

HYBRIDITY AND QUEERNESS IN JUDE DIBIA'S *WALKING WITH SHADOWS*

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Abstract

There is a rising curiosity in literary discourse regarding queer sexuality, among the LGBTQ⁺ group. This, we argue is a fallout of migration, globalization and the realities that obtain in metropolitan and cosmopolitan third spaces where freedom acquires much more liberal and semantic scope. Migration, though a human factor, its emergent social influences at different points of convergence such as same-sex erotic bonds are long-silenced realities that call for more critical attention. Earlier generations of African creative writers have been silent on the subject because it is at a crossroad with cultures, norms, laws, and religions within African societies. However, with migration and diasporic interplay, many contemporary creative works portray these hitherto uncommon existential realities. Based on the above, this study examines how creative writers, of African extraction, have responded to the discourse *vis-a-vis* the African nationhood and lifestyle, whether as virtue or vice in the African socio-cultural consciousness. The study adopts Postcolonial hybridity and the Queer theory to interrogate the current discourse on gay literature and/or romance fiction, using Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* (2005). It concludes that an individual can be or become homosexual and may choose not to engage in homosexuality; and recommends, among others, that the myth of silence enveloping the discourse on queer sexuality should be objectively reviewed to avoid victimization which may drive more people into involuntary migration thereby depleting Nigeria's workforce.

Keywords: Postcolonial hybridity, same-sex, queer theory, migration, globalization.

Introduction

Queer sexuality is a subject in contemporary literary studies in which opinions, traditions, norms, conventional belief systems and State policies are at variance with one another. This reflects the diversity of world cultures and political attitudes. In Africa, for instance, one is either a man or a woman or abnormal. One is also naturally heterosexual. The matter ends there. This has been the normative posture of African people and culture towards gender, sex and sexual orientations. Until recently, any factual or fictional discourse on sexuality was unimaginable because it was strictly a private matter and anything outside the heterosexual or cisgender nature of being a man or woman was seen as abnormal. Consequently, the LGBTQ⁺ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, *et cetera*) discourses are cocooned in a conspiracy of

silence because they are considered as *unAfrican* and aberrative. And whenever it becomes absolutely necessary, sexuality is discussed in euphemistic terms. According to Dunton (2008), “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” (733). Osofisan (2009) corroborates this when he writes that:

Up at least till the turn of the millennium, you will observe, the exploration of romantic love or of sex as themes was remarkably rare in the output of our writers. Virtually no literary work dared venture, except in the deflected language of metaphor and refringent echo, into the contentious area of carnal experience. From Tutuola to Okpewho; Achebe to Iyayi; Soyinka to Sowanda; Clarke to Onwueme – we are talking of over four decades of writing – there is no instance of a memorable kiss. (39)

In view of Osofisan’s submission, the older generations of African writers can best be described as puritans in sexual and sensual portraiture although homosexual practice has been acknowledged, albeit in metaphorical terms, in such literary texts as Mongo Beti’s *Poor Christ of Bomba* (1956); Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* (1972) and *Season of Anomy* (1973); Mariama Ba’s *Scarlet Song* (1981), Chris Abani’s *Grace Land* (2004) and a host of others.

However, the intentional silence over the subject aims to justify the non-existence or *unAfricanness* of such alternative sexualities. Consequently, Africans and Nigerians in particular have refused to boldly engage in the discussion on sexuality in all its ramifications, they have rather maintained a withdrawn or evasive posture towards it – ordinary people avoid the subject, intellectuals are very passive in interrogating the subject, NGOs are not concerned about it but the fact remains that no matter how people try to avoid discussing such issues, they exist (Akujobi, 2017). Amidst the ominous silence over the issue of homosexuality or same-sex narrative and the undeniable fact of the reality of its existence in Africa, nay Nigeria, is another twist to the veracity of the argument. That twist is that the practice is also common among the more influential members of the society, as portrayed in Dibia’s *Walking with Shadows*.

Homosexuality is, therefore, acknowledged to be real but inherently alien to Africa and the African culture and its practice is invariably attributed to the detrimental impact made on Africa by the West. It is believed to be one of the legacies bequeathed Africa by the early colonialists and practised by westernized Africans, which has contributed to the flourish of a pattern of systemic disintegration similar to other violations of normal behaviour and lifestyle. Simply put, “homosexuality as a reality in Africa is therefore conceived as part of the arena of African western relations” (Dunton, 732). Another major controversy surrounding homosexuality bothers on whether it is

natural or influenced by environmental factors (nurture) (Natu, 2024; Brathwaite, 2022; Cornuelle, 2010) or just subjective lifestyle built on personal choices or simply an indulgence. Some theological scholars have also argued that same-sex, as well as other queer sexual orientations, is a human factor and universal, since the Holy Books (Bible and Quran) have acknowledged such practices and their consequences (Koukl, 2013). This research, is therefore, situated within the precincts of the current rising curiosity in the literary discourses regarding the LGBTQ⁺ group and the controversies of the politics of inclusivity in a world where freedom has acquired an unlimited semantic scope. However, the primary concern of this study is not just to contribute to the debate on the pejorative judgement that Africans and African writers have applied to the same-sex narrative, rather, we are interested in how migration has contributed to the current status of the narrative as well as the portrayal of it in Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* (2005). We are particularly interested in how Dibia has navigated the mucky waters of queer sexuality in his novel, as one of the major concerns of contemporary Nigerian literature. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010) articulate the preponderance of sexual scenes in 21st century African literature, as a shift from what has obtained in the works of earlier generations of writers:

Without doubt, one of the most defining characteristics of contemporary (especially 21st century) Nigerian literature is the demonstration of almost extreme sexual and sensual liberties. The conscious imaging of sexuality has become such a dominant feature in Nigerian and African literature as a whole to the extent that it appears to have been elevated to the status of a narrative subject. For the contemporary Nigerian writer, sexuality has become more of a rule than a taboo, it has emerged from the provinces of the sacred and has now been banalized to degrees that new 'blasphemous' grounds are being broken in the artistic conversations involving it (174).

Onyerionwu further argues that the height of this development is the gay fiction which came to the limelight with the publication of Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* in 2005. He attributes the daring artistic disposition and boldness to the influence of the 'liberated' world literary culture especially those of Europe and America on the younger Nigerian writers who have in one way or the other had contact with the West through one form of migration or the other, because human beings are constantly on the move (Egbuta, 2023) and when they move, they do so with both their material and non-material socio-cultural capital and artefacts.

In other words, the migration phenomenon has played significant roles in creating fluid social spaces and identity-forming contexts which are constantly reworked through their simultaneous connectedness to more than one society (Ahmed, 2022), giving rise to a consistent state of becoming. Prominence in the discourse surrounding human sexuality is the social or 'third' space (Bhabha, 1994)

impact, created by migration and other global factors. It is, therefore, against this background that we apply the concept of postcolonial hybridity and queer theory to analyze homosexuality as portrayed in Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*.

The Same-Sex Narrative/Controversies

As pointed out earlier, LGBTQ⁺ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer *et cetera*) discourse is one of the topical issues in the twenty-first century. Migration, globalization and technology have combined to create the spaces for the free-flow of humans and ideas as well as the impetus for freedom of expression and association in both physical and virtual platforms. Technology has also compressed the world into a global village for bonding and the creation of a community of LGBTQI persons who were hitherto separated by distance. Thus, through the aid of social media, people who engage in same-sex and other related practices have found a voice, a family and an avenue through which they press for recognition and acceptance. Consequently, many Western countries have legalized same-sex relationships while most African countries, with the probable exception of South Africa, have refused to make same-sex marriage legal, possibly because homosexuality is believed to be *unAfrican* and therefore a foreign legacy.

Some literary productions have also corroborated the mainstream belief that homosexuality is an exclusively foreign importation that came into Africa through the contact with foreigners. In *Two Thousand Seasons*, the Ghanaian author, Ayi Kwei Armah projects the view that same-sex relationships emanate from trade and colonial relations between Africa and the Arab and western world. Mariama Ba's *Scarlet Song* and Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* also advance the belief that homosexuality is foreign to Africa. Similarly, many African political leaders insist that it is *unAfrican* and have as well opposed it, even legally. For example, the former Kenyan President, Uhuru Kenyatta publicly disagreed with President Obama's call for Africa to disallow discriminatory practices against LGBTQI persons (<https://www.politico.com>). Other African leaders such as Sam Nujoma (Namibia), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Paul Kagame (Rwanda), Edgar Lungu (Zambia), Yahya Jammeh (Gambia), Bingu wa Mutharka (Malawi), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), et cetera, are united in their condemnation of same sex relationships. The former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan signed "The Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act" in 2014.

On the contrary, the African belief that homosexuality has foreign provenances has also been countered in several studies by Africans (Amadiume, 1987; Epprecht, 2002; Tamale, 2014). In their edited work, *Boy-wives and Female-husbands, Studies in African Homosexuality* (1998), Murray, Roscoe and Epprecht provide evidence that same-sex relationships existed in different parts of pre-colonial Africa. There is also the existence of African indigenous terms and proverbs used to refer to LGBTQI persons. *Inkotshane* (used by the Shangaan people of Southern Africa); *motsoale* (used by the Basotho people of Botswana) *gorjiggen* (used by the Wolof people of Senegambia),

ngochani (used by Shona in Zimbabwe); *adufuro* (used by the Yoruba people of Nigeria); *yan daudu* (used in Northern Nigeria); *nwa-nkpa* and *o bu aru nwoke ifia nwoke ibe ya eka robi* –a proverb, (used in Eastern Nigeria) all refer to people of homosexual identities. Their argument is hinged on the fact that it is improbable to evolve terms and proverbs for non-existent phenomena.

In 2023, the Roman Catholic Pope, Francis, spoke about blessing same-sex couples in Roman Catholic churches. But the conference of Nigerian Bishops issued a strong-worded statement that vehemently condemned homosexuality as satanic, unchristian and unAfrican. The statement also contained its unequivocal refusal to obey the Pope by blessing same sex marriages. The position of The Conference received public applause and even hinted at the possibility of a Nigerian Catholic Church, should the Roman Catholic Church insist and enforce the blessing of same-sex relationships/marriages (<https://www.africanews.com>).

Considering the two positions, we adduce that LGBTQI discourses engender mixed feelings – sympathy from some quarters and rejection/opposition from others. To some people, LGBTQI persons should be allowed to freely express themselves, while to others, they should not be allowed. Some think that same-sex relationships have been in existence in Africa since time immemorial but because Africa is dominantly a heterosexual society, with zero tolerance for queer sexual orientations, people of queer sexuality hide their sexual orientation and practice it very secretly and tacitly for fear of being ridiculed, molested, ostracized or even killed. Such people exist in many remote villages where they have had no exposure to the West or Western lifestyle but still indulge in homosexual practices. There were also people referred to as *nwoke-nwanyi* – effeminate men or sissies – who find pleasure socializing with their fellow men. These men grow up acting like women, disliking male gatherings and even sports. One wonders what the sexual orientation for such people is.

From the arguments raised above, it is adducible that homosexuality is a function of both nature and nurture. Some LGBTQI persons claim to have just discovered queerness in their sexual cravings as they grew up, while others claim to have been influenced by their environment or peer pressure. Sex-same desires and relationships are noticed in schools – primary, secondary and tertiary. Some people who engage in it whether as kids, teenagers or adults, may not actually understand what it is, but still engage in same-sex relationships out of curiosity. There are still others who are lured into it and those who deliberately join their friends in doing it, as well as others who are forced into it.

But generally, in Africa, the tendency is to be silent or to portray sex and sexuality in euphemistic terms. Such intentional avoidance mechanisms do not obliterate the existence of queer sexuality. We therefore argue that homosexual relationships must have been practiced surreptitiously even in precolonial African societies. It must have had an unacceptable yet relatively tolerated existence. It is a possibility that African conceptualization and practice of same-sex relationships

considerably differ from the Western LGBTQI. For example, the open display of affection by LGBTQI persons encouraged in the Western world is unacceptable in Africa.

However, there are notable Africans/Nigerians who have openly declared their homosexuality. Such people as the Late Kenyan author/journalist and winner of 2002 Caine prize for African writing, Kenneth Binyavanya Wainaina; the British-Nigerian gay rights activist, Bisi Alimi; the Nigerian Queer Theologian and founder of the House of Rainbows CIC, Jide Macaulay, who describes himself as a “Happy Holy Homosexual,” to mention but a few, but their experiences are always unpalatable. Jide Macaulay presents his ordeal as a gay in Nigeria during an interview session:

I came out as gay in 1994, it was terrifying and very lonely. I am Black African and from a very conservative Christian family, from Nigeria. I was afraid of losing everything. When I came out, I was married to a woman and we had a child. It was the most difficult decision I had to make and it broke me into pieces. I felt like a failure but was also relieved that I am now able to speak the truth about who I am. I started my journey from that moment rebuilding my life based on my truth and I have not looked back (<https://keele.ac.uk>).

Reverend Macaulay ended up by saying that GAY, for him, means “God Adores/Accepts You” and that concealing his identity and sexual orientation means not being honest with himself and living in perpetual emotional trauma. Owing to the travails of being gay in Nigeria, migration presents an alternative for those involved (Egbuta, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts postcolonial hybridity and queer theory for the analysis. Postcolonial hybridity becomes imperative because of the significant impact of the colonial experience on the historical and socio-cultural life of the people resulting in identity hybridization. Hybridity is a product of the interplay between two cultures within a contact zone through cultural cross-fertilization resulting in the production of a new or novel one (Ali, 2022). It resists the idea of a pure culture at an intersecting space. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2006) argue that:

Hybridity occurs in postcolonial societies as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or when settler-invaders dispossess indigenous peoples and force them to ‘assimilate’ to new social patterns. It may occur in later periods when patterns of migration from the metropolitan societies and from other imperial areas of influence ... continue to produce complex cultural palimpsests with the post-colonized world. (137)

The concept of postcolonial hybridity is associated with the influential cultural and post-colonial theorist, Homi Bhabha who explores how the formation and reformation of new cultures, as a result of colonial relations, disrupt any notion of a pristine culture. This hybridization process occurs in what Bhabha refers to as the "Third Space" (Bhabha, 2006), an interstitial site where new cultural identities are continually shaped (Raine, 2024). Postcolonial hybridity serves as an important analytical tool for the present study because it enables a critical examination of homosexuality in the context of a postcolonial novel. Aside this, the dynamic nature of hybridity enables it to provide insights into and re-examination of dominant discourses from a myopic or obscure minority perspective to a broader and more complex domains, considering emergent issues of global significance.

This study also adopts Queer Theory for the analysis. The term Queer is often used as an inclusive, umbrella term to encompass a spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities that do not align with the conventional hetero-normative sexuality. Queer theory (QT) is a theory in literary criticism which emerged in the early 1990s and has gained popularity throughout the late 20th century and the 21st century, it is a broad area of literary criticism that carries many meanings. However, it has peculiar core values: it focuses on how ideas of sexuality and gender are discussed in texts and how the topic is taught to students. It argues that sexuality and gender can be dynamic and do not necessarily fit neatly into pre-defined categories. Critics examine texts that explore diverse sexual orientations and gender identities that deviate from hetero-normative conventions. This includes narratives focusing on characters who identify as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, intersex, or more. Sexuality is the primary concern of the Queer theory. Sexuality is explored differently from hetero-normative literature. The theme is essential to understanding the psychology of the text's characters, sexuality, the fluid nature of identity, and the environment in which they exist. Most times the theme is typically resolved in a happy ending, where the protagonist lets go of their internalized homophobia in some way. QT is a deconstructive way of re-examining traditional assumptions about gender and sexual identity putting into consideration the factors of change and social fluidity. Queer theorists believe in the dynamic nature of things and sexual identities. They argue that there is no set 'normal', only changing norms that people may or may not fit into. They encourage scholars to consider the world through new avenues. They are accommodationists who interrogate stereotypes opposed to gender essentialism, queer theorists see sexuality as a discursive social construction (Lauretis 1990) and are interested in those who do not neatly fit into conventional categories such as bisexual, transvestites, transgendered people and trans-sexuals. Their perspective represents a departure both from previous scholarship about gender and sexuality and how identity politics open new avenues of thought. It questions hetero-normativity (Warner, 1993) – the belief that heterosexuality is default and therefore preferred expression of sexuality opposing the belief that same-sex relationships are non-conforming. They

challenge dualistic class dialectics such as sexual (heterosexual/homosexual), gender (male/female), class (rich/poor), racial (white/non-white), *et cetera*, classifications (Thiel, 2018).

Both postcolonial hybridity and the queer theory are products of Migration and globalization in a fast-changing world. The two factors provide queer theorists and activists with expanded terrain for intervention. These conceptual and theoretical preferences enable us to appraise the portrayal of the same-sex narrative in Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* as it relates to migration, technology and digitalization in a global arena.

The Migration Factor

Human beings, in search of solutions to their insatiable needs and desires engage in one form of migration or another, in the course of which they are in constant contact with other human beings from different socio-cultural backgrounds. In these 'constant contact' zones, what Bhabha calls the third space, personalities are moulded and remoulded and cultures are eroded of their purity. Therefore, migration is a significant factor in the formation of hybrids and migrant subjectivities with attention on local forms of belonging that are nonetheless global at the same time (Steiner, 2014). Apart from the economic benefits of migration especially the type the world is experiencing today, it has obvious flipside especially in the form of socio-political and cultural disruptions. Before now, migration was not considered as relating to sexuality in any way. However, recent studies have incorporated sexuality studies as part of the visible reality of cultures in contact. Studies from intersectional perspectives have shown how sexuality can shape the migratory process, affecting migrants' identities and impacting the social, cultural and political dynamics of already heterogeneous peoples (Cantu 2009; Luibheid 2002; Manalansa 2006). It is on this premise that migration studies get preoccupied with the debates on sexuality and inclusivity. We therefore argue that while sex is natural, gender could be a social construct; and while heterosexuality is a conventional practice, queer sexuality may be unconventional but a reality which now occupies a space in the public academic domain through the instrumentality of migration and other global factors. It can also be a strong motivation for migration.

Textual Analysis

Synopsis

Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* tells an enthralling tale of Adrian (Ebele), the gay-protagonist whose sexual orientation makes him an outcast among his family members, in a society where homosexuality is an abomination and no one talks about it, because it is assumed that it does not exist. It is therefore unheard of that one will openly choose to identify with a kind of sexuality that is outside their gender-affinity. Consequently, Ebele Njoko becomes a victim of a forlorn and poignant childhood as he tries to conceal the secret of his queer sexuality. He craves the affection and approval

of his conservative parents, who have already noticed the strangeness of his being. He becomes emotionally malnourished through the attitudes of his parents and siblings towards him. Eventually, to earn a certain level of approval, he gets married, and becomes a husband and father but eventually gets exposed through just a phone call from an avenger which changes the whole spectrum of his life.

This singular act of vengeance crumbles his entire life as he frantically tries to control the effect but to no avail. In a nutshell, *Walking with Shadows* presents a man who has to come to terms with the dark secrets of his sexuality and has to choose between keeping his family or accepting a life of possible loneliness and rejection in a foreign land. Dibia consciously builds into Ebele, the protagonist, a very admirable personality: handsome, compassionate, willing to take blames and even be punished for the sins of others, very social and accommodating, hardworking and ingenuous: "Everything about him was perfect" (p32). With all these fine attributes, the reader is made to like his person and empathize with him in those challenging moments, wishing that the world understands and treats him and his likes better.

In what follows, we examine the same-sex narrative as portrayed in our study text. We interrogate the text in the following areas: homosexuality as nature or nurture; homosexuality in the Nigerian context; who and who are involved in the practice; possible spousal reactions to the reality of a homosexual partner; politics of inclusivity, constructive or destructive tendencies of homosexuality; and homosexuality as a push-factor for migration.

Same-sex Narrative in Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*

Homosexuality as Nature or Nurture

At age seven, Adrian's friend visits and sleeps over in their house, in the morning his mother "banished them to the bathroom to clean up ... since it was customary for two kids to bath together" (p13). But something strange happens to Adrian when "they both sponged each other amidst laughter ... and he felt some closeness to Ekene that was not entirely platonic" (p13). At that stage, he does not know what that unusual feeling is. Eventually, he grows up, becomes more exposed and realizes that "he was homosexual, gay." He finds this nature very controversial and unwelcoming in a country that has zero tolerance for such sexuality and he even questions God on "why He had made him the way he was" and "cursed himself for being different" (p240). This presentation enables us to justify homosexuality, especially in Adrian's case as natural, since it is an urge he tries to reject or subvert, for the greater part of his life, if not for the vengeful exposure. The same can apply to some younger boys in the text such as Nkechi's son (pp116-117), and "that boy" (p254) at the airport.

But for others, such as the pansexual Rotimi who represents the "self-proclaimed women lovers, who when the opportunity arose, would go with men as well" (p180), homosexuality can be an indulgence. It can also be presented as one of those deep issues about human sexuality (p242) that continue to call for closer

objective examination, especially when we consider Adrian's explanation of what it means to be gay:

... being gay has nothing to do with the physical action of sex or a person's sexual preference, be it with the opposite sex or same sex. Sleeping with a man or woman will always remain the individual's choice. I am gay because it is the way I reason and live. It is waking up in the morning and going to bed at night.... It is appreciating the simple things life brings and not the act of sexual intercourse.... A man can be gay all his life without actually sleeping with another man, can you understand this? (p238)

This provides a new curio on the subject, which is against the popular belief that gay means: "Two people of the same sex having sex."

And as confusing as this sounds, homosexuality can be nature, nurture, an act of indulgence or a 'sin' committed through peer pressure. Moreover, a gay person also has a choice either to copulate with same-sex partners or practice celibacy "all his life", just as some heterosexuals do, too. This could be the reason behind Reverend Jide Macaulay proclaiming himself as a "Happy Holy Homosexual" (<https://keele.ac.uk>). This displaces the general belief that homosexuality must involve 'same-sex sex'. It is evident, from Adrian's evasive explanation, that there is more to the subject than the generally-held opinion.

Homosexuality in the Nigerian Context

The conflicting views of homosexuality – as a variant of normal human sexual behaviour on the one hand, and as a psychological deviant behaviour on the other – remain present in the 21st century. In Nigeria, for example, it is prohibited by culture and the law, so Ada, in *Walking with Shadows*, is absolutely bewildered at the realization that her husband is gay. She ruminates:

Adrian was a Nigerian, an African man, being gay was certainly not the African culture. The whole idea was so foreign, so unnatural. That was a thing everyone knew somehow existed within the African society, but the probability of it being so close home was something she never could imagine (p28).

She also recalls that "There had been people she had suspected of being gay while she was in school ..." (p28). This raises a question of whether homosexuality is actually a western legacy or a 'universal citizen' only secretly and tacitly practised for fear of criticism, molestation or even the death penalty. Evidently, the end to this debate is not in sight.

For Adrian, "he had always known that there is no chance that Nigeria would evolve in such a way that same-sex unions would be accepted ..." (p249), even if the law is amended. South Africa provides an example of where "a disparity [still] exists

between the protection provided by the law and the lived experiences of queer individuals" (<https://saiia.org.za>). But then, what happens to a homosexual who contributes significantly to national development through their enterprise and whose sexuality does not pose a threat to others, but he is still gay, in Nigeria? Does The Law in Nigeria prohibit homosexuality or the marriage of homosexuals? Should an individual be victimized in his family or workplace, just as Adrian is, on account of being gay? These are questions that beg answers regarding queer sexuality in Nigeria.

Who and Who are Involved in the Practice

The Nigerian society has continued to evolve in line with the dynamics of change and it would be sheer naivety to pretend not to notice the growing trend of homosexuality among both men and women as well as the sexual revolution taking place. In Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*, many characters are portrayed as gay. Most prominent among them is Adrian, the protagonist. Others include Abdul and Femi, described as "the longest going gay couple ... [who have] been together for about ten years" (p20); Yahaya, the stranger with "a rich voice that had a hint of expensive European education" (p125); Major Obosi, "who during the military era was one of the ministers ..." (p154); Adebayo George, "was a high-ranking judge in the Supreme Court" (p154). Awwal, "a special adviser to the minister of petroleum" (p156); "the boy" at the airport who stares at Adrian "with his big brown vacant eyes" (p254) and a host of others. By the representation of different categories of men as gay, Dibia gives insights into the wide range of people who are homosexuals in Nigeria, through Nkechi's stream of consciousness: "If someone as decent-looking as Adrian was gay, then how many more men out there were living double lives as well?" (p116).

Possible Spousal Reactions to the Reality of a Homosexual Partner

The experience of discovering that one's partner is gay, probably after many years of marriage, can be overwhelming and may present a complicated situation. Dibia in *Walking with Shadows* portrays such a scenario and also different responses by women who discover after many years of marriage that their husbands are gay. He juxtaposes Ada's response to the delicate situation with that of the other women – Carol, Hajiya and Temi. Ada's first response when she gets the news is shock, as she asks him, "Are you gay, Adrian?" (p11). This is followed by separation: "We can't be together right now Would you rather I moved out or you moved out?" (p14) and then she takes her daughter Ego to the hospital for both of them to run an HIV/AIDS test (pp57-59). Eventually, they (Ada and Adrian) opt for a divorce on account of "irreconcilable differences" (p252).

Meanwhile, to enable Ada to relax, Iheoma takes her to Carol Obosi's "grand architectural edifice on Queen's Drive, Ikoyi" where she meets "quite a high-profile mix of women" (pp153-154). In the course of their discussion, Carol tells Ada, "We are all

here because we have a common issue ... we are all married to gay men" (p155). Ada is alarmed and becomes more nervous when Temi confesses:

[T]he truth is, I'm not into men at all. I like women myself and by marrying Bayo who knew my preferences I am free to have my lovers while he is free to have his. I don't care much about children.... To the world, we are the best couple and it serves its purpose politically as well since he is a senior advocate (pp157-158).

In utter exasperation Ada questions, "What was the world coming to if women admit their lesbianism and marry bisexual men who still slept with them?" (p159), when she learns that the "beautiful, educated middle-aged women were comfortable being married to gay men" (p158). She therefore wonders, just as many other conservative Nigerians:

When had happened to the old values they were brought up with. A man and woman made up a family and then produced children, not a man and man or woman and woman. When did this foreign and alien outlook on life creep into the typical Nigerian society? These women's acceptance of this cultural imbalance was more than strange to Ada. (p158)

From the above, it is evident that (homo/bi) sexuality among couples is common. However, spousal responses are varied and dependent on one's exposure, individuality and value system.

Homosexuality as a Possible Push-Factor for Migration

Adrian longs for love and acceptance as a child, as a husband, as a member of staff in his workplace, even when his queer sexuality does not pose a threat to his society but is always confronted with rejection. He recreates himself into a different conventional persona, gets married, fathers a child, but unfortunately, he has a lot of depression and personal struggles to grapple with. He suffers emotional trauma as he tries to suppress his internal cravings in order to please the people and the society he finds himself into. Despite all his admirable personality, humane disposition, accomplishments at work and all other fine attributes, the environment remains too hostile and Adrian is compelled to migrate into a life of loneliness in the diaspora. He tells Ada:

Nigeria is not tolerant of my kind and I want to work and live in a place where I won't have to deny my sexuality.... If I remain here, I will always be a victim. I will always have to worry about what the next person is thinking about me or I will worry that I may lose my job at any time or not get the necessary recognition I deserve at work (p240)

Eventually, Adrian qualifies "as a highly skilled immigrant" (p246) who has to leave "behind a false life here to start a new life in a foreign land" (p253). He travels first class to the UK where there is already a job waiting for him.

Conclusion

This study has analysed the travails of people with queer sexuality in Nigeria, as portrayed in Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*, using Adrian, the protagonist. It is a fact that sexuality defines the very essence of humanity regarding self-image, gender, physical looks and reproductive capacity. But in Nigeria's socio-cultural milieu, discourses on sexuality are treated with silence and confined to the private domain. Contrary to the dominant disposition towards the subject, Dibia presents not just sexuality but queer sexuality for interrogation in *Walking with Shadows*. The study has adopted postcolonial hybridity and queer theory as conceptual and theoretical frameworks to examine the subject. After a qualitative content analysis, the study concludes that homosexuality is common in contemporary Nigerian society and those affected are different categories of people who form the human resources and workforce of the Nigerian society. It is also discovered that some individuals now have and are comfortable with queer sexual preferences against the conventional hetero-normative specifications. Moreover, when confronted with the reality of a bisexual partner, some people opt for divorce while others devise some defense mechanisms that enable them to retain their families. Finally, those who feel victimized because of their queer sexuality migrate to the West where they are accepted.

Recommendations

The interplay between sexuality and human rights is no longer a mere question of biology and social construct, but of palpable matters of power politics and the ways in which global policy dialogue unfolds. And, in a world where the global can now affect the local in significant ways, even at the most macro-levels, dominant politics and ideologies can profoundly influence an individual's realization of dignity in the most intimate realms of their sexuality, we recommend a more objective, holistic comprehensive study and education on the subject of sexuality as well as its queer variants.

Rather than lose more human resources to the West, it is recommended that such natural or social 'misnomer' be addressed by the relevant stakeholders, starting from the family, by appreciating the humanity of those affected. Mere affection could be all they need to live a more socially acceptable life, in Nigeria. Finally, more analytical studies are recommended for Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*, from bildungsroman perspective and adopting Sigmund Freud's Id, Ego and Superego structure of Psychoanalysis to study the circumstances surrounding Adrian's maturation. The effects of a hostile environment on the impressionable mind of a child should be re-examined from this perspective and relevant measures should be taken to channel children's curiosity into more constructive engagements.

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