

Queer: Heterosexual and homosexual in Tatakulu Afrika's Bitter Eden

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to assess the depiction of homosexuality in Bitter Eden by Tatakulu Afrika, as well as the reasons for its positive or negative portrayal and the attitudes of gays and heterosexuals toward one another. Homosexuality covers homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, transgender, and other so-called "sexual disorders." Additionally, it is classified as a psychopathological disorder.

Methodology/approach: The work adopted psychological and queer theory. And descriptive and qualitative methods of data analysis were used by grouping and having textual analysis.

Results: In gender studies, femininity (s) and masculinity (ies) are major issues, whereas queer studies, which were long marginalized, are now garnering more attention in the West. However, queerness, particularly homosexuality, has received little creative and critical attention in Africa. As a result, this research would fill a need left by the paucity of literature on the issue. The result of the investigation demonstrates that when it comes to African environments, homosexuality is still weird.

Limitations: The study is limited to one novel, Afrika (2002). *Bitter Eden*.

Contributions: The study revealed that homosexuals are stigmatized in the chosen text. The study concluded that despite the presence of homosexuality in Africa, it is still largely a closet phenomenon.

Keywords: *Homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender, pedophilia and homophobia*

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1. Introduction

Homosexuality has never been a novel issue in African literature; rather, because of its nature in the African setting, it has been addressed with contempt. The reason for this is that the "idea" is seen as being foreign or "un-African" in African literature. Homosexuality has begun to expand in leaps and bounds, becoming a relevant problem throughout Africa and steadily asserting itself in the literary environment. As a result, it deserves to be examined and handled as a key subject in African literature in the twenty-first century. As previously said, African academics, both authors and critics, have never been troubled to address or write about homosexuality, which is a contentious, restricted, sensitive, and guarded issue. They are just good at researching other topics and pay little attention to gayness or queerness. As time went on, most researchers who looked into homosexuality did so from a negative point of view, calling it an "abomination," "moral degradation," "turpitude of existence," "foreign to African culture and environment," and "a western tradition." Those who colonized Africa were considered to be people who promoted same-sex "relationships" in an African setting and were connected with such practices. In their writings, certain authors have vociferously argued for the negative aspects of homosexuality. Armah (1973) with his work, *Two Thousand Seasons*, for example. Wole Soyinka is a Nigerian writer. *The Interpreters* and Ata (1977), *Our Sister Killjoy*,

are two works that successfully reject homosexuality. The above arts speak less of it since each piece of art necessarily has several meanings (Stanley Ordu, 2022). And art is one of the means by which homosexuals use it to uplift themselves and express themselves (Stanley Ordu & Odukwu, 2022). The goal of this paper is to make known the existence of these illnesses despite their being hidden. And it is becoming a normalized practice as a result of poverty, retaliations, genetic issues, etc.

1.1. The Concept of Homosexuality (Gayness)

Homosexuality is a choice that a person has chosen to live with. It may be acquired, inherent, or hereditary. Gays have existed since the dawn of time. Many people believe that LGBT people were the first mentioned in the Bible, whether as acquired, inherent, or hereditary. Gays have existed since the dawn of time. Many individuals think that the first LGBT person to be referenced in the Bible was Any works that celebrate male-male or female-female love are susceptible to censorship since it is commonly believed that these relationships are obscene, even if they don't include any explicit sexual language or even hint at it. There is little doubt that most, if not all, governments across the globe have practiced homosexuality in some form or another, despite their denials.

The term “gay” “grew out of conceptions of heterosexuality and homosexuality, where heterosexuality is viewed as normal and homosexuality as deviant,” writes Peter Nardi in 2000 (Nardi, 2000). Morrow and Messinger (2006) and Lucas (1995) said that the word “gay” is used to describe people (male or female) who mostly date and hang out with people of the same sex. “Lesbians are women who are primarily attracted to other women and have romantic relationships with them.” Some women want to be referred to as “homosexuals,” while others prefer to be referred to as “lesbians” (7). In the 1960s, the English-speaking world accepted the term “gay” as a fitting word for homosexuals to describe themselves. We'll use the terms “gays” and “homosexuals” interchangeably in this comment. The word “homosexuality” now refers to those who have a sexual attraction to other people in the same sex group as themselves. Hiskey (2010), he believes:

“By 1955 the gay now officially acquired the new added definition of meaning homosexual males. Gay men themselves are seen to have been behind the diving thrust for this definition as they felt (and most still do), that “homosexual” is much too clinical sounding and is often thought of as offensive among gay people due to sounding like a disorder. As such, it was common amongst themselves to refer to one another as gay decades before this was a commonly known definition (reportedly homosexual men were calling one another gay as early as the 1920s). at this time, homosexual women were referred to as lesbians, not gay.”

“Gayness is a term that refers to both people, particularly men, as well as the traditions and practices associated with homosexuality. According to this definition, homosexuality is defined as the engagement of sexual intimacy, attraction, emotions, interaction, affection, relationship orientation, behavior, arousal, activity, and intercourse between people of the same sex. Homosexuality is defined as a same-sex relationship or marriage (Sarason & Sarason, 2002). Homosexuality, according to McMahon and McMahon (1982), is a sexual relationship between two people of the same sex. The desire for a member or members of the same sex is what distinguishes it. However, according to Nnachi (2011), homosexuality is a psychopathological disorder. He contends:

“The most basic definition of homosexuality is abnormal sexual attraction towards the members of the same sex. Thus, a homosexual may be considered a person with sexual desires directed wholly or in part towards members of the same sex.” (p.245).

The essence of homosexuality is desire, and it is believed that everyone is “wired” differently to nurture and follow different inclinations. First, it is argued that all literary works deal with desire in some way and that ultimately, one loves what one desires rather than what one seeks (Power, 2008). This additional point of view, which he presents in a tale about a little child, is as follows (Sarason & Sarason, 2002):

“Being different, being gay.....I always knew I was different from the other guys, seventeen-year-old Bill explained to me. Whenever I went out to the movies with friends, most of the other guys were just dying for a cute girl to sit next to them.

Nobody else seemed to realize it, but I was really hoping a good-looking guy would sit next to me. I don't think anybody had any idea what I was going through.”(p.206).

When a boy or girl reaches adulthood, being homosexual or gay means that he or she will mostly be attracted to other men or women in a romantic sense. And this innate creation This creation is employed in the process of getting to adulthood. (Stanley Ordu & Odukwu, 2022) Gay men, for instance, are more likely to fall in love with other guys and yearn to find a man to spend the rest of their lives with than they are to fall in love with women and yearn for a woman to be their wife. Similar to how straight or heterosexual boys do not “decide” to be that way or “choose” to live that way as adults, homosexual boys do not “decide” to be that way or “choose” to live a homosexual existence as adults. (S Ordu, 2021). However, this viewpoint is flawed. This is because it seems to have eliminated humankind's option of choice, of options, and even of what individuals perceive to be opportunities as life develops via development. (S Ordu, 2021) backs this up by claiming that homosexuality is a sexual orientation that goes hand in hand with sexual politics. Homosexuality is an act of defiance. “It's the revolution that went unnoticed” (S Ordu, 2021). Homosexuality is the boundary that separates what civilizations consider “normal” (straight) sexual behavior from aberrant sexual behavior. Today, the theme has taken on a new and daring dimension. “Boys today are in significant difficulty,” even those who seem “normal” and to be doing well. Many people experience melancholy and alienation they can't even define because of society's contradictory signals about what is expected of them. Regardless of how people argue about homosexuality, the main issue is simply the domicile and abode of same-sex bearing.

1.2. Gayness in African Concept

Some works by Dunton (1989), Vignal (1983), Edward Gibbon, and others could demonstrate that, up until now, homosexuality was thought to be something that didn't happen in Africa and that it came from the West. In this regard, African academics have been hesitant to write on homosexuality, although their Western counterparts have devoted so much attention to the “gayness topic” in their literary works. “I think and hope,” Gibbon (2010) says, “that Nigerians in their own nation are free from this moral disease.” As Stephen Murray points out, “hardly any Europeans had penetrated more than a few kilometers into the African interior when Gibbon made the assertion” (xi). According to Murray, Sir Richard Burton subsequently backed up Gibbon's assertion that “the Negro race is essentially untouched by sodomy and tribalism.” (246) Burton made this observation after seeing homosexuality being practiced freely throughout the Near East and South Asia, in contrast to what he saw in Africa.

Higginson (2005), on the other hand, backed Gibbon's position and stated that “homosexuality is not part of traditional African cultures.” These writers actively portray homosexuality as un-African in their writing. Examples of authors and their works include Awoonor's (1972) “The Earth, My Brother,” Ayi Kwei Amah's “Two Thousand Seasons,” Soyinka's (1965) “The Interpreters,” and Aidoo's “Our Sister Killjoy.” African literature that explores lesbianism includes Jane Benett's (2008) collection of short stories, *Porcupine*, which explores the symbolism of being both black and lesbian. Another is Apolo (1982), a lesbian romance novel called *Lagos Na Wa I Swear*. Additionally, some African writers, like No, do not view homosexuality as an issue as a result of their exposure to Western society. For instance, Yulisa Amadu Maddy's book *Past, Present, and Future* explores the experiences of three African immigrants to Europe. Joe Bengoh, a homosexual, is made fun of by his two coworkers, but he manages to get by on his own as he accepts who he really is. Despite being gay, he retains his integrity and self-assurance, so it doesn't wreck him. The treatment of homosexuality has been viewed as an un-African and Western-driven disease (Vignal, 1983).

2. Literature Review

The fundamental focus of first and second-wave feminism was the liberation of women in relation to race, class, and sex. Third-wave feminism contests essentialism, as demonstrated in queer theory. According to essentialism, a person's permanent, inflexible, and unyielding characteristics are what genuinely define them as being human (male or female) (Sotunsa, 2009). Human identity is formed culturally, according to queer theorists. What it means to be a man or a woman is a fluid concept that is always changing. In other words, a person can repeatedly transition from being homo to hetero and vice versa. The social constructivist perspective is that of this According to Kimmel and Messner (1995) in

their book *Men's Lives*, as more gay men become aware of the shared oppression of women and gays, they label themselves as feminists. Accordingly, “during the anti-Vietnam War, anti-establishment, and countercultural ferment of the 1960s and 1970s, both lesbian studies and homosexual studies originated as “liberation movements,” in line with the movements for African American and feminist freedom” (Abrams & Harpham, 2014).

The main focus of the fight has been to ensure that gays have the same political, legal, and economic rights as the heterosexual majority. The dominant group claims privilege, power, and centrality, while the minority group is denigrated, subjugated, and ignored (Stanley Ordu, 2022). There are also queer faiths that cater to the needs of gays on a spiritual level, as well as queer theologies that aim to combat religious intolerance. And according to Hafezi (2021), self-control can reduce the rate of abnormal sex like lesbianism.

In the June/July 2010 issue of *Impact*, a Singapore-based publication, a report states:

Gary Mcfarlane, a 48-year-old Christian relationship counselor from Bristol, will argue that an employment tribunal erred by upholding his dismissal for refusing to provide sex therapy to gay couples... According to the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey, senior judges are prejudiced against Christianity and should be prohibited from deciding issues involving religious rights. (p. 20).

As a result of this study, homosexuals currently enjoy a wide range of benefits and rights, including those that are political, legal, economic, social, and medical. They have the freedom to exercise their right to social expression. They have learned who they are, and they now bear that identity with pride and dignity, at least in their own way.

Another subject in queer studies is transvestism. Cross-dressing is the exact definition of transvestism. Clothing is frequently used by transvestites as a sexual obsession or stimulant. Transvestic men may do anything from wearing feminine clothing in private to actively participating in the transvestic subculture (Sarason & Sarason, 2002). Sarason and Sarason (2002) add the following:

“Some men wear a single piece of women's clothing (such as hosiery or panties) under their masculine outfit, while others dress totally as women and apply makeup... Women are not often seen as transvestites, most likely because our culture permits them to dress in mostly male fashions.” (p.263)

In African culture, however, there is a clear distinction between what men and women wear. Among the Yoruba-speaking population of Nigeria, for instance, the agbada (flowing gown), bubaatisokoto (top and trousers), and bubaatiiro (top and wrappa), the latter of which is wrapped around the waist, are used to identify men from women. According to Nnachi (2011), historically men and women have been required to dress differently. Nnachi discusses “African Societies in Dress and Gender”

“In Africa, particularly in Nigeria, men are required to dress differently than ladies... Many African civilizations, such as the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba cultures of Nigeria, require men and women to dress differently. In a number of Nigerian ethnic traditions, it would be considered humorous for a guy to dress identically to a lady or vice versa. In certain societies, it could be deemed sacrilegious for a male to dress as a woman and parade about in such attire.” (p.110)

For some traditional occasions, men in most African cultures wear wrappers, underwear, shirts, chieftaincy garments, robes, manly gowns, shoes, and caps, among other items that have been sanctioned and recognized by the community in question (Nnachi, 2008) Males who dress differently from the norm are occasionally labeled as deviants or yokels. Gayness, lesbianism, bisexuality, transgender, pedophilia, transsexuality, transvestism, sodomy, and bestiality are among the sexual issues that are typically regarded as unconventional (strange or queer). Queerness is stigmatized more than AIDS in many countries today, especially in third-world and Islamic countries; it is likely seen to be more contagious than leprosy. However, Sharonrose (1998) notes:

“Bisexuality has been acknowledged and practiced since antiquity, but it has only lately evolved as a political identity in the United States. Sexual politics... It is necessary to dispel the fallacies regarding bisexuality.” (p. 467).

Threats and rejection faced by gays and lesbians were most frequently the result of ignorance on the part of society, necessitating a political response. Goring, Hawthorn, and Mitchell (2001) state:

“The birth of the American organization Queer Nation may be attributed to the recovery of the word queer, which was originally a derogatory epithet for homosexuals but was reclaimed by them to express their pride in their identity as gays and lesbians.” (p.196).

The history of Queer Nation dates back to 1990. This followed fractures and conflicts among the New York ACT Up movement. Activists created a new organization. In his 1998 book *Queer Nation*, Lucas argues:

“Queer Nation based their advocacy on sexual identity — not just homosexuality or bisexuality, but queerness as well. Queer was used as a blatant catch-all design descriptor. Its startling tone reflected some of the brutality shown toward lesbian groups in America. It was also a call to queer nationalism - a group that faced homophobia and shared the duty of breaking the closet's power.” (p.14).

The enormous exposure of Queer Nation gave the fight for homosexual and lesbian rights more momentum. The issue of homosexuality would no longer be kept “behind bars,” in the shadows, or in a closet, but out in the open. This is discussed by Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott in “Sexual Skirmishes and Feminist Fractions.” According to Goring et al. from “Twenty-five Years of Debate on Women and Sexuality,” “queer means to mess with gender.” According to Dobie (2011), because of its focus on essentialist feminism as opposed to the social constructionist ideas explored by the earlier movement, queer theory has been referred to as “third-wave feminism.” In addition, she contends that the term “queer theory” alludes to an emerging alliance (compromise) between gay men and lesbians, as opposed to the lone-wolf approach of conventional male studies and female studies adopted by early gay and lesbian organizations.

The storylines that emphasize the unexpected and odd pique the queer theory critic's interest more than those that present the individuals as steel replicas of the past. It is obvious why this is happening. Critics contend that sex-related topics should be flexible. Once more, sexuality must be viewed as being on a continuum—likely the arduous journey to freedom. It is considered a step in the evolution or development of humans.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This work is based on psychoanalytic literary theory. This is a hypothesis about gay, lesbian, and queer behaviors. This theory looks at mental processes and is particularly well suited to such research since it can be utilized to delve into the brains of the characters in order to figure out why they act the way they do. According to Sau (1916), Sigmund Freud created psychoanalysis in his psychosexual phases in 1916–1917. “The goal of psychoanalytic treatment is to relieve repressed and made-unconscious emotions and experiences,” he claims. Freud's work and the research he employs to establish his ideas are referred to as “psychoanalysis.”

Like Marxism and feminism, queerness also started as a movement. Its goal was to secure the political, legal, and economic freedom of homosexual men and lesbians. Through literature and criticism, queer theory aims to clarify these unusual sexual concerns as well as all associated subjects. (Eagleton, 1983). From the 1960s through the 1970s, queer people participated in a liberation movement, calling for political, legal, and economic rights that were equivalent to those enjoyed by the heterosexual majority. A complex concept is queerness. Murray (2000) said as follows:

“Queer is a strange term. The introduction of the term 'queer' into the English language is a study of the peculiar ways words may be used... Queer entered the English language in the United States and worldwide as a disparaging word for (typically

male) homosexuality. In reaction to the prevalence of AIDS among gay men, the phrase received a queer bent in the late 1980s and 1990s, when homosexuals began to “reclaim” the term. 'Queer' becomes a phrase of pride and celebration of self-affirmation, acknowledged difference, and positive diversity. (216- 217).

After more than two decades of living together, Erik Ladefoged and Kim Norgaard were finally allowed to marry in 1989, surrounded by thirty family members and friends. Our wedding took place between two straight couples. The couple was surprised to discover that their wedding was an emotional occasion, indicative not just of their public proclamation of love but also of their nation's acceptance of them. “I believed it would be a simple formality. However, our companions were singing a classic Danish tune. I was completely content. It felt nice to be homosexual and to receive the state's official handshake and grin” (248).

The narrative continues, “Mr. Ladefoged was a 49-year-old schoolteacher. The people would concur that it was OK for them, regardless of whether society found it weird. More significantly, they were able to find a home. In Africa, however, this is not the case. It is, without a doubt, “a story of two towns.”

In this research, queer theory was able to accomplish the following:

1. helped determine the characters' sexual orientation;
2. aid in character portrayal and characterization; and
3. Assisting in the understanding of Africans' general attitudes toward the issue

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative and descriptive study. The issue’s literary text and critical resources are evaluated, assessed, and interpreted using qualitative research criteria. This work makes use of Tatakulu Afrika’s *Bitter Eden*. The text above is the main source, while the secondary sources consist of pertinent literature on the same issue. The book would be analyzed using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the three levels of mind—conscious, subconscious, and human development—which represent the id, ego, and superego. The three levels of the mind will be used to examine how the minds of some of the characters, notably the gay ones, operate.

3.1. Summary of Tatakulu Afrika’s *Bitter Eden*

Grandfather Africa, or Tatakulu Afrika, was born to a Turkish mother named Magamed Fu 'ad Nasif and an Egyptian father named Tatakulu Ibrahim in 1920s Egypt. Young Tatakulu (Tata) accompanied his parents to South Africa. Sadly, the illness took the lives of Tata's parents within a short time frame, making him an orphan. Afrika had an Arab father and a Turkish mother, so he could easily be mistaken for “white,” although he strongly disagreed with the label. As a South African soldier, he served in the North African Theater of World War II. After his capture at Tobruk, he spent the remainder of the war in a German and Italian prison camp. *Bitter Eden*, a semi-autobiographical work, is grounded in such experiences. After being freed at the war's conclusion, Afrika moved to Namibia. In 1964, he converted to Islam and changed his name to Ismail Joubert, at which time he relocated to Cape Town.

After entering his sixties, Africa began writing and quickly began winning accolades. Mark Simpson of *The Independent* named *Bitter Eden* one of the best novels of 2002. The book was released in the UK that year. Tatakulu Afrika died at age 82 two weeks later. Notice from the Publisher: (Pages v-vii) When *Bitter Eden* was originally published in the United Kingdom in 2002, the author had already departed. During World War II, the author was a prisoner of war in German and Italian prisons, and this story is partially based on his experiences there. A central theme of the novel is the LGBT taboo and all the accusations, denials, and celebrations that surround it. The plot revolves around Tom Smith, a heterosexual who experiences a sudden and radical shift toward homosexuality. Inhumane camp circumstances would force the male inmates to form intimate ties with each other, both platonic and

sexual. The need to stay alive is the primary motivator. The novel starts with a letter from one of the POWs to Tom that sounds eerily like it was written about the atrocities that occurred in the POW camps. Tom can't forget the horrific events that accompanied the gay hijinks in "Bitter Eden." Four important characters in Bitter Eden are Tom, the main character; Douglas; Danny; and Tony. Bisexuals Douglas and Danny are "happily" married at home but accepted homosexuality while serving as prisoners of war. Tom is depressed, to begin with. But he is caught in Douglas' expertly woven queer web. Tom travels from partner to partner after becoming addicted, including Douglas, Danny, and Tony. Despite finding his first love in Douglas, Danny proves to be a true buddy who has platonic, sexual, and emotional bonds with him. The concentration camps are portrayed as pits of suffering or as haunting dwellings. They allowed relationships and emotions that the rest of the world detests and forbids, such as homosexuality, to exist.

Tom asks aloud, "Am I one of them?" as his fear increases. Is it real that I have a crush on a man? Inmates are coerced into same-sex partnerships because of external factors. However, it is a fact. He not only joins them, but he also develops into an incurable whore. In an exclusively male atmosphere, men have ambiguous domestic relationships with their "partners." He says, "Sometimes I try to face the vague beast that is how I "feel." When he saw Tom grabbing a new pair of expensive pants, Douglas would tell him, "All I'm asking is that you have the decency to be with someone who has stayed with you and not run off with every new pair of nice pants." "The thugs will eat out of your hand," the narrator warns (148). Tom overhears Tony bragging about the gay promises he made. He gives Tom a friendly handshake and says, "Welcome to the big family of creeps." Tom says, "Queen or no Queen, I'm still as much of a man as I've ever been." He also says, "This is Africa, where the dramatist thinks it's never cold and everyone sleeps in the open." (p, 151).

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Homosexuality: a Case of the hunter and hunted in Bitter Eden

It is often believed that some people are born great, while others attain greatness, and still others have greatness thrust upon them. This viewpoint is supported by Takamkhulu's treatment of gay characters in this work. While nothing is revealed about how certain homosexual males in the text acquire sexual identification, these gays play a crucial part in tracking down, catching, and initiating the play's protagonist, Tom Smith (Thomas Aloysius Symthe). The main hunter is Douglas Summerfield; some are born great, while others attain greatness, and still others have greatness thrust upon them. This viewpoint is supported by Takamkhulu's treatment of gay characters in this work. While nothing is revealed about how certain homosexual males in the text acquire sexual identification, these gays play a crucial part in tracking down, catching, and initiating the play's protagonist, Tom Smith (Thomas Aloysius Symthe). The main hunter is Douglas Summerfield. He writes letters, and Tom mulls over them, recalling ancient recollections of homosexual pastimes done by soul mates:

"The other letter was written by him. I turn to the present and begin to open it, but suddenly stop, not wanting this from him and fearing it as much as if it contained his severed hand. A love whose weirdness is better kept buried where it lays at a time when war has become the same as every other conflict. (pp. 2, 3, 4).

This is a double tragedy for Tom. As a prisoner of war, he is continuously vanquished by an enigmatic love that exudes uncertainty. As a skilled predator, Douglas seizes any opportunity to corner his victim. Their first encounter is characterized as follows:

"He seems pleased, and it comes out in his attitude, tone, and what seems to be greediness in his eyes, which I dismiss as stress-related fancifulness of mind." (p. 7)

The hunter then makes purposeful and premeditated physical contact with the animal, as if there were no barriers between him and the pelican. Tom clearly recalls the interaction that set in motion a series of subsequent events:

"His shoulder lightly brushes mine, and I wince aside, not only because I dislike poms, but also because I have never been one for touching or being touched, and, as a prisoner, I have been leaned on, trodden on, and shoved in every conceivable way,

with a frequency and ferocity that should see me through the remainder of my days.”
(p. 9)

Douglas was adamant about not letting go. He keeps making approaches and overtures, and Tom is getting tired of them. Tom gradually begins to fall in love with the bait. Douglas' goal is to use his opportunity to trap Tom. This potency has been proven:

“It's not that he looks particularly awful. But after the first few discussions about the nothing we share, this guy seemed to be more likely to become my lover... His eyes, however, are devoid of ambiguity; they interpret everything and everything, as well as every other darned benign trait that may sometimes put my teeth on edge.” (p.11)

Douglas, the predator, is a tenacious and determined combatant. Despite the fact that Tom speaks about “the nothing we share,” he is unknowingly becoming addicted. It's as if you want to share a large spoon with the devil. As Douglas continues to touch Tom, Tom submits:

“What does put me off are his movements; the little almost dancing steps he takes even when, supposedly, he is standing still, the delicate, frenetic gestures of his hands, the almost womanliness of him that threatens to touch – and touch - and touch – and I have already told of my feelings concerning that.” (p.11)

Some things are better left undone, as the saying goes, and Tom wished he hadn't let his guard down. Late in the game, he laments:

“I wish I had ended the connection earlier. He appears furiously bent on it, yet my whole ego shudders at the thought of it. However, I still have enough conscience left to feel somewhat guilty when I recall that my legal name—which I almost ever spell out to anyone—is Thomas Aloysious Smythe—as it appears on my birth certificate.
(p.13)

The predator's job is not yet over. He is committed to making his impact. The pursuer's conscience has probably already been seared with a red-hot iron many times before, even if the pursued's shame of failure may not weigh as much as lead. Gay people are still being sought after.

And occasionally a sudden surge of people will separate us, and I'll try to flee through the bodies crammed close together like mealies in a field, but always, someway, he finds me again, either suddenly reappearing at my side with fine white teeth grinning and glad, or waving to me over the intervening heads like - I savagely think - a drowning or a tart desperate for trade. (p. 13)

This picture depicts two ideas. While the latter is the behavior of a fundamentally smart person who is hell-bent on doing it regardless of the consequences, the former is the behavior of a savage in its purest form. Tom is now torn between whether to be or not to be.

Should I break off the relationship and do it? Isn't the term “relationship” a little strong? Can the pursuer and the pursued have a relationship? (p. 16)

The prey loses the struggle and the fight when the heat is fiercely turned on Tom. Tom laments as the bitter Eden is reenacted:

I am locked into the ass in front of me as if I had sodomized it, and I am locked from behind in a final negation of the privacy of my flesh. Douglas hip is jutting into mine like a broken-off iron, and my own bones are lattices of pain that restrain my knotting body's unrelenting scream. This is an unfortunate image after what I have just been through. (pp. 20, 21)

Tom eventually falls for other homosexuals, like Tony and Danny, and becomes promiscuous. In each of these instances, Tom is the one who receives the message. The pelican has been killed by the hunter. The pursued is mercilessly cut down after this “baptism of depravity,” his back to the ground, never to rise again.

4.2. In Bitter Eden, Transcendentalism: Homosexuality as a Conversation

In *Bitter Eden*, homosexuality is presented as a state of mind that goes beyond romantic sensations. The majority of the characters are POWs in Italy and Germany. A few of them are Africans caught in the middle of a global war they didn't start and had little knowledge about. Some of the most powerful homosexual men in the country are married with children and have conjugal and filial inclinations. Tom describes his connection with Douglas as follows:

I glance at Douglas and, for the first time, there is a genuine connection between us as I can see that he is thinking the same thing: "The notion is upon me like an assassin in a secret place. My attention is always on Douglas, who has won over my affections from the so-called germ of my tolerance and for whom I have developed a respect-based attachment that may not be particularly ardent but is still well-founded. (pp. 23, 37)

Danny is another of Tom's soul mates. The narrative depicts the relationship's cherubic and near-cultic position in this pattern:

Of course, being hungry may lead to moments of snappishness, but Danny's inherent sense of humor always restores the balance and is bringing out in me a capacity for laughing that I didn't know I had. We are getting along with one other easier and easier as a result... Occasionally, we even engage in a little childlike fighting. (pp. 114, 115)

The most vivid representation of their own changes, in the eyes of homosexuals, is each other. Before military prisoners, the prospect of death dangles ominously like a hangman's noose. Danny, who has a mother and family back home, informs Tom that dying from a bullet to the head isn't such a huge issue. This amazes Tom. Tom adds in:

"How about your mother, though? Your spouse? Would you not have them on your mind? (p. 120)

Danny responds:

Yes, I would be thinking about them, but only in my own manner, and if it weren't for that, I wouldn't be sitting next to you right now. Take my wife. Yes, I adore her. However, a mate is the only one of his species, just as a mother is the only one of her kind. (p. 120)

The fact that he or she is the only one of his or her type suggests a profound or mystical bond. Danny argues that if he died, his wife could find another husband, and if he lost his wife, he could find another wife. However, the loss of a partner or a friend would be irreversible. As described by Afrika, the communion seems to be cultic. Tom and Douglas have an unfathomably close bond. This is how Tom explains it:

Both pleasant and terrible moments were experienced by us. Douglas was a rock that never moves—he was always there. (p. 167)

Being always there implies a real friend. A friend who is ready to go above and beyond in good times and bad, through the ups and downs of life, is a friend in action. This is the kind of contact that transcends basic needs, sexual inclinations, and everyday concerns. The "pair" clings to one another like two lost sailors in a storm, as if to convey:

Thanks for visiting the vast sisterhood of creeps.(p. 150).

The image shown here is only speculative. Prisoners of war are rounded up in ways over which they have no control. There is no evidence that they were born homosexual, but destiny seems to be playing a cruel joke on them. There's a sense of nostalgia mixed with a sense of isolation. They resort to homosexuality as a cure for the loneliness that hangs over their heads like the sword of Damocles. Above all, tomorrow is too unclear for them, since they are just a step away from death. As a consequence, homosexuality is seen as a strategy for maximizing each day.

4.3. Homosexuality as a Failed Adventure in Bitter Eden.

Lesbians are likely to be more accepted in many communities throughout the globe than homosexuals. Despite the fact that feminism has succeeded in elevating women to the same status as men, this is still the case. And it also underscores the need for men, women, and children to work together to survive (Stanley Ordu & Odukwu, 2022). *Bitter Eden* is essentially a homosexual treatise. The protagonist, Tom, however, shudders at the prospect of being reduced to a boy or a girl—a woman. Tom's reaction to Douglas' attitude is as follows:

“I'm feeling angry... Partly because I fear that any sign of weakness on my behalf would result in him sobbing like a baby on my shoulder. Should it be “small girl” instead? (p. 25)

Tom being treated like a kid while being well into his forties is ludicrous. The fact that he is treated like a kid makes it even more disgusting. A tiny girl may have some extraordinary awareness, but it is uncertain if she is not prone to angry gullibility. A small girl needs nurturing. Tom continues to battle back:

Will you stop mothering me as though I were a little kid? You're not that old! And anyway, I don't need you. I don't need anybody. I have looked after myself all of my goddam life! (pp. 25, 26)

The message is plainly understood by both guys. Tom would be reduced to the pitiful position of a vegetable if this happened. Douglas had no choice but to pose a question:

Why did you say mothering? (p.26)

Despite his initial defiance, Tom gives up. He falls and falters, falling farther and further into the cesspool created just for macho - weaklings. Tom reveals his secret:

Does Douglas still 'mother' me? Like the manly weakling that I am, I have caved into him. Yes, but in reality, my 'weakness' is more like a unique compassion. I now see that for Douglas, not to mother someone is like not breathing. (p. 28)

Camel is another LGBT character introduced in the tale. Keep an eye on the name. Camel, according to the narrator, has a good physique, a nice heart that is striving to be pleasant, and a loyal heart. This is a fag, a person without a backbone. He is completely devoid of soul. Male or female, guts define a person. Camel lacks just one thing: courage. He is characterized as follows:

The reason he is dubbed a camel, rather than because he truly resembles one, is because he has long, irregular bones that jangle and swing to the point where you almost think you can see the hump on his back, which is absent. (p. 57)

The narrative portrays homosexuality as a futile endeavor, a fantasy, and a blank. You almost feel as though you're in a fool's paradise. It is a total squandering of manliness, character, responsibility, principle, and life. Tom has a tendency toward avarice. He states

Danny crawls up alongside me and pulls me close while remaining silent and wishing for the trembling to cease. In the morning, he is still there. That is what I convinced myself, Queen or no Queen. I remain every bit the man I once was. (p. 151)

Finally, the homosexuals' condemnation of one another is all that remains. They arrived. They had seen. They were defeated rather than conquered. It's revolting to witness how these homosexuals attack one another. It becomes clear that a same-sex relationship is a product of circumstance once again. According to reports,

What's the difference if it's reversed? Again, I find myself fumbling for words, but I am slow and startled by how vulgar the word “fucking” might sound. Why are you here, then? Do you think you're not the same whore as me by sticking your nose in my arse? (p. 162)

Despite the fact that he is now completely immersed in LGBT activities, Tom finds them disgusting and filthy. It's as though a bird has been caught in a horrible net. The following is Tom's observation:

“My mind has already created such indescribable queries as “Am I one of them” and “Am I in love with a man?” stubborn rebel that it is. But I rebuffed these inquiries with the franticness of someone under attack, then I dwelled on the mechanics of sex between men with a purposeful crudeness, saying, “Come out all covered in crap!” (pp. 94, 95)

Tom hoped to find a means to frighten himself back into the Christian prison he had been raised in, but the deed had already been done by crossing the Rubicon (95). Tom laments:

“I don't think I've ever heard a lonelier sound or one that so bitterly announces the absoluteness of our exile from a world that slips away from us every day like the dream escaping my head; every day it feels more and more like the unreal, the myth, and our terrible Eden. I stir in distress and fight with the covers that have suddenly entrapped me. I am stuck at a fork in the path, unsure of what to do. (pp.106, 107)

The voice here is that of a defeated adventurer, to put it plainly and unambiguously. He's stuck in limbo, his dreams smashed at his feet and no chance of atonement in sight. Tom bemoans this misdirected zeal in search of the queer once again when he approaches Tony:

“Tony, stop wasting your time with me and utilize one of your males who already acts like a lady. No matter how you dress me up, nothing will change because I've got balls, I know it, and I enjoy it. (p.142)

Homosexuality, as shown here, is a total failure. 'Already feels' is just that — a sensation, like a ghost. It doesn't matter how much gays attempt to reproduce events, it's all for nothing. What's more, the protagonist adores and values the balls tucked between his legs. This is the last straw that breaks the camel's back:

Nothing's going to change
Stop wasting your time (p. 142).

The homosexual is, in essence, unsatisfied. The gay is left to his destiny, much like money and drink, which promise many things but do not give, most notably happiness. In the end, he or she, like “a beast of no gender,” becomes a wreck. They take advantage of one another and then discard them. It's as if it were a needy kid.

4.4. Bitter Eden's Locked in the Subconscious: Homosexuals as Biologically “Wired”

Homosexuality is portrayed in the text as a dormant keg of dynamite hidden away in people's subconsciouses, ready to explode. It will need light, soil, and water to flourish, much like a seed. These are elements of the environment. Tom's buddy Tony, a painter and artist, teaches him about homosexuality.

With the patience of a kid, he explains. Your wicked eye is the one that squints. You see, we are both angels and devils. And because I am not painting your skin, there is no skin on your face. I'm depicting the true you that you don't want me to see behind your skin. (p.59)

Tony says that beauty is merely skin deep, while the true man is concealed deep inside the mind. The mind's architecture, however, is not inscribed on the face. A person's mind is a shadow from which he or she may never be able to escape. Tom's body reacts as a result of his meeting with Tony. He explains:

“This is the first... Although I can't remember the sexual dream, it left behind its sperm sowing between my bare thighs. I quickly remove the sperm by washing it off in the ablution block. (p.60).

This is the conflict that plagues homosexuals' minds. In the story, Bitter Eden portrays his LGBT characters, notably the protagonist, as plodding down the path. Tony believes that homosexuality's seed must be tended and nurtured in order for it to sprout. Tony observes:

Tom, you must now stop. You are a slow learner who requires a first night for everything to come together and turn you on. How much more potent will that turning-

on be for you who have never felt like a woman than for others for whom it is just another stout-around in drag? (p.142).

Because of these things, some gay people are quickly kicked out, while others have to be rounded up, taught, and told what to do. However, the topic of how a homosexual guy realizes he has a woman's instinct, that is, how to behave like a woman, remains unanswered. When there is no marriage involved, homosexual friends often take liberties with one another. However, in *Bitter Eden*, the protagonist, Tom, is a woman. He becomes well-known for his promiscuity. Tony is the only character in the narrative who behaves in a biologically-wired manner. He is an artist and a painter. In addition, he is a philosopher by extension. He excavates his "patient's" thoughts, painting the mind's architecture on the face. This is a challenging activity since the architecture of the mind cannot be simply re-echoed or re-enacted on the face.

5. Conclusion

The research concludes as follows, based on the aforementioned results: Although the primarily heterosexual African community still views same-sex relationships with disdain, homosexuality has become a facet of African life. Despite its presence in Africa, homosexuality remains a "closed" phenomenon, and homophobia is a result of this openness.

5.1. Limitation/recommendation

The study is limited to one novel, *The Bitter Eden* by Tatakulu Afrika. The study recommends freedom of sexuality and identity with regard to humans and their environment.

5.2. Suggestion

Other studies should look into the causes of lesbianism in Africa. And the rising case of queer or LGTB people in Nigeria.

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