939–1991). They had two children, Nicolas (1966–1989) and Gisela (b. 1968). In 1965 Coetzee entered the graduate school of the University of Texas at Austin, and in 1968 graduated with a PhD in English, Linguistics, and Germanic languages. For three years (1968–71) Coetzee was assistant professor of English at the State University of New York in Buffalo. After an application for permanent residence in the United States was denied, he returned to South Africa. From 1972 until 2000 he held a series of positions at the University of Cape Town, the last of them as Distinguished Professor of Literature. Coetzee began writing fiction in 1969. His first book, *Dusklands*, was published in South Africa in 1974. *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) won South Africa's then principal literary award, the CNA Prize, and was published in Britain and the USA. *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) received international notice. His reputation was confirmed by *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), which won Britain's Booker Prize. It was followed by *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* (1990), *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), and *Disgrace* (1999), which again won the Booker Prize. Coetzee also wrote two fictionalized memoirs, *Boyhood* (1997) and *Youth* (2002). *The Lives of Animals* (1999) is a fictionalized lecture, later absorbed into *Elizabeth Costello* (2003). *White Writing* (1988) is a set of essays on South African literature and culture. *Doubling the Point* (1992) consists of essays and interviews with David Attwell. His *Giving Offense* (1996) is a study of literary censorship while *Stranger Shores* (2001) collects his later literary essays. The representation of the violation of and advocacy for sexual rights in *Disgrace* is of interest to this study.

***Disgrace* – Summary**

Fifty-two-year old professor at the Technical University of Cape Town, David Lurie, has an affair with his twenty-year old student, Melanie Isaacs. He is reported by her to the university disciplinary committee and is forced to resign from the university when he will not

give a public apology, though he admits to being guilty of the charges pressed against him. A public apology will mean, to David, denying his nature as a man and he finds that disagreeable since he is a proponent of the rights of desire. He seeks refuge on the daughter's farm in the Eastern Cape where he goes through a period of re-education when his lesbian daughter, Lucy, is raped by a gang of three black men with him helplessly locked up in a toilet. Experiencing the trauma attending his so-called "rights of desire" schools him on the protection of sexual rights, and a transformed David comes back to George Town to ask for forgiveness from Melanie's family for the pain he has caused them. He returns to the farm to watch his daughter nurse the pregnancy that resulted from the rape.

Negotiating Sexual Rights and Consent in Coetzee's *Disgrace*

The first chapter leaves the reader in no doubt that Coetzee's primary interest in the text is to explore the workings of sexuality. It is not surprising that David Lurie finally gets into trouble with his student because from the onset he is presented as a man that is swayed by women who are by far much younger than his age – fifty two years. For Soraya, the sex worker he visits every Thursday, "Technically he is old enough to be her father" (1) and the other Soraya who replaces the first when she no longer feels comfortable with David, is "no more than eighteen, unpractised, to his mind coarse" (8). Dawn, the new secretary in his department who comes after the second Soraya, does not belong to the same generation with him as she makes it a point of duty to clarify in her conversation with him: "You people had it easier. I mean, whatever the rights and wrongs of the situation, at least you knew where you were....I mean your generation" (8-9). Before this addiction to sex with the much younger generation, David is described as a man with insatiable sexual appetite: "He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity. He had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in the bars on the waterfront or at the Club Italia; he slept with whores" (7).

Briefly in the first chapter too, Coetzee examines in passing, sex trade and sex workers. Soraya works for an agency that deals in marketing human flesh from mainly Asian countries which they make available via phone calls and advertisements in catalogues of their various available workers and their potentials. Half of the earnings of the sex workers goes to the agency which provides them with the rooms used as business premises and hooks them up with clients who are not permitted to negotiate personally with the workers. In a sense, this kind of

trade is very organised and controlled and is registered under the name “Discreet Escorts”. The sex workers are called hostesses and when they indicate their interest in no longer seeing a client, as happens with Soraya and David, the agency cuts off the client and protects the interests of its workers. Under the column of exotic hostesses, one finds “Malaysian, Thai, Chinese” (8) and this is not coincidental since most Asian countries have been stereotyped, alongside Africans, for over a decade now as giving problems to the immigration authorities in many developed countries in the area of human trafficking for the purpose of sex trade (Agustin, 1988).

While Coetzee looks at organised sex trade in *Disgrace*, Abani analyses human trafficking. These two though sometimes yoked together as if they were the same, differ markedly as is seen from the kind of exploration given to them in *Disgrace* and *Becoming Abigail*. Sexual rights completely kick against the practices in *Becoming Abigail* where there is no agency that protects the interests of the hostesses or keeps away the unwanted attention from clients in need of sexual services. This is made available in *Disgrace* and it is also noticed that the sex workers are not compelled to conduct their trade; they appear to be in it because they want to. Soraya has another life different from the sex trade and she does not mix the two. The only part of her which the agency has a part in is the part that does the sex trade. Outside the agency, she is a mother of two sons living happily with her family. Her moralistic views about tourists who bare their breasts on public beaches is a pointer to the normal life (and this is not to say that her life at the Discreet Escorts Agency is abnormal) she leads outside the agency (1). The violence which characterizes trafficking in *Becoming Abigail* is totally imperceptible in *Disgrace*. Perhaps, the circumstances surrounding the mode of procuring/acquiring the hostesses from their countries of origin are responsible. Nothing is mentioned about this in *Disgrace* but the treatment given to the workers by the Discreet Escorts Agency suggests that the workers applied for their jobs as hostesses out of their own will. In *Becoming Abigail*, it is a one-man business where the owner (Peter) travels to deceive his own relatives into coming with him to London to earn a better living or start schooling. He procures fake travelling papers for them as a means of obliterating their existence in the new world where they will find themselves. This totally removes their will and negotiating powers, leaving them at Peter’s mercy to do with as he pleases.

Melanie Isaacs is not the first student to captivate David Lurie because on their first meeting, the text says: “He is mildly smitten with her. It is no great matter: barely a term passes when he does not fall for one or other of his charges” (11-12). There is nothing in Melanie’s behaviour to show that she is comfortable with the affair with David, rather, from the beginning a cornered child is seen going through the motions of an affair with her teacher whose advances she is poorly equipped to reject. She is reluctant to go to his house (12) and hesitant to join him in preparing supper (13). After the first meeting at home, David does not let Melanie go, even when he is aware of her reluctance and lack of enthusiasm over the relationship. Instead, he digs up her detail from the department office and calls her home. Again, he is confronted by Melanie’s immaturity, but he will not let go and this time ends up having sex with her:

“Hello?”

In the one word he hears all her uncertainty. Too young. She will not know how to deal with him; he ought to let her go. But he is in the grip of something. Beauty’s rose: the poem drives straight as an arrow. She does not own herself; perhaps he does not own himself either....He takes her back to his house. On the living-room floor, to the sound of the rain pattering against the windows, he makes love to her. Her body is clear, simple, in its way perfect; **though she is passive throughout...** (18-19). (Emphases mine)

The sexual sessions between David and Melanie can easily be described as rapes because Melanie is always an unwilling participant who only gives her body because she does not know how to say no or is afraid of what a no might result to since David is her teacher:

He has given her no warning; she is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her. When he takes her in his arms, **her limbs crumple** like a marionette’s. Words **heavy as clubs thud** into the delicate whorl of her ear. “No, not now!” she says, **struggling**. “My cousin will be back!”

But nothing will stop him. He carries her to the bedroom...She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips. Little shivers of cold run through her; as soon as she is bare, she slips under the quilted counterpane **like a mole burrowing**, and turns her back to him.

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, **like a rabbit when the jaws of a fox close on its neck**. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away (24-25). (Emphases mine)

Also, David's recollection of one of the sex scenes reveals the attending violence which permits the use of rape as a defining term: "A memory floods back: the moment on the floor when he **forced** the sweater up and exposed her neat, perfect breasts" (23). The choice of words in the excerpts shows Melanie's unwillingness and resistance to the assault on her body as well as David's insensitivity and impropriety. Why does David womanise and finally get to the point of rape? A trail of his conversation with other characters in the text reveals his perception of women. With Melanie, he defines women as creatures meant to be donors of sexual pleasure, and hence, creatures that should not regulate or have control over their sex partners:

"You're very lovely," he says. "I'm going to invite you to do something reckless." He touches her again. "Stay the night with me."

Across the rim of the cup she regards him steadily. "Why?"

"Because you ought to."

Why ought I to?"

"Why? Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it."

(16)

Although Melanie is twenty years old, her student-teacher relationship with David positions her with David as a child whose rights ought to be protected by him. The committee of inquiry set up to look into the charges filed by Melanie against David puts his position in clear perspective and defines Melanie as occupying the childlike position with him:

"Don't you think", says Swarts, "that by its nature academic life must call for certain sacrifices? That for the good of the whole we have to deny ourselves certain gratifications?"

"You have in mind a ban on intimacy across the generations?"

"No, not necessarily. But as teachers we occupy positions of power. Perhaps a ban on mixing power relations with sexual relations. Which, I sense, is what was going on in this case. Or extreme caution."

Farodia Rassool intervenes. "...all of a sudden, it is not the abuse of a young woman he is confessing to, just an impulse he could not resist, with no mention of the pain he has caused, no mention of the long history of exploitation of which this is part..."

Abuse: he was waiting for the word. Spoken in a voice quivering with righteousness. What does she see, when she looks at him, that keeps her at such a pitch of anger? A shark among the helpless little fishies? [sic] Or does she have another vision: of a great thick-boned male bearing down on a girl-child, a huge hand stifling her cries? How absurd! Then he remembered they

were gathered here yesterday in this same room, and she was before them, Melanie, who barely comes to his shoulder. Unequal: how can he deny that? (52-53)

David admits to being guilty of all the charges pressed against him but he is not remorseful and when interviewed by the student press, he admits his non-repentance by saying he “was enriched by the experience” (56). This admittance leaves him culpable and he loses the sympathy of the reader so that when he is forced to resign from the university, he is not missed.

It is interesting to note that Coetzee also presents rape like most of the female writers in this study: the man as the perpetrator with the woman as the violated. This does not escape David in the session with the committee of enquiry where the only sympathetic voices he hears are from the male members of the committee and he declares: “In this chorus of goodwill, I hear no female voice” (52). His declaration is greeted with silence. Only Lucy, his daughter, is seen in the text showing him what looks like sympathy/goodwill as regards his actions, and not until she has established in clear terms that he is wrong to have had an affair with his student. Lucy sees his resignation as a fair price which he has to pay and believes Melanie might forgive and not think harshly of him (69). However, unlike the other writers on rape, Coetzee allows David to defend his actions in order to examine the psyche of the rapist to see if in the discourse of sexual rights, there might be anything that excuses his actions. Hence, David’s arguments about his rights are made to sound ridiculous. First, David’s discussion with Lucy confirms his awareness and understanding of the adult-child relationship between him and Melanie:

“Have you thought of getting married again?” asks Lucy.

“To someone of my own generation, do you mean? I wasn’t made for marriage, Lucy. You have seen that for yourself.”

“Yes. But – ”

“But what? But it is unseemly to go on preying on children?”

“I didn’t mean that. Just that you are going to find it more difficult, not easier, as time passes.” (69)

This foundation of “preying on children” detracts from his arguments on “the rights of desire” (89) which he believes empowers him to have sexual relations with whoever Eros, to whom he is a servant, chooses for him (52). David’s story of the Kenilworth dog, which illustrates that the male instinct to womanise is not to be punished to the point of breeding hatred for the self,

classifies his actions, in his arguments for the rights of desire, as a natural reaction. Punishment for the exercise of rights of desire would bring about a denial of the nature of the male species (90). David's refusal to apologise to the disciplinary committee rests on this perception of the nature of the male: how does a man apologise for being a man?

Anker (2008:233) states that "J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* explicitly invokes the concept of human rights only to expose the many limitations of rights as vehicles for approaching social justice" by juxtaposing 'its protagonist's "rights of desire" with human rights, thereby exposing significant liabilities of rights talk'. She also looks at "communitarian mode of interpersonal solidarity as an alternative to the rights paradigm" but safely concludes on the novel's "insistence upon the indeterminate status of justice". It must be said that David's rights of desire, though it appears to have some elements of the rights to pleasure, do not have the same content – it is not a recognized right at all. While the rights to pleasure approve of adult partners entering into whatever form of all-round healthy sexually pleasurable experiences which the parties involved have consented to without being pressurized into doing so, David's rights of desire is blind to words like consent, adult partners' all round healthiness and undue pressure. The "rights of desire" therefore cannot be promoted in the process of sexual rights advocacy or centralizing the marginalized, because it is in itself an agent of further marginalization.

It is not coincidental that immediately after David has expounded his theory of the rights of desire, the next scene is the rape of his daughter, Lucy. He is made to experience the effects of expressing the kind of rights he just finished promoting. And of course, he does not find it pleasurable. He becomes hypocritical, wanting the three-man gang of rapists to be brought to book – they have violated his daughter and only child and his paternal instincts to protect a child are re-awakened to seek justice for a wronged child. Coetzee, by giving David a taste of his own brew allows the reader to weigh the sexual rights of a child (although Lucy and Melanie are not categorically children, being above eighteen) against the rights of desire. And David's reactions are enough proofs that the sexual rights of a child should under no circumstances be denied as the effects are far-reaching, touching not only the violated child but the parents and loved ones. This much is seen also in Melanie and her entire family. Unfortunately for David, as much as he is grieved by his daughter's violation, Lucy will not file a report against the rapists. The only thing she tells the police is that they have been robbed

by three men who tried to set her father ablaze, massacring six full-grown dogs in the process and making away with their loot in her father's car. This momentary triumph of the rights of desire is promoted and perpetuated by the culture of silence where the violated is made to feel ashamed of his/her position. David recognises it when he tries to get Lucy to tell him what happened to her:

As gently as he can, he offers his question again. 'Lucy, my dearest, why don't you want to tell? It was a crime. There is no shame in being the object of a crime. You did not choose to be the object. You are an innocent party.'
(111)

Lucy does not budge but the psychological trauma which her silence puts the father into is remarkable:

The events of yesterday have shocked him to the depths. The trembling, the weakness are only the first and most superficial signs of that shock. He has a sense that, inside him, a vital organ has been bruised, abused – perhaps even his heart...he feels his interest in the world draining from him drop by drop. It may take weeks, it may take months before he is bled dry, but he is bleeding. When it is finished, he will be like a fly-casing in a spiderweb, brittle to the touch, lighter than rice-chaff, ready to float away (107).

The trauma transforms David and it is this transformed David who later returns to George to apologise to the Isaac's family. Faber (2009:303) sees Coetzee as complicating "willing, ethical agency and self-initiated transformation, in and through Lurie's resistance to vulnerability undone in slight and important ways through the urgent address of others, both animal and human". For Faber (2009), David's transformation is as a result of his interaction with a new environment of new set of people and animals. However, he notes that this transformation is self-initiated. This agrees with Kochin's (2004) idea of sustaining humanity by establishing relations with animals, the land and with the human agency for the perpetuation of humanity being Petrus, Lucy and Melanie. And Kochin (2004) is quick to note the faults in the ethical, political, moral and religious foundations of these characters. It is obvious that Kochin (2004), even when his major focus is not human rights, still understands that the cost of the kind of perpetuation provided by Petrus, for example, is high and lacking in ethics (especially in his new desired role in Lucy's life). David would not have had a need to initiate a transformation if he had not been brought face to face with the workings of his rights of desire

in others. He realizes the criminality of allowing the promotion of the rights of desire and begins a fresh campaign against it:

She does not reply, and he does not press her, for the moment. But his thoughts go to the three intruders, the three invaders, men he will probably never lay eyes on again, yet forever part of his life now, and of his daughter's. The men will watch the newspapers, listen to the gossip. They will read that they are being sought for robbery and assault and nothing else. It will dawn on them that over the body of the woman silence is being drawn like a blanket. *Too ashamed* they will say to each other, *too ashamed to tell*, and they will chuckle luxuriously, recollecting their exploit. Is Lucy prepared to concede them that victory? (110)

It crosses David's mind that the daughter's silence might be based on her understanding through his own escapades "of what women undergo at the hands of men" (111) which she denies by bringing up her triply marginalized position in post-apartheid South Africa where the tables have turned against the whites. First, she is a woman in a patriarchal society. Second, she is white in a predominantly black society that is hostile to whites as a pay back to colonial apartheid injustices. Third, she is lesbian in a predominantly heterosexual community. The third point makes David to think: "Raping a lesbian worse than raping a virgin: more of a blow. Did they know what they were up to, those men? Had the word got around?" (105). David's fear of the rape being as a result of the community's knowledge of Lucy's status as a lesbian is not unfounded since all over the world, the homosexual movements have been fighting against things like gay-bashing. David does not find Lucy's sex partner, Helen, or their relationship attractive. Being heterosexual, he wonders what the daughter does with Helen and whether his presence in her house constitutes a nuisance to their relationship. Coetzee does not sound condemnatory in his exploration of homosexuality but does not sound approving either. Being neutral, he is able to clinically examine the feelings of the group as they are made to bear injustices by an intolerant society. They are human and have the same feelings as heterosexuals when subjected to inhuman treatments and as such, should be recognized and protected by the same structures that protect the interests of the majority. Using David, the fear and discomfort of a parent in knowing and living with the sexual identity of his child is examined. David remedies this fear by recognizing that sexual happiness does not lie in heterosexual relationships:

The truth is, he does not like to think of his daughter in the throes of passion with another woman, and a plain one at that. Yet would he be happier if the lover were a man? What does he really want for Lucy? Not that she should be forever a child, forever innocent, forever his – certainly not that (86).

The three marginalisers are captured where Lucy refuses to go to the market after the rape but asks David and Petrus, the dog-man/farm help to go without her:

She would rather hide her face, and he knows why. Because of the disgrace. Because of the shame. That is what their visitors have achieved; that is what they have done to this confident, modern young woman. Like a stain the story is spreading across the district. Not her story to spread but theirs: they are its owners. How they put her in her place, how they showed her what a woman was for (115).

The phrase “what a woman was for” is a pointer to what the society thinks of Lucy – she is not behaving according to what it thinks of a woman (docile, having affections for men and not women, etc.) – and she is therefore in need of some lessons. When subsequently a baby results from the rape and Petrus offers to marry her, (or rather, blackmails her into marrying him), he makes it clear that although he is aware that Lucy *would not want to marry a man*, in this new South Africa, “it is dangerous, too dangerous. A woman must be marry [sic]” (202). Lucy understands this “bargain” – she is to get married to Petrus, giving over the farmland to him in exchange for protection. If she refuses to be blackmailed, and she does not, she understands that “Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game” (203). She does not want to have to sleep with Petrus and makes that part of her own bargain. In essence, if she must be humiliated by rape and marriage to Petrus, at least, she gets to keep her identity as a lesbian. Here, the struggle to maintain self (a lesbian identity) against the Big Other (heterosexuality) is explored. Society through the agent Petrus forces Lucy to align to its norm – marriage – and she complies to maintain a façade that gains her the acceptance of the society while she remains who she is on the inside. This is a new form of forced marriage and sexual rights is against all forms of forced marriage.

The presentation of rape in *Disgrace* generally aligns with Easeal’s (1992) and UNHCR’s (1995) perception of rape as an instrument of humiliation and subjugation. Lucy describes the rape as “a purely private matter” (112), “Not slavery. Subjection. Subjugation” (159). Her words for describing her experience concretise the rapists’ personalization of the act

taking in the three marginalisers. Unfortunately, the rape distorts Lucy's perception of everything: she sees herself through the eyes of the rapists "as owing something" (158), the rapists as "debt collectors, tax collectors" (158), and the rape as "the price one has to pay for staying on" (158). Even this distortion does not make rape appealing or acceptable to the violated. Lucy's psyche finds it difficult to separate other men from the rapists and her experience, giving an insight to her traumatised state:

'Hatred... When it comes to men and sex, David, nothing surprises me anymore. Maybe, for men, hating the woman makes sex more exciting. You are a man, you ought to know. When you have sex with someone strange – when you trap her, hold her down, get her under you, put all your weight on her – isn't it a bit like killing? Pushing the knife in; exiting afterwards, leaving the body behind covered in blood – doesn't it feel like murder, like getting away with murder?' (158)

She is not surprised at men and sex going by her father's history, so when she says "you are a man, you ought to know", she is not making a generalisation that lacks support, at least from her immediate experiential sphere. Apart from the spreading hatred she nurses in her heart for men, she is not interested in the product of the rape. One wonders why she chooses to keep the baby since she does not love it, yet. Unlike Mazvita, the protagonist of *Without a Name*, Lucy is prepared and determined to give love and motherhood a try:

'Do you love him yet?' ...
'The child? No. How could I? But I will. Love will grow – one can trust Mother Nature for that. I am determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person. You should try to be a good person too.'
(216)

In this is seen a reconciliation. Lucy, though she finds it very difficult, is forward looking and makes preparations to be reabsorbed into the society on her own terms: lesbian still (since she would not add sexual relations with Petrus to their terms of agreement), good mother and good person (even if this goodness excludes, in the interim, love for the unborn child). In line with reconciliation, she begins with her relationship with the father with whom she has been having an estranged relationship. David is invited into the house for some tea: "She makes the offer as if he were a visitor. Good. Visitorship, visitation: a new footing, a new start" (218). This reconciliation is absent in Nadine Gordimer's "The Children". Paulus and Thebedi's baby is murdered because South Africa is still under apartheid. The reconciliation embodied in the

mulatto baby is thus stifled. In the story, it is Paulus, the baby's white father who steals into the home Thebedi has made with Njabulo (who does not say anything about his wife giving birth to a mulatto only two months after their wedding) and poisons the baby with an ingredient of insecticides used by farmers. The baby represents a part of him that has gone into a "forbidden" relationship with the black side of the divide and therefore has to be eliminated to remove this evidence of trespass. Paulus' South Africa differs very much from Lucy's and is responsible for the difference in their reactions of rejection and accommodation/reconciliation, respectively.

Reactions of rape victims (male or female) vary as well as the outlook on and propelling factor for the perpetrators. The reactions of Lucy (in *Disgrace*) and Mazvita (in *Without a Name*) to rape differ from Anna-Claude's in *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* who is raped by the prison warden during interrogation in order to force her to give him information on Tanga, her cell mate. Having been schooled by Tanga on how to withdraw from her environment in moments of violation, Anna-Claude makes her psyche unavailable to her violation in order to live through it. Later, when Tanga asks if she was hurt, her reply is: "It was nothing, just sex" (128). In Anna-Claude and Tanga are seen women who have devised psychological means of escaping the horrors they have to live through as a result of rape, especially when the rapists, like the prison warden, have the flimsy excuse of: "There's nothing left but fornication to bring the woman to reason" (126).

Just as WHO and USAID (2008) recognize television shows and radio programmes as advocacy tools having a great impact on addressing areas of life that were considered taboos, like sex, dealing with rape and its attendant psychological trauma, Coetzee's *Disgrace* offers the same services by exploring like themes. Using Melanie, *Disgrace* sends the same message as WHO's (2002) *Growing in Confidence: Programming for Adolescent Health and Development (Lessons from Eight Countries)* which maintains that the use of TV programmes like *Soul City* and *loveLife* as advocacy tools in South Africa has brought about a change in response to sexual and reproductive health issues: "young people are learning they have a real choice in determining what happens to them as individuals and as a society" (22). The choice of the sexually violated is not to remain silent but to seek justice/redress in authorities set up to handle such matters. Keeping silent does not help. And as is seen in David, if the violator is

exposed, there is a great possibility of his undergoing a transformation which makes the society a sexually healthier and safer environment.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHILD IN SEXUAL RIGHTS DISCOURSES: CHRIS ABANI'S *BECOMING ABIGAIL* AND CALIXTHE BEYALA'S *YOUR NAME SHALL BE TANGA*

Chris Abani: Biography

Nigerian author, Christopher Abani was born on December 27, 1966. He holds a Bachelor's degree in English (Nigeria), a Master's in Gender and Culture (Birkbeck College, University of London), another Master's in English and a PhD in Literature and Creative Writing (University of Southern California). He is a Professor at the University of California, Riverside and the recipient of the PEN USA Freedom-to-Write Award, the Prince Claus Award, a Lannan Literary Fellowship, a California Book Award, a Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, a PEN Beyond the Margins Award, the PEN Hemingway Book Prize and a Guggenheim Award. Chris Abani's prose includes *Song for Night* (2007), *The Virgin of Flames* (2007), *Becoming Abigail* (2006), *GraceLand* (2004), and *Masters of the Board* (1985). His poetry collections are *Sanctificum* (2010), *There Are No Names for Red* (2010), *Feed Me the Sun - Collected Long Poems* (2010) *Hands Washing Water* (2006), *Dog Woman* (2004), *Daphne's Lot* (2003), and *Kalakuta Republic* (2001). For study, in this work, is his novella, *Becoming Abigail*, which has won many awards. In 2007, it was Finalist for the PEN Beyond the Margins Award and won the New York Libraries Books for Teens Selection. In 2006, it bagged the following awards: the New York Times Editor's Choice; Chicago Reader Critic's Choice; a selection of the Essence Magazine Book Club; and a selection of the Black Expressions Book Club.

***Becoming Abigail* – Summary**

Abigail loses the mother while she was giving birth to her and ends up living all her life in her shadows as her father refuses to recognize her for herself but as the mother's younger image. She suffers neglect and abuse from the males that come into her life. Her father decides to give her to Peter who takes her to London where she is expected to serve him as a sex worker. A few days before her departure with Peter, her father hangs himself, leaving her an orphan with nobody to return to in Nigeria. Abigail resists Peter's plans for her as a sex worker

and is subjected to inhuman treatments until she succumbs to him. This does not last long as she revolts one day, bites off Peter's penis and runs into the streets with it. The police take her to the hospital while searching for the owner of the penis. She is assigned to a social worker, Derek, and soon, they are having an affair which is terminated when Molly (Derek's wife) finds out and reports to the police. Derek loses his job and is imprisoned while Abigail commits suicide out of grief for the loss of the love of her life, Derek.

Sexual Rights of the Child in *Becoming Abigail*

In most discussions on sexual rights of children, the focus is usually on sexuality education, the abuse of their sexuality and the violation of their rights. This emphasises that the under aged are sexual beings with sexual feelings, habits, behaviours, various sexual identities and orientations. The relationships between Abigail and the men in her life raise various questions from different angles of sexual rights. Abigail's father is so consumed with the wife's death during childbirth that he overlooks the fundamentals of sexuality education which he ought to provide for his daughter who looks every inch like her mother that he cannot wait to have her grow into the deceased wife. His sorrow blinds him to seeing the daughter for who she is but as the mother's shadow. Abigail's efforts at self-assertion do not amount to much with her father: "She tried to talk to her father about this need to see herself, but he couldn't understand what she meant. It maybe he just pretended not to. The desire to be noticed for herself didn't go away though. She couldn't be the ghost he wanted her to be" (31). It is therefore an embittered Abigail who decides to talk to the father about her menstrual period. The father's reaction lacks the understanding required to see a girl through this difficult phase of maturing:

Looking up, her father smiled.

"Hey, baby, can I get you anything?" he asked.

"No, Dad, I just wanted to talk."

"What about?" he asked, folding the newspaper he had been reading into a neat square, which he placed on the table...

"About my period," Abigail began. "About being a woman."

He looked away uncomfortably. "Abigail! How can you bring that up, eh? I was just about to ask you to make dinner."

"But Dad."

"Your mother would never have talked like this, you know? She knew the right way to conduct herself," he said (31-32).

Her father's reaction gives the impression that he perceives menstrual period as a subject unfit for discussion, a taboo perhaps, or something propriety does not allow girls/women to openly talk about. So, by implication, the female anatomy is made obscure even to them by the imposition of rules that interpret its unveiling as improper conduct. Without being informed, it is not surprising therefore that Abigail grows up exposed to many dangers and conflicts in the area of her sexuality.

Peter, from the first time he appears in Abigail's life has had nothing positive to offer her. At twelve when Abigail was a bridesmaid at his wedding to Mary (Abigail's cousin), Peter lays a foundation for his subsequent abuses two years later:

Peter had cornered her in the bathroom. She didn't shrink away like other girls her age might have at being surprised in the bathroom... Surprised at her fearlessness he kissed her, his finger exploring her.

Later, when he was back at Mary's side, she caught him sniffing his finger occasionally, a smile playing around his lips... Even at that young age she knew what men were like (47-48).

The novella does not specifically say why Abigail does not raise an alarm at Peter's behaviour towards her to anybody, but much can be inferred through the preceding events in her life. Her father, from his reaction to her when she wanted to talk about her menstrual cycle, is not accessible for such conversations. Again, two years before the wedding incident, Edwin, her fifteen year old cousin, had disvirgined her at the age of ten in exchange for a bag of sweets issued under a threat to kill her if she told anybody (14). In this case, both Abigail and Edwin are minors but Edwin cannot be treated the same way as Abigail in this discourse since, from his actions, it is clear that he has attained the age of responsibility (though not the age of majority or consent). The sentence, "Even at that young age she knew what men were like" (48), carries the weight of the culture of silence which forces the abused to keep quiet and accept mistreatment as permissible and the norm. The male dominance imposed on the female in patriarchal societies is also felt as being responsible for part of Abigail's tragedy. The decision to go to London with Peter is not made by her. Although it might be said that she is a minor and as such her father is in a position to take decisions for her, the novella records her feeling towards this decision as something anchored on patriarchy: "She had felt caught in the sheath of men's plans. From the time her father and Peter had decided that she needed to come to London" (61). London does not hold the promises of a better education for her, as her father

and Peter made her believe. Peter turns her to his sex slave and dresses her up in adult clothes and make-ups in readiness for business as a sex worker. Her resistance to the first customer whom Peter steals into the house in the dark of the night earns her the most unimaginable kinds of treatment: she is handcuffed, kept outside the house in the cold in a dog's kennel, urinated upon, fed tossed out leftovers or rotten food and rancid water or sometimes Peter's urine (75, 77-78). Fifteen days of being made to live like a dog subdues Abigail "and she no longer fought when Peter mounted her. Wrote his shame and anger in her. Until. The slime of it threatened to obliterate the tattoos that made her" (81), but there is a limit to endurance in every human being, even the subdued ones. Peter's treatment brings out the venom in Abigail: "One night. Unable to stand it anymore, she screamed. Invoking the spirit of Abigail. And with her teeth tore off Peter's penis" (83).

All through the text, it is observed that Mary's presence does not deter Peter from his perversion. He threatens to do the same to her if she intervenes. This is not an empty threat as Peter has done some horrible things to her before. He beat her and their two-month old baby up in annoyance over the sex of the baby (a girl, and not the boy he wanted), pushed her off the staircase so that she fell and hit the baby that she was carrying on the floor causing it to die. This is another case of the extreme form of sexual violence against the child for reasons associated with its sex. It is the same as experienced by Zakeya in *God Dies by the Nile* for the sex of her daughters. In both instances, mother and child(ren) suffer for biological determination over which they have no control. In the period of Abigail's incarceration, Mary comes to talk with and comfort her in Peter's absence, bringing the house heater out to warm her. Finally, when Abigail bites off Peter's penis, it is Mary that unchains her and asks her to go. It will be easy to call Mary an accomplice because she does nothing to alert the police about the husband's trafficking business, but her situation is such that her hands are tied and there is nothing much she can do: she is jobless and solely dependent on the husband. Even when the police pick Abigail off the streets clutching a bleeding penis, she does not disclose the owner or how to locate him because she wants to protect Mary: "But no matter how hard he [Derek] pressed, the memory of Mary's eyes at the door on the first night of her rape kept Abigail from telling him or the police where to find Peter" (95). It is not impossible that Mary's papers of migration, since they were prepared by Peter, are not authentic or are done with fake names since that is what he has done for Abigail who when she gives the police her

name as Abigail Tansi, does not exist anywhere in the British records as an immigrant. Being a ghost in a foreign country takes away Mary's powers to negotiate her sexual rights as well as Abigail's as does her economic dependence.

A comparison of Mary's and Molly's reactions to Abigail's abuse by their husbands reveals the power conferred on an individual by legalized citizenship and economic status. Molly, Derek's wife, in a matter of minutes gets the police to come and take both her husband and Abigail away on walking in on them having sex in her kitchen. She had the means to pursue the cause, even though her reasons are presented to border between revenge and civic duty:

Before he could pull up his trousers, Molly was gone.

Running down the street. Night. Late. Dressing gown stained with the bleeding of her pain. And then the police later. Derek looked cowed. Molly shamed, perhaps a little regretful....

Revenge is a raven.

Feathers blackened from hate. And Molly was relentless in her pursuit. Shame turning to the certainty of faith.

The reprisals were swift.

Derek was fired from his job and brought up on charges for the abuse of a minor (102-103).

The swiftness of her actions are also made possible by the fact that she has no migration law enforcement agency after her, so she moves freely and makes the necessary contact with the police.

There is enough evidence in the text to show that Abigail feels something rare and valuable for Derek. Derek is her social worker, the only man apart from her father, for whom she has any soft feelings. From the first time Derek crosses his boundary by kissing her while showing her round Greenwich Park, Abigail's feeling for Derek shifts from the filial to the erotic:

He kissed her then and looked into her eyes with an infinite sadness...What they walked up was more a rise than a hill, a gentle bumping in the ground. Not unlike what she felt for him: an unassuming tenderness.

Like what she felt for her father. At least before he died...And now here he was again, in this stranger's tender fumbling...This wasn't the familiarity she had expected. Instead she felt passion enveloping her, and she gave into the safety, the warmth, looking up into his eyes, eyes blue as the sea she

had never seen except on television, eyes looking at her wanting no more than was there. This was love? To be seen. No turning away. No turning toward. Just there.

Later that night, in Derek's home, while his wife slept in their floral wallpapered bedroom under the warmth of bed-clothes, they made love on the sofa. And Abigail was giving. For the first time, she wasn't taken....Abigail, this Abigail, only this Abigail, always this Abigail, felt herself becoming, even in this moment of taking (36-38).

The transmutation undergone by this feeling is attributable to the deficiency in the relationship she has had with her father who never saw the girl in her as a person different from her mother. Derek *sees* her, and in this seeing, she gains an acceptance that she cherishes and labels as "love". Using Derek, Abani explores the value of recognition of the individual's identity. Human beings are not empowered by the blotting out of their self-assigned definition of self/personhood (especially when this is done to make them align with the ideology of an oppressive centre) but by its recognition and appreciation. Derek identifies with Abigail in a way nobody else does and in that way enlivens her dark world for the period their relationship lasts (two months of knowing her and three and a half weeks of time spent together with her). However, Derek defaults on sexual rights in many ways. First, Abigail is a minor, only fourteen. Second, he is placed by the government in a position of trust over her as her social worker – a position which confers on him the responsibility to protect Abigail, especially from the kind of abuse which he himself indulges in. The compounding twist to his story is that he feels something warm for Abigail, which makes his imprisonment something that draws the sympathy of the reader:

So much of love is memory, she thought, her mind tracing the outline of Derek. She had loved him so completely and he her. But what are the limits of desire? The edges beyond which love must not cross? Those were the questions she had heard others discuss in these last few days. Discuss as if she were a mere ghost in their presence. Called this thing between Derek and her wrong. How could it be?

There is only so much we can do to save those we love (65).

But, Abani makes it such that the sympathy is quickly reined in on the consideration of his abuse of power and position. It may be said that Abigail did not have to deal with any form of coercion in her relationship with Derek as she appears from the onset to be a willing party to the affair. In fact, after the initial kiss from Derek, she initiates the rest of the action (37). But, a careful analysis calls attention to what is termed "consent", especially, given the position of

the two actors: Abigail, on the one hand, a minor, homeless, on the run from Peter and his sexually abusive business, psychologically destabilized and very much in need of rehabilitation, re-acculturation and reintegration into the society; and Derek, on the other hand, an adult, employed as a social worker, professionally trained to cater for the emotionally and psychologically disturbed/challenged persons like Abigail. The disparity in their statuses places Abigail at a disadvantaged vulnerable position which removes her power to negotiate consent.

An examination of Abani's use of language reveals an attempt to convey the state of mind of the tragic protagonist, Abigail. The psychology of the disturbed and unstable is very much present in *Becoming Abigail*. There is a sense of disjointedness and a struggle to connect which appears to fail before the connection is made. Efforts are not made in realizing long or full sentences. Most times, a word or phrase is enough. Yet, Abani, in this compressed way which utilizes nouns, verbs and adjectives mainly, condenses the experience being explored and makes sense in that way which belongs to poetry. The novella is action-packed, an impression realised with the form of sentences and structures in it. His language can be said to belong to the unconscious/sub-conscious, following the stream of consciousness. A look at the scene where Molly walks in on Abigail and Derek, for example, reveals the use of language to create mind pictures that give the reader a sense of cinematography and clinical detachment of the narrator from the experience he is narrating:

Turning the knob, opening. The door, opening. And there was Abigail, rump on the edge of the kitchen table, skirt up around her waist, naked breasts rubbing pert lines of sweat up and down Derek's chest, ankles locked around his back. Lost in the hot damp of Abigail: Derek. And over the shoulder, the women locked eyes. Abigail smiled.

Then Molly's scream. The stab. The look. Death. The look and the collapse onto the linoleum floor. Soft. Slow. Just as Abigail would have imagined it. An autumn leaf. Falling. Cocoa, like old blood, spilling down the front of Molly's pale blue dressing gown. Rusting. Derek. Turning. Seeing his wife falling, even as his hips still jerked their urgent need (101-102).

With utmost brevity, Abani captures every detail of the moments in his work in a way that suggests clinical observation, but giving it enough emotional material while maintaining a safe distance from the experience being shared. This skill parallels Yvonne Vera's in *Without a Name*. Using their style of writing, these two writers succeed in the creation and management of grief in their heroines. The heroines' grief and tragedies are convincing although their

actions (Mazvita commits infanticide while Abigail commits suicide) are not redeeming but go to show the level of destruction sexual abuse can bring to the lives of victims. With Abigail, one may be forced to ask whether the apprehending/punishment of the perpetrator of sexual abuse is worth it if it ends up taking the life of the victim. But, the answer is still a yes. The thing to consider in Abigail's case is that the proceedings of justice did not take appropriate and holistic consideration of her psychologically abused state. If this was ascertained, it would have been discovered that emotional bonds, albeit wrong ones, have been established between the victim and perpetrator which renders the situation sensitive. Again, if this was established, perhaps, Abigail would not have had to sit through the hearing where what she feels for Derek is ridiculed, which to her young impressionable mind is injustice. It calls to the fore that extreme care should be taken in the handling of matters dealing with the minors since they, in most cases lack the sense of judgement and stability to navigate through dangerous waters such as Abigail's. Although the text does not specify it, it is not unlikely that the justice system in the text does not do its best for Abigail for obvious reasons like her immigrant status and refusal to give information on Peter. However, these are just speculations. Abani, by allowing Abigail to die, calls attention to the justice system in the fight for sexual rights. While the perpetrator should be brought to justice, the overall wellbeing of the victim should be taken into consideration.

Calixthe Beyala: Biography

Cameroonian Calixthe Beyala was born in 1961 and grew up in Douala. She is married with two children. In 1996 she was awarded the *Grand Prix du Roman de l'Académie Française*. Most of her works are in French and the following have been translated into English by Marjolijn De Jager: *Loukoum: The 'Little Prince' of Belleville* (1995), *The Sun Hath Looked Upon Me* (1996), and *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* (1996).

***Your Name Shall Be Tanga* – Summary**

Anna-Claude, a white half-crazy teacher of philosophy finds herself in jail for being a social disturbance and is joined by Tanga in her cell. The dying seventeen year old Tanga has been arrested along with some money forgers. With a lot of persuasion, Tanga shares her life's story with Anna-Claude. She has lived all her life under various kinds of sexual abuse from her

parents and society – incest, rapes, commercialisation of her body as a means of income for the entire family, forced prostitution, abandonment from lovers, etc. Attempts to break free meet with her mother's blackmail. Tanga's only hope at making a meaning out of her life becomes Mala, a street urchin that she picks up and works towards giving a proper home until he falls ill and she cannot save him because she lacks the money. The realisation that money makes the world go round sends her to money forgers and she is caught alongside these people and sent to the prison where she dies after sharing her story with Anna-Claude.

The Sexually Violated Child: Calixthe Beyala's *Your Name Shall Be Tanga*

Sonja Darlington sees *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* as a social critique and political manifesto for the civil rights of children and women with the significant part of the argument lying

...in a fight against free market capitalism, which determines the value of girl-children and women through the demand for their bodies... *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* strongly contests illegitimacy: it focuses attention on a young female child's rights to have others acknowledge her birth, a female child's right to have others value her existence, and a female child's right to control her body (2003: 41)

While recognising the use of the text to advocate the rights of women and children, Darlington (2003) fails to point out that the nature of the rights for the women and children in the text border on their sexuality and are, therefore, sexual rights. *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* puts up an argument for sexual rights, not by creating a heroine that conquers all odds at the end of the novel to gain her freedom or liberation, but one that does so by dying in a prison because she is denied her rights. In so doing, Beyala arrests the readers' sympathy and utilises it to focus attention on the denial of the protagonist's rights. Tanga's story shared with European Anna-Claude before her demise does not seek to paint her as a rights activist, but in her chronicling of her life experience, a window into the experiences of children and women who live on the margins is created and made available through the solidarity of two female cellmates convinced of the injustice of their social system. The reader is called to look into their lives through the eyes of a fellow sufferer and understand the reasons behind actions and the consequences of deprivation if the centre/Big Other is to continue with its marginalisation/othering.

To understand seventeen-year-old Tanga, Anna-Claude has to allow the white woman in her to die first (7). This brings specificity to the discussion on sexual rights in Africa as against the general sexual rights all over the globe. Sexual rights are universal, yet, are interpreted to suit specific socio-cultural environments. However, this specificity dissolves when Anna-Claude declares that “blood is neither white nor black. It’s quite simply red” (63). This solidarity is seen by Marie-Chantal Kalisa (1997:1) as calling for “the internationalization of women’s solidarity”. It creates a means of forging ahead for the self/marginalised, since through Tanga, “the novel attempts to offer a solution to women's victimization by proposing the sharing of history.... The act of telling her story transforms the woman from a mere objectified being to the subject of her own history. Tanga, like every other exploited girl-child/woman, desires to control her own story/history” (Kalisa, 1997:1). Kalisa (1997) identifies the hopelessness of entrusting Tanga’s history in the hands of Anna-Claude who Iningue and her own Paris see as being mentally demented, but this is a pointer that Beyala’s strategy for advocacy rests on the stirring up of the sympathies of the reader so that, hopefully, the change towards the perception of the rights of the marginalised will start from within. Anna-Claude is not like El Saadawi into whose hands Firdaus in *Woman at Point Zero* entrusts her story. El Saadawi is a real person and ensures that the story she gets from Firdaus is told to the world, even when Firdaus has not asked for this service. Her story haunts El Saadawi until she is immortalised in writing: “She [Firdaus] stood out amongst the others, vibrated within me, or sometimes lay quiet, until the day when I put her down in ink on paper and gave her life after she had died” (El Saadawi, “Author’s Note”, *Woman at Point Zero*, 1983: iii). In any case, the end product of the two novels by El Saadawi and Beyala is awakening the need to challenge the denial of the rights of the marginalised woman and child. Psychoanalytically, narration (story telling) is therapeutic. In telling their stories, Firdaus and Tanga get the emotional and psychological relief of sharing their burdens with another. If the listener, like El Saadawi is haunted by the received story, the therapy continues with the retelling of the story.

Tanga is into the sex trade to take care of her parents, not voluntarily but under compulsion from what her society regards as duty “in fulfilment of the rites of child-parent to her parents...to feed them always because of the breath of life they gave” (18). She tells Anna-Claude: “In my country, the child is born an adult, responsible for its parents” (41). Tanga is ashamed of her forced profession and during sex with each client, as with Hassan, she is

“clothed in shame....” (18). So, it is right to term each of her sexual experiences as rape, if not for anything, then for the fact that though she is a sex worker, she has not yet attained the age of consent which makes all her clients culpable of abuse. Tanga is not the only one of her kind. The streets are littered with underage sex workers every night as she walks home: “I come across unprotected girlchild-women offering their bodies. They’re women or children defined by mood or profit, sisters of a similar destiny, a similar despair, a mixed scent of girlchild-women who go through life without leaving any traces other than the ephemeral vibrations of a butterfly” (20-21).

Tanga succinctly captures the position of the child as a voiceless entity for which reason her marginalisation even when she cries out do not meet with recognisable attention: “But who will believe me? The world prefers the silence that covers up the thorn. I am a child. I do not exist. My age cancels me out. My heart lies rooted in a forest of sand” (28). This perception of the child as defenceless and voiceless is responsible for the innumerable abuses that children suffer. Tanga is raped by her father at the age of twelve. She becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son whom the father poisons. Mother old one acts as an accomplice to this abuse by covering up for her husband – she, “to avert malediction and shame, hoodwinked everybody with the eternal tale of the child [Tanga’s baby from the incest] that had come from lord knows where and of the depraved girl [Tanga]” (30-31). Of more concern to her is covering the shame of the incestuous relationship between her husband and their twelve year old daughter than protecting this child from the abusive relationship. Tanga’s abuse at the hands of the father does not start with the rape. At the age of six, she is a victim of indecent exposure to the sexual lives of adults. Her father takes her along to his mistress’ house where she is left in a corner of the room blowing air into balloons and watching while her father and his mistress have sex. The adults assume that she is either too young to understand or too insignificant to matter. Of course, she is a child and is regarded as invisible or voiceless in her society. But Tanga understands and hates her father and his mistress for making her a voyeur (89-90). Again, with the butcher, Tanga’s abuse is that which portrays an understanding of the child in Iningue as not only invisible and voiceless but as an object of service donated by the parents to the society. Hence, the butcher rapes Tanga for two reasons: one, ““When your parents let you loiter around the streets, surely they mean you to be of service”” (66) and two,

“My loins have been needing release for weeks now. You’ll serve just fine to start me off” (66).

Alongside child rights, Beyala examines same-sex relationship to a great detail. The lesbian relationship between Tanga and Anna-Claude affords both respite from the horrors of the prison. It enables the women to live out their dreams of finding love and happiness. Tanga becomes Anna-Claude’s Ousmane, giving her fertility and “some kids to perpetuate other kinds of human beings” (45) while Tanga gets love and the giving of a self (Anna-Claude’s) – two things that she has lacked all her life. Their union is not like any heterosexual or gay one in the text or in any of the texts under study. Here, two women experience and inhabit each other’s being in a way that transmits a deep mutual understanding.

Their bodies intertwine. Anna-Claude weeps. Tanga traces grooves of tenderness on her neck and her loins... She tells her that they will stroke their despair and that the most maternal of all love will gush forth from them. She tells her to dry her tears, so that the scab will fall off the wound of unhappiness. She cradles her cajoles her... The sobs begin to fade. Anna-Claude is calming down. Love’s hands sweep away the poisoned remnants of pain, every trace left by its calloused steps (45).

Beyala promotes the freedom to this kind of relationship amongst women when, if and since it brings them wholesomeness. Hence, it is noticed that the voice of the omniscient narrator, different from the first person narrator – Tanga – who tells the greater part of the story, is approving. This tone is lacking in the presentation of heterosexual unions in the texts which are most times presented as parasitic or subjugating. This lesbian union lacks the pretence and shameful scrutiny of Hassan’s exploration of Tanga’s body where he has to suspend reality and pretend that she is white before he could have sex with her. Sex is only possible for Hassan after he has blindfolded Tanga and himself and she is reborn in his blindfolded eyes as having green eyes, heavy breasts and hair that comes right down to the buttocks (18). The giving and taking (mutuality) in the lesbian Tanga-Anna-Claude union that sees and accepts the participants as and for who they are is lacking in the Hassan-Tanga heterosexual union: “Hassan takes me in his arms. Step by step, without letting go of me, he pushes me towards the bed. He collapses on top of my belly. ‘Kiss me,’ he demands. His lips subjugate me...He doesn’t hear me, fully concentrating on his pleasure” (19). Again the Hassan-Tanga relationship reveals the male as being only after his personal pleasure. The female in his eyes is

an instrument to serve his purposes. So, when Hassan in relating the emptiness that pursues men who patronise sex workers in a bid to forget the disarray in their home front says: “But you, women, you’re like the wind. You pass through and leave us alone with our anxieties” (92), he summarises his expectations from Tanga – an elixir, painkiller, or some kind of anaesthesia that makes men feel alright. This is taking without giving anything in return, or giving something that is relatively valueless, like money, in return. This characteristic also defines the relationship between Monsieur John and Tanga’s younger sister. Monsieur John is transferred by Mother old one to Tanga’s younger sister when Tanga refuses to continue with the sex trade in order to still have a grip on Monsieur John’s money. His pleasure (106) at having Tanga changed with a younger person speaks volumes. The ages of his sex partners do not provoke concern in him that he is involved in an abusive behaviour; their young bodies are his interest. The younger they are, the better satisfied he is. He derives sexual pleasure which is best described as paedophilic. No feelings are wasted on his sex partners and all his attention is geared towards the pleasure he derives from them.

In another lesbian (?) relationship between Tanga and her younger sister, a bond that generates soul satisfaction is seen. Though the relationship is devoid of any sexual body contact, much of the lesbian tenets of women generating pleasure and wellbeing for themselves are perceived. Tanga’s curative pastime, before the male intrusion of Monsieur John, is looking at the sister’s body (an act not too far from voyeurism) – it is a body that symbolises the absence of violence and the untouched, for Tanga. This body is what she desires for herself – a body untouched by men and the putrefaction that plagues childhood and womanhood in a patriarchal Iningue. The body brings her comfort and satisfaction that in a corner of Iningue, something good is preserved in a child, at least, before the ravaging of Monsieur John commences on the sister:

My eyes wander over the sleeping body of the girl, my sister. She’s resting on one side, her cheek buried in the pillow, her hand clenched. Sometimes when I wake up and my sister’s still asleep, I look at her body. It makes a backward S. I love that S. A little bit more than anything else. Just a little bit. I can watch that S indefinitely. It’s allowed. I can look, fill my eyes, get drunk on the S; look at it beyond the girl my sister, the white of the sole of her feet, her breasts, her thighs (49).

This voyeurism defines happiness for Tanga:

What is happiness like?

I look at my sister's body. The sleeping body of my sister. The deserted body of my sister. The talkative body of my sister. I'll have to use an infinitive number of words to describe my sister's body. It is permitted to look – the eyes have no prescribed direction. Looking has always been the only satisfaction that I offer myself (49).

Watching Father old one sleeping does not produce the same effect of happiness and satisfaction in Tanga. It rather provokes vengeance – she catches a tick and sets it on her father's neck to suck his blood while she derives pleasure in crushing the tick. This is a symbolic way of crushing the father's life, his blood in the tick. This feeling is shared as Father old one is furious on knowing that he is being watched by Tanga while he is asleep: ““You look at me while I'm sleeping, you sorceress, you dirty little witch”, he screams. Get out! Get the hell out right now!” (65). Beyala appears to be saying that heterosexuality does not give room for the male to be vulnerable in front of the female. People are vulnerable to others while they are asleep and to have someone watch at this vulnerable moment can be unsettling if the person is not trusted. Father old one feels unsafe under Tanga's gaze – patriarchy, when subjected to the female gaze is riddled with imperfections that keep the male uncomfortable under this observation. On the contrary, Tanga's gaze on femininity (matriarchy?) highlights peace. Nfah-Abbenyi's (1997) study of lesbian relationships in Beyala shows her as using her lesbian characters “to question the silences (specifically women's silences) and prohibitions that...have repressed and suppressed homosexuality in the language, beliefs, customs and culture of her people” (29). From this angle of lesbianism versus heterosexuality and by extension patriarchy, it is not surprising that Alan Greig (2006) while considering the influence of gender (feminist) activists in the emergence of sexual rights and trying to locate the sexual rights of men states: “Given this gender analysis, what can men's relationship be to sexual rights claims whose goal is to radically change social and sexual arrangements of power from which they benefit?” (1).

Sexual abuse is not the only violence suffered by children in Iningue. Beyala catalogues other forms of violations of child rights: Mouélé's daughter is sold into prostitution, Dakassi's son sells peanuts, Tchoumbi's son and Mala carry luggage that are too heavy for them at the station and market place, Yaya's son is blinded in the two eyes by the father to attract the pity of tourists so that they can give him more coins while he begs, Ngono, the daughter of Ngala,

is sent to the city to live with a rich uncle who converts her to the housemaid and object of sexual entertainment for his guests instead of the schooling and rich husband her parents were promised (46-47). All these children share Tanga's fate: they "are born adult and will never know how to measure the harshness of their destiny; these children who are widowers of their childhood, to whom even time no longer makes any promises" (47). It is one of them, Mala, that Tanga adopts and starts working towards giving his life and hers a meaning. Beyala demonstrates that children are powerful and can cause ripples if they choose and come under the direction of the strong-willed ones in their midst, even when their society does everything in its power to disable them. The demonstration for food which Tanga at the age of twelve was the only girl that participated in is another example. The children in Iningue are led by sixteen year old Kamgué and they wreak havoc and destruction on the city crying out for food, millet. Knowing well that they are enough to cause a stir in the government, the police take out Kamgué and make it look like suicide. The people pretend they have seen and heard nothing. Tanga gets beaten by her mother for participating and the father re-establishes his rules for the child: "The child must not budge. Respect alone must breathe" (99). Reactions such as Mother and Father old ones' are what keep the children as found under Lame-leg's care happy under his extortion. Lame-Leg uses the children he has entrapped in his kingdom to beg and enrich himself, however, it must be said that the children get some kind of benefit from his arrangement since once every week, the accumulated goods are divided among them, some of who go back to their parents to give them the proceeds and return almost immediately to Lame-Leg to continue the begging business.

Camilla, the exotic white sex worker at the café where Tanga meets with Hassan is an example of the tragedy of women driven into the sex trade by psychological distraction/disorientation. Abandoned with two children by Pierre, a black student she met in Paris in the fast food restaurant where she worked as a waitress and decided to return to Africa with, she first discovers she has to do something to survive the suffering of a jobless mother of two. Like Soraya in Coetzee's *Disgrace*, she veers into the sex industry but unlike Soraya, she runs her business empire by herself where 'She became a drug, and gained a reputation as monumental as the woman herself: "With Camilla, just looking at her is almost enough to satisfy you"' (83). Camilla does not enjoy her job, but sticks to it for survival. Her two children are worse off. They lived with her in her room and she has to "load them with valium and

whiskey” (83-84) when she is entertaining clients. When she could not handle the pressure, she murders her children by arranging a bottled gas explosion (87). Tanga admires her for this act of “bravery” that takes the children out of the abusive life they have been living. All through Camilla’s work, it is the thought of Pierre’s desertion as much as her basic needs which have to be met, that drives her on. She disillusiones Tanga’s mind on the beauty of Paris. Tanga’s childhood dreams have been to travel to Paris – a place where everything worked perfectly, the streets have no beggars and the people are born clean with happiness on their lips and where a sensible government takes care of the citizens, offering them and their dogs social security. She finds it hard to believe when Camilla says: “Abandoned children, the unemployed, whores, battered women – they’re all there in my country too” (85). This generalises suffering, especially of women and children. Paris (the West) loses its attraction in the eyes of the African (Tanga) when seen through Camilla’s eyes. In Camilla is seen a reversal of the generally promoted trend of the citizens of developing countries running to developed ones in search of a good life which turns sour and force them into the sex industry as a means of surviving the hardship posed by the unfriendly environment.

The meeting of the elders to force Tanga to go back to sex work in order to continue taking care of them is symbolic of the aged traditions and culture which demand that children should bend over backwards in their efforts to take care of their parents (95-96). Expectations from the child should not just end in what can be gained from him/her but should also be accompanied by parental and societal responsibility to care and protect. The society in *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* fails in this. Hence, the second time Mother old one calls in the elders and other members of the community to intervene in her grievance against her daughter who would not go out to “fend for the family”, she accuses her of stealing her underwear and the elders succeed in forcing her out of the house and into the arms of Lam-Leg (106-112). Tanga, by now is desperate to realise her dream of having her own home where she can finally rest. She is now afraid of finding herself alone and tells herself that “it’s time to find the tree in which to carve my name, immortalising myself once and for all” (109).

Lam-Leg abducts Tanga under the pretence of giving her the love she craves, imprisons her in an undisclosed compound where she serves as his sex machine. He says: “Here everyone is lost. I shall call you Mango. I shall pick you every season to commemorate our meeting” (110) and plans on making a child with Tanga. Tanga, having seen so much

abuse and suffering does not wish to replicate herself or lend her womb to Lame-Leg for that purpose, so she escapes from Lame-Leg's grip and returns to Mother old one. Tanga resumes her foster mothering of Mala. On a blue Mother's day, Mala gives her a gift of a drawing with a magpie at the end of a meadow. She feels with this gift: "I exist. A gift attests to my birth. He gives me a place. He violates unhappiness. He places me inside a spoiled childhood" (121-122). Tanga's life regains a meaning with the role of a mother, but this is cut short. Mala takes ill and all her efforts to get him into a hospital for cure fail. She even patronises the religious charlatan, Lord von Deutschman, who sells miracles, but all she has is a one hundred-franc coin which could not purchase the miracle Mala needs to live. He dies and it dawns on Tanga that money is the answer to everything. She seeks out money counterfeiters and is following them when the police arrest her. She dies while incarcerated in the prison, leaving Anna-Claude to tell the world her story. She, like Abigail in *Becoming Abigail*, is destroyed in the process of tracing her path back to a life devoid of abuse.

These children are not the only ones that face sexual abuse. In El Saadawi's novels under study, all the marriages in them are conducted before the women are eighteen classifying them as child marriages. And then, there is a form of sexual abuse explored in *God Dies by the Nile* where the society's religious perception of a sexual act informs their association with the child that issues from it. The child dropped in front of Sheik Hamzawi's house which he and his wife Fatheya adopt is seen as a child of sin/fornication and as such is held responsible for all the calamities that befall the community ranging from crop failure to fire outbreaks. For this reason, the villagers in Kafr El Teen antagonise Sheikh Hamzawi and Fatheya. Sheikh Hamzawi agrees with the villagers that it is a child of sin/fornication and sometimes when the baby "misbehaves" like urinating on the Koran that the Sheikh was reading while carrying him, the Sheikh hits him and calls him a product of sin, as if sin makes babies urinate. El Saadawi purposely allows this baby to urinate on the Koran to make the statement that a religion which takes away a child's rights to live because it is regarded as issuing from a sinful union is in need of repair. Sheikh Hamzawi's only concern is that he is losing popularity with the villagers over whom he is meant to be a spiritual head. Fatheya's pleas and threats that Allah only condemns that which is evil, that the baby is neither evil nor is to be held responsible for the parents' sin and that she will leave the house with the baby to give Hamzawi the peace he craves all come to an end when the villagers discover her making away with the baby and beat

the two to death. Here, it is the woman, Fatheya who has suffered her own share of abuses both in her childhood and as an adult woman, who rises to defend the baby and pays for it with her life. It really does not take an abused person to recognise or challenge abuse. Fatheya's death leaves a mark in the husband's heart. It is obvious in the way he handles her burial (burying her with the baby still in her cold embrace) that he has learnt a lesson on fighting for child rights. It will only be a matter of time for the harvest of the lessons to be reaped. The fight for child rights, including their sexual rights, might be grinding slowly like a mill at the moment but surely. Society needs reacculturation and sensitisation, and in due course, results will start coming in.

A measure of irreverence in language is felt throughout *Your Name Shall Be Tanga*. Considering the depravity in Tanga's story, Anna-Claude declares Tanga's country "a country of madmen!" (41) to which Tanga's response is "Here, even God is mad. He's painted the world in a whirl" (41). Even God is not spared the postmodernist irreverence in language. Elsewhere, He is said to be a swindler who has allotted the rich all the money, happiness and time they need to live and die "but not what is needed to die and be born at the same time" (51), that is, to be reincarnated rich again. Also, He is termed a forgetful God who the men do their utmost to blaspheme when they are drunk on *jojoba* (90).

CHAPTER FIVE

SEXUAL IDENTITY AND EROTICISM AS CENTRALISING AGENTS: JUDE DIBIA'S *WALKING WITH SHADOWS* AND DIANNE CASE'S *TOASTED PENIS AND CHEESE*

Dianne Case: A Biography

Dianne Case, born in Cape Town, is the mother of three children. Her writing career started with the need to raise additional funds to care for her family which her full-time bookkeeping job could not comfortably take. Much of Case's writings are for children and several have won prizes: "Love, David" won the Young Africa Award, "Albatross Winter" (1980) won the Adventure Africa Award. She has also won the Percy Fitzpatrick Prize for Literature and the M-Net Book Prize. Case runs creative writing workshops for adults at a local college and also for women inmates at Pollsmoor Prison and has established her own publishing firm, Kwagga Publishers, to facilitate the publication of many of her students' works. *Toasted Penis and Cheese* (1999) is published by Kwagga Publishers and is her first adult novel.

***Toasted Penis and Cheese* – Summary**

Toasted Penis and Cheese centres around a young woman's struggle to cope with her sexual needs on becoming a divorcee and single mother of a teenage daughter. Forty-one year old Jennifer starts to hear the voices of two angels (a "good" and a "bad" one) in the heartbreak and confusion that follow the intrusion of Carol, the husband's lover, into her life. Jennifer faces a lot of challenges beginning from loss of self-esteem to outrageous weight gain, especially around the abdominal region. With her discovery of the pleasures that lie in self-loving and self-pleasuring, she is renewed. Jennifer rediscovers who she truly is and develops her hidden writing abilities. She is back on her feet again with a readiness and confidence to face the world on her own terms.

Eroticism and Rights to Pleasure in *Toasted Penis and Cheese*

The first paragraph in the novel captures its essence:

I have a phallic preoccupation. It is the most distracting obsession. Everything I see or touch makes me think of a penis – a healthy, clean, erect, shinning penis staring me straight in the eye, asking me the question: “*What now, my love, now that you’ve found me?*” (1)

Examining eroticism and pleasure from the angle of the woman is an emerging trend in African literature. Earlier works view eroticism from what the man does, his pleasure which are met, half met or denied, with the woman being passive. Emphasis is laid on the man as sexually active and the harvester of sexual pleasures while the woman is sexually dormant and the provider of pleasures for the man. From this angle, the woman is marginalized in discussions on sexual pleasures.

Toasted Penis and Cheese explores the rights of both men and women to sexual pleasure. Arguments in the text over the options for sexual pleasure include behaviours and activities considered good/bad, healthy/unhealthy and moral/immoral. Jennifer’s fantasies and desires tend towards the “unacceptable” – she fantasizes about having sex with Peter, her sister’s husband or giving him a blow-job (which she enjoyed with her ex-husband). Bettina Weiss (2006) looks at this societal inversion of roles and states: “The male becomes the object of a female gaze. The contradiction of picturing women on the one hand as having no desire, of being passive lovers, and on the other as animalistic or perverse is ironically subverted in this scene” (50). Melanie, Jennifer’s sister, on the other hand represents the moralistic opinions which see certain sexual orientations and behaviours as perverse. Melanie believes men visit sex-workers “because they do all sorts of dirty things with them...like blow-jobs!” (12). She is horrified that some people enjoy it and sees it as wickedness which she will never permit herself to do or allow Peter to do to her because, she says, “I am fussy about what goes into my mouth because I eat with this mouth... Peter used to ask me if he could do it to me, but no, I’m sorry I am not a pervert and I told him so!” (13) With Peter, Case explores the denial of sexual pleasure to men and the classification of certain sexual activities as unacceptable as a result of morality. Peter’s sexual orientation is perceived as perversion by the wife, hence he lives in denial. The rights to pleasure does not imply that Peter should compel Melanie to accept his sexual orientation, but, her refusal to even consider or create a platform for a consensus to be

reached makes her stand oppressive. Melanie believes “that God gave us sex to make babies to populate the earth” (13). The influence of religious doctrines in the shaping of Melanie’s views is obvious. On the other hand, Raymond and Jennifer do not harbour such inhibitions in their sexual relationship as husband and wife. They are so free that they contemplate a threesome once but could not agree on who the third party should be – Raymond wanted a woman while Jennifer wanted a man (14). Coming this far in their sexual freedom but disagreeing on the sex of the third party gives an idea that couples in open marriages have a lot to deal with and that maintaining that kind of marital relationship is not as easy as it sounds. Jennifer’s freedom contrasts with Ada’s inhibition in Jude Dibia’s *Walking with Shadows*. Ego is shy and does not demand sex or sexual commitment from Adrian because she **thinks** it makes a woman common (60). Ego goes with the religion-influenced and traditionally accepted rule of sex as something to be initiated and enjoyed by the man and not the woman. For this reason also, Ada’s sexual self-exploration/pleasuring ends in a feeling of guilt and shame arising from her strict Christian upbringing (152-153).

Even while promoting pleasure, the text is not unaware of sexual health. The prevalence of AIDS/HIV, the use of condoms, the availability and accessibility of knowledge of sex/sexuality matters is seen to be upheld in the text. At 17, Melissa is well informed about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, and comfortably shares the information with her mother (49). Case reviews the prevalent ignorance on sexual matters and the marginalization of women and girl-children using KwaZulu-Natal as a case study. Reference is made to some harmful sexual practices that encourage the spread of HIV:

The Mail and Guardian ran an article recently on how some men find the moistness of a woman’s vagina repulsive, so women use potions to dry the insides of their vaginas. This makes them tear during sex, and of course the tearing dramatically increases their chances of contracting HIV. When are these women going to stand up for themselves? What is sex to them? Is it an expression of passionate love? Is it a means to hold onto a man? No! It’s about power and submission. But they don’t know that. Shit! It must be sore. Rape, too, is reaching epidemic proportions with a lot of ignorant men believing that if they have sex with a virgin, they will be cured of HIV. Very often, the virgin is a little child. It’s really a tragedy (50).

Case’s exploration of rights and marginalization in the above excerpt assumes the same kind of stand as Yvonne Vera’s where the men are the perpetrators of violence (the violators)

and the women are the violated. Men in this excerpt carry HIV and create circumstances in women that expose them to contracting the virus. There is also a level of ignorance portrayed in men, excluding the recourse to power relations, which is responsible for the spread of HIV. While women engage in sex for pleasure or to hold on to a man, men see it as an avenue for exercising control and power, hence the recourse to rape. However, Case does not end the discussion on HIV/AIDS on this fatal note but uses Clive to offer the way forward, thus amending the position of the man and elevating him to that of a person with restraint, conscience, adequate information on how to tackle the problems occasioned by HIV/AIDS. Clive knows his HIV status as positive, is on anti-retroviral drugs and is therefore managing his health well. It is to his credit too that he makes it a point to inform Jennifer of his status so as to prevent their relationship from getting sexual, so they remain platonic friends. He does not take advantage of Jennifer, even when the occasion presents itself for them to have sex and knowing that it is what she would have wanted. Case uses Clive to make a statement on the possibility of living a normal life with HIV and uses Jennifer and Melissa to show that the burden of the people living with HIV is made lighter with understanding and support from close friends and family. These two do not share the information on Clive's status without his consent which is what is advocated by sexual rights. The same attitude is seen in Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* where the initial reaction is that when men are discovered to be gay, the very next thing is for them to be living with AIDS – Ada's first reaction to the revelation of her husband's sexual orientation is to take herself and their daughter to the hospital for a HIV test, as if straight/heterosexual people are not at the risk of HIV/AIDS. Ebele does not rhyme with this perception which his wife and other family members share, but using Antonio, another gay character in the text, Dibia explores AIDS as one of the risks which some careless and irresponsible practices amongst men-sleeping-with-men (MSM) could expose them to. Antonio reveals his HIV status to Ebele and is careful to state that it was his carelessness, and not his gayness, that exposed him to it : "He had chosen to have multiple partners and not use protection when it mattered most" (248). However, Antonio is on medication like Clive, has it under control and is living a normal life. This goes to say that Dibia is also an advocate of sexual health. He, like Case, encourages friends and family members to support people living with AIDS. Antonio's life is made better and he is encouraged when Ebele, his old flame visits him to say that he has forgiven him for breaking his heart. This feeling of well-being goes a long way in the maintenance of psychological and emotional health of any sick person. Case

and Dibia illustrate that sexual health is not just a heterosexual/homosexual thing; it is for every sexual human being.

Sex as a means of control and dominance does not find application only with the illiterate women. A look at Jennifer reveals this. She is educated, informed on sexual matters, but is not able to enforce her rights. She knows all about condoms and even buys some but fails to enforce their use on her partner on the occasion she had casual sex (50). Again, in her relationship with her husband, a lot of abnormalities are observed. She and Raymond get married because she is pregnant; Raymond would have preferred it aborted (although he comes to love Melissa very much when she is born). Their marriage is that of people with conflicting interests: the one for pleasure only, the other for pleasure with responsibilities. Raymond wants a relationship that affords him all kinds of imaginable pleasures but at his women's expense and not taking their psychological well-being into consideration. When Jennifer has post-coital bleeding after the birth of Melissa, to ensure the continuance of his pleasurable moments without responsibilities, Raymond takes it on himself to make an appointment with a gynaecologist who ties up the wife's fallopian tubes on Raymond's instruction in the process of taking care of her bleeding. She is neither consulted nor permitted to seek another medical opinion before she is taken into the operating theatre. The rights to pleasure, while giving room for the pursuance of sexually pleasurable experiences, insist on consent between/among partners. To promote the value of agreement between/amongst partners, Case explores the psychological trauma that Jennifer passes through when she is denied of her rights to controlling what happens to her body. She suffers from depression over the babies she will never have but who she imagines dying with the unfertilised sperm each time she has sex, she gains weight and has dramatic hair loss (54-55). It is within this period while she is having post-coital bleeding, Jennifer supposes, that Raymond moves on to Carol – he could not stand the bleeding interfering with his sexual pleasures and found a non-bleeding partner. Carol confronts Jennifer asking her to let go of Raymond since his happiness depends on her (Carol) and she (Jennifer) was standing in the way. Jennifer initiates a divorce because she feels betrayed and afterwards, though she still longs for him (they even have sex on one occasion after the divorce), she starts looking for distractions to absorb her need for a sex partner.

Clive comes along and with him, Case explores a relationship that offers both partners grounds to analyse each other's feelings while providing support and respect. They first meet at

a party where Melanie (Jennifer's younger and more sophisticated sister) had taken her to with the hope that she will get her emotional distress under control and start a new relationship with another man after the divorce. Clive "does nothing for my hormones, but I do enjoy the attention and respect" (87), Jennifer says. The bad angel suggests that she should help things along by getting Clive to develop the relationship along the sex axis and to dump him if he has no wish to go in that direction. Veronica, Jennifer's very sexually active friend agrees with this point. But, Melanie and their mother support the good angel's opinion – to allow the relationship develop gradually since Clive appears very rich, is "the romantic sort, chivalrous" (89) and "there is nothing wrong with waiting for the right moment when we will both be overcome with desire and succumb to our basic carnal selves" (88). Whether Clive and Jennifer wait or not is not the issue here but the fact that they both have an understanding and agreement with neither crossing the other's boundaries. When it turns out Clive has been giving Jennifer space because he is HIV positive, Jennifer is fulfilled giving him all the moral support he needs. Theirs becomes "a deep and spiritual" love (146).

Case examines self-pleasuring (masturbation) as a healthy means of providing sexual pleasure. Jennifer daydreams about having sex with Peter, her sister's sexually deprived husband, and dedicates the pleasures she gets from self-pleasuring to him. She is happy with her new discovery of combating loneliness and sees nothing wrong with it. This is not the same as the voices of the angels that speak with her.

Most mornings after he [Peter] leaves I lie in the bath and fiddle with my bits. When the ripples of pleasure dance all over me I throw my head back and say loudly, "This is for you, Peter!"

My good angel thinks it is disgusting while my bad angel reasons that since no one is getting hurt and it relieves the sexual tension, it is quite a good exercise. I must add that calling his name makes these sessions less lonely, not that it bothered me before (97).

The self-pleasuring theory propounded by Veronica and Jennifer and the reason for their stand are noteworthy. The theory is that "most adults – men and women – fiddle with their bits quite regularly" (97) and "more women than men do it or at least the women do it more often" (98) with their reason being that "most men reach a climax with every sexual encounter. But not us women" (98). Carroll (2005) echoes the same opinion in her section of

study on masturbation. The frustration this puts on the women qualify them as experts in self-pleasuring. Veronica's and Jennifer's claim appear to be true when one considers that a higher number of the sex toys available in sex shops (breast clamps, nipple clips, vibrators, SmartBalls, glass and magic wands, Tango, etc.) are targeted at the women, an indication that their sexual needs are not met as much as those of men. The traditional outlook on sexual relationships which generally discourages the woman from enjoying sex and/or restricts her from making sexual advances or asking for specific sexual attentions may be responsible for the general lack of sexual satisfaction of women. Veronica's and Jennifer's reason clearly shows the marginalization of the sexually deprived. Masturbation becomes an avenue for addressing deprivation. It is noticed that Jennifer does not take the relationship with Peter further than the daydreams as societal moral codes place a restriction on her having sexual intimacy with the sister's husband. Hence, on the one occasion the two of them allow their raging hormones to exceed their limits, Jennifer is quick to recollect herself and ask Peter to stop before they actually have sex (99).

Jennifer discovers the freedom that self-pleasuring offers the sexually deprived when she goes out with Clive who refuses to make sexual moves towards her despite her suggestive cues. She ends up giving herself some sexual stimulation in the open mountainside where they both went for a walk. The experience rejuvenates her: "I feel like I am a whole new woman and I am pleased that I did not share my experience with him. Something happened to me on the mountain, something magical that set me free" (131). Later on, she equips herself with lots of cucumbers dressed in glow-in-the-dark condoms (in place of a vibrator) during her masturbation sessions and she says: "I found the experience liberating to say the least...Now I know why they say, 'as cool as a cucumber'." (159). It is a Jennifer who has built up her self esteem, after discovering she is lovable because she can love herself and the way she makes her body feel without any man's assistance, that thinks of picking up a new life in which she will do only the things that she enjoys. She has heeded her bad angel's advice: "If you do not enjoy your body, how can you allow someone else to?" (171) with the response: "I do enjoy my body and I do love myself" (171). She is not looking for a man anymore but for healthy sex on its own – "a penis to do with as I please" (15) as she puts it. She is now Genevieve, a book writer and "Genevieve feels that she has hundreds of penises at her disposal...Genevieve wakes with a song in her heart...she says to herself, looking back into the mirror, "you are one

amazing woman. Go out and be amazing!” And she is an amazing woman, for she nurtures no embryonic anger” (182). The dowdy, unsure woman who quit her job because she could not stand the questions of sympathizers on losing her husband to her friend, Carol, gives way to a self-confident writer. She discovers too that Raymond’s ability to hurt her feelings after the divorce is partly because she is still financially dependent on him. This strongly links economic empowerment with sexual freedom and rights. The choices and behaviours of the marginalized, to a large extent, are controlled by their financial status and ties with the centre.

Veronica is for self-pleasuring with her vibrator. She does not get maximum sexual satisfaction from the foreigner she is dating because “He is a bit boring in bed...gets out of breath and cramps in his legs” (132). She summarises his inadequacies in three sentences: “He has the thinnest penis I have ever encountered. It feels like he’s tickling me with a chicken bone. Giving him a blow-job is like doing battle with a chewy, half-cooked chipolata sausage.” (133) Jennifer’s offer that the size of a penis does not determine the pleasure it gives is discarded by Veronica as “a myth to protect the male ego” (133). Veronica’s preference for the vibrator is tied to the gender roles fixed by the patriarchal society for women: “I don’t need to get up early to make my vibrator breakfast or fetch him an ashtray” (133). Looking at her choice from the angle of this statement, it can be inferred that self-pleasuring is also a way of revolting against fixed gender roles that are unacceptable to a particular gender.

Watching of pornographic movies which parallels voyeurism is another source of sexual pleasure explored by Case but she draws a limit, using Jennifer, to what society considers acceptable and unacceptable (135-136). Jennifer’s major disagreement with the pornographic movies is that the animals or women in them appear to be drugged to give their various performances, especially the ones that lead to bodily injuries on the performers (animals and humans). This strikes a chord with people fighting for animal rights and the rights of the sexually abused, an indication that bestiality though a form of sexual pleasure is seen as abnormal and unacceptable in some societies. This advocacy against sexual pleasures like bestiality is also seen in El Saadawi’s *God Dies by the Nile* where she removes bestiality and necrophilia from the sexual pleasures that should be encouraged. Kafrawi in *God Dies by the Nile* enjoys an intimate moment with Aziza, his buffalo. El Saadawi goes poetic in describing the sexual encounter between Kafrawi and the buffalo to shroud the distaste for what is a pleasurable moment for Kafrawi. The buffalo’s hold on Kafrawi’s penis while he struggles to

disentangle from its vagina is not given a loving description that may give the writer away as being in support of the act:

After a while it tried to slip out into the fresh air again where it could breathe more freely, but the hole closed itself closely about it, like strong fingers intent on choking it to death. It fought for its life, jerked with the mad spasm of an animal caught in a trap, erupted itself of all capacity to fight and collapsed, like tired eyes surrendering to the deepest of sleeps (*God Dies by the Nile*, 47).

The phrase “like an animal caught in a trap” is used deliberately to reduce Kafrawi to the status of the buffalo (an affinity recognised by Matthews (1994) in zoophiles), an indication that bestiality is debasing. It is also not an accident that his time out with the buffalo is interrupted by the screaming that sets off his journey to the prison in the Chief of the Village Guards’ scheme to put Elwau’s murder on his neck. Kafrawi, of course, does not deserve to serve time in the prison for a murder he did not commit but, the writer’s arrangement of the plot to have him on the murder scene right after the bestiality scene seems to reduce the full sympathy he would have enjoyed without it. In the case of Sheikh Metwali, the village idiot who indulges in necrophilia, the writer’s disapproval is also felt strongly. Metwali’s stock in trade is to prowl the graveyard, dig up dead bodies, have sex with them (both male and female) and afterwards steal their shrouds which he goes to Ramla and Bauhout to sell (*God Dies by the Nile*, 55-57). Nobody suspects Metwali because he is regarded as the retarded village idiot. The assignment of imbecility to Metwali is El Saadawi’s way of presenting his sexual practice and preoccupation as abnormal and against human rights. There might be an argument that the dead body, since it is lifeless, has been reduced to an object as in the case of the use of sex toys, but the truth is that dead bodies are not acquired through the same processes as the toys and therefore cannot be treated the same way. Necrophilia does not respect the rights of the dead persons or those of their family members. And since sexual rights has consent of the partners in a sexual act as its backbone, Metwali can only freely and acceptably enjoy his practices if he finds a way of getting the consent of the dead persons (in a will or something of equal legal weight) or the consent of their family members. Again, as in the presentation of bestiality, El Saadawi leans very much on the poetic use of language to shroud the directness of the actions – a reflection of the society’s perception of these practices as immoral and unacceptable. But, then, society will have to first admit that these practices are in existence before it can go

forward to find measures to curb it. El Saadawi's introduction of these in a subtle manner offers the familiarisation tour needed as the platform for addressing them. So, it is seen that while writers advocate the right kind of sexual freedom, they also identify the harmful ones and discourage them.

While Case recommends self-pleasuring, she maintains a neutral stand on homosexuality. While Jennifer waits for Clive, her bad angel suggests Clive has not shown up or shown any sexual interest in Jennifer because he might be gay. The choice of words and the tone of expression employed enable Case to briefly explore the way the society looks at homosexuality. She finally takes the neutral stand of not taking sides for or against it:

“...He has an attitude of out of sight, out of mind. For all you know he has a sleazy double life somewhere. Forget him! It's time to test the market again. And quite frankly, little sister, I'm surprised no one thought he could be gay.”

“No, I don't think so my love,” my good angel says. “There's nothing feminine about him.”

“What planet do you come from?” my bad angel fumes. “Who says gay has to be feminine?”

I don't know what to think. Maybe he is asexual like the snails. Still, I feel a little sad thinking of what could have been (109).

Society is explored here as seeing gayness as abnormal and unacceptable. Clive is suspected by the bad angel as being uninterested in sex because he might be gay, a veiled reference to the idea that patriarchal societies expect male aggression and proactivity in sexual relationships. There is also a misconception on the general behaviour of gay men – femininity. Femininity is considered improper in a man and a pointer to his sexual orientation. Case avoids delving into gay rights discussion by quickly assigning the term “asexual” to Clive, and by so doing extricates herself from being seen as nursing an aversion for gayness.

With Peter, Case recognizes that it is not always the woman that is sexually deprived in a marriage or sexual relationship and that in promoting sexual pleasure, self-pleasuring may not always be the perfect answer to everybody's needs. Peter's sexual problems with his wife are sorted out through dialogue between the couple. They discover the strain each one of them is going through as a result of neglect and sit down to talk and iron out their differences. Melanie who is the conservatively perfect wife soft-pedals with Peter and makes amendments to some aspects of her life like her dressing in order to accommodate her husband's needs.

Peter too makes some changes like paying her more attention. Their marriage survives the storms without recourse to any extreme measures. This is the key factor behind the rights to pleasure, that each partner's feelings, needs and general wellbeing be taken into consideration in decisions that concern their sexual needs.

Jennifer considers having sex with one of the daughter's friends, Luke, but is quick to note the dangers, which says that she is aware of and respects the sexual rights of the child:

How I crave that boy and his youthful penis right now. All I want is to pull him into me, to look into his green eyes as I teach him the ways of a mature woman – over and over again, and I will see him grow up before my eyes. And then, when the morning comes, will he be a boy again? (126)

Case, using Jennifer, makes provision for adults to recognize and respect the need to preserve the sanctity of the sexual rights of the child, even when this child (Luke) wants what the bill of sexual rights sees as unacceptable for it. Luke admires Jennifer, sees her as oozing sex appeal and says that much to Melissa. Melissa is not comfortable that her friend who is probably her age (17years) finds her mother sexually attractive. And Jennifer saves Luke a lot of trouble by being responsible and not pursuing the leading of her raging hormones or the promptings from the under-aged Luke:

...Luke, who comes from a mismanaged childhood, looking for approval from an older woman and lustfully eager to test his testosterone overload. I put him straight when he grabbed me from behind when I was washing the dishes one day. I only just managed, cursing myself I must add, because the hardness of his erection against my bum was terribly enticing. What was the boy thinking? He was so apologetic and terribly embarrassed. Can you believe that young boy? But that is it exactly – he is but a young boy and bound to make mistakes (170).

An examination of the voices of the angels in the text reveals Case's invention of these characters to take care of the differing opinions and voices on issues bordering on sexual rights, especially pleasure. The good angel speaks with the voice of the morals of the society (ideology/the centre) while the bad one brings to light the individual's/self's desires that are in conflict with ideology. For example, the good angel does not "watch blue movies or talk about such disgusting things" (136) while the bad one believes a man "needs the movies to kick-start his dick" (136). The good angel finds numerous cucumber penises and their services disgusting

while the bad one responds with “If you don’t like it, you can always leave” (182). The bad angel suggests that Jennifer gets some sex toys to play with to the chagrin of her good angel:

“You should get yourself some toys to play with little sister,” my bad angel continues. “There’s no harm in having a bit of fun on your own. You even get blow up men these days and toy penises with thumbs attached for extra stimulation.”

“That’s a sick idea!” my good angel bristles. (15-16)

Jude Dibia – A Brief Biography

Jude Dibia was born in Lagos, Nigeria. He has a B.A in Modern European Languages (German). He has written three novels: *Walking with Shadows* (2005), *Unbridled* (2007) and *Blackbird* (2011). While *Walking with Shadows* treats the experiences surrounding the coming out of a gay protagonist, *Unbridled* tackles the liberation of a female protagonist who had suffered from incest and various forms of abuse from men and *Blackbird* explores the clash of traditional beliefs with personal experiences to bring out the power of love, jealousy, pride and sense of duty. *Unbridled* won the 2007 Ken Saro-Wiwa Prize for Prose and was a finalist in the 2007 Nigeria Prize for Literature. Dibia’s short stories have appeared on various online literary sites including AfricanWriter.com and Halftribe.com.

***Walking with Shadows* – Summary**

Ebele/Adrian Njoko’s life falls apart when an envious colleague in the office who has a score to settle over dismissal from the office stumbles on his secret: he is gay. News spread to his family, friends and colleagues in the office and he faces various kinds of stigmatisation, rejection and abuses from family members, friends, office boss and colleagues. Gradually, he quits trying to fit into a society that sees him as abnormal and a misfit and accepts himself for who he is. His family, friends and colleagues are also made to embark on this journey of discovery and each settles for either acceptance or rejection of the true person Ebele has always been. Because the society is still battling with the acceptance of the gay as normal people, Ebele is forced to relocate to London where he hopes to live the life that is free of discrimination based on his sexual orientation.

Sexual Identity and Centralising the Margins in *Walking With Shadows*

Jude Dibia in the author's note to *Walking with Shadows* summarises what he set out to achieve in the novel:

People like Ebele/Adrian exist in every society and Nigeria is no different. Like every human, they have a right to life and to live their lives. There are some things that cannot be fully explained or understood, but that does not necessarily make them evil or criminal. What is criminal and evil is allowing an atmosphere of hate and hate crimes thrive in any society. So while writing this book, I was conscious of some of the common fears and questions we have in relation to homosexuality in Nigeria. I proffered no answers by the way, but instead tried to **advocate tolerance**. And this is all I ask from every reader – Tolerance (258). [Emphasis, mine]

Dibia states the purpose of his writing: literature as a tool of advocacy for sexual rights. From the Alfred North Whitehead quote used at the beginning of the novel: "What is morality in any given time or place? It is what the majority then and there happen to like, and immorality is what they dislike." (v), it is clear that the tensions in the text are those of ideology of the centre against the margins. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) observes that "most African literary critics are not concerned with lesbian or gay issues because this topic is very sensitive and often controversial, or because they view other issues as more pressing. Or...that homosexuality is shunned or repressed by their culture and thought by many not to exist" (29-30). Considering this aversion by African critics on homosexuality, Dibia has taken a very big step in his advocacy for tolerance for the homosexual in his novel. However, he is not the first African writer to advocate tolerance, love towards and understanding of the gay. Nawal El Saadawi does the same in "Man" in *She Has No Place in Paradise*. Khadija discovers that her husband Ashmawi is in a forced homosexual relationship with his boss, the chief attorney who delights in "whenever another man appeared before him, a violent desire to subjugate him" (98). Ashmawi has learnt that obeying orders is more important than expertise to maintain one's job and since he needs his job, he remains in this relationship with the boss even when the story suggests that he does not like it. So when his wife bumps into him and the chief attorney having sex on the office floor, Ashmawi is reduced to tears and wailing. He hides his head in the Persian carpet and remains there until the wife reaches out to comfort him, pull him up and clothe his naked body.

Ashmawi differs a great deal from Ebele/Adrian, the protagonist of *Walking with Shadows*. Whereas Ebele is portrayed as a natural gay, Ashmawi's gayness is both learnt and forced. Hence he is ashamed of it. What he shares with the chief attorney can be rightly explained as rape experiences since his consent is not that which is willingly given but that which is given under the fear of loss of favour with the boss and the loss of his job. Ashmawi's boss belongs to the class of people who rape in order to humiliate and subjugate. Much of the negativism towards the gay relationship is felt in the short story "Man". Khadija stands rooted in shock for a long time at the door watching her husband in sexual union with his boss who quickly vanishes on becoming aware of a third presence. Before she rises to the husband's rescue, she makes herself function "as though she forgot all she had seen, as though she had been asleep, had had a nightmare and had awoken" (101). These are pointers that the society in "Man" does not see homosexuality as acceptable, they occur only in people's nightmares. Gay practices are still meant to be hidden and are treated as things to be ashamed of: "Ashmawi never imagined that what happened to him could happen. Before it did happen, he did not imagine he was conceding anything big, as long as it happened in secret and no one knew about it" (99). Given the context of the story, one wonders if Ashmawi's reactions on being caught in the act by the wife would have been the same thing if his sex partner was female and it is clear there would have been a difference. But, the scene before this couple is that which they would not like their society to share in. It would have been easy for Khadija to walk out on her marriage but she considers the life she has made and shared with Ashmawi and gives him the much needed support and understanding:

She found herself kneeling beside Ashmawi, stroking his face and with the palm of her hand wiping away his tears, the tears of Ashmawi, her husband, her man. Whatever happened, he was her man and his tears cut into her like a knife. Whatever happened, he was Ashmawi, the only one she had in this life. Ten years under the same roof, ten bitter-sweet years. And the sweet was so much greater than the bitter. Get up, Ashmawi. With her own two hands, she began to gather up his scattered clothes. With her own hands she dressed him in the suit, the suit for which she had chosen him over all the men of the village (101).

The act of dressing Ashmawi up is symbolic and indicative of the fact that though the wife tolerates his gay practices, she is not willing to make it public. It is still a secret the two of them will share and dress up in a garb that hides it from being made a public spectacle. This

agrees with Abdul's arguments in support of homosexuality in *Walking with Shadows*: gays do not have to advertise their gayness just as heterosexuals do not advertise theirs (20).

Abdul sees homosexuality as natural and not learnt, bringing to bear Henslin's (2009) essentialism and social constructionism, and as such something that should not be blamed on the individual since he has no control over it. He tries to make Adrian come to the truth on how he sees himself: "You sound like you are ashamed of your past." Abdul said. "You sound like you had a choice in determining your sexuality... You sound like it is a curse to be homosexual and you should be punished for your crimes." (24) Evidences abound in the text to show that Ebele/Adrian is an essentialist and therefore gay from childhood and not as a result of peer influence or a habit learnt over time (social constructionism). At the age of seven or eight, he enjoyed sitting under the balcony to be touched by his father's love – drops of water (showers of love) falling from his hair as he combed it after a bath (41). This is an indicator of attachment to the male and a negation of the Oedipus complex. At ten years, Ebele notes that he is not permitted to play the Ringa-Ringa Roses game he loves simply because it is considered feminine. Part of why he wants to be baptised is so he can become a new person – Adrian – who would not be laughed at for playing with girls (4). As children, his brothers, Chiedu and Chika, accused him of being a girl or being sissy when he expressed discomfort at playing roughly or entering dark places (45-6) and he had a strange fondness then for Obinna, Chiedu's friend: "Whenever Obinna was around, Adrian's eyes lit up and he felt his heart flutter. When Obinna smiled at anything Adrian said, he was overjoyed for the rest of the day for being noticed." (45-46) This is akin to the heterosexual romantic infatuation. At fifteen, Adrian is comfortable watching movies with gay characters while Chiedu and his friends disapproved of it and changed the channels, stopping him from watching "a faggot... the gay character on the screen" (49).

There are also evidences that the family members knew, or at least had a suspicion, that he was gay. However, since the generally accepted societal preference is heterosexuality, every effort is made to make Ebele conform from childhood to the "acceptable" norm. Chika's childhood memories of Ebele are those of a recluse who is **invisible**, **sissy** and **different**:

But he had always been **different** and Chika knew this. But you don't hate people because they are different, do you? Chika asked himself. He realized

that Ebele's difference as a child had been a source of major concern and fear for their family; this was the only way Chika could explain this to himself. Why else would their parents have ignored him? And his brothers had also ignored him as well. He was never there. He was **invisible** more or less. He was a **sissy**! And everyone hated a sissy. He cried easily, he was too **frail** and he wasn't just like either of his brothers. This, on its own did not make him gay, but Chika had somehow known. There was always the suspicion (136-137). (Emphases mine)

The choice of the words: different, invisible, frail and sissy are not coincidental. In a predominantly patriarchal society with fixed roles for men and women, these words are not favourable when associated with the male. Women, traditionally, are meant to be frail, sissy and invisible, therefore, something was wrong with Ebele if he had the physical features of a male and the behaviour of a female. This makes him different and, to his mother, abnormal. Adrian's mother admits their efforts at curing him of his "abnormality" from childhood: "We tried to harden you when we noticed you were weak... We did everything to make you normal." (228) Studies show that homosexuals are not agreed on whether they are naturally/biologically or socially/environmentally configured the way they are. Proponent of homosexuality as a social behaviour fear being called deviants while the biology faction fear being termed malformed/diseased. The stand of the author as indicated by prevailing argument in the text is that homosexuality is biologically determined and not a product of choice. Hence, Ebele/Adrian even though he "had also somehow bought into the heterosexual idea that he was not normal and should be ashamed of his feeling...knew it was biological somehow. He had always been this way" (52). His reason for marrying Ada was that he wanted to be **accepted** as a **normal** person (86), an indication that the society in which he finds himself views gayness as an unacceptable abnormality. His craving for acceptance (by his parents) triggers off a recurrent dream of being given by his actual parents to a couple supposed to be his parents who would love him for who he was. He desperately desires and works to be the exemplary son they want him to be. It takes Abdul to point this out before he resolves to live his life with/without their acceptance. He cannot go on waiting for an acceptance that does not appear to be forthcoming (145-150).

The challenges faced by the gay are not limited to excommunication by family members but includes stigmatisation at the work place. Adrian's boss, John, on discovering that Adrian was gay, quickly withdraws his hands after a handshake as if gayness was a

contagious disease (74). Adrian becomes marginalised at his work place when his sexual preferences are revealed. Dibia goes a great length in dissecting the many ways in which the rights of the homosexual are violated in the country – intrusion on their privacy, unequal treatment at workplaces, illegal arrests and imprisonment, forced leaves at workplaces, etc. (170-175). Adrian is forced to take a paid leave when he does not need it to give his colleagues at DialPlus mobile telecommunications company some time to get used to having to work with a gay (171-172). However, in Adrian’s homophobic office environment, there is a tiny comfort zone found in Rotimi. Rotimi, Adrian’s junior in the office – his boy whom he helped to secure a job with DialPlus – makes a pass at Adrian to comfort and show him solidarity. Rotimi is not gay but admits to having had sex with a man once and receiving flattering passes from men. Adrian, though attracted sexually to Rotimi resists his advances and sends him home before it gets out of hand. Dibia uses Rotimi to explore the chances of heterosexual men/people having occasional homosexual urges which do not make them gay or bisexual. Rotimi’s attraction to Adrian is one of such. His one night fling with Debo which was fuelled by Debo’s suggestive compliments on his handsome looks is another case. This second one however leaves him disgusted. With a character like Rotimi, it becomes possible to talk about natural gayness and learnt/circumstantial gayness. Adrian is a natural, Rotimi is a circumstantial.

Societal and religious views (Christianity in the case of the protagonist and Islam in the case of minor characters like Hajiya and Awwal) of homosexuality as a taboo are seen to be responsible for the reactions of the characters in the text towards the gay and lesbian. Adrian’s father does not want to see him (227) and the mother’s pain is Adrian’s “selfishness” in not thinking about what people will say about their family raising a son like him (228). Ada’s major problem is not her husband’s sexual identity and orientation but the society’s view of it. So, when Theoma asks what terrifies her really: “Having a gay husband or dealing with what people are thinking and saying?” (121), Ada realises that her worries stem from her environment: “The issue of homosexuality was a topic never discussed in any civil setting and constituted a taboo where she came from... She feared becoming one of the “new outcast” of women rejected by the society and scorned through no fault of theirs. And her daughter would have to also bear the stigma and in turn the scorn of other children mocking her” (121-122). Chiedu’s major grievance with Ebele appears not to be the social stigmatisation but what God thought about the matter, so he tells Ebele: “You know what the Bible says about

homosexuals...God forbids it! The law says it's felony for a man to practise sodomy." (50) Ebele knows what the Bible and the law (plus Sharia laws existing in some parts of the country) say concerning homosexuality, but argues that these laws made out of prejudice cannot be held as being right; it is the mind of the majority over the minority. In the argument between Adrian and Ego, his wife, she fails to understand that why Adrian failed to tell her of his past lovers as a gay was because he was trying to conform to societal standards of heterosexuality and not because he thought it was a sin. If he was naturally gay as he claims, then, why shut the door on who he is, if not for guilt? Her recommendation does not differ much from Chiedu's: "You need to read the Bible, Adrian...Even God forbids the act." (108) Adrian who does not see the justice in a God that "makes" people in one way and expects them to behave in another has only one reply: "Then let God be the one to judge me...I was born this way. I only wish you could see that." (108) Also from Nkechi, Ego's cousin, religion as a strong source of homophobia is seen. It did not follow that nice people could be gay. It was an anomaly. Homosexuality was bad and abnormal, hence, gays are not expected, in Nkechi's views to be good:

She couldn't believe she had been so wrong about Adrian, or had she? He was a nice person. But he was gay! This was definitely not right. Being a strong Christian, she could not be tolerant of such. It went against all her morals and she could imagine what her pastor would say about people like Adrian (114).

Chiedu takes steps in the direction of giving the reader an idea of what a pastor could do concerning homosexuality. His idea of supporting Adrian is calling in Pastor Matthew to help in correcting his "sexually confused" brother (138). He sees Adrian as someone in need of prayers and deliverance. Pastor Matthew has claimed to be successful in exorcising gayness from men and is hoped to once more perform this miraculous exorcism on Adrian. Chika is not comfortable with the arrangement but goes along with Chiedu. Pastor Matthew's methods are crude: Adrian is whipped to exorcise the evil spirit responsible for his homosexuality while Chiedu watches and prays along. Only Chika's entrance with his friend when Adrian is almost half dead rescues him from Pastor Matthew and his acolytes. Adrian's mother, although she does not support Chiedu's extreme measures of allowing Pastor Matthew to nearly flog Adrian to death, pleads understanding that Chiedu **had to** do what he did to save his confused brother from damnation (229). Something must have gone wrong with her son spiritually, considering

that she and his father did not bring any of their children up like that (meaning, to be gay) and that they instilled in them strong Christian values (228). So, she recommends exorcism for gayness, even if she does not feel comfortable with the severe methods.

Iheoma, Ada's friend is one of the very few in the text that are liberal about homosexuality. She does not see why Ada should feel like it is the end of the world just because Adrian is gay. She reminds Ada that he is not the only man in Nigeria who fancies other men. The get together she arranges for Ada and Carol, Temi and Hajiya serves as an eye opener to Ada. She is not the only woman whose husband is gay. Different coping strategies and reasons for sticking with a gay husband are seen. For Carol, the husband, Major Obosi, provides her with all the money and luxury she needs while she provides him with the good public image needed by a man of his social standing. Hajiya sticks with Awwal for the same reasons whereas for Temi, the reason differs. Temi is a lesbian and her marriage allows her to keep her lovers while the husband also gets to keep his own lovers – a perfect arrangement where everybody's needs are met. Ada is shocked by these revelations and wonders when “this foreign and alien outlook on life”(158) crept into “the typical Nigerian society” (158). While examining her furniture pieces, the best of which are imported from the West, Europe and America, it hits Ada that “she was not willing to accept certain aspects of these cultures that challenged what she held dear as traditional African values. She still strongly believed that the concept of homosexuality was very much not in the African culture” (164). To her, homosexuality is classified amongst negative imports like “the violent rap music, sophisticated armed robbery, and nudity as a form of fashion” (165) and if not from the West, her question remains: “Where else could an African learn such?” (166) She is not the only person that sees homosexuality as foreign/alien. This idea is prominently projected in many African fictions that dare give a place to a gay character as Dunton's (2007[1989]) and Azodo and Eke's (Eds.) (2007) works attest. But, Sefi Atta's “Spoils” in *Lawless and Other Stories* deviates from this opinion. Farouk, the street hawker, is raised by the mother as *yan dauda* and has all kinds of feminine behaviours and attributes. He is even described as “pretty, for a man” (97), yet a majority of his Islam community accepts him the way he is. He is the only man parents allow their young daughters to play with without supervision since being gay, he is considered harmless. Although once in a while someone, like the driver of the white Peugeot, abuses and calls him “an abomination for a man” (99), yet he is a favourite: “everyone knows about

Farouk. We love Farouk as he is and trust him” (99-100). Atta does not bother to make Farouk’s sexual identity/orientation a foreign thing. He is African through and through, having the facial marks of the Kanuri people and definitely no contact which suggests that his gayness is learnt from a non-African source. It is his mother who has raised him as *yan dauda*.

Dibia works out schedules for the major characters to resolve their differences and readjust their opinions concerning homosexuality using contributions from the minor characters. Carol’s visit to Ada to amend the shocking way she, Temi and Hajiya revealed their husbands’ gayness to her is noteworthy. These two women do not like each other and know it, but they seek to find oneness in their shared experience of having gay husbands. Dibia seems to suggest that solidarity helps in overcoming intolerance for the homosexual. The encounter with Yahaya at Champagne serves to illuminate Adrian on the coping strategies of other gays who are married: get married to please the society and go to gay clubs to acquire partners who satisfy your gay needs. The end result is that both the society and the gay are satisfied. Nkechi’s sharing with Ada her son’s feminine tendencies sets the stage for Ada’s acceptance of Adrian’s sexual orientation. Both women come to realise that the love they have for Junior will not diminish if he eventually turns out to be gay. And, if this is so, then Adrian should not be facing a different fate. Ada wants to cling to the fact that he deceived her into marrying him, but deep down in her heart, she knows that this is no longer a viable excuse for keeping him at bay. Adrian finally feels accepted by one member of his family – Chika – when he professes to love him. The three words “I love you” assure him that in a homophobic Nigeria, he has an anchor. Someone loves him and the knowledge is all he needs for everything to be okay. Dibia advocates love and acceptance as a way of reintegrating the marginalised homosexuals into the society. Ada and Adrian settle for a divorce. Ada has come to terms with Adrian’s sexuality and has ceased to be judgmental over his kind, though she does not understand why they are the way they are. She promises to raise up their daughter, Ego, to be unprejudiced about sexualities, an indication that reorientation of the society needs to be done beginning with the youths through proper sexuality education. However, her religious and social orientations do not allow her to continue with the marriage. She, it must be said, has made a great advancement towards accepting what she cannot change. She remains friends with Adrian and somehow understands his frustrations. Dibia advocates this understanding: that gays and lesbians are people/human beings too, who have needs which are begging to be understood by

the prejudiced homophobic heterosexual ideology. Nigeria, like most African countries, is yet to come to this point. And, until she does, the haven for the likes of Adrian would be the West, hence he gets a job in London and migrates. This return to the West appears to suggest that even Dibia himself thinks homosexuality to be an imported behaviour.

Dibia is not subjective or biased in his views about homosexuality. He uses George and Johan to examine the opportunistic tendencies of some people who are or profess to be gay and who try to live out their dreams against all odds in a country that is homophobic like Nigeria. George goes away from the country with his German boyfriend, Johan. They get married in Germany and live happily for ten years. George's mother dies and he is in Nigeria for her burial with complaints of being tired of Johan. He wants to get a new relationship with another foreigner because Johan is becoming too old for him. Suddenly, the fifteen years age difference means much to him only because he has used Johan to get out of the country, get German citizenship and a good job in Germany. The complaints he gives of being marginalised because of his colour sounds hollow since they only come up as an excuse for him to leave Johan. Suggestions from Abdul and Adrian to come back to the country are not welcome – he misses the Nigeria of his dreams where everything worked well and the citizens are contented and happy. He would rather stay in Germany (where he claims to suffer from racial discrimination/marginalisation) and find a new lover/partner. So, gays, just like heterosexuals, have their own relationship troubles, betrayals and challenges. This similarity with heterosexuals removes arguments about their normalcy as it is seen that both gays and straights negotiate their relationships and mate selection using basically the same patterns.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In all the texts examined, only “Man”, *God Dies by the Nile*, *Toasted Penis and Cheese* and *Walking with Shadows* have the image of the male as victim of sexual violence. Other texts under study, and even some of the aforementioned, uphold to a large extent the image of the male as perpetrator and the female as victim. Sexual violence having to do with the subjection of the body to suffering, which results to other forms of suffering of the mind and psyche, is predominant in the texts analysed. Even in texts like *Walking with Shadows* and *Toasted Penis and Cheese* which dealt with sexual identity and eroticism, there is recourse to sexual violence – Jennifer’s husband asks the gynaecologist to tie her womb without her consent while Adrian is nearly beaten to death by Pastor Matthew. It goes to show that sexual violence in all of its forms requires urgent attention. The most easily identified form which is rape goes unreported in all the texts where it occurs, except for the case of Melanie in Coetzee’s *Disgrace*. Even at that, it is suggested that Melanie reports to the school’s disciplinary committee on the parents’ and boyfriend’s insistence. This goes to show that the society still stigmatises the victims of sexual violence, leaving the perpetrators to glory in their crime and thereby reinforcing the debilitating culture of silence. Amongst the remedies for sexual violence advocated in the texts under study are, one, the shifting of the blame from the victim to the perpetrator in order to destroy the culture of silence which victims maintain for fear of adding the society’s judgement to their suffering and strong sense of humiliation. This is seen in *Disgrace*, *Your Name Shall Be Tanga*, and *Without a Name*. Two, is the recommendation of setting up of bodies to address issues related to sexual violence which will hold perpetrators accountable for their actions and deliver a redress. It is true that Coetzee’s disciplinary committee finds David culpable for his wrongs but fails to deliver a redress, allowing David to apologise to Melanie’s family in his own time when other factors have worked on him to bring about a change of disposition. However, it will be recognised that this committee set him on the path to this transformation by forcing him to resign from his job. Three, is the provision of an avenue for the victims of rape to talk about their experiences and suffering and to cry, if necessary. This is a therapeutic strategy to provide them emotional relief from their psychological distress. *Woman at Point Zero*, “Man”, *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* and *Without a Name* explore this option.

For violence in the nature of FGM, the exploration of the sense of loss which the victims suffer in the texts where they occur (in *Woman at Point Zero*, *Two Women in One*, *God Dies by the Nile* and *Your Name Shall Be Tanga*) is meant to generate a reacculturation in the reader towards the practice. For forced marriage, the reformation of institutions like religion (Islam) which encourage the practice, although it is not basically or originally a religious one, is advocated. If institutional heads get to see the evil behind the practice, the lot of the people they influence and have spiritual authority and control over will be made better. For the kind of violence generated by individuals' sexual orientation such as the hate crimes against the gay and lesbian, the authors (El Saadawi and Dibia) advocate tolerance of the differences in sexual orientations by making readers see the injustice behind the treatments that the LGBTQs encounter in their everyday lives in a predominantly heterosexual society. Beyala's more revolutionary stance demands a complete acceptance, not just tolerance, for same-sex relationships by cataloguing the positive sides of these kinds of relationships. Case, while not condemning homosexuality, is not homophobic. She is neutral by assigning asexuality to perceived gayness in Clive. This seems to say that the least to do is to maintain a neutral stand if one does not know how to handle the LGBTQs and cannot love them like Beyala suggests, or tolerate them like El Saadawi and Dibia suggest. Neutrality is preferable to homophobia or violence towards the LGBTQs. The place of sexuality education is also emphasised by nearly all the writers. This is hoped to equip individuals with the basic information needed in first of all understanding their sexuality and then challenging various kinds of abuses/violation of rights that arise from sexuality and sexuality related matters.

A comparison of texts from male and female writers reveals that both subscribe to writing the body both as a linguistic object and as a metaphor. In using the body as a linguistic object, the writers explore what becomes of the bodies when they are victims or subjects of denial of rights. It is noticed that this is used more when the victim of violation of rights is female and is being explored by a female writer as found in *Woman at Point Zero*, *Two Women in One*, *God Dies by the Nile*, *Your Name Shall Be Tanga*, *Toasted Penis and Cheese* and *Without a Name*.

Amongst the male writers, only Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail* centralizes on the body, perhaps because the protagonist is both the victim and a female. J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* only writes on the female body in x-raying Lucy's rape and Melanie's sexual experience with

David, but not the protagonist's body – he is given a psycho-sociological analysis in the text, hence readers are only acquainted with his anguish at being dispossessed of his sexual capacities – the reason he will not apologize because he sees it as apologizing for being male. However, with Lucy and Melanie, Coetzee examines the body as a linguistic object. He employs metaphors in capturing the unpleasantness of the bad experiences they undergo. Jude Dibia's protagonist too does not have his body x-rayed in the manner of Abani and the female writers but sticks with Coetzee's psychosocial x-ray. Musila (2007) states: "Indeed, the body is often absent from discussions on dismantling oppressive structures; the irony here being in the way the body, which is often the experiential site of both oppression and acts of resistance, has its experiences elided in discourses attempting to emancipate it" (50). While this is not true for the texts under study as revealed in the analyses since they go a great length in utilizing the body as an agency for the fight for rights, how this is negotiated differs in individual texts. Musila (2007) finds that for women as victims of sexual violence, "lived experience as played out by and on their bodies is central in shaping both the choices these women make and their exercise of agency... it nevertheless spells a radical reconceptualization of agency and resistance" (50). This is not restricted to Vera, as in Musila's (2007) study, but also applies to other texts under study where women are highlighted as being denied their sexual rights. The same also applies to the cases where there are male victims. Experiences of victims, both male and female, go a long way in shaping their choices and modes of resisting the centre. While some victims adopt palliative measures, some resort to revolutionary steps of taking their fate into their own hands and defying existing oppressive structures, and others give in to their experiences and are completely changed or doomed by them.

A look at how the writers under study use language to capture the experiences of their characters is noteworthy. Although experts on communication, like Tannen (1990), Eckstein and Goldman (2001) and Payne (2001), believe that there are definite differences in the way men and women communicate, evidences from the analyses appear to support Canary and Hause's (1993) submission that the differences are minimal. Only Coetzee adopts what Eckstein and Goldman (2001) call the report-talk for which men are known as against the rapport-talk of women. Coetzee's style of writing basically delivers the facts and figures of the experiences of characters without much recourse to their emotions. This cannot be said about the other male writers – Abani and Dibia or all the female writers under study. These have a

leaning towards the emotional, poetic and/or graphic and detailed descriptions. While Abani and Coetzee share in their detachment from the experiences their chosen narrators tell, Abani adopts the feminine genderlect (Tannen, 1990) which negotiates communication through emotions and making use of the poetic and highly lyrical language. This feminine genderlect that draws from emotions, provides elaborate details and makes use of the poetic in the discourse of the unpleasant, runs through all the texts of the female writers under study. El Saadawi, Beyala and Vera choose the poetic language over the everyday language in the exploration of the offensive, or what the society terms offensive/unacceptable, in their texts. Hence, the rapes in their texts, the infanticide in Vera, the same-sex relationships in Beyala, FGM, bestiality and necrophilia in El Saadawi are to a large extent metaphorised or rendered in poetic language. Carolyn Martin Shaw's (2004) and Paul Zeleza's (2007) studies of Vera reveal the power of her lyricism and the poetic on the mind and emotions of the reader which they say draw attention to the images and feelings of the characters in her texts. This same effect is created by all the employments of the poetic in the texts under study, especially in Beyala which has a lot of things in common with Vera. Their narrative styles share the same feminine qualities of narration identified by Gunner and Kortenaar (2007) which is characterized by "sensuous detail and emotional appeal, rather than by linear drive forward or character development" and a "tradition that privileges the lyric and personal...conveying a sense of interiority rather than reflecting a social and physical world outside the protagonist's perception...characterized by monoglossia rather than polyvocality" (3). The same can be said about El Saadawi too. Dibia, although he does not go poetic like Abani and the female writers, makes up for this in the detailed treatment he offers his characters emotions and experiences and therefore can be classified with them as using the feminine genderlect. Because there is really no line to demarcate the male from the female writers in their treatment of sexual rights using language as a criteria, Canary and Hause's (1993) claim of minimal differences in male and female discourses stands.

In conclusion, the selected writers have, through their exploration of suffering and its effects on the lives of the victims, their loved ones and society in general, equipped their readers with substantial education on the need for the promotion of sexual rights and removal of the boundaries separating the self/marginalised from the other/centre. What is left is the practicalisation of the recommended strategies advocated by these writers. With the

sensitization, which their works provide, a change in views is hoped for, although this may take some time considering that reading is not a very popular practice in Africa where this enlightenment is most needed.

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