Innovations

Religion, Gender and Anti-homosexual Discourse in Jude Dibia's Walking with Shadows

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Abstract
This paper interrogates the slippery slope in deploying some religious injunctions to demonise those whose sexual identities betray the heteronormative standpoint of some religious liturgies in Jude Dibia's Walking with Shadows. The paper notes that some religious groups and their preachments, undeniably, have been major sites of struggle where the fiercest debate on what constitutes an ideal sexuality is fought. Instances abound, especially in some parts of Africa, where religious leaders, acting on the premise of the heterosexual rhetoric of their sacred books, deliberately project homosexuality as evil, queer and a threat to African sets of moral norms. It is against this backdrop that this paper is critical of the skewed application of some religious mandates in persecuting those considered as sexual deviants. The paper adopts queer theory and some aspects of Judith Butler's concept of performativity as its theoretical position. Through analyses of extrapolations from the novel under examination, the paper establishes that, instead of emphasising love, inclusivity and enhancing societal cohesion, religious bodies have become a platform through which cruel acts of homophobia are meted to the sexual minorities. The paper concludes that every human deserves to be treated with love and respect, irrespective of their gender, class, race or sexuality.

Key words: 1.*Religion, 2.Gender, 3.Anti- homosexuality, 4.Africa*

1. Introduction

Organised religion has continued to serve as a useful gauge with which societies and individuals' moral codes are evaluated. Despite the wind of secularism and individualism that has blown and wafted into all areas of humanity, people still remain deeply influenced by sacred texts and teachings of religion, particularly as many of these religions and sacred texts arecolonially inherited. According to Bloom (2012;184) "… religion makes explicit moral claims that are accepted by followers because they believe in religious texts. Through holy texts and the proclamations of authority figures, religions make moral claims…. People believe these claims because, implicitly or explicitly, they trust the sources. They accept them on faith"

It is this strong grip which religion welds on the individual and society's psyche that has subjected life's variables into binary positions: anything sanctioned by religion is good and the contrary is evil. It is also the humanity's vulnerability in the face of religion that has sparked off strongly politicised public discourses on what constitutes an ideal sexuality. Andsince majority of religion and their adherents believe in the infallibility of the supreme beings which they revere, nothing seems to have happened or come into being by mistake. One is either born a man or a woman, and this suggests a binarity of heterosexuality.

Thus, acting on the premises of their preachments, some religious leaders deploy strongly-inspired religion-based rhetoric and other religious imaginaries to depict homosexuality and other sexual identities as serious moral pervasion, thereby pushing the victims into secrecy of shame and untold trauma. This, it is believed, has also been responsible for the incessant physical assaults, tortures, murders, arbitrary arrests,

detentions, extra-judicial killings and executions, forced disappearances, extortion and blackmail' that sexual minorities experience in Africa (Kaoma,16).Geoffrion (2018:271) further reveals that:

> Homophobic discourses in Africa have reached an unprecedented peak in many countriessuch as Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, where anti-gay laws are being proposed and where hate crimes against gay men and women are being committed…. The anti-gay rhetoric used in the media as propaganda has a devastating effect on the masses, who quickly adopt the leaders' position and hence create a favourable climate for the development of fundamentalisms.

In fact, Rueda's (1982:243) argument is that "religious belief is probably the single most important factor in the near universal rejection of homosexual behaviour."

In some parts of Africa, it is believed, according to Okpiliya and Akpan (2021:213) that "Sex is understood or experienced within a heterosexual union and, any other sexual preferences beyond theseare seen as non-normative, queer and a disruption on the social order upon which the society is sustained".The above position has become a paradigm that detects the operations of the major religions in Africa. Thus,there seems to be an inter-faith collaboration and synergy among the Traditional, Christian, and Islamic religions to demonise those with sexual identity outside the mainstream. According to Kaoma (2016:20). "Whereas the traditional worldview informs much of the religiosity of an African, Christianity and Islam play an important role in the appropriation of traditional religious beliefs and convictions." Since the application and practices of Christianity and Islam are planted on African traditional ontology, it is difficult to identify the difference between the 'sacred' and 'profane' and, as both worlds are intricately intertwined and significant, African religious leaders become critical political actors in sexual politics.

Many instances abound, in some parts of Africa, where religious leaders openly canvass for stiffer measures by their governments to criminalise non-normative sexual activities. While the oppositional stance of religious adherents is predicated on the perceived moral dangers and degenerating influence of homosexuality, the political class often wield anti-queer sentiments in order to appeal to and gain assurances of the voting public, majority of whom hold strong homophobic perceptions.This makes the acceptance of sexual minorities, perhaps one of the most socially unwelcomed, touchy and politically thorny topics to broach in contemporary Africa. It is also noted that in African sexual politics, protective homophobia seems to unite both the Christians and Moslems. Despite their antagonistic relationship and major theological differences, there seems to be an inter-faith collaboration in opposing the sexual minorities. For example, in Nigeria, according to Kaoma (2016:22),

> …Muslim and Christian leaders backed President Jonathan's 2014 law banning same-sex marriages, gay groups and show of same-sex public affection. Similarly, Mufti Mubajje of Uganda, the head of the Pentecostal Church, Pastor Joshua Lwere, Anglican Archbishop Stanley Ntagali, and Roman Catholic Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga' jointly presented President Museveni a plaque for signing the anti-gay bill into law in 2014.

More so, it is noted that both Christianity and Islam share some significant aspects of the Hebrew Biblical stories, especially the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which contextualises, localises and modernises anti-gay position. Thus, arising from the ripples of the Sodom and Gomorrah Story, Christian and Moslem leaders go out of their way to institute and justify homophobic cruelties against those with deferent sexualities. Kaoma (2016:21-22) further reveals that:

> In 2014, Dr.Salmin Omar Idrussi of the Muslim Association of Malawi argued that homosexuals 'need to be handed death penalty as a way of making sure that the issue is curbed'. In 2011, Sheikh Mohammed Khalifa of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya demanded the death penalty for homosexuals. Reminiscence of the US Pastor's demands to fence off all gays until they die off, in 2007, Mufti Sheikh RamathanShabanMubajje of Uganda asked President Museveni to round up

> all homosexuals and dump them on an island on Lake Victoria until they starve to death.

The intolerance and refusal of religious leaders to see homosexuality as human rights issue illustrate the limitations of the secular human rights frame in negotiating sexual rights in Africa, where religion suffuses all areas of socio-political interactions.

It may be revealing to point out that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, as recorded in both the holy Bible and Quran, does not make any direct reference to homosexuality. In fact, the term does not even appear in both sacred texts. However, according to Sias (2016:1) "through context, we are able to assume homosexual behaviour since the men of Sodom want "to know" (the idiomatic term phrase for carnal relations) the male strangers in Lot's house." Ndzovu (2013:851) further reveals that:

> Despite the Quran's lack of a proper term for homosexuals as a concrete idea designating same-sex sexual desires, Muslim ulema in Africa use the particular Quranic narrative of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah…to condemn homosexuality as a perverse act, with limited theological bases for tolerating it.

Even the terms 'Liwat' and 'Luti' used by Muslims, in recent times, to mean acts associated with same-sex relationship and persons associated with these acts respectively, are not mentioned at all in the Quran. This corroborates Ndzovu's (2013:854) position that:

> Religious mobilization against same-sex sexuality in Africa, therefore, is part of the broader political dynamics evident in various African countries where it is viewed as a struggle for the preservation of presumed Islamic, and sometimes Africanidentity against a domineering Western culture.

The absence of specific terms for homosexuality in the Quran is also responsible for the lack of specified punishment for homosexual acts in the Islamic book. It is against this backdrop that Ndzovu (2013:851) further reveals that "the decision to arbitrate on the practice was left to the discretion of the local ruling authorities, as observed in Islamic history, which explains the varied attitudes toward LGBTQ persons among African Moslems." Thus, the arrogation of mandate on the local ruling authorities to determine punishment for sexual offenders, and given the hetero-normativised impulse of Islamic religion, homosexuals suddenly become endangered species, living at the mercy of these religious leaders.

In Christian religion, apart from the Sodom and Gomorrah story, the Levitical mandate in the book of Leviticus 20:13 has consistently been cited to justify the blatant condemnation of homosexuality. The passage reads thus: "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death: their blood shall be upon them" (KJV). Arising from this,Boesak (2011:18) argues that "the social context of today differs greatly from the context in which the circumstances in the Bible was construed". This, to a greater extent, has never be taken into account in contemporary interpretations of Biblical texts.Sias (2016: iv) therefore advises that: "we must understand that if we use the Biblical law as justification for our modern-day laws, we risk the very dangerous slippery-slope of picking and choosing the Biblical laws that best fit our own convenient agendas". In all these, it could be inferred that religious perceptions and interpretations of Biblical texts greatly underlie the anti-queer morality.

The major consequence of all these is that African writers, especially those sympathetic to Christian and Moslem religions and their doctrines, rarely write about homosexuality, as though it were not an aspect of African life and, secondly, for fear of committing heresies. As Dotun (1989:727) puts it "…the practice of homosexuality within African society remains an area of experience not granted a history by African writers but has been greeted, rather, with sustained outburst of silence". In the same vein, African critics also rarely pay serious critical attention to this subject in their assessment of African literature, leading to what could be described as 'a conspiracy of silence'. Although early Nigerian writers hinted at queer presences in their narratives, they however "bury the queer character and his gender role versatility to make way for a strong, masculine image of a heterosexual male which practically overdose the need to depict an alternative sexuality in

fiction" (Yakubu, 1). This, to some extent, has created a lacuna in African sexuality discourses, which leads to a problem of misrepresentation and fractured understanding of African sexuality.

But things have changed in the recent times. The conscious silence of African writers and critics, especially the older generation, on sexuality, is gradually becoming insecure. African writers have opened up a fertile space for consideration of African sexualities in all their forms. According to Green-Simms (2016:141):

> an impressively critical mass of novels and short stories from across the continent now contain gay characters or same-sex desires, so much so that Jackie Kay, chair of the Caine Prize judging committee in 2014, felt compelled to note in her press release thatJudges were "heartened by how many entrants were drawn to explorations of a gay narrative.

African critics are also becoming interested in the ways in which literary works interpolate issues of sexual normativity and transgression (Desai, 737). More so, the outlawing of homosexuality in many African countries and its attendant spate of violence has rather provided a robust platform for African writers and critics to open up discourses on African sexualities.

In Nigeria for instance, writers like ChineloOkparanta, Jude Dibia, ArinzeIfekandu, ChimamandaAdichie and others have begun to raise serious questions about sexuality through their works and advocacy campaigns. This informs Omolola's (2016: 82) position that "the contemporary generation of African writers do not seem to share in the silence on those subjects which the earlier generations considered unspeakable. They seem to grow interested in those aspects of human life that the previous writers shied away from, for reasons best known to them". It is against this backdrop that Jude Dibia deploys his creative lens to interrogate religion as an institution of homophobia, thus contradicting the very hallmark of every religion by providing succour to humanity without minding the delicate borders of sexual identity.

2. Review of Related Literature

The politicisation of homosexuality by African religiousbodies has not onlyattracted enormous critical attention, but has also dichotomised African sexuality studies and polarised some African critical scholars along the simplistic binaries of religiously defined concepts of good and evil.Kaoma (2009:7) avers that the sacralisation of heterosexuality and demonisation of homosexuality by religious bodies in Africa is influenced by the American Christian fundamentalists, who, having lost credibility in the US because of their extremity, see Africa as a fertile ground to regroup for wider membership. In his*Globalizing the Culture Wars: U.S. Conservatives, African Churches & Homophobia*, the author reveals that, following their decimated membership,many American fundamentalists therefore journey to Africa forming a transnational orthodox movement. In his summation, this movement retains its orthodox religious perception which greatly influences the moral perceptions of its adherents.

Gerth (2011) avers that the term morality is a normative concept, constructed within certain socio-religious premises due to social interaction and social process of assigning meanings, and in various ways, the terms "moral" and "immoral" are not only defined and practiced, but also reproduced in different ways across time and space. Arising from this, the author seems to imply that one can possess multiple morals at the same time inspired by social, cultural, religious or political rules of conduct. The author avers that, because morals greatly determine what is perceived as right and wrong within society, it is assumed that morality underlies the perception of society towards homosexuals and queers. This also reveals that an anti-queer perception is greatly determined by societal as well as individual morals.

In their examination of how religious preachments infringes on the rights of the sexual minority, Cornelio and Dagle (2019:87) deploy the phrase "Weaponising Religious Freedom" to graphically dissect different ways religious principles become antipodal to what religion represents, with regards to the sexual freedom. According to them,"weaponisation" is the most appropriate way to characterise how principles meant to protect liberties especially of minorities have been used to advance the interests of an assumed majority ofthe dominant religion...". In their estimation, Weaponisation in this light is what they describe as "majoritarian", which emphasises exclusivity as a people over inclusive citizenship'. They also view"weaponisation" as evokingdeceptive or politicisation of religious freedom, highlighting how both the dominant religious majority and sexual minorities have taken different interpretations on the matter.

Epprecht (2013:5), opines that the antagonism by religious bodies to the homosexual community and queer sexuality as a whole in many African states is predicated on the fact that "it immediately challenges one of those stereotypes about non-normative sexualities in Africa that opponents of sexual rights often cite: that non-normative sexualities are not a topic of particular interest to African intellectuals or a serious research priority but rather reflect a purely Westerndriven agenda or elitist frivolity". In addition, there has been a deep-rootedfixation that the acceptance of non-heterosexual sexual orientations is corrosive and will ultimately lead to the erosion of the concept of the family within traditional African sociological practices. This has motivated the outcry for the criminalisation of homosexuality. Even more contributory to the strident calls is the assumption that homosexuality is transmissible, implying that the homosexual lifestyle as well as traits or habits could soon overrun the society if nothing is done to quickly nip its spread in the bud.

Alava (2016) argues that the entire gamut of debates around homosexuality in Africa in the recent years has been a proportional consequence of the simultaneous increase in activism by lesbian and gay rights groups on the one hand, and the intense Pentecostalisation of African public spheres on the other. According to him, for example:

> In Uganda, as across the continent, Charismatic Christian groups have found new links with conservative Christian groups in Europe and North America, while politically progressive movements in Africa have received financial and political support from their ideological and political allies in the West, leading scholars and activists to suggest that the culture wars of Europe and North America have turned global.

The author attributes this transcontinental interlinked politics of religion and sexuality in contemporary Africa as firmly entrenched in the continent's colonial and missionary past, through which the patriarchal and heteronormative emphases within the colonising religions of Christianity and Islam repressed diverse indigenous African beliefs and values concerning gender and sexuality.

It could therefore be inferred, from the scholarships reviewed above, that the backlashes that attend homosexual practice, mostly, stem from the fixation that religious morality determines the values, norms and morals that nations, communities and individuals uphold. The above is also the thrust of this paper.However, unlike the reviewed articles, this paper will problematise the issue from the perspective of a literary text. Thus, through textual analysis of Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*, this paper will interrogate Religion as the major albatross on the neck of the sexual minority.

3. Methodology of the Study.

This paper adopts queer theory and some aspects of Judith Butler's theory of performativity to problematise religion as an agent of homophobia in Jude Dibia's *Walking with* Shadows. As literary research, the paper relies on analysis of some extrapolations from the text. In addition to the primary text, other secondary sources like reference books, e-journals, Newspapers and Magazines were also explored to enrich the work.

4.0 Results and Discussions

4.1 Religion and Sexual Politics in Dibia's Walking with Shadows

One of the recent trends that has attracted enormous critical attention within the African literary space is the politicisation of sexuality by religious groups. Unlike when sexuality used to be spoken of in whispers, in recent time, African literary and critical spaces are suffused with the fiercest controversies on what constitutes the ideal African sexuality. While some believe that diversity of sexuality is natural, others insist on heterosexuality as Africa's traditional sexual identity and view any other sexual preference as queer, un-African and a despicable influence from the morally decadent West. This corroborates Dunton's (1998:728) position that in Africa, "non- normative sexuality is read or studied and criticised as not only "unchristian but also unAfrican". These viewpoints have, for a very long time, been repeatedly espoused in African societies not only through Christian churches but also Moslem doctrines, strong political hate speeches, customs and traditions and in day-to-day dialogues. In most cases, 'victims' are consistently demonised, haunted and pushed to the fringes of the society's schema.

It is noted that African religions have been focal platforms where homosexuality and other sexual preferences are condemned. In fact, homosexuals and other sexual minorities are seen as diseased individuals, possessed by evil spirits or demonic spirits that are supposed to be cast out and the individuals cleansed through

prayers and deliverance. They are also seen as seriously morally pervasive and a dent on African moral norms. Thus, some religious leaders openly canvass for stiffer legislation by their governments to persecute sexual minorities. Following this, African political leaders and statesmen, in exchange for goodwill, deploy the usual anti-homosexual viewpoints and demonise those with same-sex sexual identity. The late Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe seems to have captured the position of some African leaders on homosexuality, when he posited that "homosexuals are worse than pigs and dogs and deserve no rights whatsoever" (BBC…02/11/2011). This paper therefore interrogates religious, social and political underpinnings in the discourses of sexual rights and politics, as well as the tension between sexuality as a social construct and a lived experience in Dibia's *Walking with Shadow*.

Jude Dibia is one of the new voices echoing from the African literary space and, in this compelling and chilling narrative, Dibia lends his literary voice to other literary voices in calling for a more tolerant approach in relating with those with same-sex sexual identity. Green-Simms (2016:148) describes the novel as "…a ground-breaking novel in that it is the first to explore what it means to be gay and closeted in Nigeria." The author's representation challenges the stereotypes of gays and notion that they are possessed with demons and have to be cleansed and delivered through prayers.

Walking with Shadows narrates the story of Ebele, known as Adrian through baptism, a Nigerian head of Risk Business Unit. He is a gay in the closet who is married to a beautiful woman, a father of a gorgeous daughter, and a respected mentor to many young men. Upon uncovering a fraud in his place of work, an aggrieved colleague, TayoOnansaya, exposes Adrian's 'dark secret'. Tayo had learnt of Adrian's sexual orientation from a lesbian mutual friend. The narrator depicts in detail, and with great sympathy, the crisis that hits Adrian when his wife Ada, is told about his sexual past. His relatives, as well, do not take it lightly, as his elder brother Chiedu engages a priest to cast out the spirits responsible for Adrian's homosexual behaviour. The novel broaches several issues about sexuality. It demonstrates that even the most liberal people might suddenly become conservative when homosexuality is mentioned, especially in the Nigerian society.

The Novel *opens* with a prologue, a scene where Adrian, then called Ebele is baptised and reborn as Adrian. Dibia describes how Adrian thought that the baptism would help him shed his past as Ebele, a weak boy who got teased and harassed by his friends and ignored by his parents. Here, the author stylistically introduces his readers to two names, which also connote two identities. Ebele represents the identity of a gay boy who struggles to come to terms with his identity, while Adrian is the ideal man whose life and sexual behaviour is in conformity with the Christian and the society's approved identity. Thus, Dibia utilises the baptism to represent the denouncement of Ebele and emergence of Adrian. Little wonder "his ten-year-old mind was in hurry to rid itself of the pathetic person it had always known as "Ebele"(15). Amonyeze (2017:6) asserts that "Adrain's baptism and wish for rebirth at the beginning of the novel launches a broadside at the absurd belief that religion can correct sexual orientation." In his review of this novel, Ode (2011:71) posits that "the religious correction reflects the possibilities offered by satire as a vehicle for socio-political and cultural commentary within the institution of the novel." Therefore, Dibia showcases that rather than being an agent of support for the debilitated and displaced homosexuals, Christian religion has become an agency that metes out judgment to people.

It is also important to note that, in the context of Christianity, people seem to suddenly become fixated by this belief that everything is fixable through prayers. Hence, it is not uncommon to hear people proffer church prayers as solutions to typhoid, malaria, poverty, and of course homosexuality which is termed "demonic". In *Walking with Shadows*, Chiedu, Adrian's elder brother conspires with Pastor Matthew who flogs Adrian in the name of casting out the gay demon in him. Thus, the belief that religion can correct sexual orientation is not only absurd but also emblematic of Africa's religious conservatism.

This scenario also plays out in Uzodinma Iweala's *Speak No Evil* when Niru's devoutly religious and unremittingly homophobic father physically assaults him, as he discovers a gay site transferred into Niru's phone by his friend. He does not only assault Niru, but bundles him to different churches in the belief that he will be delivered of the gay demons. The above incidences do not only reveal the dynamics of homophobic violence perpetrated by religious bodies which people should naturally turn to for love and support, it also affirms Collins' (1964:182) assertion that, "the adult world is generally hostile, vicious, uncomprehending or indifferent, or the child had to minister to instead of being supported by it."

In *Walking with Shadows*, Adrian is always on the defensive, struggling to be accepted as a normal person in the society. "He felt shame because he knew they were thinking he was sick, abnormal and surely a sinner already condemned to hell fire" (137-8). Ada advises Adrian thus: "you need to read your Bible, Adrian. Even God forbids the act" (95). Although, she admits how nice Adrian is but: "Being a strong Christian, she could not be tolerant of such behaviour. It went against all her morals and she could imagine what her pastor would say about people like Adrian" (98-9). This development informs one of the basic assumptions of queer critics that heterosexuality is not natural but rather, a social construct that conditions members of the society towards aligning their sexuality to the norms expected by the culture. Queer critics vehemently refutes this promotion of compulsory hetero-sexuality and sees sexuality as personal identity expressed by an individual. Harris (1991:8), a queer critic, opines that:

> Queer theory insists that all sexual behaviours, all concepts linking sexual behaviours to sexual identities, and all categories of normative and deviant sexualities, are social constructs and set of signifiers which creates certain types of social meaning. Queer theory follows feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies in rejecting the idea that sexuality is an essentialist category, something determined by biology or judged by external standards of morality and truth.

Following this, Klages (2005:3) posits that "sexuality is a complex array of social codes and forces, forms of individual activity and institutional power, which interact to shape the ideas of what is deviant at any particular moment, and then operate under the rubric of what is "essential", "natural", "biological" or "God-given."

However, as has been observed, if homosexuality is an importation from the West, as widely touted, why are African Christians not sceptical of deploying the Bible, another importation from the West, as the basis for rejecting the same homosexuality? It is for this reason that Msibi (2011:69) argues that:

> There is an apparent contradictory acceptance and use of Christianity which clearly presents a dilemma in understanding the debate about a 'sodomite-free' Africa. If Africa rejects ideologies brought from the West, then surely religion brought from the West cannot be used to reject something that is being rejected for its foreign roots".

This corroborates the position of this paper that in contemporary Nigeria and Africa, the Bible has become a platform of struggle where the debate on homosexuality is being fought.

In the same vein, while Ada vehemently opposes homosexuality as an import of modernity and Westernisation which threatens her much-guarded traditional values, she is seen indirectly propagating that same modernity as an interior decorator "through all the exotic pieces she used in her client's house, most of her best pieces were imports from the West, from Europe and America" (35). Thus, it is ironical that the very modernity and westernization which she condemns is the bedrock of her interior decoration business through which she earns a living. This further validates the position of this paper that queerness does not only exist in the sexual act in the literal or traditional sense of same sex relationship but also exist in other possibilities, situations and options which an individual finds himself or herself. As Epprecht (2011:13) argues:

> *[Q]ueer*[serves] as a convenient shorthand to describe an anti-essentialist approach . . . that is open to the whole range of human sexual diversity; that underscores sexuality as a critical component in the construction of class, race, national, ethnic, and other identities; that analyses language and silences in relation to material conditions and struggles; and that engages with current debates about global economic and other inequalities coming out of African feminist, subaltern, and critical masculinity studies . . ..

In other words, queer reading of a text is that reading that sexualises the meaning of a text beyond conventional perceptions of sexuality.

Adrian's father also expresses shock that Adrian is gay despite being raised with solid Christian values: "We didn't bring any of you up like this…we instilled in you all Christian values" (182). Butler (1988:3)

opposes this society's prescription of how one should express oneself sexually. Most times, according to her, "how someone expresses him or herself through their clothes or hair style may not match the way they feel internally or match what society may expect of them, being a certain gender." And since gender and sex is not a stable identity, raising one with Christian values does not preclude the direction of one's feelings and desires. Butler's argument on this is that, there is no exact match between gender and sexuality. When one is male sex, it does not absolutely imply that he belongs to the male gender and the same is true with females. Therefore, homosexuality and other sexuality alternatives can only be justified on the basis of gender performativity.

It is important to note here that this paper does not engage Christianity and anti- homosexual politics monolithically and existentially, as if they are stereotypical peculiarities of Africa and African religions. The prominent religions in Africa traverse all parts of the globe with global network of adherents. Believers export, import and share their beliefs and values. That's the reason, in Christian Africa, sexual politics receive impetus from theological and ecclesiological partnership with global Christianity. According to Kaoma (2016:19), "This missiological premise explains the US Christian Rights activities in Africa. Aside from partnering with African conservative Christians, the US Christian Right shares its opposition to sexual diversity with its allies on the continent using various means—from human bodies to TV, to the internet and to literature". But since Christianity is also a local religion, operating within defined socio-cultural, political and historical locations, there is need to pay attention to local context and realities, as well as global dynamics, which have seen the theme of homosexuality moved from the periphery of Christianity to the front burner of sexuality discourses in African literature.

The above positions exemplify how religious doctrines oppress the sexual minorities and how the church has indoctrinated members to view homosexual practice as a transgression against God. Thus, this paper vehemently maintains a view that sees it as oppressive, when Africanrelgions claim to have detailed knowledge of God's plan for everybody including their sexuality.

5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to interrogate the homophobic contents in the Christian liturgy and how these contents have been deployed to oppress the sexual minorities in Africa. The paper notes that the selective deployment of sexual injunctions in the Bible to dehumanise the homosexuals contradicts love, tolerance and accommodation which are hallmarks of true Christianity. The study has further established, like some queer critics, that gender and sex are not stable identity but performative and that, one becomes a man or woman through a ritualised performance of a particular action. In other words, it does not follow that the construction of men will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that women will interpret only female body. The study has attempted to dismantle the prevalent hetero-normativised impulse of some religious organisations which has constituted a structure that has over time been used in silencing the LGBTQ nation and stripping them of 'normalcy'. The paper advocates an accommodation of the oppressed sexual minorities in the society because in the grand scheme of things, only "he who is without sin" is deemed fit to "cast the stone".

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