



SEXUALITY / GENDER DEVIATIONS AND THE FUTURE OF THE CONSTRUCTIONIST FEMINIST LITERARY TRADITION IN AFRICAN FICTION

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Abstract : This article investigates, in Stanley Kenani's "Love on Trial" (2011) and "In the Best Interests of the Child" (2011) ", Monica Arac De Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" (2013) and Beatrice Lamwaka's "Chief of the Home" (2013), homosexuality, lesbianism and transgenderism as forms of deviations in sexuality and gender to evaluate how africans react to these phenomena to project perspectives of the constructionist feminist literary ideology in Africa. My essay maintains that, the high rate of homophobic sentiments accounts for the many impediments faced by the constructionist feminist ideology in Africa and implies that Africa is not a place for LGBTI's ideologies to prosper for long. If constructionist feminists endow individuals with freedom to deviate from the roles attached to their sex and gender, the strong attachment of most africans to the "compulsory heterosexuality" and traditional gender seriously put into question the LGBTI's ideology in Africa. Without pretending to proclaim the failure of the constructionist feminism in Africa, my essay rather lays emphasis on cultural impediments to the emerging gender democracy that contradicts the previously established traditional gender roles to imply that the constructionist feminist ideology is simply unwelcome in Africa. Through the lenses of the constructionist feminism and the reader-oriented theory, the study discovers that gender and sexuality are nowadays not static. Next, there is an emerging gender democracy that departs from the imposed gender dictatorship. Most definitely, it results from the study that the future of the constructionist feminist's ideology is compromised by african cultural dictates that bring about homophobic sentiments. Textual analysis is the methodology used to achieve the expected results of this article.

Keywords : Homosexuality, lesbianism, transgenderism, deviation, constructionist feminism.

LES DÉVIATIONS DE SEXUALITÉ / GENRE ET L'AVENIR DE LA TRADITION LITTÉRAIRE DU FÉMINISME CONSTRUCTIONNISTE DANS LA FICTION AFRICAINE

Résumé : Cet article étudie, dans "Love on Trial" (2011) et "In the Best Interests of the Child" (2011) de Stanley Kenani, "Jambula Tree" (2013) de Monica Arac de Nyeko et "Chief of the Home" (2013) de Beatrice Lamwaka, l'homosexualité, le lesbianisme et le transgenderisme comme formes de déviations dans la sexualité et le genre, afin d'évaluer comment les africains réagissent à ces phénomènes pour projeter les perspectives de l'idéologie littéraire du féminisme constructionniste en Afrique. Mon essai soutient que le taux élevé de sentiments homophobes explique

les nombreux obstacles rencontrés par l'idéologie féministe constructionniste en Afrique et implique que l'Afrique n'est pas un endroit où les idéologies LGBTI peuvent prospérer longtemps. Si les féministes constructionnistes confèrent aux individus la liberté de s'écarter des rôles attachés à leur sexe et à leur genre, le fort attachement de la plupart des Africains à l'hétérosexualité obligatoire et au genre traditionnel remet sérieusement en question l'idéologie LGBTI en Afrique. Sans prétendre proclamer l'échec du féminisme constructionniste en Afrique, mon essai met plutôt l'accent sur les obstacles culturels à la démocratie de genre émergente qui contredit les rôles de genre traditionnels précédemment établis pour impliquer que l'idéologie féministe constructionniste est simplement indésirable en Afrique. À travers les lentilles du féminisme constructionniste et de la théorie orientée vers le lecteur, l'étude découvre que le genre et la sexualité ne sont pas statiques de nos jours. Ensuite, il existe une démocratie de genre émergente qui s'écarte de la dictature de genre imposée. Enfin, il ressort de l'étude que l'avenir de l'idéologie féministe constructionniste est compromis par les dictats culturels africains qui suscitent des sentiments homophobes. L'analyse textuelle est la méthodologie utilisée pour atteindre les résultats attendus de cet article.

Mots-clés : Homosexualité, lesbianisme, transgenre, déviation, féminisme constructionniste.

Introduction

The topicality of sexuality and gender deviations in contemporary african societies has motivated my choice of a delicate topic such as the one under study. Stanley Kenani (Malawi), Monica Arac de Nyeko (Uganda) and Beatrice Lamwaka (Uganda), are part of the few african pioneers championing queer studies and explore rarely discussed aspects of sex and gender in their selected short stories. They break sexual and gender taboos and barriers, shed light on an emerging gender democracy under the form of LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) to portray outrageous realities through the constructionist feminist approach which sensitive readers will not fail to find upsetting. In this vein, M. Gaye (1995, p.3) opines in his preface to *Bridges*, an african journal of English studies that : "The relevance of the gender issues, as well as the controversies raised by Feminist Criticism, have made the exploration of gender and sexuality in literature a challenging issue in many ways".

It becomes therefore crystal clear that, the constructionist feminist criticism is not innocent to the recent changes and revolutions observed in individuals' management of their sexuality and gender marked by a clear will to depart from the conventional sexuality and gender as dictated by society. My essay turns around deviations in sexuality and gender as promoted by the constructionist feminism. This implicitly implied that there is a norm from

which deviations have emerged. Till recently in most societies, individuals are organised around the biological sex and a socially constructed gender. While sex is God-made and does not vary from one society to the other, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Sex defines individuals' sexual orientation towards what J. Butler (1990, p.ix) terms "compulsory heterosexuality" as opposed to homosexuality. As such, male and female are sex categories, while masculine and feminine are gender categories. These constitute the jurisprudence book regulating people's sexual orientations and gender roles. Deviations rightly emerge when individuals elect to depart from socially established norms around male vs female and masculine vs feminine. It is obvious that gender-based discrimination and marginalisation are central to early and recent feminist criticism and movements around the world. For Macharia (2015, p.144), african feminists have played a key role in mapping "the changing meanings of sex, gender, and embodiment during colonial modernity".

In *C'est pour un garçon ou une fille ? La dictature du genre*, G. Guilbert discusses gender as a tool in the hands of patriarchy to subjugate women. He primarily relates gender imposed roles to a kind of dictatorship from the part of society which gives no chance to individuals to freely choose what roles they aspire to attach to their sex. For G. Guilbert (2004, p.12): "La plus belle invention du patriarcat sexiste pour dominer les femmes est le genre ou du moins la fausse équation sex = genre, que la société s'applique à propager depuis tant de siècles; équation qui s'assortir bien sûr d'une hiérarchie séculaire, le genre masculin étant systématiquement présenté comme supérieur"¹. It is against this background that feminism "challenges male hegemony" (A. Adebayo, 1996, p.1) for a more balanced society for men and women. Guilbert therefore rejects gender dictatorship and promotes gender democracy which allows individuals to feely move from feminine to masculine roles; from masculine to feminine roles; and most definitely, rejects compulsory heterosexuality to promote homosexuality, tansgenderism, transexuality, etc, which stand for gender democracy and are reminiscent of the constructionist feminist tradition.

It is my standpoint that these gender deviations account for gender troubles, gender confusions and make gender complex at a point where it

¹The most beautiful invention of the sexist patriarchy to dominate women is gender, or at least the false and criminal equation sex = gender, which society has been propagating for so many centuries; this equation is of course accompanied by an age-old hierarchy, with the male gender systematically presented as superior. My own translation

becomes urgent to think about the future of the feminist literary tradition in both african literature and african societies. My approach of gender complexities is a different one from J. Butler's view of "gender trouble". My study goes beyond to discuss how individuals rebel against their biologically defined gender roles, in order to enjoy what I would call gender democracy where each individual freely moves from one gender to the other and even from one sexuality to the other (transsexuality, homosexuality, lesbianism, gayism, etc) as portrayed in the corpus texts selected for this critical study. The short stories selected for this study are replete with sex and gender deviations and clearly reflect the gender dictatorship and gender democracy. This essay maps and examines the different manifestations of sex and gender deviations to show how they relate to gender democracy and queer studies. Besides, the study investigates what G. Guilbert (2004) views as gender dictatorship to show how it has inspired feminist struggles which in turn resulted in gender democracy. The study is mainly conducted from the perspective of the constructionist feminist literary approach as developed by G. Guilbert (2004). The methodology used is that of a textual analysis of four selected short stories. The article is structured around two (02) sections. Section one (01) discusses homosexuality, lesbianism and the future of constructionist feminism while the second section examines transgenderism and the constructionist feminist ideology in Africa.

1. Homosexuality/Lesbianism and the Future of Constructionist Feminism

This first section examines homosexuality and lesbianism as forms of deviations as far as sexual orientations are concerned and how it relates to the future of the constructionist feminist literary ideology in Africa. For this purpose, the study is done through three (03) short stories ; "Love on Trial", "In the Best Interests of the Child" by Stanley Kenani in his collection of stories titled *For Honour and Other Short Stories* (2011) and "Jambula Tree" by Monica Arac De Nyeko. Using G. Guilbert's (2004) constructionist feminism, this section elaborates on sexual democracy as opposed to compulsory heterosexuality and the reasons for people's homophobic or anti-homosexuality and anti-lesbianism sentiments in Africa. In the view of Guilbert (2004), humanity by attaching importance to traditional heterosexuality falls thus into the trap of gender dictatorship imposed by society at the birth of any individual

in accordance with specific sexual orientations for the male and female sexes. He thinks that the equation :

Sexe=genre=orientation sexuelle ; autrement dit, vous naissez xx, donc vous êtes une femme, donc vous éprouvez du désir pour les hommes, donc votre ambition est de trouver un mari à servir. Pour les féministes constructionnistes, l'équation sexe=genre est monstrueuse au plus haut point "² (G. Guilbert, 2004, p.13).

For the advocates of this type of feminism, including Guilbert, it is necessary to get out of the dictatorship of gender, that is to give individuals the freedom to freely choose their sexual orientation, since even sexuality is a purely social fact attached to a sex. It is therefore necessary to democratize sexual orientation, which means violating the compulsory heterosexuality in order to open up freely to homosexuality and lesbianism. As such, it gives freedom to males to be homosexuals and to females to be lesbians. The constructionist feminism is used under two angles to shed light on same-sex sexualities (female vs female sexual orientation and male vs male sexual attraction) and how this contrasts with traditional social order provoking therefore homophobic responses especially in Africa known for its attachment to cultural and traditional values. Critics like J. Butler, S. De Beauvoir and T. Gautier share the constructionist feminist's view of sex and gender as they plainly promote individuals' freedom to choose their own sexual orientations and gender roles. As such, Butler rejects the belief that sex or gender is stable. She regards "gender as a multiple interpretation of sex" (1990, p.8). It is as a result of gender being 'a multiple interpretation of sex' that has led to denigration of queers in socio-cultural contexts universally (Butler, 1990). For Théophile Gautier, "It often happens that the sex of the soul is not the same as that of the body, and this is a contradiction which cannot fail to produce much disorder » (my own translation). An in-depth analysis of the selected short stories are therefore crucial to reveal how deviations in sexual orientations are feminism-based in order to think about the future of feminism.

In "Love on Trial", Kenani introduces readers to a village drunk, Mr Lapani Kachingwe and the protagonist Charles Chikwanje. The author gets Chikwanje caught red-handed with his homosexual partner while they were having sex. What attracts readers' attention is people's interest to know how

² Sex = gender = sexual orientation; in other words, you are born xx, therefore you are a woman, therefore you have desire for men, therefore your ambition is to find a husband to serve. For constructionist feminists, the sex = gender equation is monstrous and shocking in the extreme » (G. Guilbert, 2004, p13), my own translation.

possible it is “to have sex between two men and who, in the process, was performing the functions of the man and who was the woman” (Kenani, “Love on Trial”, 2011, Pp.11-12 » This excerpt which portrays an homosexual episode, confirms individuals’ willingness to transgress sexual orientation traditionally assigned to their sex in order to enjoy their personal desire. This passage also informs us that nowadays, it is not enough to be born male to live as a man as sexuality is no longer a foregone conclusion. Through this excerpt, Kenani highlights the constructionist feminism as seen by Guilbert (2004, p.13). Homosexual practice as depicted in “Love on Trial” is a form of gender deviation as it contrasts the compulsory heterosexuality to promote a democracy in sexual orientation. This gender democracy meets the constructionist feminists’ major concerns. It shows that feminism as an awareness-raising movement has achieved its goal of emancipating people while at the same time achieving equal rights and opportunities and chances for men and women. Here, homosexuality is an imminent fruit of feminist struggles that plunges humanity into what can be called gender confusion or disorder because biological sex no longer determines gender. Commenting this extract B. De Souza (2020, p.4) opines that: “Through the ‘pit latrine scandal’, his characterisation challenges the compulsory order of sexuality. Thus, beneath Charles’ narrative voice lies his subtle defiance of socio-cultural constructions of sexuality”. From this quotation by De Souza, it appears crystal clear that what Charles Chikwanje does is a deviation from his cultural dictates about sexuality. Consequently, the crowd roars “*Wamathanyula! Homosexual!*” (Kenani, 2011, p.16) to mock him. This is an open act of homophobic sentiment. Commenting Stanley Kenani’s “Love on Trial”, B. De Souza (2020, p.5) observes that “Charles is labelled as a ‘lost sheep’ by the conservative and homophobic Chipiri society. He becomes a cultural rebel, someone who has departed from the ways of his society’s cultural norms regarding gender and sexuality”. By getting people from the Chipiri society mock at Charles’ homosexuality from one hand and on the other hand refer to Charles as a “lost sheep”, Kenani shows his readership how culture justifies their homophobia. It urges to emphasise that as the foreign donors have contested Charles’s arrest by the government, people of the Chipiri “view this donor’s reaction as an affront to the dignity of our nation. Malawi is a sovereign state. Let them keep their aid, and we will keep our religious and cultural values” (Kenani, 2011, p.23). Again, culture here is used to justify homophobia. The fact of the matter being that the fictitious africans of Chipiri exhibit a strong attachment to their cultural values. That is probably why the choice between the donors’s aid and their culture is clear. This episode is particularly reminiscent with the Senegalese

player, Idrissa Gana Gueye's refusal to play in the Paris-Saint-Germain' football team as he was imposed a dress in honor of the LGBT. These scenes illustrate that africans are not yet prepared to divorce with their traditional values to which they hold dearly. This implies that, the revolution being brought about by the constructionist feminism and its propaganders are still unwelcome in most african societies. There is more than ample evidence that :

Eighty-six United Nation member countries have laws that criminalize same-sex relations; some thirty-seven African countries, along with Middle Eastern countries, constitute a majority of these. Average citizens, religious authorities, and heads of state alike have contributed to entrenching the belief that homosexuality, itself a slippery contender, is un-African. A spectacular illustration of this was to be found on placards outside the Johannesburg Supreme Court during the 1991 Winnie Mandela trial: "HOMOSEX IS NOT IN BLACK CULTURE." This ad populum logical fallacy is often used as a means of controlling gender variance, and punitive behavior includes beating, rape, imprisonment, and, in some contexts, aversion therapy, forcible sex change, and even murder (C. Zabu, 2021, p.381).

The above quotation comes as a support to my view point that African setting is a hostile place for the constructionist feminist's ideology and questions therefore its future in Africa. C. Zabu is of that opinion as she recalls that "homosex is not black culture" and is consequently criminalized by most african governments. This carries powerful and hostile messages against the ideology of the LHGBT (Lesbian, Homosexual, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender). Even though though activists in the likes of Epprecht (2013, p.4) in his *Sexuality and Social Justice in Africa* criticises the social injustices that people with sexualities other than heterosexuality face in Africa, the situation has no many chances to change. Sexual deviations that go against traditional sexual norms to meet constructionist feminists' goals are domed to failure by a great homophobic sentiment in Africa.

Furthermore, the auhtor of "Love on Trial" has depicted the character of Mr Kachingwe who contrasts Charles Chikwanje's characvterisation in the short story. In fact, Charles's homosexuality is used by Mr Kachingwe to lure people of Chipiri buy him alcohol as he pretends to have witnessed the event and therefore narrates it to make people laugh and mock at that un-African behavior of Charles. What is interresting and fictitious is that though the character Kachingwe seems to have witnessed the event, he could not however, provide precise details of the incident. The n arrator informs us that : "In truth, nobody ever finds out what the strands of those details are in Mr Kachingwe's

story" (Kenani, "Love on Trial" 2011, p.11). What is worth of critical analysis is the way the event attracts peoples' attention who do not hesitate buying alcohol to Mr Kachingwe. This very telling about how people of Chipiri society find the story funny and trivial. Again, through these scenes, Kenani introduces readers to an hostile Chipiri society to the constructionist's feminist ideology which promotes democracy in sexual orientations. Those who attempt to create a sexuality of their own that contrasts social norms are all unwelcome seeing people homophobic sentiments. By contrasting the characters of Charles and Kachingwe, Kenani purposefully introduces readers to cultural influence on people's homophobic sentiment in order to question the future perspectives of constructionist feminism in Africa. This does not mean that Africa did not witness earlier forms of homosexuality before colonisation. For instance, in his introduction to *African Sexualities: A Reader*, Tamale as quoted by De Souza (2020, Pp.5-6) comments that: "Ideas about and experiences of African sexualities are shaped and defined by issues such as colonialism". Mentioning studies such as "Hawley (2017), Matebeni and Pereira (2014), Zabus (2013) and Msibi (2011) ". De Souza (2020, p.6) arrives at the conclusion that "Many of these studies found historical evidence which strongly suggests that same-sex desires have existed in Africa even before colonialism. Most of the same-sex acts at the time were associated with witchcraft and boosting physical power for men". Such studies reveal that Africa has not heard of homosexuality and lesbianism for the first time from colonialist but it was strictly not an African value since it is linked to witchcraft. In an article published in *Peuple Noirs, Peuples Africains* in 1983, D. Vignal (1983, Pp.74-75) comments: "For the majority of African writers, homophilia is exclusively a deviation introduced by colonialists or their descendants ; by outsiders of all kinds : Arabs, French, English, métis, and so on. It is difficult for them to conceive that homophilia might be the act of a black African". Homosexual practice is "almost invariably attributed to the detrimental impact made on Africa by the West" (C. Dunton, 2007, p.727).

While Kenani depicts a Chipiri community which is against homosexuality, he gives a rather different perception of lesbianism in his short story "In the Best Interest of the Child" through characters that are more tolerant towards lesbians. It is through the character of Sister Fire that Kenani introduces lesbianism to readers in his "In the Best Interest of the Child". Sister Fire defies the compulsory order of sexuality that portrays alternative sexualities as less human. The characterisation of Peter Sitolo, the custodian of Dorothy, contrasts cultures that shape people's negative view of alternative sexualities such as lesbianism. Commenting Kenani's short story, De Souza

opines that : “The heterosexual populace of Chipiri justifies its homophobic stance on Sister Fire based on culture. Although Sister Fire is a lesbian, Peter Sitolo indicates that he has no problem with her sexual orientation and makes it clear that what he wants is to save the life of Dorothy”. Clearly then, Peter Sitolo appears more tolerant towards Sister Fire’s sexual deviation. Nevertheless, the general opinion and that of government agents in the story is that a child cannot be properly raised by lesbian parents. They argue for instance that : “The little girl will have her morality corrupted” (Kenani, 2011, “In the Best Interest of the Child”, p.122), thereby associating lesbianism with immorality. There is no exaggeration to say that homosexuality, lesbianism and other forms of sexual deviations are seen in Africa as unhuman and immoral and this justifies people’s sharp opposition to the ideology of the constructionist feminism as promoted by George-Claude Guilbert (2004) in his *C’est pour un garçon ou une fille ? La dicature du genre*.

In her “Jambula Tree”, Monica Arac de Nyeko depicts lesbianism between two female characters, Anyango and Sanyu. Winner of the 2007 Caine Prize for African Writing, De Nyeko’s story is an epistolary piece that explores forbidden sexual desire between Anyango and Sanyu. Just like Kenani, De Nyeko comes from Uganda where homosexuality, lesbianism and other forms of same-sex sexualities are despised by local cultures and repressed by law. This foretells the homophobic sentiment that animate characters in « Jambula Tree » about Anyango and Sanyu’s love affairs. Just like in Kenani’s “Love on Trial” where people of Chipir are hostile against same-sex sexualities, Mama Atim in de Nyeko’s “Jambula Tree” is also against lesbianism between the two girls. For readers to become aware of this, De Nyeko gets Anyango, who lives in estate housing in Uganda’s capital Kampala write to her partner, Sanyu, who is studying in London. It appears obvious that the two female characters are attracted to each other despite the cultural restrictions which do not agree with sexual deviations. The author seems to align himself on his society’s homophobic sentiment as he sees to it that Sanyu is forced by her parents to go to London for further studies. As such, there is ample evidence that De Nyeko has developed her characters in “Jambula Tree” in a way that challenges the constructionist feminist’s ideology. Mama Atim is powerfully relevant for this purpose since she is one of the interesting characters that reinforce homophobia in the story. She is portrayed to readers as an antagonist to the protagonists Anyango and Sanyu, two lesbian characters. By expressing love for each other, Anyango and Sanyu rebel against the traditional order with regard to sexuality. According to a letter by Anyango :

We said that after that night. The one night no one could make us forget. You left without saying goodbye after that. You had to, I reasoned. Perhaps it was good for both of us. Maybe things could die down that way. Things never did die down. Our names became forever associated with the forbidden (Monica Arac de Nyeko, "Jambula Tree", 2013, p.9).

This quotation is powerfully telling of Anyango's commitment to her lesbian life with Sanyu despite the distance between Uganda and London. A distance created by the author to express his sharp opposition to the two girls' lesbianism. Furthermore, this quotation introduces Anyango to readers as a strong advocate of the constructionist feminist ideology which is unfortunately criminalized by her people. De Souza (2020, p.8) also comments this extract in the following terms:

Through Anyango's claim quoted above that "things never did die down" despite her partner Sanyu being sent to London, we encounter a character who emphasizes that the feelings between the two are too strong to be doused by society's intervention. The society's reaction to Anyango's and Sanyu's love affair shows the perception of alternative sexualities as temporary deviations from heterosexuality that could be corrected.

By having imagined a character like Anyango to resist society's dictates, De Nyeko challenges homophobia displayed by Mama Atim. Mama Atim holds the view that lesbianism is un-African and should never be entertained within her society or indeed anywhere else by indicating that "London is no refuge for the immoral" (de Nyeko, 2013, p.12), in reference to Sanyu being sent to London » (Monica Arac de Nyeko, "Jambula Tree", 2013, Pp.8-9). Anyango recalls that Mama Atim "wants me to hear the word [that lesbianism is an abomination] in every breath, sniff it in every scent so it can haunt me like that day I first touched you" (Monica Arac de Nyeko, "Jambula Tree", 2013, p.12). Mama Atim sends a homophobic message that intends to echo in Anyango's ears that her sexual orientation is uncultural and must be abandoned. The cultural argument posited in "Jambula Tree" is that a normal sex relationship is only that between a man and a woman. Thus, culture makes Mama Atim regard heterosexuality as the only normal sexual orientation. From these scenes, readers come across characters that are against the constructionist feminist ideology while some conservative characters hold dear to cultural norms that are homophobic. Moreover, deviations in sexuality are differently perceived in the three selected short stories. It appears from my critical analysis that the society depicted by Kenani in his short stories is a bit tolerant of Charles sexuality while, in "Jambula Tree" cultural authority over the girls' sexuality

comes with an iron fist. Unlike Charles, who becomes an object of humour in society, Sanyu is immediately sent away from her lesbian partner on the pretext of further studies.

2. Transgenderism and the Constructionist Feminist Ideology in Africa

Based upon a critical analysis of Beatrice Lamwaka's short story entitled, "Chief of the Home", this second section of my essay examines transgenderism as a manifestation of gender deviation that conforms to the constructionist feminist ideology because it consists for the individual to exhibit the gender of his opposed sex. It goes in line with gender democracy as it endows the individual with the freedom to be feminine or masculine. G. Guilbert refers to traditional gender as gender dictatorship. In *C'est pour un garçon ou une fille ? La dictature du genre ?* Guilberet (2004, p.9) says : "We live in a dictatorship, that of gender, which unjustly and arbitrarily imposes fixed roles on women and men in all areas. How can we still tolerate in the 21st century that equality remains a pious hope?" (My own translation). The study conducted by Guilbert and which constitutes the basis for my reflection promotes deviations in individuals' traditional gender roles under the form of transgenderism. For the pioneers of this theory such as Guilbert (2004), Simone De Beauvoire (1997) and J. Butler (1990) gender is no longer fixed upon sex, rather it depends upon the individual's will to be feminine or masculine. According to Simone De Beauvoire as quoted by J. Butler (1990, p.1), "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one". Clearly then, De Beauvoir promotes constructionist feminism which maintains that the sex does not equal gender, rather one becomes the gender of his or her own choosing. In the same perspective, J. Butler (1990, p.ix) remarks that : "Precisely because female no longer appears to be a stable notion, its meaning is as troubled and unfixed as woman and because both terms gain their troubled significations only as relational terms, this inquiry takes as its focus gender and the relational analysis it suggests". Should we, therefore, say that some women are failed men or that some men are failed women or that some men and women are both male-female or female-male with their bisexual status? How is transgenderism portrayed in the corpus text under study ? How does it relate to constructionist feminism and its future ?

Any reader of "Chief of the Home" from a constructionist feminist perspective perceives a female-behaving young man, Lugul, who wanders from town to town helping people. Lugul's characterization reflects transgenderism which is rejected by people based on prevailing cultural norms in the society.

The story is set in Alokolum village and it deals with Lugul's fate. According to the narrator, Lugul's story is told because it "deserves to be heard" (Lamwaka, "Chief of the Home", 2013, p.159). A. L. Mtenje (2016, p.269) observes that "Lamwaka's focus on a transgender fictional character is a transgressive decision, addressing a form fluid *gender* identification". However, the reading of the story reveals that Lugul is not a transgender: "Being transgender entails making a conscious decision to change one's identification from one gender identity category to another. This is not entirely the case with Lugul" (De Souza, 2020, 10). Lugul, performs femininity unconsciously of the demands of his assigned gender at birth. Yet, both transgender and intersex are suppressed by patriarchal contexts where most things are either masculine or feminine. The cultural norms in Lugul's society dictate whether he be conferred the attributes of a man or a woman. As an intersex individual, the society struggles to assign a proper gender to Lugul. For her readership to see society's opposition against Lugul's gender deviation, the authoress depicts scenes whereby Lugul is rejected and mocked at by his own people. The narrator informs readers that: "whatever anyone said didn't deter you from doing what you enjoyed most [...]. Others said you only had a *penis*, but that wasn't enough to make you a *man*" (Lamwaka, "Chief of the Home", 2013, p.160). Using the constructionist feminism, one may argue that the fact that Lugul has a penis is not sufficient to call him a man. In Lamwaka's short story, Lugul's characterisation shows that he is not comfortable with his manhood. As a result, he deviates to become feminine. From the manner in which Lugul's body is represented in the story, one can argue that Lugul's male sexuality does not inform his gender. Through scenes such as these, it is the constructionist feminist's ideology which is implemented by Lugul. What urges is to evaluate society's reaction or opposition to this philosophy. Interestingly enough, the Alokolum society is aware that Lugul is a non-conforming gender. The narrator confirms this by saying that "nobody wanted to call [Lugul] a man because [he] fetched water from the well, carried firewood on [his] head" (Lamwaka, "Chief of the Home", 2013, p.163). Yet, the Alokolum's society disapproves Lugul's other sexuality because he is not conforming to the one constructed by their culture.

However, Lamwaka seems, at times, to align herself with Lugul's transgender attitude as she empowered him with the technique of silence to ignore people's mockery. For this purpose, readers are informed that Lugul "didn't say anything when one man, drunk with arege, said 'Lugulobedodako ma laco', Lugul is a woman man" (Lamwaka, "Chief of the Home", 2013, p.162). Silence therefore becomes a narrative element that helps Lugul challenge the traditional gender of his society. What attracts the constructionist feminist

reader is Lugul's failure to convince people to stop mocking at him or rejecting him. This is telling about the sharp opposition and homophobia of his people against his transgenderism. About Lugul's characterisation, De Souza comments: "Lugul is characterised as a 'woman man' because his social practices are of a female. He cooks. He fetches firewood. In other words, Lugul is perceived as feminine rather than masculine as a result of society's definition of masculinity". Clearly then, while Lugul's behavior conforms to the constructionist feminist ideology as seen by Guilbert, it contrasts his socially and culturally prescribed gender roles. The immediate consequence is Lugul's rejection by his people. The following comments by De Souza accounts for the significance of Lugul's silence about people's mockery of his intersexual behavior: "Throughout the story, Lamwaka creates a feeling of silence that is echoed in Lugul's characterisation. This feeling of silence suggests the hardships and insults that individuals who unconsciously perform genders and sexualities are subjected to in the heterosexual societies".

However, as noted by Connell, "masculinity refers to male bodies but it is not determined by male biology" (2010, p.2). This means that masculine bodies are not necessarily those of males (De Larch, 2017; Butler, 1990; Halberstam, 1998). Although Lugul has a male body, it is not conclusive that he is masculine. This conforms to constructionists' claims in order to free individuals from imposed traditional gender based upon the biological sex. Cornell (2010, p.2) furthermore talks of 'masculine' women, when women behave or present themselves in a way their society regards as distinctive of men". What Lugul exhibits are instances of gender deviations that have no consequences on his sexuality. Biologically, Lugul is male yet his behavior informs us that he is a female. In this regard, Ru Paul as quoted by G. Guilbert (2004, p.7) observes: "We are born naked, everything else is a travesty". This observation resonates with what De Beauvoir describes as one is not born woman, rather one becomes one. After Lugul's death, the narrator tells us that: « My father said he would give you a home where you will rest. He said you were a good man but the world didn't treat you well. I never understood his change of heart. Maybe he knew deep down in his heart, although the harsh words never stopped coming from him » (Lamwaka, "Chief of the Home" 2013, p.163). The above passage surely equips the reader with the knowledge that the narrator's father had no problem with Lugul's transgenderism but "harsh words", that are used to defend socio-cultural norms of this society. Like Stanley Kenani and De Nyeko, Lamwaka powerfully undermines homophobic sentiments through the character of Lugul.

On reading Beatrice Lamwaka's "Chief of the Home", the reader notices that the intersex protagonist Lugul has a body that can be described as feminine. Though a male character, Lugul performs all domestic chores. As a result he is not made head of the family seeing his femininity because males only with masculine attitudes are qualified enough to manage a family in the African context. The narrator sees to it that boys' education is not given to the transgender Lugul: "my father said boys should not be close to you because you will teach them how to cook, that you didn't know that being near the cooking fire will burn your penis" (Lamwaka, "Chief of the Home", 2013, p.160). This implies that things should be done the quickest possible to avoid the young generation's contamination by Lugul's transgenderism that violates and deviates cultural norms.

Conclusion

It has been the task of this study to map and examine homosexuality, lesbianism, transgenderism as deviations in sexuality and gender in order to discuss the future of the constructionist feminist's ideology in African fiction. The research has revealed that same-sex sexualities and transgenderism conform to the constructionist feminism that contrasts traditional sex and gender and promotes sexuality and gender democracy. Consequently, my article discovered that homophobic sentiments in Africa as depicted in the selected short stories constitutes a serious threat and impediment to the future of the constructionist feminism in Africa. Further, it is found that the homophobic sentiments are motivated by the theory of compulsory heterosexuality as demanded by African culture. All these account for people's anti-homosexuality, anti-lesbianism and anti-transgenderism as seen in the corpus texts of this essay. All things considered, my study has shown that the ideology promoted by the constructionist feminism is sharply opposed by homophobia and does not therefore seem to enjoy a promising future in Africa. My study also reveals that the changes promoted by the constructionist feminism enrich feminist studies in order to broaden it to the demands of the contemporary world. Thus, feminism cannot be static, but rather changes to conform to contemporary demands, even if these are not necessarily welcome. It is my hope that this article may contribute to debates about queer studies in African countries. In doing so, I will have modestly contributed to shedding light on the issue of homosexuality, lesbianism and transgenderism as it manifests itself today in Africa and thus contribute to its better management.

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