

A Critical Performativity Analysis of Religious Laws on Homosexual Discourse in Nigeria: A Study of “Under the Udala Trees” and “Born on a Tuesday”

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Abstract

This manuscript delves into the ideological underpinnings embedded in the traditional religious doctrines governing homosexuality. Leveraging insights from a curated selection of Nigerian literary works, it illuminates the thematic intersections of Christianity and Islam, seeking to unravel the symbolic nuances of Biblical and Quranic precepts on homosexuality. This exploration asserts that these ancient laws stand detached from the diverse sexual orientations prevalent in contemporary society. While there exists a rich tapestry of discourse encompassing aspects such as LGBTQ+ rights and identity formation, a significant void remains in the scholarly exploration of the religious dimensions of homosexuality. Addressing this lacuna, essential in shaping informed gay law policies in the African context. Drawing upon the seminal theories of Judith Butler’s “Gender Performativity” (1990) and Fairclough’s “Critical Discourse Analysis” (1995) as analytical lenses, this paper scrutinises two poignant literary narratives – “Under the Udala Trees” and “Born on a Tuesday”- offering a deep dive into the religious discourse on homosexuality they encapsulate. The findings illuminate the overarching universal ethos present in the reversed texts of Bible and Quran, evincing a grand design that accommodates the multifaceted tapestry of human behaviour of sexual orientations. It compellingly argues that the homophobic undertones discernible in these texts are emblematic, anchored in historical contexts, rather than prescriptive mandates for the modern era.

Keynotes: Performativity, Responsibilitisation, Religious Laws, Homosexuality, In/exclusion Roles

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to show how selected Nigerian literatures respond to the religious laws on homosexuality, delving into ideological perspectives embedded in the traditional

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religious doctrines of Christianity and Islamism. The manuscript examines gay rights, law and African literatures by thematising the context of representations of Biblical and Quranic precepts on homosexuality as detached from the diverse sexual orientations prevalent in contemporary society. It focuses on re-evaluating the tradition of law making on homosexuality especially the January 2014 bill commonly known as the ‘Jail the Gays’ act signed to law in Nigeria, which criminalises same sex relationships in which violators are to face 14 years of imprisonment, and risk death by stoning in the Northern region. In an attempt to challenge this law, African literature through an emerging field known as *Literature and Law* that uses social and historical evidences, narratology and social dynamism, questions the authorial stances of the anti-gay law order.

Goodrich (2021), among other scholars of Law and Literature, opines that the law is a social institution that should not be restricted to only the courtroom. He recognises that law is a social institution with the implication that rather than operating as a closed, self-referential entity, should be understood in a social reality because of its place and role within the ethical, political and sexual commitments of its times. He thus states that “reading a legal text, just as reading a literary text, becomes an interpretive activity whose outcome might be an indeterminacy of meaning, or at best, the discovery of a multiplicity of meanings. Kairys (1998) observes that legal reasoning does not provide concrete, real answers to particular social problems without considering social and political judgement. The idea of bridging the gap between Law and Literature has been termed *specialised knowledge* by Michel Foucault (1978). He explains in a succinct manner that bridging both would allow for creative interpretation of legal texts and very useful critical tools that could be used to open up the field of African literatures and to provide new avenues for innovative research. The argument of Norris (2001) that the law is not merely a reflection of social conditions, but also a social text that is meant to respond to historical situations by finding ways to resolve social conflicts is germane. This study attempts to fill an important gap in African interdisciplinary studies by showing how curated African literature challenges traditional religious laws on homosexuality by illuminating the thematic intersections of Christianity and Islamism to unravel the symbolic nuances of the traditional precepts on homophobia. While there exists a rich tapestry of Nigerian texts that advocate sexuality as freewill even as against religious or political backdrop, the gay right law in Nigeria that banned man to man or woman to woman affairs has been reconstructed in such Nigerian novels as “Born on a Tuesday”, now (BOT) and “Under the Udala trees”, now (UTT). These works are selected based on the themes of homosexuality they discuss and their geographical settings. These works are used as the base for argument of the specialised knowledge of Law and Literature and how the bounds have been broken through such affective and evaluative evidentials as evinced in the paper. This study investigates the use of context specific linguistic representations and performativity to facilitate access to sexuality in Africa.

Methodology

The work draws upon the seminal theories of Judith Butler's "Gender Performativity" (1990) and Fairclough's "Critical Discourse Analysis" (1995) as analytical lenses. Fairclough (1995) method includes the linguistic description of the language text (i.e. textual level of analysis), the interpretation of the relationship between the discursive processes and the text (i.e. interpersonal and intertextual levels) and the explanation of the relations between the discursive practices and social processes (i.e. the contextual level). The study adapts ideology construction, an aspect of CDA which is based on class relations of domination. Fairclough (1995b:14) defines ideology as "meaning in the service of power". Ideologies are constructions of meaning which generate production, reproduction and transformation of relation dominance. Judith Butler's "Gender Performativity" (1990) attributes gender to acts rather than innateness. It explains the cultural signification that the body itself produces rather than a super-imposed and constrained nature of behaviour. "There is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured. The theory explains gender as *doing*, rather than something natural or internal, rooted in outward signs and actions. These performative acts do not express an innate gender but actually create gender itself. This study uses mainly qualitative approaches in that data samples were interpreted using analytical and critical measures. Insights from the two theories are used to explain religious laws on homosexuality discourse in "Under The Udala Trees" and "Born on a Tuesday".

Synopsis of the Texts

"Born on a Tuesday" by Elnathan John is a political story borne on Islamic religious impetus in the Northern Nigeria. It has a story rendition of a simple boy who tells of the everyday living. The fiction questions the morality of fear and sin and concludes that there is no moral constraint anywhere except the one created by some powerful classes of the society. There are instances of masturbation, prostitution, adultery, unrequited love, sexual adventures. It reveals violence and the strictest religious laws.

"Under the Udala Trees" by Chinelo Okparanta is a fiction set during the Biafran war. The novel takes place in the background of the Nigerian Civil War- (6 July 1967-15 Jan 1970) that was between the Nigerian government and the secessionist state of Biafra. Ijeoma, the protagonist finds herself in a situation that reshaped her identity in a society torn in war and ethnic biases. She clamours for a society where there would be true freedom (sexuality and ethnic unity); where everyone would coexist without any fear or restrictions. Ijeoma, the title character in the novel, is under moral siege. She thus grapples to find a balance between religious teachings of her mother and her strong sexual feelings for Amina. Through her mind, readers easily navigate the scripture and question the natural science against the biblical law on homosexuality. Apart from the popular themes of radical and extreme religiosity, both novels touch on sexuality and homophobic laws in Islamic and Christian religions.

Analysis of Findings

The analysis will be done under three subheadings:

- Us/them dichotomy
- Power constructions and relations
- Identity, role representations and allocation.

Us/Them Dichotomy

The ideological polarisation of good *self* and bad *other* is explicit in the data. The texts polarise homosexuals and heterosexuals into *us* and *them*, where *them* has pejorative and negative connotations of evil. The polarisation explains how the Bible and the Quran engage self-presentation, self-defense, legitimation and persuasion using the ideological square under the following subdivisions:

- A. Emphasise positive things about us;
- B. Emphasise negative things about them;
- C. De-emphasise negative things about us;
- D. De-emphasise positive things about them.

A prominent assumption that runs through the data is the appreciation of the heterosexuals as rule abiding and godly while the homosexuals are represented as legitimating illegality and evil. Abundant linguistic strategies are used to praise the in-group while the out-group is denigrated. Through material processes, verbal processes, pronouns, and presuppositions, us/them dichotomy is revealed from the data in the excerpts below

Excerpt 1

I don't like sitting with the boys around the mosque or the motor park because all they do is talk about whose penis is big and whose penis is small and whose penis is curved like a fishing hook. And every time Abdulkareem is around, everyone jokes about how he has fold his penis three times before it can fit in his pants. I wondered how everyone knew what his penis looked like. Then someone told me that there was a time some boys wanted to see it when the rumours started going around when Abdulkareem refused to show them, they all pinned and held him down, stripped him and stroked his penis until it became like a big fate sugarcane... Bilal and Abdulkareem were always coming out of corners or disappearing together. When they would re-appear they would both be quiet for a long time and I would suspect they were up to no good. For a long time, I tried to find out where they always went and what they were doing. I feel relieved that I don't have to see Bilal and Abdulkareem anymore because of what I saw one day. They had both disappeared as usual and I wasn't thinking anything of it... as I opened the door, loosening the rope of my trousers, someone almost

knocked me over and ran out...his penis was huge and erect and he was panting like he had been running...(P. 51, BOT)

Excerpt 2

I resented them because they could sleep, and it was I who stayed up with thoughts plaguing my mind...Malaam Jinaidu said it was a sin fasting could not cleanse. I had heard of men being together, read many Hadiths about sodomy, but I had never seen it with my own eyes...I thought of the Hadith that said that the earth trembles whenever there is an act of sodomy and wondered how many times they have done it and if I ever felt the earth tremble. It made me feel nauseated when I thought of it- Abdulkareem touching Bilal, Bilal bending over- how they could prefer themselves to girls? The morning after, I waited for them to beg me not to say anything and when they didn't I was angry...I resented them because they could sleep. (P. 53, BOT)

Excerpt 3

"DON'T YOU SEE?", mama asked. 'It is that same behavior that led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the very same behavior that you and that girl- what is her name again?- engaged in.' Two angels had come to visit Sodom, and Lot had persuaded them to lodge with him. But then came the men of the city, knocking on Lot's door, demanding to see the guests. Bring them out to us, that we may know them. But Lot refused. Instead, he offered the men his two virgin daughters, for the men to do to the daughters as they wished as long, so long as they did not harm the guests...' lot was a good man...hospitable. was willing to protect his guests from sin.' But he offered up his own daughters to be done with as the sodomites wished. (PG 74, UTT)

Excerpt 4

The droplets continued to wet the skin on my neck and face and even my arms. I felt lightheaded, as if the blood had drained out of me. She was speaking to the devil, crying for him to turn back and leave me alone. 'I order you to leave. I order you to leave her alone. (PG. 86, UTT)

To emphasise the negative aspects of homosexuality, in excerpt 1, Ahmad who has been taken in to be trained by the Sheikh as an apprentice spoke bluntly against homosexuals as vulgar and indecent with the Material Processes determined by the verbal groups *talk about whose penis is big and whose penis is small* to show solidarity with the in-group, Here, *penis* and *they* are the Goals; the third person *they* functions as the Actor with two Location types of Circumstances, the prepositional phrase *around the mosque* and the noun phrase

the motor park. Evident in ‘*I don’t like sitting with the boys around the mosque or the motor park...*’, Ahmad polarises himself as good and the boys around the Mosque or the motor park as bad. In excerpt 2, Abdulkareem and Bilal are set against the pious Ahmad with the use of the exclusive *they* against *I*. Evident in, *I would suspect they were up to no good...* and *I resented them*. Relying on Fairclough (1989: 127- 128), such usage of ‘the so-called ‘exclusive’ *they*’ / ‘them’ could indicate, in this particular case, that Ahmad is speaking not only ‘on behalf of himself, but also all (‘right-minded’)’ members of the heterosexual community. No one from the out-groups is up to any good *I would suspect they were up to no good...* and in the use of Verbiage *resented, don’t like*. Members of the out-group, that is, members of the gay society who are represented by the pronoun *they / them*; which is the Goal of the Material Processes are to be- *avoided* and *resented* as their sin is categorised as one that cannot be forgiven ... *a sin fasting could not cleanse*. Ahmad and other members of the in-group including the *Malaam Junaidu* represented by the pronoun *we* in excerpt 2 are the Actors of the Material Processes of the inclusive *Us*. The choice of the Material Processes reveals that in-group is very sure that members of the out-group can never be forgiven and would rot in fire, *I thought of the Hadith that said that the earth trembles whenever there is an act of sodomy* and in *I resented them*. A resentment ideology is also evident in, *I don’t like sitting with the boys around the mosque or the motor park*. The rejection of homosexuality as vulgarity and indecency is evident in the excerpts.

Also, in excerpt 2, the component of the ideological square: emphasise positive things about the in-group is manifested in, *Malam Abdul-Nur put his hand on my shoulder to tell me he liked the way I always got up early to take care of the mosque*. This is a clear positive representation of self and other members of the in-group. *Malam Abdul-Nur* emphasises the positive things Ahmad is doing and so praises him with such verbiages as *like, take care, got up early*. In excerpt 3, the behaviour of Ijeoma and Amina was denounced by Ijeoma’s mother; another polarisation and emphasising negative things about *them*. The behaviour was considered as so terrible that it cannot be named, thus its Goal was represented by *that*, ‘*It is **that** same behavior that led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; a pragmatic deixis that shows distancing*. To denounce the evil of the act, avoidance strategy in the pronoun *that* was used. “DON’T USE SEE”, ascribing a Material Process feature to the abstract act of sodomy in order to show its negative connotation. In excerpt 3, like in the sin of sodomy of the Sodom and Gomorrah. The in-group is portrayed positively through the representation of actions and achievements of Lot, a hospitable person who willingly gives his virgin girls in order to protect the sanity of the law. He is constructed as obedient and chaste as he prevented his visitors from being violated and rather, offered to give up his daughter to be violated, ensuring that the in-group is safe. Positive construction of the in-group can also be seen in how they thereafter protected the entire members of the Lot’s family and destroyed the *other-* town members. Their actions are positively related in verbiage such as *hospitable, obedient, chaste*. The data deploys the noun sodomy, evil in reference to homosexuality. The

label, *sodomy* has the feature +irrational, +abnormal +evil and +illegal and constructed as God's *enemy*. In excerpt 4, the Goal, *the devil*, an out-group was cast out of Ijeoma. *She was speaking to the devil, crying for him to turn back and leave me alone. I order you to leave. I order you to leave her alone.*

The polarisation of the in-group is good and the outgroup as bad is ideological. The wrong of the latter is deemphasised while that of the former is emphasised.

Power Constructions and Relations

Religiosity is a means of ideology as identified in the class stratification identified by Foucault (1995). Therefore, in the production of discriminatory language such as polarisation, relations of domination are obvious and this is a matter of a primary concern to Fairclough who claims that ideologies are reflected in language through "propositions that generally figure as implicit assumptions in texts which include presuppositions (implicitness). According to him, "ideologies are most effective when they become naturalised and achieve a status of common sense. It is concerned with a powerful group controlling the other less powerful groups. The rules and traditions of religion are made by the powerful class and made binding through social legitimatisation, representations and productions. Sample excerpts are used to explain how power structures are constructed using religious laws:

Excerpt 5

But for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The lord god fashioned into a woman the rib which he had taken from the man... (Gen 20, UTT)

Excerpt 6

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the waters (Genesis 1:1 P. 67. UTT)

Excerpt 7

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.(Mark 10:6-9,UTT)

Excerpt 8

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murders, and whoremongers...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire. (Rev. 21:8, UTT)

Excerpt 9

For this cause, God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the man, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men (Rom 1:26-32, UTT)

Excerpt 10

Malam Abdul-Nur did not raise his head from his exercise book when he asked; if Allah asks you to do something, will you refuse?... no I said. Are you ready to do what Allah wants when he wants it, without asking why? (P. 67, BOT)

Excerpt 11

Malam Abdul-Nur raised his hand when one of the men from England had finished speaking. The man had said that Islam means peace and that all Muslims should be examples of peace in the community. Malam Abdul-Nur said he wanted to make a correction. 'Islam does not mean peace,' he began. All of us went quiet in the room apart from the boys who follow him everywhere he goes and shout Allahu Akbar after everything he says... 'Islam means submission. Submission to the will of Allah and the will of Allah is not the will of the infidel or the will of America... (P. 70, BOT)

Excerpt 12

Malam Abdul-Nur now preaches openly against us, mentioning us by name, mocking us in his sermons. Last month, Malam Abdul-Nur challenged sheikh to a doctrinal debate about whether it is haram to go to University and work for the government...everyone likes something new, eventually people get tired and some other new thing takes over (P. 155, BOT)

Excerpt 13

People are throwing books and papers into the fire. Malam Abdul-Nur is supervising the burning, adding kerosene any time the items being dumped seem to be overwhelming the fire. Every time the flame leaps from the pile the crowd screams: Allahu Akbar! (P. 158, BOT)

The data show a rich tapestry of law evinced in both the Bible and the Quran. Majority of the verbal processes in the data associated with religious nuances bear the name of God and Allah. The ideological square is used here to categorically distance people that are for God / Allah and those that are against Him. Excerpts 11, 12, 13 & 14 show the almost authoritarian stance of the religious leaders as represented by Mallam Abdul-Nur, a one-time follower of

the Sheikh, who has now formed his own faction of radical Islamism. His group denounces education and everything that has a link with America. The form of Islamism that insists that no one is allowed to question the will of Allah as it is absolute. In excerpt 11, ... *what Allah wants when he wants it*, The Verbal Process occurrence of *want*, which is implicit and understated shows extremism as it is unfolded in the subsequent havoc the group wreaked on the out-group. The polarisation of the out-group is evident in excerpt 12, *Malam Abdul-Nur now preaches openly against us, mentioning us by name, mocking us...*; and excerpt 13, *All of us went quiet in the room apart*. The prepositional phrase *against us* and *by us* in excerpt 13 is a Circumstantial Element expressing the intention of the process of frustrating the group of the Sheikh. The negative other representation of the Sheikh therefore distinguishes the out-group, the Sheikh, his loyalists and the people supporting him as not doing the dictates of Allah. In excerpt 12, Mallam Abdul-Nur uses a negative Verbal Process type to represent the American visitors that gave a speech on Islamism as a religion of peace. The negative Verbal Process *raised* and *said* cast some doubt as to whether the Americans really understand the religion at all. From excerpts 5-14, God's / Allah's voice is behind the actions of Mallam Abdul-Nur as his group is heard shouting *Allahu Akbar! Every time the flame leaps from the pile* and during the slaughtering of the Sheikh. In excerpts 5-10, it is God's voice that is creating. *God created, ordering, inherit the kingdom of God, God made them..* From the foregoing, it is evident that the polarisation of the in-group shows that God is the determinant of the actions and inactions of the in-group. There is also the foregrounding of the religious ideology that homosexuals are belonging to the out-group and vile. This Presupposition is found in the position of a complement: *God made them male and female excerpt 7, But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murders, and whoremongers...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire in excerpt 8; For this cause, God gave them up unto vile affections in excerpt 10*. The presupposition that the homosexuals have deviated from the norm arises from the adjectival complement *vile affection, and the prepositional complement with fire* which functions to establish the fact that there are certain principles that guide the proper forms of sexuality. This ideology emphasises the existence of some misguided deviant fringes. In another instance, the conception that homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom is perpetuated by the conjunction '*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire*. Preceding the linguistic structure, the logical presupposition of nonconformism is triggered in the next clause by the verb *shall have*. Other excerpts revealed examples of presupposition that stress the theme of exclusion. Mainly, presupposition in the data functions to negatively delineate the homosexuals.

Identity, Role Representation and Allocation

By questioning ethnic, religious, and sexual biases, the understanding of performativity not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative

power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains. Gender does not denote a substantive being, but a set of relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations. The data responds by allocating roles to characters based on their sexual preferences. This is in line with Butler (1990) that ‘because there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalises nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all (1990). Gender allocation in the data is shown in the excerpts below:

Excerpt 14

Last night I dreamed of you. You were merging into me and I was merging into you. There were no clothes between us, nothing but our flesh and our warmth. And my lips reaching longingly yours...the heat rose in my face. I felt naked, like my heart has been yanked of and kept out as public display (P.261 UTT)

Excerpt 15

Yesterday I cried. I cried because when Malam Abdul-Nur put his hand on my shoulder to tell me he liked the way I always got up early to take care of the mosque, I felt it again. The flashes from that dream, the flashes that made me go to a quiet corner to hide my erection. He touched me and it all came rushing through my head...I went into the toilet and locked the door. (Pg. 55, BOT)

Excerpt 16

Then one night, when I was finally able to sleep, I dreamt I was out in the bush with Abdulkareem and he pinned me against a tree and made me bend over. I woke up with my penis erect and sweat all over my body (Pg. 53, BOT)

Excerpt 17

...as I opened the door, loosening the rope of my trousers, someone almost knocked me over and ran out...his penis was huge and erect and he was panting like had been running (pg.51,BOT)

Excerpt 18

Amina and I bathing together out by the tap, both of us looking into each other's faces. Amina and I on the mattress we shared, our warm breaths intermingling in the small space between (Pg. 84, UTT)

Excerpt 19

I went closer to her, ran my fingers through her braids...I held her face in the palms of my hands and pretended to inspect her hair. Back in the hovel, our towels fell on the floor. In the near darkness, our hands moved across our bodies.

We took in with our fingers the curves of our flesh...eventually our lips met. This was the beginning of our bodies being touched by the fire that was each other's flesh (Pg. 110, UTT)

Excerpt 20

We might as well be married,' Amina said...of course to each other. I mean that it would be nice to be married to you too...have you kissed anyone before? I asked. She shook her head. 'No'...Slowly she made her way to my chest. We'd never gone farther than the chest. But now she gently removed my nightgown, and then removed hers. She cupped her hands around my breasts, took turns with them, fondling and stroking and caressing them with her tongue. I felt the soft tug of her teeth on the peaks of my chest. Euphoria washed over me. She continued along, leaving a trail of kisses on her way down to my belly. She travelled farther, beyond the belly, farther than we had ever gone. I moaned and surrendered myself to her (Pg. 113-119, UTT)

The theory of Performativity places action, a kind of ritualised repetition above the natural fixture of sexuality. The data set reveals that the characters in the texts performed such sexual acts as they desired and allocated roles to themselves through ritualised performance as against the fixture of the society on gender representation. The performative acts are evident in "Under the Udala Tree" where Ijeoma, the protagonist of the novel was allotted the role of a male. This is manifested in her taking important decisions on sexuality, first with Amina, the homeless Hausa girl she picked on the road, and then, Ndidi, the lady she later settled with. Ijeoma provided shelter for Amina in the Grammar School teacher's house and also made sure that she was sent to school. She explained to the couple that they could keep Amina to work with them as maid too and her wages would be saved for her education. At several other times, she is heard professing her love for Amina and promising to love her *in every way any boy can*, making love moves and giving gifts. She performs the same sexual role with Ndidi as she also makes the first sex move and prayed in her heart that she satisfies her. Thwarting the role with Chibundu, a male character who she later got married to was considered uninteresting and passive as it would have been with either Amina or Ndidi who are female characters. What this implies is that though Ijeoma has a child for Chibundu, the man she marries customarily, Ijeoma could still not play the role of female. After a while, she packed her things and went back to her mum. And Ndidi moved with her into a building few blocks away. Her male performativity is obvious.

In "Born on a Tuesday", the author allocated the role of a female to the protagonist, Ahmad and male role to the character of Abdulkareem. The first instance of sexual performativity is between Abdulkareem and Bilal. An incident Ahmad describes succinctly thus: *...as I opened the door, loosening the rope of my trousers, someone almost knocked*

me over and ran out...his penis was huge and erect and he was panting like he had been running... (PG.51, BOT). Abdulkareem's manhood is described as huge and panicky- an African description of a proper man. This revelation makes Ahmad sleepless and when eventually he was able to sleep, he saw Abdulkareem making love gestures towards him. Not only does Ahmad have sexual urges each time he thinks about Abdulkareem, he feels sexual arousal whenever he is in the company of other male characters, Mallam Abdul-Nur and Jibril. His feminine role representation is pronounced when he was taken to a brothel by Jibril. He got carried away by the thought of Abdul that he released before meeting the lady. These are clear evidences of female role allocation to Ahmad in the data. In order to clearly reveal the performative cues that reveal male and female categorisation in the data, a tabulation of characters, social roles, performativity and semantic cues will be shown in a table below:

Characters	Social role	Role Performativity	Performative Cues
Amina (UTT)	Female	Female	+dependent, +shy, +withdrawn
Nididi (UTT)	Female	Female	+in/dependent
Ijeoma (UTT)	Female	Male	+decisive, +Sexually active +security
Abdulkareem (BOT)	Male	Male	+big dick, +sexual advances
Bilal (BOT)	Male	Female	+dependent, +withdrawn, +shy
Jibril (BOT)	Male	Male	+intelligent, +tough
Mallam Abdul-Nur (BOT)	Male	Male	+cruel, +intelligent, +skillful
Ahmad (BOT)	Male	Female	+dependent, +responsive, +talkative

Table 1.0

Table 1.0 above shows characters, social roles, performativity and cues. The table reveals such performative features that depict sexual representations as against the social or natural gender fixture. The African female are depicted as shy, withdrawn and dependent. These are features depicted by such characters as Amina, Bilal and Ahmad. Though Ndidi is depicted as a female character, she has a carefree and independent nature that shows norm violation and through representation, she becomes the voice of freedom for the female gender. The likes of Abdulkareem, Abdul-Nur, Jibril and Ijeoma are allocated male gender role because of certain outstanding features. Ijeoma like the other male in her category is bold. She challenges norms and traditions that have been. An example of this was when she queried the kindness of

Lot in giving her two virgin daughters to be molested by men of Sodom and Gomorrah in an attempt to protect his visitors. She sees Lot as effeminate and weak, exposing her daughters to danger when he could have stood up for them. Her character shows strength and provides security for every female character she came across in the novel.

Recontextualising Homosexual Laws

The data set revealed that some of the excerpts depicting the evil of homosexuality in the data reveal imprecision, overgeneralisation and inexactitudeness. Excerpts 5-10 are few of these instances. Excerpt 5 states that God didn't find a suitable match for Adam and so made him a woman. This shows imprecision and violates the presuppositional implicitness of homophobia. If God made him a suitable match of a woman, then every man-man or woman-woman relationship is bad. The proposition of **b** doesn't directly follow the proposition of **a** because there were only animals in the garden. Excerpt 6 talks about the inexactitudeness of gender performativity. In the creation, everything was formless and void. It means that nothing was definite; not even gender nor sexuality. In excerpt 7, it records that God made them male and female. The incompleteness becomes a subject of debate. He made them male and female to do what? Could the making not be in the performativity rather than in the fixtures? Also in excerpt 9, there was no mention of homosexuality in ...*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire...* it was overgeneralisation to have assumed that the verse was condemning them to hell.

The ideological assessment that homosexuals are evil is unequivocally bias and unobjective implying a division through which homosexuals are categorised along the *We vs They* continuum—they are the bad sex versus we are the good sex. This makes self-presentation and therefore 'us/them' categorisation ideological by nature because it focuses on group polarisation that employs a strategy of positive self-presentation of the in-group and negative other presentation of the out-group. However, such negative representation of others (heterosexuals) can only lead to an 'us' versus 'them' or an 'us' from 'them' categorisation, Huntington (2002: 21) explains that we only know who we are when we know who we are against. This way of constructing groups draws on the antagonistic world view of *good/evil* versus *beasts, perverts*. Huntington's logic holds the view that the identity of 'us' is dependent on a fear of 'them'. If indeed God loves everyone and created everyone in great love as suggested in John 3:16 and his allusion that everything created was void and formless (UTT, 170), how then can he love some and hate others? The data identified the homosexuals as against the law of nature while the Bible states that during creation nothing was definite. If everything was void, how then can there be a fixed sexual habit if not the one determined by the society?

Also in BOT, the excerpt referent in the Hadith where it was stated that every act of sodomy makes the earth tremble. The protagonist who could not pinpoint the number of

times they had engaged in the act yet the earth has remained unshakable sums up the presupposition thus- if a, then b becomes a question if no trembling, then it must be non-abominable as claimed.

Insights from CDA and Performativity have been used to account for us/them dichotomy, power relation and identity construction of homosexuality in Nigerian fictions. UTT, 82 shows the fussiness and confusion of the traditional religious nuances and questions thus:

Yes, it had been Adam and Eve. But so what if it was only the story of Adam and Eve that we got in the Bible? Why did that have to invalidate the possibility of a certain Adam and Adam or a certain Eve and Eve? Just because the story happened to focus on a certain Adam and Eve did not mean that all other possibilities were forbidden because the Bible recorded one specific thread of events, one specific history, why did that have to invalidate or discredit all other threads all other histories.

The possibility of the dynamic context in UTT, 296 is valid: *God made a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that he made with their fathers (Heb. 8). If that first covenant was faultless, then no place would have been made for the second...maybe God is still making new covenants...* And in BOT 170, the Sheikh explained that there is no moral law except manmade:

Are you waiting for me to say something? That is the end of my story.' He gets up and walks to the door. 'were you wondering what the moral of the story was?' he asks, turning around. Yes, Sheikh, I reply. 'There is no moral. I just felt like telling you a story...

The excerpts from both UTT and BOT reveal that the negative representations of homosexuals are borne out of cultural homophobic laws that are not necessarily from the traditional religious documents. The old laws might have shown that male/female relationships are good but there are new laws emerging because of the new social realities. The essence of '*...no moral ground*' as touching the story of the Sheikh in BOT reveals that morality is cultural and not necessarily religious. Thus far, the data have shown that there are overarching universal ethos present in the traditional religious documents of the Bible and the Quran that accommodates the multifaceted tapestry of human behavior of sexual orientations. It argues that the homophobic undertones discernible in these texts are emblematic, anchored in historical contexts, rather than prescriptive.

Summary of Research Findings

Delving into the ideological underpinnings embedded in the traditional religious doctrines governing homosexuals, the texts see the religious laws of homophobia in both the Bible and the Quran as detached and mere symbolic representational nuances whose context is historical. With such theoretical tools as critical discourse analysis and performativity used to evaluate the inclusion and exclusion roles of homosexuals against heterosexual, performativity and power and ideology that show that the powerful in the society construct the nuances of the laws as they please because of the complex and almost distant meanings of the religious documents. The work has demonstrated how through performativity and immediate contextualisation of the documents, the laws evinced more universal laws that cater for homosexuals. Apparently, the use of power and ideology alone may not have yielded a tangible result, this informs the choice of a complementary gender theory of performativity which revealed the identities and roles of the homosexuals in the selected texts. Addressing this lacuna not only enriches the existing body of knowledge but also fosters a nuanced understanding, essential in shaping informed gay law policies in the African context. The study has therefore established that homophobia is established through religious laws due to unfounded ideologies and power that are subjective. A proper contextualisation would reveal that the documents have universal laws that cater for emerging sexual behaviours.

Our findings are consistent with some of the works of Nwachika (2014) on the liberation of African women and the intersection of same sex sexualities; Durkin's (2017) work on the exploration of positive representation of sexual and gender minorities in African literatures and films. The work is on the resistance of contemporary homophobic attitudes espoused by government and religion. Adriaan (2020) looks at the representation of religion in African literature by espousing on the creative representation of religious traditions and dynamics. He criticises the religious beliefs and institutions as mere imagination and seeks for alternative religious possibilities on gender and sexuality. The work of Adriaan (2020) is the closest to this manuscript because it sees religion as tools for ideology but differs on the ground that it doesn't explore the universal parameters that cater for all gender behaviours as explicit in the current data.

The work has demonstrated that recontextualising the religious documents if properly situated are capable of making changes in the African law on sexuality. While the people; both homosexuals and heterosexuals need to be positively disposed to all sex genders noting that all that God / Allah creates is good.

Conclusion

The manuscript examines the religious ethos as evinced in the perspectival laws on homosexuality in Nigeria. The principles of the Christian and Islamic laws of the Bible and the Quran were examined through the analytical lenses of Critical Discourse Analysis and Performativity. These revealed a heavy negative ideological and exclusion stance on homosexuality. The study explained that the role allocation of the male-man and the male-woman as exemplified in the religious documents should be done on performativity rather than mere conventional examination.

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