

No place for Gays: Colonialism and the African Homosexual in African Literature

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Abstract

This paper argues that African writers who set out to give the literary world an African perspective of the Indigenous people during colonialism did so by giving a convenient image of the African's sexuality. This image stems out of the fact that the African's sexuality was one in which same-sex relationships were portrayed as cultural imports of colonialism and not practices that were inherently part of the African. The paper shows how some influential West African writers either depicted homosexuality as evil or ignored it altogether despite the reality that was happening in the African continent. Furthermore, though there were instances in which the missionaries themselves were hypocritical in their denouncing of homosexuality this was not picked up by writers of African literature at the time. The gender politics was such that writers created an ideal image of the African male that was seen to have strong physical and spiritual characteristics to the effect that notions of homosexuality would be seen as improbable.

Keywords: homosexual, colonialism, identity

1.0 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to show how African literature dealt with the problematic issue of homosexuality during the colonial period. African writers were writing during a time when there was a strong need to project an African perspective of what constituted the African image. This surprisingly did not involve a look at homosexuality among Africans although the practice was widespread during the time of colonialism and even prior to that. As such one gets the feeling that there were some inconsistencies between the content in the novels and what was happening in Africa. Much of this problem could be a result of external pressure or the desire to project an image that is idealized, an image that is sexually 'correct' if you will. So, the paper shows that though the cultural aspects of the African were carefully mapped out for the local and European audience there was a concerted effort to present homosexuality as alien to Africa. The pre-colonial African is one who has been severely handicapped in terms of sexuality. West African writers for instance sought to present a picture of the African male where sex was seen in the context of procreation and in a heterosexual framework. The notion of the homosexual African was ludicrous such that the definition of the ideal African as the masculine symbol of his race did not offer any sexual ambiguities. Even African leaders were at the forefront of creating this ideal yet misinformed image of Africa. As Tamale states, "By re-writing the history of African sexualities, the power elite seek to obliterate same-sex relations in order to bolster their control over the political and social context, to maintain the hegemonic heteronormative hold on women." (Tamale 2013, 22) The seductive image of an African male that is unambiguous and consistent is at variance with recent research in the area of African sexuality both during and prior to colonialism.

2.0 Pre-Colonial views of the African's Sexual Identity

It is important that for one to appreciate how African writers viewed homosexuality one must be aware of how earlier writers presented heterosexual relationships and their inherent politics. These representations were influenced by several factors such as characterization, setting and the writer's spiritual and social climate. Three works generally come to mind. These are Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), Plaatjie's *Mhudi* (1930) and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902). One may argue that these three influenced the focus of Achebe's groundbreaking text on the African identity, *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

The period in which the writer is in plays no small part in how he manipulates certain dynamics of his characters. So, for instance, issues of sexuality are not only considerations for the author but also involve concerns of how the readership will be receptive to the content. An example of this can be taken from *King Solomon's Mines* where the narrative voice describes Good, the white explorer, in terms of how he views the possibility of a relationship with the native girl, Foulata.

The poor creature was no ordinary native girl, but a person of great, I had almost said stately, beauty, and of considerable refinement of mind. But no amount of beauty or refinement could have made an entanglement between Good and herself a desirable occurrence; for as she herself puts it, 'Can the sun mate with the darkness, or the white with the black?' (Haggard 1958, 241).

Not only were heterosexual relationships upheld, they had to be between members of the same race. Foulata makes it clear that an 'entanglement' was profoundly an exclusive undertaking where skin colour took precedence over desire. Sexuality had a clearly defined ethnic boundary. Collits however, suggests that Foulata's assertions were a result of Haggard's self-censorship in that "King Solomon's Mines reminds us of the limits that decorum placed on Victorian discussions of sexuality." (Collits 2005, 126). *Mhudi* is a novel that is told from an African perspective unlike the Eurocentric *King Solomon's Mines* and here too one understands that a lot of the content is influenced by factors outside the author's control. The book traces the Rolong tribe which is forced to flee from the marauding Matabele army. The heroine, Mhudi, experiences multiple challenges ranging from jealousy to surviving in a forest inhabited by man-eating lions. The novel has an overbearing moralizing tone of peace and goodwill which is indicative of Plaatjie's background of missionary education. There is thus an abundance of brotherly love in *Mhudi* though no mention of any sexual encounters either within the ethnic tribes or between the white boer trekkers and the natives. The portrayal of homosexuals and what would constitute for the missionaries spiritual depravity would be at variance with the Christian message. This is despite the fact that homosexuality was arguably widespread in South Africa during Plaatjie's time than anywhere else in Africa according to court records and other sources. Mining towns experienced a flourish of same sex relations chiefly because women were restricted from entering these areas. Hyam states that "young men became 'wives' in the mines in order to earn the money to become husbands at home. Mine marriage was thus a function of migrancy in the gold-mining labour system, and a means of reinforcing African resistance to proletarianisation." (Hyam 1990, 99). Hyam states that the incidences of same sex relationships were so prolific that "The government and mining companies therefore decided in the 1920s to introduce a system of regulated prostitution." (Hyam 1990, 99). Epprecht also reveals that "charges of male-male sexual assaults by Bantu speakers upon their countrymen began to crop up in British courts as early as 1860" (Epprecht 2008, 57).

So it is possible that missionary influence and the fact that they controlled the printing presses contributed to Plaatjie's thematic considerations. This does not mean that missionaries were beacons of morality. Though mission stations would be expected to speak out against homosexuality, a lot of these were often embroiled in same-sex scandals. The practice was not only confined to Africa but was virtually global (see Ryan 1839; Clarke 1929; Sturman 1983; Binney 1978). Hyam talks of a specific example from the Orange Free State in colonial South Africa involving a young missionary Bishop Edward Twells, "who fled back to Britain in 1870 to escape a sodomy charge and never held benefice again before his death thirty years later." (Hyam 1990, 105). There were undoubtedly many such cases of impropriety but one believes the shame kept the cases hushed up. *Heart of Darkness* is a remarkable text and deserves to be mentioned if only because Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, which was to become a seminal piece on the African image, was a reaction to Conrad's portrayal of the indigenous African. Conrad though, for all his faults at presenting the African as an inarticulate primate, did not define him in a sexual manner, "While I stood horror-struck, one of these creatures rose to his hands and knees, and went off on all fours towards the river to drink. He lapped out of his hand, then sat up in the sunlight, crossing his shins in front of him, and after a time let his woolly head fall on his breastbone." (Conrad 1902, 45). There is a female native in the text but just as with Haggard's novel, you get the idea that she represents an enigma rather than a sexual being, "She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress." (Conrad 1902, 101). Though some may hint at there being an affair between her and Kurtz, the company agent who has abandoned his post to indulge in the native lifestyle, there is nothing solid to base this on but conjecture. As a reaction to *Heart of Darkness*, *Things Fall Apart* was an ideological confrontation that sought to show that Africans were more than apes that grunted and growled.

Achebe himself in an interview with Jerome Brooks puts this into perspective, “Then I grew older and began to read about adventures in which I didn’t know that I was supposed to be on the side of these savages who were encountered by the good white man. I instinctively took sides with the white people. They were fine! They were excellent. They were intelligent. The others were not...they were stupid and ugly. That was the way I was introduced to the danger of not having your own stories. There is that great proverb – that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. That did not come to me until much later. Once I realised that, I had to be a writer. I had to be that historian.” (Achebe, 1994)

It can be argued that there was no need for *Things Fall Apart* to somehow set the record straight through detailing African sexual practices for Joseph Conrad had made no such assertions. Did this therefore mean that the African as seen by Conrad and echoed by Achebe was entirely heterosexual?

3.0 The African Writer’s Phobia of the Homosexual

Newell, states that Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) “fills the absent ‘space’ marked out for Africa in English texts with strong local voices, re-inserting Igbo eloquence and Igbo literary genres” (Newell 2006, 87). In addition to the oral tradition this novel emphasized that the African male during colonialism was a man defined on three fronts: his valour in battle, his ability to provide for his family and his capacity to procreate. This three pronged symbol became a cultural vaccine against the colonialist interpretation of what an African man should be.

As Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* shows, masculinity was defined on a social and political level, by farming yams successfully and by accumulating titles. The portrayal of anything else bordered on the effeminate. Unoka, Okonkwo’s father is presented in this manner and it is apparent that ‘manhood’ is not a prominent feature of this man. “Unoka was never happy when it came to wars. He was in fact a coward and could not bear the sight of blood. And so he changed the subject and talked about music, and his face beamed,” (Achebe 1958, 5). It is thus clear why the narrative states, “Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father.” (Achebe 1958, 6). Despite the definitions of manhood being explicit in *Things Fall Apart* there is also a realisation that heterosexuality formed a functional rather than a sensual purpose. It was simply there to develop one’s lineage.

Thus the issue of sexual enjoyment, let alone liberal attitudes to sex is alien to Umuofia. The conclusion one gets is that homosexuality could not have existed in Achebe’s Umuofia prior to the colonial diffusion. Thus African writers take a very extreme Afrocentric view of homosexuality seeing it not as an individual choice with which to explore one’s sexuality but a western aberration that is part of the psychological baggage of colonialism. Whatever views one might have of Achebe’s seminal work, the assertion is that the African male had only one sexual identity and it was not one that was necessitated by individual nuances but by deep rooted cultural norms and values. This is despite Epprecht’s findings that “same sex exceptions to heterosexual norms and ideals were also noted in descriptive accounts of African societies from as early as the sixteenth century.” (Epprecht 2008, 37). However, it is perhaps not surprising that one of the first accounts of Africans having homosexual experiences is written by a European, the great explorer Henry Morton Stanley, credited by many as the one who came to the rescue of Dr David Livingstone. Wole Soyinka would later give us an African perspective of interracial homosexuality in *The Interpreters* (1965) but it was Stanley who set the tone of same sex relationships in Africa and what they meant to those involved. Stanley’s book *My Kalulu: Prince, King and Slave* was published in 1873 at a time when the colonial footprint was colossal on the African soil.

The book is set during internal upheavals caused by tribal conflicts and touches on slavery just like Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973). Stanley’s novel narrates the adventures of two Africans, Selim and Kalulu, and describes how their friendship develops over time. What makes it interesting is that, as Aldrich states, “episodes of homoerotic voyeurism occur throughout the novel.” (Aldrich 2003, 40) and that the book “may be read as an idealised homosexual love story in an exotic setting, filled with recognisable classical and biblical illusions and complete with a ‘they lived happily ever after conclusion.’ ” (Aldrich 2003, 41). The relationship that these two males develop is not a relationship that is presented as corrosive to cultural morals nor is it one that implies that homosexuality is a condition of the soulless individual as Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* shows. One thus gets the impression that the heterosexual male is exaggerated. However, it needs to be understood that in *Things Fall Apart* sexual encounters are heterosexual precisely because procreation had more than a physical function.

It had ties to the village ideals of manhood as well as spiritual interpretations as is the case with Okonkwo's spirit child. In this manner childbirth is a complex ritual that blends with the oral tradition and the spiritual. This makes sexual intercourse a profound traditional experience between a man and a woman in which no other versions such as same sex relationships are considered as definitive of the African community. There is thus no evidence that in Achebe's text sexual intercourse was anything other than a serious undertaking that was specific in its function with a culturally articulated form and style. One of the elders, in commenting on a practice of gender roles in Abame and Aninta shows us how rigid Umuofian cultural practices are when it comes to sex, "The world is large," said Okonkwo. "I have even heard that in some tribes a man's children belong to his wife and her family." "That cannot be," said Machi. "You might as well say that the woman lies on top of the man when they are making the children." (Achebe 1958, 52).

There is no other understanding or experience of sex beyond that of a heterosexual union for childbirth. The comment above shows that in Umuofia the African male does not eroticise the female form but sees her solely as a vessel for carrying his offspring.

It is not only Achebe's work which brings this convenient yet narrow view of African sexuality. Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966) depicts a society that is exclusively heterosexual. In this text the practise of arranged marriages, as shown by Ekwueme and Ahurole, underlines that children were exposed at a young age to the concept of a heterosexual lifestyle. Ekwueme is 5 years old when he is engaged to Ahurole who is eight days old at the time. One gets the idea that there is no other alternative that exists in this pre-colonial society. Ekwueme's father, Wigwe, is depicted as taking part in a ceremony that is essentially a communal event. Thus one realises that heterosexual marriages create strong bonds within the village as well as beyond it. "The day for the formal presentation of wine arrived. This time Wigwe was accompanied by several village elders. They were all neatly dressed in gay wrappers and sang their way to Omigwe. As they passed by, housewives peeped out with wistful looks in their eyes, their minds thrown back to the day when like Ahurole they waited anxiously for the wine party to arrive at their fathers' compounds." (Amadi 1966, 123).

The engagement is not restricted to the couple but forges a bond between families as well. As such marriage is not so much about a sexual awakening but has deeper social and political implications. For Wigwe and his wife Adaku if the marriage does not take place this will create a great shame in them and they would lose face in the eyes of the community. The rituals that are done to ensure a smooth wedding show that just as in *Things Fall Apart*, the trending theme here is one of combining heterosexual relationships with spirituality. All the characters seem to be inevitably linked with marriage with the exception of the dibias. In other words, one has to be in commune with the spirits to be exempted from marriage. Only in bestriding the human and spirit world can one remain unmarried. In the underworld though, marriage is still an important function and it brings much of the same emotions as in the human world. Ekwueme's problematic union with Ihuoma is sanctioned by the Sea-King, a vengeful spiritual god who vows death on all men who seek Ihuoma's hand in marriage. In another instance, Anyika, the local dibia or traditional healer, is unwilling to provide a love potion to Ahurole who is desperate to rekindle the passion with an increasingly disinterested Ekwueme. So, in this text there are cultural avenues for redress regarding heterosexual liaisons as well as spiritual obstructions that need to be negotiated with caution. There is no place for homosexuality. None of the characters have sexual feelings for their own sex nor do they describe one another in sexual tones. The idea is that this society and, by extension, African society prior to colonialism was exclusively heterosexual and had cultural and spiritual pillars that supported the institution of marriage. Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) mentions homosexuality, at times explicitly, but it generally follows the same pattern of denial shown in the texts mentioned above. Armah's text narrated in an oral quality comes across as being more culturally rooted in a past that is untainted by the foreign footprint. It suggests that the behaviour of the indigenous people has been forever altered by the appearance of the coloniser. It is interesting to note that *Two Thousand Seasons* shows the female form solely as a symbol of birth and continuity. There is none of the lurid descriptions that assail the senses when the Arabs are being described. The woman is seen as a viable weapon in the fight towards a rebirth of a particular way of life. "Was it not plain that being so reduced we should strain every sinew to increase our numbers? And what better way to do this than to make of every female a childbearer as soon as her body showed it was ready, and for as long as her body continued to turn manseed to harvest?" (Armah 1973,60). The agricultural image is important in that it makes a strong dichotomy between heterosexual and homosexual interaction. Woman is seen as having a natural purpose that makes sexual enjoyment secondary or even inconsequential. Her purpose is to bring forth children.

This then sees homosexuality as meaningless and even taboo in that in terms of output this sexual union is a dead end. Downing illustrates how in the medieval world Armah's portrayal of the homosexual would not be out of place. "In the medieval world the most important distinction was between procreative and non procreative practices. Anal or oral sex was condemned even within marriage, and regarded as more sinful than rape or incest because it was non-reproductive." (Downing 1989, 5). The idea that Armah wants to project is that women's primary obligation is to carry the seed of man and to populate the earth. The sexual excesses of homosexual encounters that are described at the beginning of the text are fruitless in the natural order in that they only relate to the lesser human needs such as enjoyment. There is nothing spiritual or purposeful in the sexual acts. There is no link with nature, no idea of harvest. What Armah suggests is that homosexuality is what separates the African from the European. Heterosexuality is what defines the black culture of family and identity. For Armah the colonial culture is one that is inhuman not only in terms of its barbaric practise of slavery but the shocking sexual preferences as well. When the Arab calls forth the Askari the narrative voice states, "He strode forward at the urgent call and in a moment was naked upon his master's back, ploughing the predator's open arsehole while the master tried to keep his forgetful penis in Azania. Then the joy of having his Askari mount him overwhelmed all Faisal's senses." (Armah 1973, 23). Words such as 'ploughing' and 'predator' and 'mount' help construct a picture of animalistic behaviour. The Askari is seen as a pack animal that has mounted and is ploughing a predator's arsehole. The idea is to portray the encounter as inhuman or outside what is natural. So, couched in the violent description there is the tone of disapproval. These Askari are not even presented as human. The narrative voice describes them as 'zombies' (Armah 1973,20) which effectively denies them an identity at par even with animals. They have become outside nature as to be soulless.

So, for an African to become a homosexual that implies that you are not in control of your actions and are simply acting out an urge that is beyond the realms of nature. One thus inhabits a place outside the natural and should be pitied or treated as a thing. Since the African is one who sees sex as a merging of the human and spiritual world, being a zombie is to throw the homosexual into an abyss. The psychological ramifications of this are immense and this is made clear through the Askari, Juma, who turns against his white master to help his fellow Africans to stage a mutiny on the slave ship. The act is one of redemption, of trying to regain the remnants of one's damned soul. It is an attempt to be African again. "A part of his will desired to take the journey back with us into the attempt at a new life close to our way. The other part was weary of all attempts. The sense of being a person already destroyed was so strong in him." (Armah 1973,150). The African homosexual is an individual with a fragmented personality, overwhelmed with shame and hopelessness. Altman states that, "homosexuality is no longer considered an expression of "really" being a woman in a man's body (or vice versa), but rather as physically desiring one's own gender without necessarily wishing to deny one's masculinity/ femininity." (Altman 2001,26). However, as Juma's character shows, there is none of the conscious effort at labelling oneself that Altman's definition implies. With Juma we see homosexuality as a result of an association with the white man's sadistic desires. Homosexuality thus is not seen as genetic but as something that one catches through associating with certain races. There is none of the element of choice that Altman makes reference to. In Armah's text one does not choose to become homosexual, one is forced by circumstances but ultimately such a choice creates a zombie out of one. It is a choice that is worse than death in that it gives you no peace, just loathing. It is hence telling why Juma no longer wants to remember his life as an Askari, "The need for forgetfulness was still strong in him. No one pressed him anymore. Of his own will he chose action as his best conversation with us." (Armah 1973, 147). It is as if the colonial encounter morally stained the African. It opened his soul to an alien level of depravity. The narrative states that one of the local leaders, Jonto, "came upon us with a spirit caught straight from the white predators from the desert." (Armah 1973, 64). The quote shows how homosexual behaviour is akin to a communicable disease. So, simple contact with the white predator could irrevocably change the black man's nature. Voss makes it clear that notions of sexuality are not straightforward indicators of one's origin or cultural sensibilities by stating that, "sexuality must also be treated as a variable rather than a constant in comparative studies of empire" (Voss 2012, 12). African writers like Armah failed to understand that situations existed in African societies where gay and lesbian relationships occurred prior to colonialism and which could not be explained as imported taboos. Furthermore, such practices were understood as an intrinsic part of tradition in that they formed important checks and balances within heterosexual marriages. Spurlin states that the same sex mine marriages that took place between migrant workers in South Africa were not only common, they became a substitute for the absence of the female spouse who could not travel with the husband to the mines.

Spurlin touches on lesbianism in Lesotho by stating that “Same-sex relationships among Basotho women subvert heterosexuality as a political regime and expose its pretence to reflect a natural order of “true” genders defined exclusively by heterosexual desire.” (Spurlin 2001,195). In other words there is no exclusive African sexual relationship nor are such relationships determined by one’s roots. In African literature we see something entirely different in that though there is no proven litmus test to label a race as essentially homosexual and another as essentially heterosexual, the writers would like it to be this way. An interpretation of Armah’s narrative discourse reveals that the importation of homosexuality was seen as a dangerous consequence of the colonial presence. In an interesting example he shows how one of the indigenous kings, Jonto, expresses a morbid sexuality that he has learned from his contact with the white slave traders. “He loved particularly the tender arseholes of boys not yet in the thirtieth season. Some he had oiled for ingress but in his happiest moods he dispensed with oil, preferring as lubricant the natural blood of each child’s bleeding anus as he forced his entry” (Armah 1973, 65). In the novel all these homosexuals are killed off by the traditionalists. There is a calculated extermination that takes place to cleanse the land of the moral degeneration. The fight against colonialism thus was not solely a fight to reclaim land and cultural identity. It was also a fight to cleanse corrupted spirits and fragmented souls such as we see through Jonto and Juma respectfully. All of the African leaders who sought to affirm white hegemony are portrayed as doomed. Kings such as Topre, Esibir, Krobo, Bentum, Koranche and so on are all seen as people who are on the road to self destruction.

Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* (1965) provides us with the stereotypes that govern same sex relationships but it looks at these relationships from an entirely different perspective. As the title suggests, the novel looks at how characters make sense of their place in the post colonial environment and how the need of a spiritual anchor is important in dealing with the pressures of modernity. Of particular note is the character of Joe Golder an American expatriate who is openly homosexual. A casual appraisal of Joe Golder’s character may lead one to making comparisons between Soyinka’s novel and Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*. However, though Golder is American this does not mean that like Armah, homosexuality is an imported pastime. Soyinka raises awareness that African cultures are not as exclusively heterosexual as other writers make it out to be. Golder’s discussion with Sagoe, a Nigerian journalist shows the phobia that the African has towards spending the night in Golder’s apartment. There is the stereotype that homosexuals have insatiable appetites and will instinctively jump on someone to satisfy their warped carnal urges. Sagoe is reflecting Armah’s portrayal of the homosexual as a depraved individual whose appetite for debauchery cannot be assuaged. Golder is keen for Sagoe to come clean on his phobia.

“Wait.” He came closer, almost pleading. “Tell me something, quite honestly. Are you afraid of me?”

Sagoe went past feeling; his mouth slacked open and remained there.

“You needn’t look so astonished. I want an honest answer. Are you afraid of me?” (Soyinka 1965, 198).

Sagoe is a journalist and no doubt is well read as to the different forms of sexuality but he is unable to deal with the idea of sleeping under the same roof with a homosexual. His reaction shows that education is not enough of a tool to remove irrational fears and doubts. Golder as a historian is able to inform Sagoe that homosexuality is not a white ailment and that even African cultures have been practicing homosexuality without being coerced by colonialists. “Do you think I know nothing of your Emirs and their little boys? You forget history is my subject. And what about those exclusive coteries in Lagos?” (Soyinka 1965,199). Sagoe is forthright in living in the comfort of ignorance by stating that, “if you don’t mind, I’ll persist in my delusion.” (Soyinka 1965,199).

The Interpreters is one of the first novels from West Africa to suggest that homosexuality was not a colonial burden that came across the Atlantic. It shows how Africans were unwilling to acknowledge the real possibility that being gay has nothing to do with the dictates of geography or with one’s culture. Homosexuality did not need to be quarantined in a European framework for it to be condemned and shunned without fear of shame. Soyinka’s writing is not one which cocoons itself in an African world view that is severed from western influences and experiences. Wright states that Soyinka’s work can be seen as “Ogunist criticism” (Wright 2000, 46) and is thus at extremes with the views that Armah raises on the African personality. Ogun is one of the many gods of the Yoruba pantheon and it is his multifaceted nature, often contradictory but nonetheless passionate that allows us to understand why Soyinka’s take on homosexuality is different from the other African writers mentioned here.

This god is not predictable and in the same light one can say there is nothing predictable or exclusive about African culture, be it in terms of social, political or even sexual matters. Soyinka’s favourite god, Ogun, is at best an ambiguous god, full of creativity and destruction.

This in itself guides our understanding of Soyinka's philosophy that there is dynamism to life and to project one's culture as exclusively heterosexual is to belittle the African male's ability to express his sexuality outside the prescribed and myopic dictates of an idealised patriarchy. As Wright states, Ogunist criticism, "can be said to profess a progressive traditionalism in that its members operate principally from African worldviews...(and) regard culture as dynamic, in a constant process of change, and open to modernisation and outside influences. (Wright 2000, 46).

4.0 Conclusion

This paper has tried to show that homosexuality was consciously omitted from the content of African literature by writers who commented on colonialism and the African identity. Despite the fact that the missionaries were involved in homosexual practices there was no reference to such activities in the literature. The need to project a strong, masculine image of a married male overrode the need to depict an alternative sexuality. Homosexual relationships were presented as alien to the African continent and presented as colonial side effects that corrupted the African personality and in cases, reduced him to a catatonic state. The idea of African sexuality was chiefly that of a man who slept with a woman to provide children and hence continue the important link with his culture and his ancestors. It even seems that sex was not seen in a sensual light by these writers. There was thus more to the event than a union of two individuals. In this manner one understands why homosexuality could be seen as going against nature and the ancestors in that it was presented as self-serving (and perhaps belittling the sperm) which, because of the spiritual link of childbearing, was symbolic of cultural identity and purpose. For the most part homosexuality involving Africans was seen as a result of coercion which further stereotyped the practise as unnatural and devoid of genuine affections. Later writers like Soyinka became a lone voice against such stereotypes by not only exposing them but also showing that African intellectuals were no longer willing to accept the fact that homosexuality has never been a part of African culture. Ultimately, the denial of homosexuality among Africans and having writers attribute it to colonialism is a desperate attempt to define morality through sexual practices.

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