

Original Paper

Queering the Queer: A Puritan Christian's Reading of Queered Sexualities and Identities in Selected African and African-American Queer Novels

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URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjssr.v6n3p268>**Abstract**

*This paper undertakes to read the queered sexualities and identities in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye*, Damon Galgut's *In a Strange Room* and Sello Duicker's *Thirteen Cents* from the critical lenses of a puritan Christian. The study, thus, deploys the Reader-Response and Queer theories as its theoretical frameworks. The study is motivated by the growing ideological spaces allotted to African queer studies; and aims to join the discussion by offering a puritan's angle to the African queer arguments. Among the specific LGBTQ identities and sexualities interrogated in the paper include bestiality/zoophilia, phytophilia or dendrophilia, Spectorphilia, incest, rape/molestation, masturbation, polyamorous relationship, homoerotic, homosocial, and heterosexuality. These identities and sexualities are read or interpreted based on laid down Bible principles not necessarily to generate homophobic sentiments but rather to query the moral and didactic underpinnings of these practices in the light of societal mores, stability and progress of the human race, as problematised in the selected texts. The reading reveals that certain queer practices run counter to extant Bible precepts and do not make for a harmonious world order as they are seen to be products of dysfunctional societal institutions. Thus, they are predicated on exploitation, oppression, destruction and unequal, unbalanced and unnatural relationships.*

Keywords

gender identity, unnatural relationships, polyamorous relationship, spectorphilia, queer, sexuality

1. Introduction

A wide range of sexualities and identities have been identified in gender and queer studies. Apart from LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex), Wikipedia also lists other queer sexual orientations to include asexual, deminsexual, androsexual, gynosexual, monosexual, aromantic, skoliosexual, polyamorphus, demiromantic, among others. While other parts of the world, especially Europe and America, have become more tolerant of queer people and their sexual orientations through institutional frameworks such as sponsoring legislations that discourage homophobia against queer people, the opposite holds true in Africa where nonnormative sexual orientations are largely frowned upon. Chris Dunton, for instance, submits that the existing depiction of the queer in African literature and criticism follow consequently from the political notion of cultural nationalism which views the queer in Africa as part of the western/imperialist cultural importation during the years of colonisation (p. 728). The portrayal of Joe Golder in Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* serves this purpose, as he, an African American, is depicted as the only character in the work with a deviant sexuality, which is strange and alien to the African milieu. His sexuality is also seen to be injurious and predatory, as it directly or indirectly leads to the death of Noah, a child character in the work (p. 201, p. 236).

Noting the anti-queer posturing by many African leaders and intellectuals, Brenna Munro reports that "sexual identity has become caught up in the politics of racial authenticity and postcolonial nationalism" (p. 751). The peripheral position of queer criticism in African literature is also noted by Keguro Macharia, whose 2009 article begins by noting the anti-queer stance by African political and religious leaders—from Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe to Nigeria's Bishop Peter Akinola—who have argued in favour of the un-Africanist narrative on queer issues (p. 157).

Macharia equally reports on the perspectives advanced by queer-friendly scholars such as Wayne Dynes and John Mburu who insist that queer practices existed in precolonial Africa, and that contrary to popular opinion, colonialism actually introduced homophobia into Africa through the activities of the missionaries and the legal frameworks of the mainstream imperialist culture (p. 157). In his review of Neville Hoad's *African Intimacies*, Macharia uses the 1886 martyrdom of the six Ugandan Catholic Pages who died by the hand of Kabaka Mwanga, the leader of the Baganda, owing to their refusal of the King's homosexual advances, as a striking evidence that same-sex relations predates colonialism in Africa and that homophobia can be traced to the institutionalized practices of western cultural agents on the continent during colonial days (p. 158).

It is interesting to observe that developments in African queer studies have got to a point where cases are being made for more liberal spaces to be opened up for queer studies in Africa. For instance, Stella Nyanzi pleads as follows:

Rather than facilitating the deep rift between African Studies on the one hand and Queer Studies on the other, I reiterate the urgent appeal for a political convergence that strategically forges the synchronized zygote of Queer African Studies, or else African Queer Studies. This project necessitates a two-pronged approach, namely queering African Studies on the one hand, and Africanizing Queer Studies on the other hand (p. 127).

Though tolerance towards the queer population in the United States has improved tremendously given the large-scale change of attitudes towards queer people occasioned by the enactment of laws that criminalize the discrimination of the LGBTQ population, the election of Donald Trump with his anti-queer rhetoric and actions since assuming office has raised concerns and reignited arguments as to the rightness or otherwise of queer sexual orientations. The queer theory itself problematizes human sexuality along the dialectics of heterosexuality and homosexuality, insisting that contrary to the notion of biological essentialism which sees compartmentalize human sexualities into fixed natural categories, there is a certain element of fluidity that characterizes human sexual orientations, so that in the course of an individual's existence and social interactions, one's sexuality tends to oscillate and fluctuate between and among existing and identified categories. This paper questions certain sexual practices in the selected primary texts against the background of Bible standards as well as the moral and mores of society using the Reader-Response theory which, as Charles Bressler and Ann Dobie observe, arms and empowers the reader to his or her interpretive insights to bear in the critique of the literary text (Bressler, p. 68; Dobie, p. 137). The paper maintains that while homophobia should be discouraged in the spirit of common humanity, queer practices that are symptomatic of oppression, violence and brutality against defenceless members of society should be condemned and severely punished.

Sexuality itself has been an important and vital part human existence through history. All civilizations have managed sexuality through the setting up or imposition of sexual standards, representations and behaviours. Human sexuality is the way people experience and express themselves sexually. This involves biological, erotic, physical, emotional, social, or spiritual feelings and behaviours. Human sexuality is complicated; the brain decides what gender one is affiliated to and the heart decides what it is attracted to and what spectrum of intensity. Sexual behaviour is predicated on society's norms which put sexuality in a world of infinite continuum. Sex as a biological word refers to masculine and feminine, male or female.

There is no consensus on the exact cause of developing sexual orientation but genetic, hormonal, social and cultural influences have been examined. Scientists believe that sexual orientation is caused by a complex interplay of genetic, hormonal, and environmental influences. It is also discovered that female sexuality is more fluid than male sexuality because of female higher erotic plasticity, or to the social and cultural factors that socialize women to be more open to change (sexualfluidity

pdfwikiwikipedia.org). The world is in an infinite continuum on gender and sexuality, and the acronym LGBTQ has gained recognition which symbolized lesbians, gay, bisexual, transsexual and queer.

For the purpose of this paper we will discuss LGBTQ people as a group since they constitute some sort of homogenous collectivity. Certainly, they share in common the political, economic, social, and psychological oppression they suffer as members of a sexual minority. And for many thinkers, the enormity of this shared experience, and the potential for political power generated when LGBTQ people act as a group, is sufficient to support the claim that they should be considered in this light (Tyson, p. 307).

The word Queer has a range of meanings in literary studies today. As an inclusive term, it can refer to any piece of literary criticism that interprets a text from an LGBTQ perspective. Queer criticism reads texts to reveal the problematic quality of heterosexual and homosexual representations of sexual categories; they do not represent the dynamic range of human sexuality. For Queer theory “categories of sexualities cannot be defined by such simple oppositions as homosexual/heterosexual...It defines individual sexuality as fluid, fragmented, dynamic collectivity of possible sexualities...The word queer then, as an all-inclusive term, seeks to heal these divisions by offering a collective identity to which all LGBTQ people can belong (Tyson, pp. 320-321).

For the queer therefore, the definition of one’s sexuality might be based on one’s preference for someone older or younger, for a human or an animal, for a single partner or a group activity, for oneself alone (as in masturbation) or for a variety of different partners. Other dimensions of sexuality do not involve object choice. For example, Eva Kosofsky Sefgwick notes the intricacies of human sexuality might be based on such oppositions as “orgasmic/nonorgasmic, non-commercial/commercial, using bodies only/using manufacture objects, in private/in public, spontaneous/scripted. Or the definition of one’s sexuality might be based on one’s preference for particular acts, sensations, or physical types” (Tyson, p. 321).

Queer theory may be relatively new as a literary theory, but an in-depth reading of the novelistic genres reveal enormous representations of Queer writings in even heterosexual works, as are observed in our chosen novels under review namely: Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, *Beloved*, respectively, Damon Galgut’s *In a Strange Room* and K Sello Duiker’s *Thirteen Cents*. This paper will examine among others: bestiality/zoophilia, phytophiliac or dendrophiliac, spectrophilli, lesbianism, homosexuality, bisexuality, polyamorous relationship, masturbation, homoerotic, sexual assault-psychology of a pedophile; rape/molestation, homosocial and heterosexuality in our above-named texts and will draw references from other related texts.

2. Synopses of the Works

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* discusses Young Pecola's search for blue eyes, what she perceives to be beauty. Morrison focuses on family *relationships* and the inter-communal associations, including a queer community that closes its eyes to incest and abuses and molestations of the innocent in society. Whereas in *Beloved*, Morrison revisits slave lives in plantations as she comes across a true-lifestory of Miss Garner, an escaped slave who kills her children to keep them off slavery. In *Beloved*, Morrison represents the cause and effect of infanticide, as Sethe an escaped slave woman intends to kill her four children and herself as School Teacher, the slave masters come for her twenty-eight days after her escape. She successfully kills her two-year-old child, Beloved, before she is arrested. Eighty years later Beloved, the ghost, comes back in human form spoiling for revenge.

In *In a Strange Room*, which is a form of travelogue, Damon Galgut presents the journey motif involving Damon's various journeys with different roommates at various times and places and their device reactions to one another: Damon/Reiner in South Africa, Damon/Jerome in Switzerland, and Damon/Anna in India, respectively.

Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* reflects the life of a thirteen-year-old homeless orphan, Azure, also called Blue, as he is renamed by Gerald. Azure takes to homosexuality to make a living. He is patronized by the affluence of the society and exploited and robbed of his money by a woman old enough to be his grandmother.

2.1 Bestiality/Zoophilia

Bestiality/Zoophilia refers to the act of having sex with animals or the violation of animals. In Toni Morrison's *Beloved* the Sweet Home slaves; namely, Sixo, Paul A Garner Paul D Garner, Paul F Garner, and Halle Suggs, were all involved in either bestiality or zoophilia "All the Sweet Home young men were so sick with absence of women they had taken to calves" (p. 10). "All in their twenties, minus women, fucking cows, dreaming of rape which seems the solitary gift of life, thrashing on pallets, rubbing their thighs and waiting for the new girl, the one who took Baby Suggs' place after Halle bought her with five years of Sundays...and the Sweet Home men abused cows..." (p. 11). Therefore, when Sethe agrees to marry Halle over the other Sweet Home young men, Paul D, for instance, imagines that "The jump...from a calf to a girl wasn't all that mighty. Not the leap Halle believed it would be" (p. 11). Bestiality or zoophilia is a very common practice among the slaves who are confined to plantations and are far removed from the opposite sex. And for the Sweet Home youth, bestiality becomes the only avenue to relieve their sexual emotions. On bestiality, the Holy Bible says "And if a man lies with a beast, he shall surely be put to death and you shall kill the beast" (Leviticus 20:15). This is a clear warning that the Holy Bible is against sexual relations between human beings and animals.

As a zoophiliac, Geraldine in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, loves the company of the cat "the cat will jump into Geraldine's lap. She will fondle that soft hill of hair and let the warmth of the animal's body seep over and into the deeply private areas of her lap". "...and she opens her legs just a little and the two of them will be still together, perhaps shifting a little together sleeping a little together until four o'clock, when the intruder (Louis, her husband) comes home from work..." (pp. 85-86). The Holy Bible also says "And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, you shall kill the woman and the beast..." (Leviticus 20:15). The Bible thus perceives sexual relations between human and beasts as unnatural, which explains the stiff Old Testament sanctions imposed on all offenders in such acts. However, the New Testament which heralds the grace dispensation calls on such individuals to seek God's forgiveness through repentance and belief in the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed on the cross of Calvary.

The situation that warrants the Sweet Home young men to go into bestiality could be explicated as predicated on their long abstinence and deprivation of female humans as sex partners, which further exposes the mysterious in and the conditions of slavery and isolation. Susan Corey states that "the grotesque not only reveals the horror of slavery, but it also sets forth a vision of regeneration and healing". Paul D, the only surviving member of Sweet Home, is healed of zoophilic instincts and enjoys heterosexual relationship with Sethe and this is regenerating.

Geraldine, strangely is more emotionally and sexually attracted and affectionate to the cat than she does for her son. And, to a large extent, her husband becomes an "intruder" as she relaxes with the cat. Geraldine as a zoophillia, sexually attracted to a cat, is a crime against nature. Her queer nature is beyond all explanations. She is married, has a son, which means she has heterosexual relationship with her husband and more so her husband is caring, he works to provide for his family and comes home after work-hours. The cat even recognizes that she has no affection for her husband. There are few things stranger and more repulsive than bestiality. Again, The Holy Bible says "Whoever lies with a beast shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 22:19). It is crossly inhuman and unnatural and an affront to God who created man and beast but gave man authority of all beasts and nature and empowered man to subdue and rule over them. Therefore, for man the highest form of God's creation to put down himself to the level of an animal is not only nastiness to himself but to God the Creator. "Neither shall you lie with any beast to defile yourself therewith; neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion" (Leviticus 18:23). To say the least, Geraldine is confused.

2.2 *Phytophilliac or Dendraphilliac*

Phytophilliac or Dendraphilliac—this is a person who commits to have sex with trees (treeosex). Sixo, one of the Sweet Home Slaves, is so sex starved that he is aroused and attracted to trees. He simply drills a hole in a tree and sticking his member or [penis] into it, he reaches an orgasm that to some extent relieves him of his sexual emotions. In so doing Sixo becomes dendraphilliac, and his attraction

to trees makes him phytophiliac. He confesses his attraction to tress to Paul F, Paul A, Paul D and Halle in the peculiar way that makes them cry-laugh. Sixo goes among trees at night. For dancing and to keep his bloodlines open, he says. “Privately, alone, he did it. None of the rest of them had seen him at it but they could imagine it, and the image they pictured made them eager to laugh at him—in daylight, that is, when it was safe” (p. 25). Sixo’s pathetic situation predicated on slavery is beyond comprehension. But when he finds his thirty-mile woman, he enjoys a heterosexual relationship with her and never goes back to the tress until he is buried alive and shut (p. 226).

2.3 Spectorphillia

Spectorphillia is the phenomenon of sexual encounter between ghosts and humans. In *Beloved* the author portrays the multilayered meanings of the queer theory adequately. She abandons the traditional demarcation between same sex and opposite-sex love and between the “natural” and the “unnatural”. *Beloved* the ghost sexually arouses Paul D as she lets out her shine to overshadow him. “That is how *Beloved* looked—gilded and shining” (p. 64), Paul D says. She then hypnotises him into a spectorphillia relationship and becomes pregnant as a result. She manipulates and forces him out of 124 into a shade behind the house, a cold storeroom. *Beloved* shows up and asks him to touch her and call her by name otherwise she will not depart “You have to touch me on the inside part. And you have to call me by my name” (p. 117). On insistence and under the spell of this ghost, when she moves closer to him, the narrator notes “what he [Paul D] knew was that when he reached the inside part he was saying “Red heart. Red heart, over and over again” (p. 117). Ron David believes that Paul D “wasn’t seduced by her beauty, he was compelled by the intensity of her ravenous need to grab all the life she’d been deprived of, her two-year-old mind in the body of a twenty-year-old woman, her need to exact a price from her mother...and her greedy love of her mother” (p. 121). Paul D is incapacitated; he is an unwilling partner in this queer relationship. He has a strong feeling to knock her down but remains waned.

2.4 Polyamorous Relationship

Polyamorous relationship can be open; where the relational partners agree to permit romantic or sexual relationship with other people, or closed, where those involved do not. In Morrison’s *Beloved*, when Halle and Sethe consummate their love in a corn field “And taking her in corn-field rather than her quarters, a yard away from the cabins of the others who had lost out, was a gesture of tenderness” (*Beloved*, pp. 16-17). “Who could miss a ripple in a cornfield on a quiet cloudless day?” Sixo and two of the Pauls sat under Brother (Tree) pouring water from a gourd over their heads and through eyes streaming with well water, they watched the confusion of tassels in the field below. It had been hard, hard, hard, hard sitting their erect as dogs, watching corn stalks dance at noon. The water running over their heads made it worse (*Beloved*, pp. 26-27). This polyamorous relationship is unconscious, because the relational partners Halle and Sethe did not know nor permit Sixo and the Pauls to watch their sexual

relationship, but they did. Again, the polyamorous relationship between Sethe and Paul D—one of the Sweet Home young men who escapes and locates Sethe in 124 Blue Stone House in Cincinnati, Denver, becomes an uninvited partaker. As Sethe and Paul relate sexually, Denver overhears their sexual noises and she is miserable, especially since Paul D rids her of the only other company she had; the baby ghost. This is closed because the partners are not conscious or agree to permit their romantic or sexual relationship with other people, and in this instance, certainly not with Denver, Sethe's daughter. Whereas, Geraldine in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, subjects her young son to a polyamorous relationship and bestiality consciously. It is not long before the child Junior, discovers the difference in his mother's behaviour to himself and the cat and this has an inverse effect on Junior. As he grows older, Junior learns how to direct his hatred of his mother to the cat and spends some happy moment watching it suffer (p. 86). The boy grows up with a lot of bitterness and total hatred for the cat and hunts to kill it at the least opportunity. Sexual fluidity reflects in Mrs Geraldine's characterisation. In spite of having a husband and a son, she enjoys erotic feelings with her cat over the husband and her son. It is believed that all human beings have the potential for same-sex desire or sexual activity that does not fit into heterosexual framework. Mrs Geraldine is a typical example of such, and the ripple effect may be the child developing strong revulsion for women and animals and the instinct to kill both at the least opportunity.

2.5 Lesbianism

Lesbianism defines a sexual orientation where a woman is sexually attracted to another woman—same-sex relationship between women. In Morrison's *Beloved*, Beloved the ghost is also into a lesbian relationship with Sethe “they stayed that way for a while because neither Denver nor Sethe knew how not to stop and not love the look or feel of the lips that kept on kissing” (p. 97). Beloved craves Sethe and confesses her strong love for her “She does not love me like I love her. I don't love nobody but her” (p. 116). Sethe, the unwilling partner, could not separate herself from her. Beloved is a predatory lesbian lover; she consumes Sethe's life to the extent that Sethe becomes thinner while she grows bigger. Beloved's obsessive attachment to Sethe equates Denver's fanatical bond with Beloved; which puts the trio in a lesbian relationship.

Also, in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (Caged Bird)*, Maya actually feels sexually aroused at the sight of her girlfriend's breasts, in spite of her mother's reassurance that she is not a lesbian or a hermaphrodite. “She feels there is something queer about her” (p. 279). With the knowledge acquired from her reading of *The Well of Loneliness*, sixteen-year-old Maya thinks she is a lesbian or a hermaphrodite “With a heavy voice, more feminine hands and feet, breasts sadly underdeveloped—almost like skin-swellings...Armpits as smooth as her face, with mysterious growth developing on her body that defied explanation” (pp. 273-274), Maya's features that defy her placement in the masculine or the feminine gender category set her aside from others and sickens her

mind into queerness. In Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Olivia loves Tashi sexually. As she pleads with Tashi not to go away to join the Mbeles—Freedom fighters, who have sent a captured donkey for her ride, Olivia, crying, says “Tell me to do anything, and I will do it...Tell me to go anywhere, and I will go” (p. 20). Tashi was like a lover to Olivia. It should be noted that Walker's womanism creates an ideological space for woman-to-woman sexual relationship.

Similarly, in Damon Galgut's *In a Strange Room*, Anna lives with a lesbian lover in Cape Town for eight years, but when she has the opportunity to go on a holiday to India, she shows her dissatisfaction with lesbian relationship. She takes to sleeping with any male who accepts her. Eventually, she is hooked with the Jean, a fellow tourist, and becomes totally repulsive of her lesbian partner (p. 179). This is a creative depiction of sexual fluidity as theorized in the queer creed. Anna prefers suicide to continuing in that relationship. Damon, reporting Anna's unfaithfulness to her lesbian partner, laments “Anna had an affair over here...with a man. Yes. She was determined to do it...and any man would do” (p. 183). Anna prefers heterosexuality to Lesbianism. Anna's family, who have never liked the idea of her being with a woman seized on this alternative future with a man and are pushing it delightedly (p. 304). Lesbians deny patriarchy one of its most powerful tools: heterosexuality. For some feminists, “heterosexuality is not a ‘natural’ sexual orientation for ‘normal’ women but a political institution that subordinates women to patriarchy in that women's subservience to men is built into heterosexual definition of feminine sexuality” (Tyson, p. 310). Lesbianism is a cursed relationship because the Bible in 1 Corinthians 6:9 calls it effeminate or abusers of themselves with mankind, and who shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Again, The Holy Bible says “You shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind. It is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22).

2.6 Homosexuality/Gay

Homosexuality/Gay is sexual relation between men; though not all cultures share this definition. In Latin America, for instance, a man may have affairs with other men but since he still behaves in a traditionally male manner—strong, dominant and decisive—and consistently assumes male sexual role as penetrator—a macho or a “real” man, he is not regarded as a homosexual (Tyson, p. 313). In North America, only men who allow themselves to be penetrated and behaved in a traditionally feminine manner—submissive, coy, flirtatious, “soft” are considered homosexuals (Tyson, p. 313). In ancient Athens, the elite male ruling class could have social inferior—women and boys past age of puberty and were not looked at as homosexuals (Tyson, p. 312). Historically, certain sexual acts—all forms of nonprocreative sex—were forbidden by Church or State, but they were not viewed as evidence of a specific sexual identity (Tyson, p. 312). The medical professions promoted homosexual identity as a medical and pathological disorder. Therefore, these homosexuals would rather be called gay (Tyson, pp. 313-314). In Damon Galgut's *In a Strange Room*, Jerome is sexually attracted to Damon. Though bashful, Jerome finds an audience with Damon and, taking hold of his hand, nervously asks Damon to

go with him to Switzerland (p. 120). In response to this intimate closeness, Damon finds himself sweating in his palms as he observes “my heart is hammering” (p. 121). Damon may not like Reiner, his roommate, as a sex partner, but his response to Jerome is more involved. Damon responds more to homosexual relationships than to heterosexual relationship. When Anna pleads with him to have sex with her, he recoils, and though he shares rooms with Anna throughout their trip to India, he is not attracted to her sexually. Damon may be said to be androgynous or asexual at this point.

In Duiker’s *Thirteen Cents*, Richard invites the young homeless orphan, Azure, to his flat with three other guys, and after feeding him they all have oral sex with him. He laments:

He [Richard]...shoves his dick into my mouth. Open properly...take it all in...I do as I’m told. He stands there and starts rocking his pelvis. My jaws get tired. I take his dick out of my mouth and wank him...I put it back in my mouth. The door opens...Richard takes out his piel from my mouth but he doesn’t put it away. He starts playing with himself while I suck the other’s piel. Soon they all join in and take turns with my mouth...they are giving me their salt...I start sweating. After a while my jaws become stiff but I continue sucking their smelly dicks with white stuff like pap on them. They made me give them blowjobs till they all come (p. 63).

And whatever sperm the poor boy could not swallow, they all spilled same all over his T-shirt. This homeless youth is gang raped by adult members of society. Also, MrLebowitz, an investment banker, negotiates and invites this thirteen-year-old Blue to his gorgeous home in an exclusive part of Cape Town for homosexual purpose and records the affair with a hidden camera. Azure confesses “he spreads me on the wide bed and starts sucking my dick...He turns over and lies on his back. I take his banana dick in my hand and start stroking it...I just suck and play with my tongue on his banana dick...and a fountain of sperm pours out of his banana dick and land on his chest...” (p. 100). And this taking of turns continues almost the whole night long. He pays Azure even more than they bargained for. But to submit to this degradation with a thirteen-year-old youth is pitiable. This aspect of queerness is illegal in the eyes of the law and an abomination in the sight of God. It is a product of a dysfunctional society. Homosexuality like lesbianism is an outrage. The Holy Bible in 1 Corinthians 6:9, calls it effeminate or abusers of themselves with mankind, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Again, The Holy Bible says “You shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind. It is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22). It is really an atrocity. Yet young Azure does it for a living. He says “I know how to please a man...I have done this a thousand times. They all like it if you play with the part between their balls and asshole” (p. 98). He gives the proceeds from this abomination to Joyce who is old enough to be his grandmother, for safe keeping, but she misappropriates the money, and when finally Azure demands his money, she slaps him across the face. Azure narrates “My nose starts bleeding and I let the blood drip” (p. 88) and thereafter, Joyce pushes him out of her house without his clutch. She too

becomes part of this infamy.

Mr Lebowitz is also a bisexual. He tells Azure that his family is on holiday. As he prepares for his illicit affair with this youth, he walks over to the piano where there are pictures of his family. He turns them all over as if they will see and hear everything. This signifies guilt on the part of Mr Lebowitz. He knows that what he has done is morally wrong. Reiner in *In a Strange Room* is likewise bisexual. He involves in heterosexual relationship with whores, but he still seeks homosexual affair with other men.

2.7 Masturbation

Masturbation is a queer way of relieving oneself of sexual emotions by ejaculating the semen on one's own without involving in homosexual or heterosexual relationship. In *Beloved*, the other Sweet Home young men sit back to masturbate as Halle and fourteen-year-old Sethe make love in the corn field. Again, in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, we see a situation of masturbation where some "slow-footed teen-aged boys huddled about the corner" (p. 35). These young boys met there to feel their groins...and expose themselves to those who were interested as novices to the habits. Also, in *In a Strange Room*, "Damon wakes in the middle of the night with the beam of a lighthouse flaring intermittently across the ceiling and the sound of Roderigo furtively masturbating under the sheets" (p. 121). Masturbation can occur in the case of a homoerotic sight as in the case of the young Sweet Home slaves watching Halle and Sethe make love in the corn field or can be induced as those teenagers fondle with their groins to force masturbation. It can also occur unconsciously as in the case of sleeping Roderigo. The Holy Bible in Leviticus 22:4 says "...a man whose seed goes from him", which is masturbation, shall remain unclean and shall not eat of the holy things, especially the Priest of God.

2.8 Peadophilia

Peadophilia refers to sexual feelings or activities directed towards children. This in itself is a form of sexual assault. Generally, sexual assault is a violent crime and includes, rape, child sexual abuse, incest, among others. In Angelou's *Caged Bird*, Mr Freeman, a live-in friend of Vivian Baxter, Maya's mother, rapes an eight-year-old girl, Maya (p. 78). Mr Freeman threatens to kill her only brother Bailey, if she lets the cat out of the bag. The abuse is a matter of opportunity; the child is a sexual surrogate for him since Vivian is always not available. He seeks to dominate and control Maya and wants her to believe he is showing her love. Opal Moore, commenting on issue of rape in *Caged Bird*, says "it raises issues of trust, truth and lie, love, the naturalness of a child's craving for human contact, language and understanding, and the confusion engendered by the power disparities that necessarily exist between children and adults" (p. 77). We agree with Moore that young Maya hungers for human contact since Vivian is never there for her. In *The Bluest Eye*, Cholly Breedlove, in his drunken stupor, commits inbreeding or incest by raping his eleven-year-old daughter, Pecola. "He wanted to fuck her—tenderly. But the tenderness would not hold. The tightness of her vagina was more than he could bear. His soul seemed to slip down to his guts and fly out to his guts and fly out into her, and the gigantic thrust he

made into her then provoked the only sound she made—a hollow surge of air in the back of her throat. Like the rapid loss of air from a circus balloon” (pp. 162-163). This hallowing experience pushes the child into unconsciousness. “Removing himself from her was so painful to him he cut it short and snatched his genitals out of the dry harbor of her vagina. She appeared to have fainted” (p. 163). This inhuman forceful penetration of an eleven-year-old child and the brutal extrication of his penis are barbarous and felonious. “So when the child regained consciousness, she was lying on the kitchen floor...trying to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her” (p. 163). The fact of a father traumatizing his child through rape is nothing but queerly unconscionable. Thus, Pecola carries her father’s pregnancy which is a concern to the whole community “But so deeply concerned were we with the health and safe delivery of Pecola’s baby we could think of nothing...” (p. 7).

“Did you hear about that little girl?”

“What? Pregnant?”

“Yes but guess who?” ...

“That’s just it. Ain’t no little old boy. They say it’s Cholly”.

“Cholly her daddy? (pp. 188-189).

The community is embarrassed, sorrowful disgusted, amused, shocked and outraged by the story. But everyone wants the baby dead. The act of fathers raping and impregnating daughter seems common place in many African American literature. In Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Jim Trueblood rapes and impregnates his daughter, Mattie Lou, and in Alice Walker’s *Color Purple*, Cecil is also raped and physically abused her step-father.

Cholly himself, is raped by three women in his tender years. The author reports “Three women were leaning out of two windows. They see the long clan neck of a new young boy and call to him. He goes to where they are. Inside is dark and warm. They give him lemonade in a Mason jar. As he drinks, their eyes floated up to him through the bottom of the jar, through the slick sweet water. They give him back his manhood, which he takes aimlessly” (pp. 158-159). The gang raping of this boy is condemned in strongest terms because apart from being a criminal offence in law, it definitely has long term psychological damage and other implications on the growth and maturation of the youth.

In *Caged Bird*, Vivian Baxter and her sixteen-year-old son, Bailey, are tangled in the “Oedipal skein. Neither could do without or do with the other...Bailey was hopelessly in love with Mother Dear...” (p. 257). It is on the constrictions of conscience and society, morality and ethos that dictate a separation otherwise mother/son would be involved in incest. The Holy Bible says all forms of incest are abomination and are forbidden “None shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him to uncover their nakedness” (Leviticus 18:6).

In *The Bluest Eye*, Elihue Micah Witcomb alias Soaphead Church, is an evil influence on the tender and innocent members of society. In his queerness, he prefers sexual intercourse with little children than with adults. The author writes:

His sexuality is anything but lewd; his patronage of little girls smacked of innocence and was associated in his mind with cleanliness. He was what one might call a very “clean” old man...And besides, the one thing that disgusted him more than entering and caressing a woman was caressing and being caressed by a man. In any case, his cravings although intense, never relished physical contact. He abhorred flesh on flesh. Body odor, breath odor, overwhelmed him. The sight of dried matter in the corner of the eye, decayed or missing teeth, ear wax, blackheads, moles, blisters, skin crusts, all the natural excretions and protractions the body was capable of—disquieted him. His attention therefore, gradually settled on those humans whose bodies were least offensive—children (p. 166).

Soaphead’s queerness is pathological and he should be castrated. He is sexually attracted to children for their state of purity. He exploits the innocence of these defenseless ones and in some way may maim them perpetually. These LGBTQ people are said to be sick and evil products from a sick and evil society or environment. Though Lois Tyson believes that “LGBTQ orientation is a normal response to particular environmental factors and therefore, LGBTQ people should be accepted as normal (Tyson, p. 306). Soaphead’s sexual character, his possession of the structural functional traits of sexual molestation and child sexual abuse is damaging to the future generation if it goes unchallenged. In particular, he prefers little girls to little boys because the boys were insulting, scary, and stubborn. The girls were usually manageable and frequently seductive; these are future mothers who will replenish the world! Still in *The Bluest Eye*, Mr Henry molests young girls, even within their homes. He pinches young Frieda on the breast while the parents were in the garden “He touched me...here and there, Frieda points to the tiny breasts that, like two fallen acorns, scattered a few faded rose leaves on her dress” (p. 99). The corrupting influences of the older men on the youth not only put sensual thought on the minds of these innocent ones but also corrupt even the language of these youth. As Claudia asks Frieda “He showed his privates at you?” “He touched me”...“How did it feel?” The early awakening of carnal emotions in the heart and minds of the youth creates negative effect on their adulthood and, therefore, on society as a whole.

Sexual child abuse is a type of maltreatment, violation and exploitation that refers to the involvement of the child in sexual activity to provide sexual gratification, false affection or protection, or financial benefit. Child sexual abuse is a crime against humanity. Abuse of this vulnerable member of our society is pathetic. Over three million children are sexually abused and some result in death, some are traumatized for life, though some through therapy and prayers to live normal lives (Nyanzi, p. 212).

Anyone who coerces another person into unwanted sexual contact is an offender and should be brought to face the law. The Holy Bible also places a curse on anyone who commits incest and the death penalty is put on such a one.

3. Conclusion

This paper has attempted a puritan Christian's reading of queer practices in selected African and African-American novels. The study is motivated by the ongoing discussions on the opening up of ideological spaces for African queer studies. It combines the queer theory with the Reader-Response theory in order to allow for critical comments to be passed on some of the sexual activities deemed injurious to the cerebral wholeness of society and, above all, those ones that go against extant Biblical principles. The analysis of novels such as *The Bluest Eyes*, *Thirteen Cents* and *In a Strange Room* reveals the textualisation of queer acts such as paedophilia, phytophillia or dendraphillia, zoophillia, spectrophillia and polyamorous relationship, among others. Held against Bible instructions, these queer practices are seen to be abominable in the sight of God, which makes them highly condemnable. Also, given the social contexts in which they take place, it is seen that these practices result in untold physical and psychological pains and trauma to their victims, since these acts are usually based on unequal and an unnatural relationship driven by greed, exploitation and oppression. The Bible remains an important work in English literature and serves as a timeless guide on human conduct and morals. Its precepts are ignored to the sudden peril of the individual and society.

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