

HOMOPHOBIA IN TENDAI HUCHU'S *THE HAIRDRESSER OF HARARE* AND CHINELO OKPARANTA'S *UNDER THE UDALA TREES*

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AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY. IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS, (HONS) DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE

FEBRUARY 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project entitled “Homophobia in Tendai Huchu’s *The Hairdresser of Harare* and Chinelo Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees*” was undertaken by Elizabeth Emoshiokeameh OREGBEMEH of the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under my supervision.

Dr Samson O. Eguavoen
(Project Supervisor)

Date

DEDICATION

This long essay is dedicated to God Almighty, my parents, Mr and Mrs Oregbeme, Rev. Fr Francis Diyaolu, and my siblings, Victor, Precious, Sarah, Divine, and Emmanuel Oregbeme.

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ABSTRACT

Homophobia is investigated within Tendai Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* and Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Tree* in a bid to unravel the reality, roots, and results of homophobia presented in both texts. Utilizing the qualitative research methodology, textual, critical, and comparative methods of data analysis, as well as queer literary theory, various characters as well as their experiences are examined. Focusing on specific instances from both novels illuminate the fact that homophobia is indeed a reality conditioned by the society, with adverse effects on both queer and heterosexual characters. This study therefore concludes that although not inherent, homophobia is truly a reality that can be exhibited by both queer and heterosexual characters, it is conditioned by various societal factors, and it unfavorably affects both queer and heterosexual characters.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of Study

There is currently an extended catalogue of studies on different aspects of homosexuality, including homophobia. Many of these studies centre on the queer characters and their experiences in the society. This study however focuses on both the queer and heterosexual characters to explore different aspects of homophobia including its reality, roots, and results. This study adds to the already existing knowledge of homophobia in literary academia by exploring it from different perspectives to unravel the fact that no one is inherently homophobic, and people can be homophobic without even realizing. At the same time, it explores how homophobia is conditioned, and how it affects not just queer individuals but the society at large, through the lens of Huchu and Okparanta's text.

1.2. Scope of Study

Tendai Huchu's the *Hairdresser of Harare* and Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* are the primary sources of evidences for this research. However, this research focuses not on the entire texts but on sections of it dealing with homophobia. To this effect, a couple of excerpts are selected and utilized for this purpose of this study, thereby, constituting the scope. Also, relevant extra-textual materials are included as secondary sources of evidences.

1.3. Methodology

This study adopts the use of the qualitative research method. This research method is effectual in this study by its process of collecting and analyzing descriptive data, therefore, enabling an organized and in-depth analysis of homophobia in both Huchu and Okparanta's texts, which is the core of this study. This method aids the understanding of social reality and the exploration of complex phenomenon with the aim of understanding meaning attached to different experiences and the reason behind people's behavior. To this effect, textual, critical and comparative methods of data analysis is utilized in this research. The textual data analysis method is important here because the contents including the characters and setting in both texts are explored, leading up to the critical method of data analysis which takes an in-depth look into the content of both texts in order to thoroughly explore the subject matter. Since this study involves the exploration of more than one text, the comparative method of data analysis is also implemented to explore observable similarities and differences in both texts. The research method as well as all of these methods of data analysis work for better understanding of the texts and effectively tackling the subject matter of this study.

1.4. Theoretical Background

Queer theory is the theoretical framework on which this study is built. Although it is still difficult to define objectively, some scholars have offered different definitions of the term. Ranjan, in his essay defines queer theory as "a set of ideas loosely referred to as postmodern or poststructuralist, which are originally applied in a special way to gender, and more recently to

sexuality” (90). Acadia also states in the summary of her essay states that queer theory “describes a network of critiques emerging from a legacy of activism and looking ahead to utopian features” (n.p).

Theorizing and studying gender and sexual behaviors that occur outside of heterosexuality and that challenge the idea that heterosexuality is natural is sometimes referred to as “queer theory.” With a primary focus on questioning sexual, gender, class, and racial classifications, queer theory highlights the fluid and humanly acted character of sexualities, socially constructed standards, and dualistic categories. Particularly in relation to the experience of gender and sexuality, this theory examines and challenges social and political conventions (Thiel 1).

With a view of the various definitions and explanations that have been presented by various scholars, queer theory can summarily be described as a line of thinking that opposes conventional academic approaches, battles against social inequity, and challenges preconceived notions about gender and sexual identities.

Queer theory Is an interdisciplinary field that pushes people to think differently. It is a critical theory that analyzes and critiques how society defines gender and sexuality in order to expose the social and power structures at work in our daily lives.

For many academics, queer theory is the lens through which they can “queer” ideas and works in their own field. In this way, “queering” is not always about forcing queerness on a

field, but rather about using queer theory to envision novel, undiscovered possibilities (IU Libraries n.p)

The action roots of queer theory in the Stonewall Riots of 1969 situate drags, trans issues, class, race, violence, gender, and sexuality at the center of queer theorizing. Queer theory attends to both the rhetorical power of language and the broader structures of knowledge formulation. Just as feminist epistemology asks whose knowledge matters and who creates knowledge, queer theory asks whether knowledge matters and whether naturalized knowledge is constructed (Acadia n.p).

According to history, the term “queer” has been used to disparagingly describe members of the LGBT community, but once the LGBT rights movement began in the 1960s, members of the community fought to reclaim the term as an umbrella term encompassing all non-heterosexual, non-cisgender identities. Its meaning was reclaimed in the early 1990s when the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) became known as Queer Nation. The idea was that this term which implied “not normal”, could belong to the people dehumanized by it (Georgi n.p).

The late 20th century saw the emergence of queer theory, which positioned itself within a larger feminist, poststructuralist, and postmodern critique, in response to conventional beliefs about gender and sexual identities. Queer theory has conceptual origins in a number of disciplines, such as poststructuralist philosophy, feminism, and LGBTQ+ studies. Queer theory was influenced by the writings of academics such as Judith Butler, and early feminist

theories established the foundation for challenging gender norms and patriarchal hierarchies. The civil rights movement gave rise to LGBTQ+ studies, which advocated for the acceptance and portrayal of homosexual and lesbian identities. Queer theory developed as a result of the convergence of both movements, providing criticism of gender binary thinking and heteronormativity.

Lesbian, gay, and gender studies gave rise to queer theory in the 1990s. The term “queer theory” was first used informally in the 1980s by academics like Gloria Anzaldúa, who were influenced by Michel Foucault’s 1976 work “The History of Sexuality,” which proposed that sexuality is a social construct and that identity is not fixed.

Although, the term “queer theory” has been used informally in earlier times, it acquired recognition in the academic world in the 1990s through the works of Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, Theresa de Lauretis and many other scholars.

In 1990, a groundbreaking work with the title “Epistemology of the Closet” was published by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In the book, the question of what makes up human sexuality is dealt with. Sedgwick posits that especially within the backdrop of sexuality, freedom and understanding is curtailed by standard binary oppositions, arguing that restricting sexuality to heterosexuality or homosexuality is facile. She further reviewed a late 19th century history in which a person’s identity was defined by their sexual orientation in the same way gender had been used for centuries. Literary works which mirror the social and political ideas of queer theorists is the bedrock of Sedgwick’s “Epistemology of the Closet”.

Judith Butler at that time also published “Gender Trouble “, establishing the “Theory of Gender Performativity”. Gender Performativity is one of the key concepts that helps in the comprehension of what queer theory is. Butler interprets Gender Performativity positing that gender is not a fixed identity or role, rather it consists of a set of acts continuously constituting the identity which can evolve over time. Simply put, genders are not objective or universally defined. She argues that the experiences of being one of both genders are not clearly defined or applicable to the entire human race. In relation to queer theory, if gender is socially constructed, and performance is the basis for effectuating and buttressing a system of gender binary, what about the “non-normative” identities? At its core, queer theory disputes the notion that being heterosexual is by human default and is normal (Georgi n.p).

In the same year, the first queer theory conference was organized in the University of California, by Theresa de Lauretis. Although her use of the term “queer” at that time stirred controversy, de Lauretis discussed the core objective of queer theory, stating that queer theory challenges norms that effectuate inequalities in respect to social identities like class, race, sexuality and gender. She also proposed that queer theory should be studied separately from gay and lesbian studies.

In particular, the release of important works like Judith Butler’s “Gender Trouble” that provided a framework for talking about the fluidity of identity and the subversion of conventional discourse helped queer theory solidify in the early 1990s. By studying how literature and culture reflect and build sexuality, academics such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

also made a vital contribution. As queer theory grew in popularity, it started to include intersectional viewpoints, examining the ways in which sexual identities are intertwined with race, class, and other social identities. Beyond primarily white, Western narratives, scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa and

Cherríe Moraga expanded the focus by incorporating the experiences of queer people of color.

During this time, queer theory also began to acknowledge the varied experiences of queer people around the world by interacting with globalization and transnational viewpoints.

By the 2010s, queer theory had become widely accepted, and references to it could be found in a variety of political, cultural, and educational contexts. But criticism was also raised by this acceptance. Academics started to doubt queer theory's ability to address issues like violence and prejudice that underprivileged populations actually encounter. The academic concentration of queer theory, according to critics, occasionally separated it from activism and the real-life realities of LGBT people. To address the flaws of early queer theory, "neo-queer" talks have gained popularity in recent years. This requirement highlights how important it is to engage with radical politics, material situations, and queer people's experiences in modern settings.

It is noteworthy that queer theory does not centre only on the effects of gender and sexuality on the society, but also on why these "non-normatives" are stigmatized in the society. This theory aids in critically appraising wider social stance on discussions such as sexuality and gender. Queer theory serves as a reminder to diligently examine the diversity of sexual

minorities and acknowledge the discontinuity of experience across cultures and time (Ranjan 90).

As queer theory continues to grow, it remains an essential tool for challenging cultural narratives and advancing knowledge of sexual and gender identities in literature and beyond. Queer theory has greatly enhanced literary studies by offering a framework for comprehending the subtleties of sexuality and sexual identity in literature. Its transformation from a fledgling academic discourse to a thriving field of inquiry reflects broader social changes.

Queer theory is continuously growing as a field and many of its works can be found in various study area including literary studies and as Acadia states: “Queer theory empowers novel readings of the world, and worldly readings of the novel, opening up new ways of viewing life and text”(n.p).

“Homophobia” a sub-set of queer theory was derived from two Greek words “homos” which means “same” and “Phobos” which means “fear” and according to Merriam Webster dictionary, it is “discrimination against, aversion to, or fear of homosexuality or gay people” (n.p). In other terms, it can be defined as prejudice, hatred, aversion, or antipathy towards homosexuals.

Originally used to describe an irrational fear of homosexuals or in a more internalized form, among homosexuals, the term “homophobia” has evolved in meaning since its first coining by George Weinberg in the late 1960s. As a better way to define the negative attitudes

leveled against homosexuals, psychologist, Gregory Herek coined the term “sexual prejudice” as a better replacement for “homophobia” because it is more a form of prejudice than a phobia.

Homophobia is exhibited in different forms and different types have been identified including internalized, social and emotional homophobia amongst others. The internalized homophobia has to do with negative stereotypes, prejudice and stigma about homosexuality that turns a person with same sex attraction inwards on themselves. Furthermore, the fear of being identified as a homosexual is a form of social homophobia.

To explore homophobia in Huchu and Okparanta’s text, queer theory is adopted as the theoretical framework. This is done in order to “queer” the subject matter. As stated above, queering a subject matter is not about imposing queerness but viewing the subject matter through different lenses and from different standpoints. To this effect, homophobia is “queered” in this research in order to illuminate its reality, causes, and effects presented by Huchu and Okparanta’s.

1.5. Literature Review

In recent times, the emergence of homosexuality and homophobic cultures as a central topic of debate in the society has attracted significant scholarly attention. With focus on the African society, various researches have explored Tendai Huchu’s *The Hairdresser of Harare*, as well as Chinelo Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees* examining homophobic behaviors in

the society reflected in both novels. These scholarships explore various aspects of the novels including characters and themes to investigate this topic.

Thomas Michael Emeka Chukwumezie and Elizabeth Onogwu in their study of Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, explore the dilemma, physical and psychological persecution and torment faced by homosexuals in Nigeria, discussing the challenges they encounter in a society that polices and punishes their sexual orientations thus forcing them to live "under-cover" or be killed. The study reveals how homosexuality has taken on many negative assumptions in contemporary society. It also goes on to evaluate the future of gays in the society, at the same time exploring how homosexuals create and sustain homoerotic relationships, form homosocial alliances to deliberate the general problem surrounding their sexualities, and the punishment they face when they are caught. It also observes that tolerating the presence of homosexuals in the society does not cause severe harm to the soul of the society.

While this study focuses on evaluating the challenges, the future of homosexuals in the society, and how homosexuality has taken on different negative assumptions, my study focuses on why there are so many negative assumptions about homosexuality and why homosexuals experience the challenges they do.

In his scholarship on Tendai Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* and Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, Atanazio Ernest Kamwamba examines the portrayal of queer individuals in the two novels who are forced to mask their sexuality and adopt a

heteronormative public persona in order to fit into mainstream society. At the same time observes the authors' use of diaristic and epistolary writing in which individuals of queer identity reveal their feelings for each other as strong tools of agency to their repressed queer characters.

Ernest states in his essay:

Using this narrative mode, Okparanta brings out the voice of two girls: Ndidi and Ijeoma, through letters. Their voice is repressed by the heterosexual society and the only way to bring it out is through this epistolary mode. (920)

Here he explores Okparanta's use of epistolary writing as a means of expressing the feelings of her queer characters. They are able to express their true feelings without the restrictions often imposed on them by the heterosexual society. Hence, this literary style, because there's the possibility of the letters not remaining a secret, gives the other characters and the society a glimpse into the feelings, life and experiences of these queer characters.

Ernest also asserts that:

Huchu uses literary styles as epistolary and diaristic writing to accord agency to his queer characters. Huchu depicts traces of inclusion where we see some members of the heterosexual community accepting to coexist with queer personalities. (916)

The similarities between the literary styles employed by both authors, as well as the reason behind it is evident here. Apart from the use of epistolary writing to give voice to the queer

characters, Ernest's essay also observes the authors' representation of heterosexual characters who accept the presence of queer individuals in the society, offering a glimpse of the possibility of an Inclusive society which accommodates people's sexualities that are considered nonnormative.

While this paper examines how queer characters are forced to mask their identity and the use of diaristic and epistolary writing as an instrument of agency to repressed queer characters in both texts, my study examines why, according to the texts, it is necessary for homosexuals to mask their identity, the various traumas these characters experience while masking their identity, as well as those they experience when these letters and diaries are discovered and used as a weapon against them.

Gibson Ncube's study carries out a sociological reading of Tendai Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare*. His study analyzes how various ways of construing homosexuality shapes the selfunderstanding of the culture as a whole, arguing that the fear of stigmatization makes it difficult for Huchu's protagonist to come out of the closet. Ncube states in his research:

The novel depicts how the protagonist closets his sexual orientation after he comes out to his family who disinherits him because of the "shame" he has brought to the family. The closet allows him to escape the reprobation of his family and community whilst not necessarily renouncing his sexual orientation and gender identity. (9)

Ncube's research examines various factors that leads to the minority sexualities remaining largely concealed, which includes the fear of stigmatization from people as close as family to

members to the society at large, evident in Huchu's protagonist. However, being closeted does not imply that their orientation or identity changes.

The research also destabilizes the political economy of identities and genders which places immense importance on upholding heteronormative perceptions in the society. And in conclusion, the study states that a sociological reading of the closet allows for a better appreciation of the multifaceted social processes that may shape the construction of homosexuality in homophobic societies such as Zimbabwe.

While this research offers a sociological reading of the closet and highlights factors that influence the repression of minor sexualities, my study offers a queer study, investigating not only the factors that influence the repression of minor sexualities, but also their effects on concerned individuals and the society at large.

In his queer study of Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, C Agalya explores how the neocolonial African society portrayed in the novel is filled with Christian beliefs and weaponizes the holy book of Christianity to exploit homosexuals. It examines the silent tragedy where the protagonist, Ijeoma, is forced to marry a straight man because of societal norms, and how she fights for her ideology until she is accepted and recognize, unlike Amina who submits to social constructs. It explores the arrogant subjugation, total control and subsequent submission to control portrayed in the novel, while positing that the cruel treatment of homosexuals in the society is based on deep-rooted stereotypic archetypes.

Agalya attempts an explanation of the motivation behind the actions of the neocolonial African society portrayed in the novel, primarily represented by Adaora when he states:

The opposition of the mother is not rooted from the lack of affection towards her daughter. Instead, it is because of the biased and unfair culture and the resulting cultural competence of each individual. (1597)

According to this, Adaora weaponizes the bible against her daughter because that was her understanding of the knowledge she has acquired as a firm believer in Christianity. She was acting based on the education she has received and this is likely the same case for other members of the society.

Consequently, this research posits that the society's treatment of homosexuals stems from some kind of stereotypic archetypes. My study however examines these stereotypic archetypes, as well as other various elements from which the society's treatment of homosexuals' stem.

Cristina Cruz-Gutiérrez in her own study theorizes Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* as a novel of affective and romantic development, delving into the negative effects in forms of fear, shame and guilt, that influences the protagonist's experience as a result of her non-conforming to the dictums of Nigerian customary norms.

Cristina, in her article asserts that:

In *Under the Udala Trees*, Ijeoma's experiences allow her to acquire a critical perspective both towards the idealization and romanticization of Nigerian customary laws and towards their ruling of the public and private domains. In this sense, a "bildungsromance" does not merely focus on romance but on the de-romanticization or de-idealization of traditional practices and customary laws oppressing women. (99-100)

By theorizing Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* as a "bildungsromance" in her essay, Christina employs the term to describe the growth of the novel's protagonist, Ijeoma, as intrinsically associated with the experiences gathered from her affective attachment both in private and public spheres.

This paper goes on to analyze Ijeoma's sentimental relationships as she discovers and naturalizes her queer identity, discussing the role of her romantic relationships in promoting positive forms of affect such as pride and self-love.

While this paper explores the romantic and affective relationships of the protagonist, discussing her negative experiences because of her queer identity and also the positive which is evidence of growth, my study investigates the experiences of not just the protagonist and other queer characters, but also other heterosexual characters in the text, discussing their response to queer identities and the motivation behind it.

K. Rupa Shree and Dr N. Gayathri in their research on Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* explore the experience of the protagonist struggling between her mother, society and

marriage within the Nigerian context, adopting marriage as the only choice to meet survival. This research states that: “The main character favours a man and marriage by force, mainly not to disappoint her mother, to conform to the society, and due to the threatening atmosphere in Nigeria” (510).

This research examines how the protagonist is kept repressed by marriage due to societal norms which does not accept her true identity. It explores how the protagonist was repressed by her mother until marriage and how this repression continued with her husband during marriage.

It explores the protagonist’s personal journey from a path of panic, perplexity and pain, discussing how the overpowering factors of her mother, society and marriage managed to keep her repressed, and how she was only successful at coming out during motherhood. It discusses how the queer protagonist reaches liberation and was able to dwell within her native walls.

While this study discusses the repression of a queer protagonist by different members of society, my study examines the reason behind this repression and why it is allowed and even promoted in the society as reflected in the text.

In their paper, Judith Chepkoech, Dr Robert Wesonga, PhD, and Dr Cellyne Anudo, PhD, discusses how sexuality is often determined by one’s gender and how homophobic ideas and heterosexism further complicates it. Their scholarship states that:

This practice of compulsory heterosexuality is therefore adopted by societies to deny members of the society any other form of sexual desire and maintain the binary order of sexuality (male-female). (12)

Their research examines the various factors that affect people at various levels in association with same sex relationships as reflected in the selected texts, stating that these factors arise from measures deliberately put in place to implement and maintain heterosexuality. It goes on to analyze how heteronormative societies respond to lesbian homosexuality, shedding light on cultural practices that are put in place in an attempt to normalize heterosexuality.

This study explores practices put in place to normalize heterosexuality, my study however explores the reason behind the society's need to put measures in place to normalize heterosexuality, even unconsciously.

The scholarships above have delved into different aspects of homophobia in Africa centering on the experiences of the queer protagonists in the texts. Examination of the dilemmas of the protagonists, how they are forced to mask their identity, stigmatizations they experience, how various means are employed to force or normalize heterosexuality, and also their struggle for survival in a heteronormative society have been carried out. However, it is noteworthy that homophobic cultures may be practiced with or without realization by both queer and heterosexual characters, there are a couple of factors that contribute to this, and these cultures come with their repercussions. My study focuses on the reality of homophobia in the society, discussing how these behaviors are manifested in the society with or without realization by

both queer and heterosexual characters. It also focuses on the factors that give rise to homophobic cultures, as well as the effects of the practice of these cultures.

1.6. Thesis Statement

Through physical and cultural setting in addition to characterization, Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* and Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* unravel the reality, roots and results of homophobia.

CHAPTER TWO

PHYSICAL SETTING AND THE REALITY OF HOMOPHOBIA

In many societies, especially those where traditional beliefs collide with social and legal norms, homophobia is a pervasive issue. It is especially noticeable when homophobia is present in African literature, which addresses issues of social justice, colonial heritage, and identity. Tendai Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* and Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* both explore homophobia from the perspectives of social forces, cultural expectations, and individual identity. By exploring the lives of the characters, particularly the queer characters, in a setting rife with prejudice, discrimination, and the frequently brutal enforcement of heteronormative values, both books shed light on the realities of homophobia. The reality of homophobia is brought to light in both texts through forms such as

violence/threat of violence, prejudice, ostracism, discrimination, and conflicts, and these could be practiced with or without intent, by both heterosexual and queer characters.

2.1. The Reality of Homophobia in Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare*

Huchu's novel is set in the scenery of Zimbabwe, which from the exploration of the text, is deeply ingrained in homophobic cultures. The disheartening reality of homophobia in the society with focus on the African society is brought to light in Huchu's text not just through the life of his queer characters but also other heterosexual characters in the novel. Drawing references from the text, the actions, reactions and inactions of these characters to certain occurrences, as well as their different experiences as the story unfolds is explored in this section to illuminate the reality of homophobia.

2.1.1. Prejudice as an Indication of Homophobic Reality

The first instance of the reality of homophobia explored in this section is from chapter fifteen of Huchu's novel. Here, Vimbai invites the novel's protagonist, Dumi, to her church for Sunday service, and during his sermon, the church's pastor, Pastor Roger Mvumba, gives an apocalyptic sermon on immorality including homosexuality. He says: "You must be on the lookout for homosexuals and sexual deviants. Perverts shall burn..." (73).

This is an example of homophobia existing in form of prejudice. The issue here is not the pastor preaching against homosexuality, but the manner and tone in which he does it. He was doing his due diligence as a pastor but delivered the message sounding prejudiced and

homophobic, without even realizing. This is proof of the fact that people can be homophobic without being aware.

Maybe if the pastor had given the sermon taking a different approach, instead of sounding prejudiced and discriminatory, it would not have had the kind of effect it had on Dumi who felt attacked and wanted to flee immediately from the church. To other members of the church like

Vimbai, it was a powerful sermon and they saw nothing wrong with the pastor's approach, but to Dumi, it felt like a direct attack, and this attack was just more trouble added to his already overflowing emotional baggage which he was trying his hardest to suppress, the baggage that weighed heavily on him as a result of his numerous experiences, just like the pastor's unconscious prejudice, because of his being non-heterosexual.

Another instance of homophobia appearing in form of prejudice and discrimination in Huchu's text is the scene of the revelation of Dumi's sexuality to Vimbai through his diary. Her reaction to this information attests to the reality of homophobia in the society. She had known Dumi for month and knew he is a good individual with great personality. She had admitted how kind, caring and helpful he is, but at acquiring the knowledge that he is homosexual, she is immediately gripped by some kind of irrational fear and disgust. She also begins to see him in a different light, as abnormal.

DUMI IS A HOMOSEXUAL-Ngochani. If it wasn't written in his hand before my eyes, I would have denied it. I could not have foreseen this. He spoke like a normal man, wore clothes like a normal man and even walked like a normal man... (166).

Here she is struck with awe and could not bring herself to accept this news. As it begins to dawn on her that this news is indeed true, her homophobic tendencies are awoken, and again unconsciously, she starts being homophobic: "I rubbed my body, feeling dirty and needing a long bath" (166).

Because she had associated with Dumi, a homosexual, she started to feel dirty and immediately, hate and prejudice sprung. She starts thinking to herself that Dumi was raised in a Christian home, but there he was turning her own house to Sodom and Gomorrah. She also thinks to herself that Colin, someone she had never met but only came to know of through Dumi's diary was a pervert who should have been given way more punishment, because he is also homosexual: "It seems that Canadian fellow, Colin, was a pervert as well. The authorities should have arrested him and locked him up forever" (166).

She proceeded to calling homosexuals "depraves" and their orientation "satanic behaviors". Because of her discovery she could not get herself to sleep. So unsettled was she that even her pastor noticed in church that something bothered her. She thinks to herself that "Philip the rapist was better than Dumi the homo". She thinks that homosexuals are worse than pigs. As the story unfolds, these feelings of hers leads her into taking decisions that put Dumi in harm's way just because she did not know how to deal with them. Various questions began to

spring up from this chain of events. Why did Vimbai's perception of Dumi suddenly change when she found out his (homo)sexuality? Why did she think Colin's sexual orientation should be criminalized? Why did she think a rapist is better than a homosexual?

Both incidents, the pastor's sermon and Vimbai finding out Dumi is homosexual, are major evidences in the text that proves that discrimination and prejudice against homosexuals, often carried out unconsciously, is one of the forms homophobias assumes to become a reality.

2.1.2. Familial/Social Ostracism as an Indication of Homophobic Reality

Ostracism is another form of the exhibition of homophobia in Huchu's text. Characters who are found or even suspected to be queer are alienated and left to live in isolation. The major characters in the text who have this experience is Dumi, who is queer, and Fungai, who is speculated to be queer.

Dumi, Huchu's queer protagonist, is confronted with familial ostracism as he is alienated from his family for a period of time because of his sexual orientation. Dumi had to move away from his family and have a life of his own because most of the members of his family did not support his sexuality.

It became so extreme that he was not expected to be at his brother's wedding. On their way to the wedding and before finally meeting his family, Dumi was quite tensed, Vimbai also noticed how agitated and unsettled he was. Even at the wedding ceremony, his presence was barely noticed. The family left the venue of the ceremony to take pictures without him. He

was only able to reconnect with them at the wedding party through deception, making them believe his orientation and sexuality had changed. His family was quite elated when they thought he had been “cured” by Vimbai and were glad to do anything for her.

Another instance of ostracism as a materialization of homophobia in Huchu’s text is found in chapter thirty-seven when members of his community, including his philosophy group members, began to speculate that Fungai, Vimbai’s brother, is homosexual because he attempted a philosophical explanation of homosexuality. In this case, what Fungai experiences is social ostracism.

I could not have known at that time that my question will lead to the collapse of his philosophy club. Whenever Fungai walked the streets with his dogs, youths called him the ‘ngochani’ and kept him at arm’s length. (177)

For the singular reason that he tried to philosophically explain why the existence of homosexuality is not exactly bizarre, Fungai is deserted, even by all the members of his philosophy club except one. Members of his philosophy group, who congregated with an open mind to discuss happenings in the world suddenly became close-minded when the topic of homosexuality came up. Members of the society as well became sort of scared of him, why is that? He was not caught in any incriminating act, just for not having the same perception as

other members of the community about homosexuality, he is tagged a homosexual and people avoided him like a plague. This is a glaring proof of the reality of homophobia.

All of the instances explored above unravel the presence of homophobia in Huchu's text. Through Dumi's experience with his family, and Fungai's with his community, it becomes discernible that homophobia can take the form of alienation in the society.

2.1.3. Violence as an Indication of Homophobic Reality

A more common manner in which homophobia is exhibited is through violence, and this is also related in Huchu's text. Colin and Dumi are both exposed to physical violence by due the intolerance of homosexuality in their community.

Prior to Dumi's alienation from his family, Mr Ncube, Dumi's father found out Dumi was in a relationship with another man, Colin. Mr Ncube employed various means, including harm, to keep his son "safe". Mr Ncube did not care that his tactics were putting another in harm's way, in fact, he felt whatever happens to the young man was well deserved. He did not care that hurting someone is wrong, all he felt was prejudice against a person because he is non-heterosexual.

In the same vein, when the minister found out Dumi was having an affair with her husband, she did not hesitate to "teach him a lesson". She got him thoroughly beaten up and left for dead. Dumi was rushed to the hospital after this attack and it was discovered that he suffered

major injuries including in his head as a result. After the incident, Dumi had to flee the country to save his life.

These events allow for the observation of how heterosexual characters use brute force against their homosexual counterparts and see no wrong in their actions. From the incidents portrayed by the author in his text, it is apparent that homophobia can also take the form of violence.

The responses of various characters in Huchu's texts examined above all lean towards one direction. The prejudice, feelings of disgust, alienation, sudden hatred and even resorting to violence, all point to the fact that consciously or unconsciously a good number of members of the society have homophobic tendencies, and homophobia is present in the society.

2.2. The Reality of Homophobia in Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*

Taking a leap into Okparanta's novel set in the Nigerian scenery, various instances of the reality of homophobia in the society is also examined. The protagonist of this story, Ijeoma is a vibrant young woman who goes through various ordeals in her society, emotional included, just because she is a lesbian. Her, as well as other homosexuals in the text are symbols of what many homosexuals experience in today's society, especially the African society. These experiences of theirs includes physical, mental and emotional traumas, with some of these traumatic experiences leading to death.

2.2.1. Discrimination and Familial Conflicts as an Exhibition of Homophobia

This is one form of the materialization of homophobia prominent in Okparanta's text. Ijeoma's relationship with her mother as well as with her husband deteriorates after the confirmation of her (homo)sexuality. Although they still cohabit during these periods, several intricacies arose in their relationship.

To start with, Adora's treatment of her daughter after she finds out that she is homosexual was unusual looking back at the relationship they had between them before the disclosure of Ijeoma's (homo)sexuality. From the moment Ijeoma returned home to her mother from the grammar school teacher's after she was caught with Amina, Adora's attitude towards her daughter took a new dimension. First is the silent to treatment, then the need to cleanse her soul. In a bid to "purify" her daughter, she began weaponizing the Bible:

‘DON'T YOU SEE?’. Mama asked. ‘It's that same behavior that led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the very same behavior that you and that girl- What's her name again? - engaged in’. (68)

The excerpt above is just one among the many instances of Adora's weaponization and manipulation of the bible against her daughter. Adora went on to organize daily bible study sessions with her daughter which majorly focused on highlighting bible verses condemning homosexuality through her own understanding and explanation. At a point, she felt the bible sessions were not having that much impact and then decided to perform exorcism with prayer water because she believed her daughter was possessed. Adora is agitated when she realizes

that Ijeoma still thought of the kind of relationship she had with Amina. There was always rife in their relationship as a result of this, and their relationship was never really the same anymore. Things only became better when she thought her daughter had changed and was walking the right path, until she realizes that there is nothing else she could do and then resigns to fate.

Chibundu and Ijeoma's relationship as husband and wife also had some intricacies because of Ijeoma's true identity. Chibundu had his suspicions earlier but he probably thought ignoring them would make them go away. He is one of the characters in this text who cannot be said to be outright homophobic. However, when he is confronted with the truth, the homophobic tendencies that he was thought not to possess are unmasked. At the eventual confrontation with his wife, he says:

“You are my wife, for God's sake. I can do things to make your life miserable. Do you hear me? You are my wife. Whatever you do, don't provoke me, or I will see it to that you pay the price”. (246)

This was not just a threat made by Chibundu. Her once caring husband who was not bothered to know the “abomination” she had committed because he thought it was unnecessary, all of a sudden turned a new leaf and became manipulative. From that point forward, their relationship took a different turn.

Adaora and Chibundu's characters portray a different dimension that homophobia can take. Subtle discrimination and conflicts within a family setting as a result of an individual's sexual orientation as portrayed in this text, points to the reality of homophobia.

2.2.2. Threat of Violence/Violence as an Exhibition of Homophobia

Another medium through which homophobia materializes in Okparanta's text is the threat of violence and actual violence. Different incidents in the texts including arson, murder and the justification of brutality buttresses this argument.

The grammar school teacher's reaction when he caught the girls together is a subtle form of violence, as well as a threat of violence. First, the grammar school teacher can be said to have been mortified; "The sight of us must have startled him, because he gasped like a dying man taking his final breath" (111). Next, he proceeded to hit them (he had threatened to beat them before as a form of discipline but had actually never done that until that moment). After that, he proceeded to giving them an intense lecture on how their act is abomination condemned by both holy books, the Bible and the Koran. He then went on to scare them with frightening tales of people in the past who have been caught in similar acts, telling them of how the accused in those cases were stoned all the way to the river, and stoned even as they drowned to their death. This experience alone was bound to leave the girls scarred for life, because they were threatened by the violence in the stories told to them by the grammar school teacher.

Moving on to when Ijeoma encounters Ndidi, many acts of violence is perpetuated against homosexuals and these acts were justified by other members of the community.

When Ndidi invites Ijeoma to the secret “gay club” camouflaged as a church, she informs Ijeoma of a similar arrangement which existed at precedent but was found out and burnt down, presumably by some heterosexual members of the society who were extremely repulsed by homosexuality. Luckily, no one was in that building at that time so there were no casualties. However, not so long after Ndidi and Ijeoma started visiting this new club together, it was also found out, and this time, unluckily, there were casualties.

We had only walked two yards when we saw, in the backyard of the church, a flame of orange and blue. A stack of burning logs. Ndidi began to cry, and then all of us were crying too, because we had all seen what remained of the face, and we had all recognized her: Adanna in the midst of the logs, burning and burning and turning to ashes right before our eye. (182)

While others were able to get to safety, Adanna was not so lucky. She was captured by the raiders and set ablaze. The “church” was also burnt down. Many weeks went by after the incident and it seemed like members of the community had a mutual agreement that whatever had happened in the “church” was necessary. Even though the perpetrators of the act were unknown, they seem to have been viewed as heroes or demigods who have come to the aid of the people and cleansed their land.

Analyzing these series of events, various questions begin to come to mind. Why was it necessary in the first instance that this gay hangout location to be camouflaged as a church and kept a secret? Why was Adanna set ablaze? Why was the “church” burnt down? Why was this incident justified by members of the community? All of these events and the questions that arise from them points to the reality of homophobia.

Another disheartening event that mirrors the homophobic nature of the society through violence in Okparanta’s text is the incident of two men being beaten to death by a crowd in the market because they were homosexuals. And when this incident was brought to the notice of the police, they were the least unbothered: “‘Let them rot like the faggots they are.’ One of the officers said. The other one said, ‘If they were not dead already, we would beat them some more’” (179).

In broad daylight, two citizens were murdered by other citizens, and police officers who are meant to be custodians of the law, who are meant to protect the rights as well as the lives of citizens could not be bothered by the situation because the victims were homosexuals. The crowd at the market that got involved in these murders did not stop to think that they were doing something wrong, beating humans like themselves to death. They must have thought they were fighting a just cause, for the singular reason that these men were homosexuals. Their bodies were even left to rot but for their friends that came to carry their corpse. Again, questions begin to come up. Why exactly were those men beaten to death? Why did the crowd think their action was right? Why was there no compassion, nobody to help? A crime was committed, murders were committed, why were the police so nonchalant?

Taking a dive into the epilogue of Okparanta's novel, a case was reported from the University where Ijeoma's daughter, Chidima, now works, the University of Lagos. Two female students were caught in a same-sex relationship, and some other students decided to take laws into their own hands. They stripped these girls and started beating them, screaming "666" and "God punish you!" to their faces. Those who did not participate in this violence just stood around watching and recording with their phones (275). No one thought to intervene and rescue these girls from this villainous crowd.

Another report in the epilogue of Okparanta's text had it that a bunch of God-preaching hooligans stoned and beat several members of a gay and lesbian-affirming church in Lagos, bashed their faces, caused their face to become swollen as purple blue balloons (275).

All of these are instances of violence as an exhibition of homophobia. Incidents like this birth questions like; Why do people persecute homosexuals and think they have done right? Why do many not step in to help these victims? Again, these events and the questions they birth, reflects the reality of homophobia.

2.3. Comparison of Huchu and Okparanta's Depiction of Homophobia

A plethora of evidences pointing to the reality of homophobia is presented by Huchu and Okparanta in their respective novels. Behaviors such as violence, discrimination, prejudice and so on, on the grounds of non-heterosexual orientation are eminent pointers of the reality of homophobia depicted in different manners in both texts. While both novels are set against

the backdrop of two different African societies more similarities than differences are observable.

The analysis above has explored the reality of homophobia from the standpoint of heterosexual characters who have little to no tolerance for homosexuality, however, homophobic tendencies are not only found in the novels' heterosexual characters. Queer characters in both texts are revealed to also possess some homophobic tendencies which makes them turn against themselves for fear of being identified as homosexual. This form of homophobia possessed by queer characters can be described as internalized homophobia.

Starting with Huchu's queer protagonist, Dumi, internalized homophobia can be spotted. The fear of being identified as a homosexual, especially after his family's reaction when he came out to them, turned Dumi against himself, made him live in a closet, and also made him develop internalized homophobia. When Vimbai first finds out his secret and confronted him, he was mortified and ran into the dark of the night. That was because of his internalized homophobia. All of his sneaking around with the minister's husband was also because of internalized homophobia. After his secret came out to the open, he admits that his life feels hollow and he has no one to turn, and also used to believe that his gayness was a cancer for which he needed cure. All of these is because of the homophobic tendencies within him.

In Okparanta's texts as well, some of her queer characters are also seen to possess internalized homophobia. The change in the dynamic of Ijeoma and Amina's relationship after they were caught together and given several lectures buttresses this argument. It started

with Amina who began withdrawing to herself for fear of her own sexuality, and finally gets married to a man as the only option to salvage her situation. Ijeoma who seemed to be more carefree is defeated at some point because of the internal conflict she experiences, most especially when she gets pregnant and thinks punishments would be meted on her by God through her daughter because of her past relationships.

Both authors' portrayal of this aspect of homophobia provides an insight of how these characters confront despair and self-loathing. The internal conflicts and other internal troubles both authors' queer characters experience reveals that homophobia is not only among heterosexual individuals, queer individuals also have homophobia.

Another observable similarity in both texts is the fact that many of these homophobic characters do not realize they are being homophobic. The queer characters in both texts for instance, who experience internalized homophobia, do not realize they have and are exhibiting homophobic behaviours. The pastor in Huchu's text was only carrying out his assignment not realizing he was being homophobic. The Ncubes in Huchu's texts, and Adaora and the grammar school teacher in Okparanta's were only trying to protect their kin, and help rid the society of an anomaly, they never realized that their actions were homophobic. Majority of the members of the societies in both texts did not view their actions towards homosexuals as homophobic, rather they felt they were fighting a good cause, eradicating this unnaturalness from the society. All of these establishes the fact that many homophobic practices carried out in the society do not necessarily emerge from the intent to

be homophobic, and most times people who practice them do not realize they are being homophobic.

Summarily, both novels provide a deep understanding of the prevalence of homophobia in their own societies. Huchu and Okparanta analyze the complex aspects of being queer in cultures that are categorically intolerant to sexual orientation diversity. Both authors shed light on the characters' experiences, hardships, and emotional upheaval through their in-depth character development and exploratory storylines. By doing this, both authors mirror the reality of homophobia, while at the same time exposing the human cost of bigotry, and questioning social conventions.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURAL SETTING AND THE ROOTS OF HOMOPHOBIA

As stated in the previous chapter, homophobic cultures could be practiced with or without realization and these practices could be elusive or palpable. Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare*, as well as Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, both presents a nuanced exploration of the origins of homophobia shaped by cultural, social and political dynamics within their respective context. These roots of homophobia are not restricted to homophobic practices in the society alone but also internalized homophobia among people with same-sex attraction. The major roots of homophobia elucidated in both texts are; religious fervour/understanding and the fear of the unknown, conditioned by factors like; stereotypes and misinformation, and constitutional heterosexism.

3.1. Religious Fervour/Understanding as a Root of Homophobia

One thing that appears to be an archetype in both texts is the characters substantiating homophobic tendencies with religious claims. Characters like Vimbai and the pastor in Huchu's text, as well as Adaora and the grammar school teacher in Okparanta's texts are employed as case studies for this argument. Although, these texts utilize Christianity in the discussion of this fact, Islam is also referenced in Okparanta's text.

It is a common religious dogma that God created opposite genders, man and woman for a reason.

“They are to be each other’s lovers and sexual partners, and that is the only right way to live”

(Agalya 1598), in fact, that is the only way things should be done. This commonly held belief is the major standpoint of many of the characters in both texts. The characters however take things further by validating their homophobic tendencies with this as well as other biblical references which, according to their knowledge and understanding, substantiate this belief.

Using Okparanta’s text as the starting point, a few excerpts from the text is discussed to explore how members of the society back up their homophobic tendencies and behaviors with their religious understanding.

He must have noticed the Bible on the table when he grabbed the lantern, because he turned back to the table, set the lantern back down, and grabbed the Bible. Pointing to it, he cried, “An abomination!” (112)

In the excerpt above, the grammar school teacher who was Ijeoma and Amina’s guardian at that time had just caught them together. After hitting both of them, he went on to justify his response to the situation with the Bible. He pointed the Bible towards them telling them that their action was an abomination according to the bible. He did not stop there, he continued:

Now he turned to Amina. He shouted at her too. “The Koran condemns it as well. I don’t know much of Islam, but I know enough to know that the Koran and the Bible see eye to eye on this matter!” (112)

He also referenced the Koran because Amina is Muslim. In reprimanding them for their actions, his first means of back up is religion and this is because of his religious understanding. He does not know much about the Islamic religion but he believes that both religions have a mutual stance on this particular issue. This is evidence that many of the homophobic tendencies and behaviors exhibited in the society have their roots in religious understanding.

Another character in Okparanta's text whose religious fervour and biblical understanding is also the root cause of her homophobic response to homosexuality is Adaora, Ijeoma's mother. In one of her conversations with her daughter, she says: "The fact that the bible says it's bad is all the reason you need" (69)

Here, another instance of validating homophobic behaviors with religion is seen. Adaora believes that no explanation is needed as long as something has been stated by the bible. One is to take the commands of the bible and live by it without questions whether they fully understand or not. In the same vein, she instructs her daughter, telling her to take the precepts of the bible and live by it, because the only thing that matters is what the bible has to say.

In one of their several Bible sessions, Adaora explains the story of Lot offering up his own daughter in order to protect his guests from sin. Stating that Lot was a good man for protecting his guests from being handled in the terrible way the bible warns against. Explaining the lesson derived from the story she says:

...Everybody knows what lesson we should take from that story. Man must not lie with man, and if man does, man will be destroyed. Which is why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. (68)

In another of their Bible sessions, Adaora reads from a chapter in the book of Judges in the Bible which has the story of a kind man offering his daughter up to be raped instead of his Levite guests, and one of the guests offering his wife up to be raped instead of himself. In all of the events in these stories, Adaora's take out is the fact that the men prevented a sin not intended by God. She says:

Don't you see? If the men had offered themselves, it would have been an abomination. They offered up the girls so that things would be as God intended: man and woman instead of man and man. Do you see now? (73)

Again, this is proof that religious fervour, influenced by the understanding and interpretation of religious dogmas validated by biblical references sometimes prompts homophobic tendencies. In the last two except above, Adaora's understanding and interpretation of biblical texts is not far from what many others would have. Adaora's thought was prevention of sin and God's intention and that was the lesson she was trying to pass across to her daughter. All of these were to prove to Ijeoma that a relationship outside the precepts of the Bible would only lead to destruction just like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Also, because of her religious stance, Adaora believes Ijeoma is possessed by demons: "You must really

understand that that kind of behavior between you and that girl is the influence of demonic spirits” (83).

Amina’s character also depicts how religious fervour and understanding can evoke homophobia, in this case, internalized homophobia. After she wakes from her apocalyptic dream, her homophobia, with religious fervour as its root is exhibited: “Maybe it was a sign, she said. Maybe we were the fallen children, the sinful ones without the strength to continue in the path of righteousness” (136).

She is overwhelmed by the religious teachings she receives that it even begins to influence her dreams. After she wakes from this dream, she is very distressed and scared, and no amount of explanation could pacify her. From that moment, she becomes more withdrawn especially from Ijeoma who was her love interest. She becomes fearful of her (homo)sexuality, believing that she has fallen far from righteousness and the grace of God, and does not have the strength to continue in the path of righteousness. This homophobia blossoms in her and forces her to get into relationships with the opposite sex and finally, she gets married to a Hausa boy, even though Ijeoma is positive on her behalf that that is not what she truly wants. Her internalized homophobia which flourishes solely because of religious fervour and understanding, forces her to turn against herself and cave to societal norms.

Amina is not Okparanta’s only queer character that experiences internalized homophobia as a result of religious fervour. Ijeoma also has her fair share of this experience. This is why she

keeps having dreams of her mother scolding her and constantly remembering the Bible sessions with her mum that it becomes a cause for her to worry.

The images of Mama were interspersed with a thunderous sound that, in the dream, was the voice of God, scolding also like Mama, reprimanding, condemning me for my sins.

Each time I feel to sleep, the same dream. (176)

These dreams coupled with other experiences she has makes her visit the church frequently, seeking for answers, and it seemed like none was coming and this made her more desolate. Even during her pregnancy after her marriage to Chibundu, she continues to visit the church, constantly praying because of the fear that God would punish her for her sins through her child.

All I knew in that moment was that there was a real possibility of God punishing me for the nature of my love. My mind went back to the Bible. Because if people like Mama and the grammar school teacher were right, then the Bible was all the proof I needed to know that God will surely punish me. (198)

Again, religious fervour is presented as a root of homophobia in Okparanta's text through the response of Aba community when murder and arson is committed against the queer members of their community.

No one could say who had made the discovery, or who had taken part in the burning, but everyone seemed to agree that all of it was necessary, that the discovery was aided by God, that an example needed to be set to cleanse Aba of such sinful ways. (183)

Exploring Huchu's texts also unravels similar events in which religious fervour and understanding prompts homophobic cultures. The novel opens with Vimbai saying: "I knew there was something not quite right about Dumi the very first time I ever laid my eyes on him. The problem was I just could not tell what it was. Thank God for that" (8). This opening is not only an indicator of but also foreshadows the role of religious fervour in the text. As Ncube states in his study: "...from the very beginning, the reference of God also evokes the religious perspective which will be developed as the novel unfolds to admonish the protagonist's sexuality" (14).

The major characters in this text explored to prove that religious fervour can be a root for homophobic behaviors are Vimbai and the pastor.

The pastor during his sermon extends a homophobic stance on homosexuality using biblical references to authenticate his perspective: "...How can a man and another man sleep together? God made Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve" (74).

Again, a religious dogmas validated with biblical references is the foundation on which the pastor subtly and unconsciously exhibits homophobia. He interprets God's creation of Adam and Eve according to the Bible and uses that as evidence on why the congregation should be on the "lookout" for homosexuals because they shall burn in hell. Now this congregation,

just like Vimbai, will continue with this knowledge, practicing homophobic cultures without even realizing. This proves that religious fervour is a root of homophobia.

In further examination of this text, evidences of how Vimbai's religious fervour prompts her into homophobic practices are illuminated. When she finds out Dumi's (homo)sexuality, after expressing her sudden disgust, her next thought was his religious upbringing and biblical references. She thought to herself: "As far as I knew, Dumi had been raised in a good Christian family (if Catholics are Christians) and here he was turning my house into his own Sodom and Gomorrah" (166).

As she continues to read Dumi's diary, discovering all his secret and declaration of love for Mr M, she impulsively reached for her bible: "I reached for my Bible to give me strength as I went through the document leaf by leaf" (167).

These reactions of her also reinforce the fact that religious fervour is one of the roots of homophobia.

Although not explicitly stated as other evidences, it can be inferred that religion was also a reason for the Ncubes homophobic behaviors. They are Christians and of course the religion does not support such relationship, therefore, it is only natural that followers of the religion are opposed to it as well based on the doctrine and teachings they have received. That is one of the reasons they saw Dumi's homosexuality as a sickness, took measures to "cure" him, and when their measures seemed ineffective and futile, disinheriting him was the next option.

Just like in Okparanta's text, religious fervour also triggers homophobia in Huchu's major queer character. Dumi's religious knowledge coupled with the religious eagerness of people around him makes it difficult for him to come out of his closet and nurtures some sort of fear in him leading to internalized homophobia. From the effects the apocalyptic sermon at Vimbai's church had on him, as well as his reaction afterwards, it is obvious the interpretation and understanding of religious doctrines evokes homophobia even in queer characters. Not only does Dumi literally flee from the church, his mood changes the entire day, his demeanor becomes uncharacteristic of him, and people around him could detect this oddity.

Both texts reflect the influence of religion in moulding societal attitudes. However, both texts also posit that religion in itself is not a root of homophobia but the society's understanding and utilization of it to their own benefits. In Okparanta's text, through the presentation of counter arguments utilizing Ijeoma's character, the author posits that a narrow reading of the Bible prompts homophobia because those biblical references employed by Adaora could have just been allegories, not to be taken literally, but as a symbol or representation of something else.

3.2. Fear of the Unknown as a Root of Homophobia

Fear is another root of homophobia prevalent in both texts. The fear of the unknown, the fear of difference, the fear of what is not the norm, in a way or another prompts homophobic

tendencies and the practice of homophobic cultures. The lives of various characters in both texts are implemented to expatiate this argument.

In Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, Adaora's attitude towards her daughter can be said to also be based on fear besides religion. The fear of what might be of such relationship that is alien to the society, the fear of her daughter deviating from societal norms, the fear of being associated with something so unfamiliar, something so difficult to understand, triggers her homophobic behaviors.

To begin with, the "Udala" in the title of the book is symbolic. "Udala Trees in African culture signifies sexual virility and fertility" (Agalya 1597). Now the question is how does this kind of relationship, same-sex relationship depict sexual virility and fertility? What does this kind of relationship produce? This is one of the fears common amongst members of the society represented by Adaora. She says to her daughter during one of their conversations: "Besides, how can people be fruitful and multiply if they carry on in that way? Even that is scandal enough – The fact that it does not allow for procreation" (69).

The fear of not knowing where this kind of relationship leads triggers homophobia. Adaora thinks it is scandalous because it does not allow for procreation. It deviates from the norm in the society, thereby elicits fear in her that leads to homophobia.

The fear of being associated with such relationship considered abnormal in the society also evokes homophobia. Again, through Adaora's character, this argument is expatiated. "Pray, I

say! No child of mine will carry those sick, sick desires. The mere existence of them is a terrible disrespect to God and to me!” (78).

Here, we see that aside from her religious stance, Adaora’s fear of being associated with “sick” desires also contributes to her homophobic behaviors. She says that the existence of such desires is a disrespect to her. This disrespect she speaks of comes from the society, as such behaviors is considered an anomaly. Adaora is afraid because she feels she would be disrespected because people would believe and say that she has failed in her duty as a mother in her child’s upbringing, she has failed to raise her child in conformity with societal norms. This same fear is what motivates Adaora to force her daughter into a loveless marriage which she is uninterested in. She has been thought the societal norm of marriage between a man and a woman and passes down that same knowledge to her daughter. She is scared of the society’s response if the news of her daughter’s (homo)sexuality gets out, therefore, she chooses marriage as her only option to suppress the fear building inside her and believes that everything will be back to normal once her daughter gets married. On the day of the wedding, Ijeoma is morose and expresses her doubts to her mother about the wedding, but Adaora chides her, stating that a woman is hardly a woman without a man. She goes on to tell her to forget anything that has to do with her past same-sex relationship: “My child, what do you want me to do? A woman and a woman cannot be. That’s not the way it’s done. You must let go of any remaining thought you have of that” (194).

Again, Adaora's fears are confirmed. She is scared of her daughter being different, of her daughter deviating from the norm and ensures that her daughter behaves in conformity of societal norms even when she (Ijeoma) is uncomfortable and unhappy with it. Again, her fears prompt her homophobic behaviors.

Adaora's fears are once again confirmed after the arson and murder that takes place in the "church". She says to Ijeoma: "Lucky for you that the grammar school teacher and I warned you of this... That could have been you, Ijeoma, not only would I be a widow, I would have also lost my only child" (183).

Here we see that Adaora's homophobic behaviors is not because she is disgusted by her daughter or hates her, but because she is afraid of the vicious response of the society that has a considerably low amount of tolerance for such relationships. She loves her daughter and is afraid of losing her, hence her homophobic behaviors.

In Huchu's text as well, fear is also seen as one of the root causes of homophobia. The society is usually scared of what they do not understand, scared of difference and being different, scared of not conforming to societal norms or standards.

For instance, Vimbai's fear comes from not understanding homosexuality, so did the Ncube's, the members of the philosophy club, as well as other members of the society. Their fear of something which they do not understand elicits homophobia in them.

From Vimbai's reaction after reading Dumi's written confession of his (homo)sexuality, it is eminent that amongst other things, fear was another major reason why she reacted the way

she did and took decisions that endangers him. The fear of something that was alien to her understanding and which she still struggles to understand even till the end of the novel.

The passages that were by far the sickest were the ones in which he declared his love for Mr M_, as if such a thing we're ever possible. He used passionate terms like 'the love of my life', which only men and women should use. (167)

Here, we see that her fear of this different kind of love, a love that is alien to the society makes her unsettled and scares her. Her fear of the unusual nature of this kind of relationship triggers her homophobic tendencies. She continues in her thoughts: "My daughter was the product of the union between a man and a woman. What could a man and a man ever hope to produce in a million years?" (167).

This time the fear of the unnaturalness of this kind of relationship consumes her. By her knowledge of the natural order of things, a man and a woman in a relationship procreate, but in the kind of relationship Dumi is interested in, there is no possibility for procreation. Because procreation is also a societal norm and the outcome of Dumi's kind of relationship is unknown, Vimbai's fears are heightened.

Another fear aroused in Vimbai is the fear of the society's perception of the situation, her fear of what the society would say. Still shocked by her realization of Dumi's sexuality, she thinks to herself: "The whole world would laugh at my expense. 'She was so bad she drove him into the arms of a man.' Crude jokes like that would be made behind my back" (167).

The fear of the society's perception is also eminent here just like in Okparanta's novel. Vimbai' is bothered and afraid of what the society might have to say and this triggers her homophobic tendencies.

The same fear of the unknown, of difference and of the comments from the society also evokes homophobic tendencies in the Ncubes leading them to disinherit their child and also be estranged from him. Michelle, Dumi's sister tells Vimbai after Dumi's attack: "To try and protect the family name, dad arranged with his pals in the police to have the Canadian dude deported before anyone knew what was up with his son" (184).

Here, we see that the fear of the family being associated with homosexuality, as well as the fear of the opinion of the society, prompts Mr Ncube into homophobic practices. He believes that the family name is being smeared by this anomaly and it would even be worse if words if it gets out into the society, hence the need to protect the family name by any means necessary, even if it means causing harm to another or alienating their child.

In general, fear is established by both authors as another major root of homophobia. People tend to be scared of things they do not understand, scared of things that are not the norms, scared of difference, and scared of things that seem unnatural. All of these fears are what homosexuality evokes. It is outside the norm, different from what people know, believed to be unnatural, and difficult to comprehend, therefore people respond with homophobia. Just like Ijeoma says in Okparanta's text; "Because this was the nature of things, of anything that was outside the norm. They were labelled with such words as "curse" and wasn't it wise to

keep curses at bay?” (198). But the fact deduced from the analysis of these novels is that fear is the catalyst that makes keeping this “curse” at bay thought as the wise thing to do.

3.3. Factors Stimulating the Roots of Homophobia

Although religious fervour and fear of the unknown have been elucidated by both Okparanta and Huchu in their texts as the roots of

homophobia, it is conspicuous that these roots do not stand alone. There are some factors stimulating these roots of homophobia as seen in the texts and they include: misinformation and stereotypes, and constitutional heterosexism.

3.3.1. Constitutional Heterosexism

Constitutional heterosexism does not connote state laws alone. Constitutional heterosexism can be political, cultural, and religious.

In African societies, in this context, Zimbabwe and Nigeria, traditional beliefs about gender roles and sexuality, religion, and politics play a crucial role. Both texts depict a society steeped in patriarchal norms where heterosexual relationships are not only expected but glorified. Aside from the cultural traditions, there is also colonial legacy, from which the major religion practiced in these settings can be said to have emanated, where the remnant of colonial laws are used for the exploration of homophobia. The blend of all these have perpetuated negative attitudes towards queer individuals, framing them as deviants against societal norms. Colonial legacy intertwines with local traditions and religion making it

difficult for characters to escape stigma and violence associated with their sexual identities, thereby, birthing constitutional heterosexism.

Many religious doctrines have stated that homosexuality is wrong, and many African governments, Nigeria and Zimbabwe included in some ways have criminalized it. Now, this immorality has stated by religion and illegality has stated by the law has somehow imposed constitutional heterosexism on the society, so that from whatever perspective it is viewed, homosexuality is wrong, because biblical precepts and laws laid down has stated so. This imposed heterosexism elicits fear in the society leading to homophobia because higher authorities the society obey as termed it wrong.

Going further, asides from these sources of authority, heterosexism is also imposed on the society through their culture, the manner of doing things they are familiar with. The African societies utilized by both authors are used to a certain kind of lifestyle – a man and a woman coming together as husband and wife – that is the way it has been for them and must continue to be so. This culture to passed down to the younger generations and heterosexism based on culture is formed.

In Okparanta's text, the Bible, and cultural traditions are the major sources of authority. The criminalization of homosexuality in Nigeria is also revealed in the author's note at the end of the text. The same is observed in Huchu's novel; cultural traditions and the Bible as sources of authority. Vimbai also mentions how the president had mentioned that homosexuals were worse than pigs and she agreed. The same goes for how characters in both texts keep

mentioning “how things should be done” or the “right way to do things”, it comes from the culture they were brought up with, the way of life they were used to. All of these are instances of constitutional heterosexism which can be from the religious, cultural, or political point of view stimulate the various causes of homophobia discussed earlier in this chapter.

3.3.2. Misinformation and Stereotypes

Another common trait in the practice of homophobic cultures is that these cultures are influenced by stereotypes built to a large extent by misinformation. Majority of the heterosexual characters have these various stereotypes of the homosexual characters which are usually based on some sort of information they have received. The irrational fear of homosexuals, more often than not, stems from the kind of education and information about homosexuality and homosexuals that an individual has received. For instance, Vimbai has an image in her mind of what gay men should look like and anyone who fits into this image in her mind she thinks is gay and starts displaying homophobic traits. When she found Dumi’s written confession of his sexuality, she was more surprised because he did not quite fit the stereotypic image she had of gay men. She thought to herself: “Everything about him was masculine. Didn’t homosexuals walk about with handbags and speak with squeaky voices?” (166).

This was the picture of homosexuals Vimbai had in her head based on the information she had received. Because of this, seeing people who fit this description may evoke homophobic

tendencies in her. In like manner, as she goes to visit her brother's philosophy club, she scrutinizes passers-by with the same idea in mind.

A young man with a tight pair of trousers walked past me. Was he one of them, or just someone who could not afford to get himself a new pair? Schoolboys with perm walked by; they could be on their first step down that road. (173)

Again, without even realizing, she exhibited traits of homophobia and this is based on the information she has consumed.

There is also the stereotype of homosexuals being perverts, abnormal and even down with some kind of sickness, and homosexuality being a white man's sickness brought to corrupt others. Just like Vimbai thinking Colin and Dumi are abnormal and perverts, the Ncubes believing that Dumi was "sick" and needed to be "cured", Adaora feeling her daughter had "sick desires" and was possessed by demons therefore she needed to be "cleansed", in the same way, members of Aba community believe that cleansing of their land is necessary because same-sex relationship is abominable. All of these are because of the information they have received and stereotypes that have been formed.

Here, it is evident that the causes of homophobia are not isolated from misinformation and stereotypes. The information of one being a pervert or being possessed by demons is not one that people would tolerate, it would rather evoke fear and other irrational behaviours. Therefore, misinformation and stereotypes stimulate the causes of homophobia.

Both Huchu and Okparanta vividly depicts the multifaceted roots of homophobia within their works. These roots do not dwell in isolation but are deeply embedded in cultural, political and religious frameworks that shapes perception of sexuality. Through their narratives and character depiction, it is evident that homophobia is not inherent but conditioned by different factors in the society.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTERIZATION AND THE RESULTS OF HOMOPHOBIA

The results of homophobia extend far beyond individual experiences, permeating social, psychological, and cultural realms. In Huchu and Okparanta's novels, varied consequences of homophobia are depicted, illustrating its impacts on personal identities,

relationships and broader societal dynamics. Both authors also depict how the results of homophobia transcends queer individuals to impact heterosexual characters as well. Their narratives explore how societal homophobia can shape the behavior and relationships of those who identify as heterosexual creating a complex web of fear, conformity, and moral conflicts. The results of homophobia portrayed in both texts can be concisely discussed as physical torture and psychological traumas.

4.1. Physical Torture as a Result of Homophobia

The societal stigma around homosexuality provides room for this effect. Physical torture oftentimes in both texts is the immediate result of homophobia, especially on queer individuals. Because of the homophobic cultures built in the society, the immediate response of the society, especially those with low tolerance for homosexuality, is usually violence which oftentimes involves inflicting pain on the queer characters.

Various instances in both text can be explored to prove that physical torture is an immediate result of homophobia.

One of these instances is the beating to death of the two gay men at the market in Okparanta's text. These men are not only physically tortured, it leads to their death. They were tortured to their early graves because of the presence of homophobia the society.

Another instance in Okparanta's text is Adanna's murder. Adanna was captured and killed when the gay club was raided. She was set ablaze. The pain she must have gone through

before her death can only be imagined. This again is due to the presence of homophobia in the society.

The grammar school teacher slaps Ijeoma and Amina when he catches both of them together. Although this is not as cruel as other violent events in the text, it is also physical torture resulting from the presence of homophobia.

The event narrated by the grammar school teacher to Ijeoma and Amina, of how people caught in same-sex relationship in times past were treated; stoning down to the river to drown, and the continuous stoning until they drowned to their death is also another instance of physical torture resulting from homophobia.

In the epilogue of Okparanta's text as well, events that also reveal physical torture as a result of homophobia is also narrated. The beating of the university girls caught in same-sex relationship, stripping them, taking videos of them, yelling "666" in their faces also depicts physical torture resulting from homophobia. The harassment and physical abuse of the gay and lesbian affirming church also attests to this.

In addition, the fact that this kind of relationship has also been criminalized by the government, with punishment of at least fourteen years in prison, and in the Northern part of the country, the punishment for such acts is stoning to death also confirms this argument.

This result of homophobia is not only evident in Okparanta's texts but in Huchu's as well. A few instances are seen in the text of how queer characters become victims of physical torture because of the presence of homophobia in the society.

First is Mr Ncube's harassment of Colins. He gets his friends in authority to physically abuse Colin and have him deported. Not much context about this event is presented in the novel. It is only mentioned by Dumi in one of his diary entries, and his sister to Vimbai. However, this still stands as an instance of physical torture in the text.

Dumi's estrangement from his family and the fact that he was disinherited because of his (homo)sexuality is also another subtle instance of physical torture as an effect of homophobia. This is because estranging and disinheriting him was a form of punishment meted on him by his family. They believed that if his affluent lifestyle is threatened, he would regain his senses, be cured of the alien sickness he suffers from, and finally conform to societal norms.

Finally, the minister's attack on Dumi. She gets him kidnapped from his hotel room and taken to a secluded area where he was severely tortured. He would get beaten up, beaten on the sole of his feet, until he passes out, then he is revived and the torture continues. At some point, he began to beg his torturers to let him die. They only dumped him somewhere when they thought he was dead. When Dumi is taken to the hospital after the torture, it is found out that there was extensive trauma to his head and his skull was fractured in three places. A procedure had to be carried out to relieve the pressure on his brain. This is the most pronounced instance of physical torture in Huchu's text. At the novel's climax, Dumi had to flee the country to prevent further attack on him.

The several violent instances explored above attest to the fact that the experiences of physical torture in both texts is directly connected to homophobia.

4.2. Psychological Traumas as a Result of Homophobia

Psychological trauma is also another result of homophobia in the society portrayed in Huchu's and Okparanta's novels. The psychological traumas include the various effects that homophobia has on the emotional wellbeing and mental health of not just the queer characters but other characters in the texts. In both texts, the psychological effects of homophobia is quite eminent. These effects come in forms of mental health struggles, and emotional imbalance amongst other forms.

4.2.1. Psychological Traumas as it Affects Queer Characters

The queer characters in both texts experience various forms of psychological traumas as a result of homophobia.

In Huchu's text, many of Dumi's action in the texts point to the fact that that he was struggling mentally and emotionally, but would wear a mask of happiness and try to make everyone around him happy. This continues until the readers finally find out about his struggles, both emotional and mental, through his diary, discovered by Vimbai. Through his diary entries, it becomes evident that things are not how they appear to be with this character. After his pretence to the world, Dumi turns to his diary for solace, pouring out his heart because that was the only safe space he knew: "My life feels hollow and no one to turn to or talk to except you, little black book, but I've learnt that even talking to myself provides some comfort" (163).

This excerpt is from one of the entries Dumi made in his diary. Here, his true feelings and emotions are unmasked. His diary entries reveal that he actually wears a mask and behind all of that facade, there is actually a young man struggling with his emotional and mental health. Through his diary entries, the heartache he nurses, caused by his alienation from his family is also revealed. His true feelings for them, how he wishes to reconnect with them but cannot especially because he is yet to be “cured”, his feelings of upset towards Colin’s fate influenced by his father and how he feels bad for deceiving Vimbai, are all revealed through his diary entries. All of these emotional burdens he bears are caused by homophobia, not just the homophobia in the society but also the internalized homophobia he experiences as a queer individual. He feels like his life is hollow and has no one to turn to because he cannot afford to come out of his closet especially in a society that has zero tolerance for homosexuality. Coming out to his family already costs him a lot, and he could not afford to do that again, therefore, he resorts to bottling everything within himself, living in a closet, and wearing the mask of happiness while in reality, he was struggling in his psychological health.

The homophobic experiences of Ijeoma and Amina in Okparanta’s novel also affects their mental and emotional well being. Their psychological traumas began from the moment the grammar school teacher gave them a threatening lecture after he catches them together. The story of stoning people as they drown to their death is not one that is fun to both girls to listen to, especially when they are well aware that that could be them someday.

The bible lessons they received also contributes to their psychological traumas. When Amina, after her apocalyptic dream says that maybe they were the fallen children who do not have the strength to continue in the path of righteousness (136), it became quite obvious that she was suffering psychologically while trying to appear without troubles. Even when she takes the decision to get married, it is evident that she has not quite healed psychologically and this has a huge influence on her decision because she feels getting married would make her better and help her emotional and mental health.

Ijeoma, on the other hand, who seemed to be more strong-willed also experiences her fair share of psychological trauma as a result of homophobia not only from the society but also herself. She is caught always questioning herself and her sexuality, trying to figure out why she is the way she is. At some point, she begins to believe that she is possessed as her mother said and that she is a witch.

In that moment, I began to believe myself a witch under the influence of the devil, and if mama's exorcism had not worked, then it seemed that I owed it to myself to find something that would. (172)

Ijeoma starts visiting church before and after her marriage to seek answers, and especially when she was pregnant, to beg God not to punish her child because of her actions. All of the answers she seeks, she never seems to find, but rather, is left to wallow silently in her misery.

The queer characters in both texts experience significant psychological traumas due to the pervasive homophobia inherent in both the Zimbabwean and Nigerian societies. Feelings of

fear, guilt, and shame characterizes the internal struggles of the queer individuals in both narratives. The fear of discovery coupled with the associated social consequences lead to anxiety and depression, creating a scenery where individuals are coerced into hiding their authentic identity to avoid societal retribution.

4.2.2. Psychological Traumas as it Affects Heterosexual characters

Heterosexual characters are often pressured into conforming to societal norms, especially in relation to sexuality and gender roles. This leads these characters, especially those in close relationships with the queer characters, to the experience of moral and ethical conflicts, which in turn affects their psychological health.

One of the characters in Huchu's text who experiences this is Vimbai. Her experience is born out of the intricacies in her relationship with Dumí which develops as a result of Dumí's internalized homophobia. While Dumí was just taking advantage of her, using her to mask his true identity, she is deceived into believing they are in a relationship. Her homophobia when she finds out Dumí's real sexuality and realizes she has been deceived also further traumatizes her, leading her to take some questionable decisions. She is quite disturbed mentally and emotionally that it started to affect her daily activities and she had to seek clarification from her brother to help her deal with this better.

Dumí's family, especially his mother was also psychologically affected by the news of their son's (homo)sexuality and this is because of the presence of homophobia. This is revealed by the wild excitement they displayed when they thought he was finally cured: "Your

girlfriend?’ repeated his mother, a tall woman who must have been a beauty in her prime. Then she burst into tears” (95).

This was Mrs Ncube’s reaction when Dumi introduced Vimbai to his family as his girlfriend, after which she pulled Vimbai into an embrace. Mrs Ncube could not contain her emotions, so she began to cry. This shows that all these while, Dumi was not the only one in emotional shambles, his mother as well as other members of his family were also dealing with the news of his sexuality in their own way and were also bearing their emotional traumas: “The whole family gathered around me like I was some sort of zoological curiosity. They prodded and felt me, as if to check if I was flesh and blood” (95).

Dumi’s entire family were so glad that he was finally cured of the alien sickness which he has suffered from for a long time of which they had no understanding let alone knowledge of how to cure him. Their joy as a result of his final healing made possible by Vimbai made them ready to support her with anything she needed although they were just getting to know her. They defended her honour when Phillip harassed her, treated her and her daughter with love, took them on trips, and even opened her own salon for her which had been a dream of hers for so long. All of these point to the fact that although from the onset Dumi’s family was not in support of his sexuality and acted strong, when they were estranged, they were dealing with a lot psychologically because Dumi’s news came as a shock to them due to the presence of homophobia.

In Okparanta's text, Chibundu, Ijeoma's husband is also psychologically affected by homophobia. He had for long been aware that some other woman, Ndidi, is interested in his wife, but he was not sure she reciprocated those feelings. He never wanted to discuss it because he felt that he may just be confronted with the harsh truth he did not want to hear or believe. But there was no running from the truth, he had to accept it in the end but it did not sit well with him at first. It is evident that he is psychologically traumatized when he finds Ijeoma's written confession, the letters she had written to Ndidi but never sent. He was utterly confused, angry, sad, felt betrayed, he was experiencing so many different emotions at the same time that he could not fathom which to deal with. Finally, he ended up threatening her, and it was not just a threat. From that moment, their relationship took a different turn and it becomes quite glaring that they were both unhappy with each other. All of the homophobic tendencies which Chibundu never realized he possessed began to manifest. His psychological health was suffering and this led him into manipulating Ijeoma until the eventual end of their relationship.

Adaora is also another character in Okparanta's novel who suffers psychologically because of homophobia. It was very difficult for her to come to terms with her daughter's sexuality. The point where psychological suffering was confirmed without doubt is when she felt all her effort to cleanse her daughter were futile: "Suddenly Mama was rising from the floor, flailing her hands in the air, shouting about prayer and forgiveness" (77).

The scene reveals the emotions of a distraught mother that has been suppressing a lot within herself. It shows that Adaora has also been suffering psychologically because of homophobia. She was fearful of what fate would befall her daughter in a society that does not tolerate the kind of desires her daughter possessed; she was fearful of her daughter possessing such strange desires she does not understand in the first place. This bred a lot of confusion and worry in her, affecting her emotional and mental health.

Both Huchu and Okparanta's texts tackle the profound effects of homophobia which extends to both queer and heterosexual characters. These effects are multifaceted exploring the complexities of social oppression, illustrating how the prejudice surrounding queer identities affect not only the marginalized but other members of the society.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In this exploration of homophobia in Huchu's and Okparanta's texts, a profound insight into the reality of homophobia, its intricate roots, and far-reaching results on individuals (queer and heterosexual) are offered. Through their narratives, tactful employment of physical and cultural settings, as well as characterization, both authors advocate for understanding and acceptance, drawing attention to the need to challenge deeply ingrained prejudice to promote a more inclusive society.

The first chapter of this study introduces the subject matter. Here, the purpose, scope, research methodology and theoretical background are meticulously presented. This chapter also presented a review of related literature which revealed that many scholars and critics have carried out various researches and discussed various aspects of this topic using these texts, many of which focuses on the plight and experiences of the queer characters. However, this study focuses on the reality of homophobia, its roots and results transcending queer characters and exploring the experiences of heterosexual characters as well, adopting queer theory as its theoretical frame work.

As stated in the analysis of the theoretical background in the first chapter of this study, queer theory is not just about supporting a particular sexual orientation, rather it is a means of "queering" various topics, providing an avenue for a particular situation to be viewed from a

different perspective. It basically promotes open-mindedness when interrogating various situations.

To that effect, this study in the second chapter investigates the reality of homophobia as portrayed in both texts, revealing that homophobia is truly a reality especially in the African scenery. The presence of violence, prejudice and discrimination, and other irrational behaviours as a response to homosexuality substantiates this argument. Besides that, it unravels the fact that homophobia is not just from heterosexual members of the society but can also be from queer characters as well, and the fact that homophobic cultures can be practiced unconsciously. Oftentimes, when there are discussions about homophobia, people tend to conclude that these tendencies come from the heterosexual members of the society, however, this study reveals that that is not always the case. Queer characters can also be homophobic. Their homophobia may arise from their experiences in the society or from other various factors, but the fact remains that, these queer individuals, also turn against themselves, putting on a fake persona, mostly because of the fear of being found out, and this is a form of homophobia – internalized homophobia. This argument is justified by the actions of most of the queer characters in both texts. In Huchu's text for instance, Dumi feels his homosexuality is a cancer for which he needed cure and was scared to come out for fear of what might happen to him. Okparanta's queer characters as well have similar traits. Amina feels she is beyond redemption because she has fallen from the path of righteousness and decides to get married to a man, and it is obvious that decision is taken out of fear. Ijeoma who seemed to be more carefree about her sexuality begins to believe she is a witch possessed by demons

and that God may punish her child because of her kind of love. All of these thoughts and actions of these queer characters point to the fact that they also possess homophobic tendencies just like any other heterosexual character.

In investigating the reality of homophobia in both texts, the major characters employed are

Dumi, Vimbai, the pastor, the minister and the Ncubes in Huchu's text, and Adaora, Chibundu, Amina, Ijeoma, and subtly the grammar school teacher in Okparanta's texts. Other members of the society including officers of the law, are also instrumental in analyzing this reality.

After the confirmation of the reality of homophobia in both Huchu and Okparanta's texts, this study proceeds to explore the roots of homophobia ingrained in cultural setting, and the various factors stimulating these roots presented in both texts in the third chapter. Through critical analysis, this study reveals that the major roots homophobia evident in both texts are; fear and religious fervour/understanding. While these are the root causes, there are other minor factors acting as catalysts. These factors are stereotypes and misinformation, and constitutional heterosexism. In the analysis of this chapter, this study presents an inference observed in both texts which is that but the society's perception, understanding, and interpretation of religion is one root causes of homophobia and not religion itself. Africa is quite religious and both texts are set in Africa, therefore, as expected, religious fervour has its role to play. This study also reveals that homophobia is on the rise because people tend to be scared of what they do not understand, of things outside the norm, in this case homosexuality,

therefore they turn to homophobic cultures as their defense mechanism. In this section also, stereotypes and misinformation like homosexuals being perverts or behaving in a certain manner, as well as constitutional heterosexism- like laws put in place to compel heterosexism, which could be religious, political, or cultural, are investigated as stimulants of the causes of homophobia. And all of these are applicable to both heterosexual and queer characters.

In the succeeding chapter, this study explores the results of homophobia observable in both texts through characterization which are physical torture and psychological trauma. Again, this goes both ways, the queer and heterosexual characters are affected. Characters like Dumi, Vimbai', the Ncubes and Colin in Huchu's text and Amina, Ijeoma, Adaora, Chibundu, as well as other queer characters not explicitly mentioned in Okparanta's texts are utilized to establish this argument. Here, the examination of the characters' experiences and the physical and psychological effects of homophobia are carried out. The argument that not only queer characters are affected by homophobia is established at this point with focus on the psychological effects. While the queer characters are used to expatiate this argument from one perspective, heterosexual characters in both texts are also utilized to establish this argument from another perspective.

Summarily, implementing queer theory for its analysis, this study explores homophobia in Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* and Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* by "queering" the subject matter and viewing it from different perspectives. In this study, the focus is not only the experiences of the queer characters but also that of the heterosexual characters.

Through the critical analysis of both texts, this study explores the fact that although homophobia is a reality, no one is inherently homophobic and situations around people elicits these tendencies. Also, more often than not, people are homophobic without even realizing. This study further explores the various situations that elicits the rise of homophobia as portrayed in both texts, and finally concludes with the establishment of the fact that no one is immune to the effects of homophobia.

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