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DIALOGUING SEXUALITY AND IDENTITY IN AFRICAN FICTION: A STYLISTIC EXTRAPOLATION OF SEFI ATTA'S *A BIT OF DIFFERENCE* AND NOVIOLET BULUWAYO'S *WE NEED NEW NAMES*

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Abstract

This study explores the narrative techniques deployed in Sefi Atta's A Bit of Difference and … Buluwayo's We Need New Names. The paper notes that every literary work has a particular pattern in which events and incidents are presented by the authors towards realizing the thematic goals of the work. Such peculiar styles are not taken for granted in the critical evaluation of such texts because they contribute to both semantic imports and aesthetic appeal in the works. Through a critical analysis of the two texts selected texts, it is evident that the authors deploy deviant structural organization of chapters, pagination and chapter titles which all signal some hidden yet deep-rooted meaning in the texts. The work concludes that the use of language, characterization and organizational structures in the texts enable the authors to carefully explore their different plot styles, thematic contexts and subject other relevant matters which ordinarily would not be fully perceived or understood in the context of the stories without them. It is further concluded that the authors in context's choice of deviant organization foregrounds their ideological stance on the subject of sexual identities unveiled through the structural strategy of the texts which in all adds to make the work rewarding, considering the subject matters embellished in them.

Keywords: Narrative techniques, sexual identity, LGBT, African writers.

Introduction

Modern literary works, particularly those of African descent, have been instrumental in revealing the realities of human existential cravings and the socio-cultural dynamics of human diversities. Isonguyo Akpan posits that "…the writers' social and cultural environments have great influence on the quality of their works" (84).Creative writers take into consideration the monumental task of confronting societal realities through works of art while keeping their audience entertained, educated and sensitized to the realities prevalent in societies. Rebecca Usoro and Monica Udoette acknowledges the role of the literary artist as one "who interrogates socio-cultural, religious, political and historical experiences with the sole purpose of reconstructing and revitalizing the narrative. In the process, the writer mirrors the inter-relationship between human nature and the society" (138). This is also largely because, According to Kufre Akpan, "literature remains a predominant means of investigating the complexities, apprehensions and contradictions that plague humanity" (3).Ngugi wa Thiong'O notes that: "The writer cannot be exempted from the task of exposing the distorted values governing such a jungle precisely because this distorts healthy human relationships" (xvi-xvii). Similarly, Chinua Achebe warns writers of African descent, thus: "...an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa

will end up being completely irrelevant– like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from flames" (78). Kufre Akpan and Naomi Okon have equally stated that "… literature has always been the rallying point and a convenient platform through which every social reality could be projected and addressed" (3). These assertions not only underscore the vital responsibility of the writer but also explains their social responsibility towards having a morally sound and economically viable society. According to James Okpiliya and Kufre Akpan, "this implies that no writer has ever written in isolation. His inspiration is always sharpened by the drive to expose and bring to the fore all the contradictions and apprehensions that engulf his society" (52). Therefore, the authors have become the eyes of the society.

The complications and dynamism of postmodern society motivate its digital consciousness in what David Udoinwang and Kufre Akpan refer to as: "The prevalent postmodernity with its attendant socio-cultural anomie…" (186),which keeps the African writer awake to the evolving socio-cultural order in the universe of aesthetic cravings. Furthermore, digital modernity comes with unprecedented socio-cultural issues which African writers and societies cannot but prime up to the demands of the time. Again, David Udoinwang and Ikpe Akpan aver aptly that "Digitization incursions into social life and culture continue to evolve, flooding the world with … unprecedented influence on cultural landscapes (1). In recent times, writers have turned to their creative binoculars on the socio-cultural dynamics of the moment, while deploying creative strategies towards making their minds align with the evolving existential trajectories, and the novel has come to appeal to the African writers as one of the cogent means of challenging the status quo, engaging with the changing order of things and advocating for the betterment of society and its socio-cultural institutions. Kufre Akpan affirms this when he argues that social events "…have continued to inspire writers in every genre, and in diverse approaches, they have poignantly deployed their imaginative visions in exploring every universal dilemma" (28).

The novel as an outstanding genre provides creative writers with a medium to delve into their artistic depths while also addressing critical issues in society. The novel broadens the spectrum of human understanding of social, political, religious, and economic realities in society. Writers must not only expose these realities but also depict them in a way that convinces readers that they are an accurate reflection of the world we live in. In the light of contemporary socio-cultural realities, African writers have a duty to use literary texts to mediate, interconnect and reconcile the African cosmos with the world wild web, as it were, to resist ideological and cultural impositions which African societies are still grappling with. It is in such context that David Udoinwang and Monica Udoette posit that "The imposition of imported technologies at the expense of indigenous traditional modes and thought from the earliest imperial contacts has remained till the present digital age, where the crisis of transition from the indigenous to the 'modern digital' ways of communication … continue to pose serious challenge, because such knowledge imposition gave no room for indigenous inputs in terms of contents and implications (218). Writers, especially those described as new generation writers, have always struck a balance between effectively conveying these realities and maintaining the literary quality of their work. In their interrogation of the new generation African dramatist, Uwem Affiah, Offiong Amaku and Kufre Akpan aver that: "Fuelled by the disillusion, despair and despondency of a fractured nation run by an inept military, this group of dramatists assumed a radical posture; a posture which was diametrically at variance with

that of their predecessors" (64). To achieve this, writers employ various critical literary techniques to craft beautiful narratives that capture the human experience in their environment.

Narration involves recounting events or telling stories, making it an intrinsic part of human culture. Yanna Popova argues that storytelling is peculiar to every culture. Stories that we as humans tell, as pointed out by David Udoinwang and James Tsaaior, "would be determined by the historical and literary configurations in which the narrative of one person ends up as a group-defining story through the pluralization of its contextual exigencies" (44). Suffice it to state that narrative as is presently transformed into the tradition of the novel is not a strange technique in the African context in particular. Prior to the invention of the print media, traditional African literature existed in oral forms which were narrated during moonlight tales and other socio-cultural settings. Orality and narratives are not strange to Africa, but it is a timeless lore. Mwaka Siluonde unequivocally states that the Zambian early written literature was a version of their oral narratives. Albeit, such literature could best be described as anthropological given itsrole in the representation of the culture of the people. The oral narrative plays an important role in the development and socialization process of African people. In another context, Rebecca Usoro and Monica Udoette posit that "in Africa, oral literature includes all creative imaginations which articulate dimensions of social experience in terms of what actually is, was, or could be, which tickle the imagination, feed the emotion and have the capacity to teach and to entertain". (61). As such, Ernst Wendland remarks succinctly that oral narrative in Africa:

> has played an important social role in the lives of Nyanja-speaking people and many other African peoples. This performing art functions not only as an effective means of educating the young in the knowledge of their physical and cultural environment, but due to its essentially conservative nature and continued repetition over the years, it also serves to uphold and reaffirm the people's ideals, institutions and identity. (1)

The importance of narrative tradition which has today become invaluable to humanity is undeniable, as it allows writers to express thoughts and ideological stances on events or incidents of human concern. The modern African novel is a product of this oral narrative and it is worth a critical concern for a better understanding of how African writers have deployed different means in fiction writing towards meeting given aesthetic and social goals.

To understand literary works like novels, it is essential to comprehend the mode through which writers portray realities in their art, using diverse styles. Popova recognizes the difference between fictional narratives in novels and everyday verbal narratives among people. She explains that novels are much more complex and deliberately crafted linguistic artefacts than a story told at the dinner table. Furthermore, the presumed intention of a writer is not as available or knowable as that of a conversational participant. Therefore, literary critics have a duty to assess the writer's choice of diction, imagery, mood, narrator's personality, setting, and other devices to make critical statements about the work.

In modern literary tradition, narratology is used to study narratives and uncover hidden structures. Prince Gerald defines narratology as the study of the different narrative techniques and their function in a given literary work. Narratology also explores how time and space

order affect the meaning we construct from narratives. Susana Oneg and Jose Land note that the term "narratology" simply refers to the "…science of narrative" (1). According to them, scholars like Gerrard Genette and Mieke Bal are the foremost proponents of "narratology". In *Narrative Discourse, An Essay in Method* (1980), Gérrard Genette presents a comprehensive theory of narratology that goes beyond merely identifying the structure of a plot. According to Genette, it is equally important to recognize the specific narrative techniques employed by an author to achieve the desired plot. In other words, Genette's approach to narratology emphasizes the importance of analyzing how a story is told, in addition to understanding what the story is about. This detailed approach to narratology has been influential in the study of literature and has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the art of storytelling. Genette goes ahead to divide narrative into different forms: narrative order, narrative duration, narrative frequency, narrative mode (mood), and narrative voice. Each of these has a significant implication in the study of a narrative, especially concerning how narratives should be presented. Bal Mieke equally agrees to the notion of having a theory which guides the analysis of the plot structure alongside the narrative techniques used by authors.

According to Matthew Mitchell and Margaret Egudo, the study of narrative has been a major focus in literary theory. Literary theorists analyze both spoken and written fictional stories, examining the structural components that create meaning and exploring how the reader and author contribute to the transfer of this meaning. This interdisciplinary field draws from insights in linguistics, anthropology, and cognitive science. Over time, the focus shifted from interpreting individual literary works to understanding how narrative expression communicates truth and meaning.

Furthermore, structuralism as a method of literary criticism has influenced the study of literary works. It applies language models to literature, revolutionizing the way narrative is studied. Instead of relying on a traditional cause-and-effect model, structuralism explains literary elements in relation to each other, making literary study more rigorous and systematic. In addition, structural linguistics was employed in literary theory to reveal a narrative grammar that could generate all possible narratives. Another approach to narrative analysis is the use of a communication model, where the writer and reader are considered to be participants in a communication event that helps to shape understanding of the narrative text. The crux of the matter is that a thorough examination of the underlying elements in texts is necessary to fully comprehend a text and construct objective meaning from literary texts. This cannot be done only by a mere consideration of the story or plot of a novel but by a conscious examination of both the linguistic and extra-linguistic devices used by authors. Therefore, this study aims to critically analyzethe narrative techniques in Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference* and No violet Buluwayo's *We Need New Names* to reveal the authors' style and the semantic imports in the novels.

Narrative Techniques in the Novels

▪ **Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference***

Sefi Atta's novel, *A Bit of Difference*, is a work of art that breaks away from conventional writing norms in several ways. One of the most striking features of the novel is its unconventional approach to structure. While most novels are typically divided into chapters and paragraphs, Atta presents her work in long sections with unique titles. This unconventional structure is not only aesthetically appealing but also thematically significant. The traditional chapter-

based structure of novels offers a sense of balance and orderliness, with chapters being relatively equally paginated and grouped into sections when necessary. However, Atta's choice to use long sections with unique titles imbues her work with a distinctive rhythm and tone. This structure allows her to explore and present issues of sexuality and identity in a more fluid and nuanced way.

Moreover, the absence of chapter numbers further emphasizes the fluidity of the novel's structure. This choice allows the reader to immerse themselves in the story without the interruption of chapter breaks. Atta's unconventional approach to structure is just one of the many ways in which she challenges conventional literary norms and creates a unique and powerful work of art. The first section is entitled 'Reorientation' and it spans eleven pages. The second section is entitled 'Actually' and it covers thirty-nine pages. The third section is entitled 'Foreign Capitals' and it takes up seventy-nine pages. This section is closely followed by the fourth which is entitled 'The Business of Humanitarianism' and which consumes forty-seven pages. After that is the fifth section which is entitled 'Sidestep'; this section comprises twenty-five pages. The sixth and final section is entitled 'For Good' and it spans seventeen pages. This structure can be numerically represented as follows: 11 - 39 - 79 - 47 - 25 – 17. Therefore, it suffices to state that the author's approach to the structural organisation of the novel does not only defy the traditional approach, but foregrounds her demystification sexual normativity and also opens up a new dimension in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (henceforth LGBT) discourse in African literature.

The plot structure could ordinarily be easily glossed over, but a more careful assessment of the pagination of the sections of the work reveals hidden details about the writer's representation wherein sexuality is factored into the discourse and weighed against the realities of the 'weird' postmodern world order. One also notices a swift rise in the geometric progression from eleven (11) to thirty-nine (39) to seventy-nine (79) at the beginning of the work. Suddenly, there is a slow and steady fall in the careful descent from seventy-nine (79) to forty-seven (47), to twenty-five (25), then to seventeen (17). This demonstrates the writer's swiftness in discussing the subject of sexuality, as against the prevailing attitude of remaining silent about sexuality. In other words, the author tactfully reveals that sexuality is a 'taboo' subject, but that people need not fear it. There is then a quick rise and slow fall which shows that the subject of sexuality should always be raised and not be too quickly dismissed under some rules and primordial fixations.

It is also noticeable that the novel begins with a section entitled 'Reorientation' and in this section, the protagonist meets two lesbian women. Placed against the background of homosexuality being a sexual orientation which is presently muted in the set cultural environment, the novel indirectly admonishes people to re-orientate themselves towards the tolerance of deferent sexual identities as a matter of human choice and freedom of conscience. The author's reservation and recognition of the cultural milieu appears to be in consonant with Joy Nwiyi and Monica Udoette's position that "cultural configuration dictates, to a large extent, what is conventional, moral, disdainful or otherwise among members of the community" (11). Put differently, by commencing with a section titled to fit homosexual motifs, and presenting a lesbian couple as one of the first characters, the novelist subtly advances the need for a sexual reorientation that admits more sexual identities into the

mainstream heterosexual society. Thus, Atta appears to advocate for more tolerance and acceptability of people who have the presumed *abnormal* sexual orientation in Africa.

One cannot help but notice the frequent appearance of the number seven (7) in the pagination of the novel's sections. Interestingly, seven appears three times, making it the only number to do so, apart from one (1), which only repeats due to its use in the number eleven (11). The number seven is often considered to represent completeness, and its recurring presence in the plot structure of the novel draws attention to this motif of completion, which the author unconsciously promotes. By featuring the number seven three times in the pagination of its sections, the text seems to suggest that completion can only be achieved through the inclusion of "dissident" sexual orientations in discourse.

A Bit of Difference also scores a point for its stylized use of language. Every novel is the manifestation of the protagonist's thoughts and actions. Thus, a novel often takes up a specific language, showing the protagonist's background and cultural heritage. However, *A Bit of Difference* defies this norm by cooping into its linguistic core of many languages. The novel is written in English, yet it houses characters across many cultural divides. Hence, it deploys many languages in the depiction of its essential realities. For instance, Deola Bello, is Yoruba. Therefore, when she returns home for her father's memorial service, the novel captures Yoruba culture, especially the Yoruba language and thus gives the discourse of its thematic and aesthetic coloration the native Yoruba flavor. Other Nigerian languages such as Hausa, Efik, Igbo, etc. are also reflected in the narrative at one time or the other, and this plot style depicts the diversity of 'Nigerianness' in the imagination and discourse of the story. Again, Nigerian pidgin English is also avidly used in the text to represent everyday Nigerian lifestyle and socio-cultural setting. Besides these, British, American and Nigerian 'Englishes' are also used to show marked differences between individuals, even when they all speak English. This helps create the linguistic plurality reminiscent of the author's Nigerian background in the globalized context.

The confluence of languages represented in the story is indicative of the convergence of many cultures. Culture is itself the way of life of a people. By making different ways of life converge, the author seems to emphasize the need for plurality, tolerance and mutual acceptance of cultural and human diversities. The novel seems to be saying that just as people of many languages can exist peaceably within the same text, so also people of different sexualities and identities should exist without rancor. Put more concretely, since homosexuality is considered an acceptable way of life by some people, it should be accorded the same level of acceptance and respect as heterosexuality, regardless of demographics. The display of so many languages in the novel hints at this. Many things make the novel structurally intriguing to informed readership.

There are in the same purview three principal narrative patterns in writing: the first-person narrative pattern, the second-person narrative pattern and the third-person narrative pattern. In the first-person pattern, the narrator tells the story himself, such that he is part of the events as they unfold. First-person pronouns (*I*, *my*, *myself*, *mine*, etc) are deployed for this pattern of narration. In the second-person pattern, an external entity addresses the protagonist as if the story were being told to the protagonist. This pattern is difficult to execute and is therefore very rare to find in use. Second-person pronouns (*you*, *yourself*, *yours*, etc) are used in this

narrative pattern. In the third-person narrative pattern on the other hand, the narrator assumes the role of a roving camera revealing captions as they unfold and telling things about the characters. Pronouns like *he*, *she*, *they*, *theirs*, etc are used in executing this narrative pattern, and these are what give the story its essential aesthetic flavor.

A Bit of Difference adopts the third-person narrative pattern; and like most works, it sticks religiously to this narrative pattern. However, at the beginning of the work, the second-person narrative pattern is used, and this has grave effects on the thematic core of the novel. The first line in the novel reads thus: 'The great ones capture you' (1). This sentence reads in the conventional pattern of the second-person narrative pattern, yet it is the only of its kind in the entire novel. This shows the need of the author to directly address a person. Indirectly, the author addresses all those social structures that make sexuality an asphyxiating subject. The sentence - and indeed, many sentences cast from the second person perspective - has certain accusatory qualities, which point to the fact that it condemns the ill-treatment of sexually deferring people. Using this displaced sentence, the author points out the need to constantly dialogue on the subject of sexuality. The position which this sentence occupies in the novel - it is the first sentence - makes this claim strongly relevant.

▪ **NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names***

In the literary world, No Violet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* stands out as a novel that defies conventional writing styles in several ways. The author's use of language and the structure of the narrative are just part of the elements that contribute to the book's unique aesthetic quality. However, what sets this novel apart is not just its style but also the complex and thought-provoking themes that it explores. The novel can also be read as a feminist and migrant text. As a feminist text, Monica Udoette justifies that the essence of feminism is its concern "with combating cultural stereotypes of female experience" (75).Through the eyes of the main character, Darling, the novel delves into issues of sexuality, identity, and the struggle for survival in a world that is often harsh and unforgiving; and in a sense, contests stereotypes of female experience. As such, the book is not only a work of art but also a reflection of the human experience, making it a must-read for anyone who wants to explore the complexities of life through the lens of literature.

We Need New Names in a similar vein has an interesting plot structure. Though it is written in nearly equal chapters, these chapters are not just numbered; they are given different titles as well. This situation adds beauty to the novel and also serves as an introduction to each chapter. There are eighteen chapters in all. Ten of these chapters feature the protagonist in her home country, Zimbabwe, whereas the last seven shows the protagonist in the United States. This structure is symbolic: by structuring the novel such that much of the actions take place in Zimbabwe, the author indirectly shows that much of the protagonist's life is lived in Africa and that she will, by implication, always be more African than she is American. This has great significance for the identity struggles eminent in the text. Again, the fact that the chapters on Zimbabwe preceded those on America also shows that for the average African, even though disillusionment may lead to emigration, life fundamentally still resides in the continent. Added to this is the fact that a number of the titles of the chapters have great semantic imports.

The chapter in which the children encounter sexuality through pornography is entitled 'This Film Contains Some Disturbing Images' (199). The disturbing images here no doubt refer to

homosexuality. Here, the author reveals the attitudinal reaction to homosexuality within the African context. Homosexuality is regarded as a 'disturbing' issue, to say the least. This corroborates James Okpiliya and Kufre Akpan's argument that "…in Africa, sex is not only deeply rooted in traditional ideas and values but also a sacred reality expected to be done within marriage and between opposite sex". (1). This simultaneously demonstrates the indifference and hostility towards homosexuality in Africa. And indeed, indifference and hostility are the two reactions people in Africa often have towards homosexuality.

In the same vein, the chapter in which the protagonist is taken to America is entitled 'Destroyed Michygen' (147). The protagonist goes to the city of Michigan, but in the erroneous manner of a child, she calls it Michygen, and she adds destroyed to it. The author indirectly communicates to the audience the situation of decay and destruction which the protagonist encounters in the United States. This is clearly seen in the blandness of the author's life in the United States which is heightened by the spate of racist incidents that lead to the death of a boy at school. This further resonates Kufre Akpan and Monica Udoette's position that "some migratory spaces could stifle and asphyxiates the potential of female migrants" (71). All of this goes to say that life is better in the protagonist's home country, no matter how poor and terrorized the country is. Yes, this is a society that fails in many ramifications of life and existence, what David Udoinwang and Chinenye Amonyeze describe as a society with "a strain of negativity and appalling paradoxes" (159). However, the protagonist's homeland promises good fortunes than the alien country. It is with this consciousness that the writer sharpens his creative sensibility in the work.

We Need New Names also manifests a great unconventional use of language. The novel's greatest achievement is in its stylish use of language. The story in the novel is told from the perspective of a child, Darling, and the novel's language is stepped down to reflect the way children talk, without being overly puerile or ungrammatical. Words like '*kaka* ' are adopted from the local Swahili; even though their meanings are not stated, their contextual meanings are availed to the reader through their constant use in the text. This makes the reader an active participant in the telling of the story.

Again, one notices that in the entire novel, quotation marks are not used. Conventionally, quotation marks (" ") or inverted commas are used to mark direct speeches made by characters in a novel. But in the entire novel, none is used. Yet the speeches are so well structured that the reader knows who is speaking and who is being spoken to at every point in the work. This demonstrates, perhaps, the idea that though homosexuality may not be conventional (like the author does not subscribe to the convention by not using inverted commas throughout the work), if people genuinely accept homosexuals, they may find out that they have nothing to fear from homosexuality (this is demonstrated by the coherence of conversations, despite the absence of inverted commas).

The nominal structure of the novel also has stylistic value. In a conventional novel, conventional names are used to reflect the ethno-cultural milieu of the novel. When names are deliberately coined by the author, it is usually to accentuate a fact or for purposes of symbolism. For instance, the name Kambili in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is not a common Igbo name; it is coined by the author for symbolic purposes. It means 'let me live', making it a reference to Eugene's inhumanity. This, in extension, also points at the exploitation

and oppression some women are subjected to, in some African societies. Kufre Akpan and Isonguyo Akpan aver that "…the gamut of all kinds of torture, abuse, and oppression unleashed on women by culture and tradition most often leaves them haunted and deeply traumatized" (31). Contrastively, Monica Udoette and Joy Nwiyi argue that Terry McMillan counters female exploitation, oppression and Black slave historical hegemony by selectively projecting "professionally successful black women as characters in" *Waiting to Exhale* and this "seems to be a visible trend of the 1990s where the population of working-class women increased drastically" (195).However, in *We Need New Names*, the society is still somewhat oppressive to women. One notices a plethora of uncommon names, many of them disparaging - Bastard, Mother of Bones, Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro, etc. The prevalence of such names is indicative of the situation of disgust in the novel. This disgust, of course, also manifests the attitude of Africans towards homosexuality.

In *A Bit of Difference* and *We Need New Names*, Sefi Atta and No Violet Bulawayo deploy unconventional, yet interesting, tactics in their narration. Through a unique plot structure, a unique linguistic composition, a unique narrative pattern and a unique nominal structure, Atta's *A Bit of Difference* and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* reinforce their message on the need for sexual equality and acceptance. Both writers expose primordial attitudes towards homosexuality and call for dialogue on the area as it is a crucial part of contemporary human experiences. They also call into question the taboo status accorded homosexuality and its discussion in most parts of Africa.

Conclusion

The study aimed to analyze the narrative techniques employed in the two chosen novels. It has been noted in the analysis how narrative serves a as fundamental aspect of human society, and this has been affirmed in the body of the two stories. The way and manners that the authors present their works show how narration or the novel as a literary tradition has evolved significantly just as society equally evolves. The two novels have emerged as potent tools to communicate various themes and subject matters that replicate the socio-cultural situation of postmodern society. The high point of this work is that literary critics have a responsibility to evaluate how authors articulate their stories, and how the techniques deployed by writers could be used as the direct signification of the world experienced by the author. From the textual extrapolation of the two novels, Atta's *A Bit of Difference* defies the traditional structures and organization of novels in chapters, and this should be seen as a cogent indicator of the writer's freedom which indicates also the temperament of the postmodern moment under which the creative intuition is fertilized. This narrative technique introduces a unique style which is in tandem with the subject of discourse or theme of the novel.

A shift from the traditional chapter organisation signals and foregrounds the author's social orientation or her ideology concerning the LGBT community. The disorganization of the well-known pattern of narrative structure portrays the author's questioning of normative sexuality and advocacy for the acceptance of neo-sexuality in society. In No violet Buluwayo's *We Need New Names*, the author in a similar purview uses a unique plot and characterization to discuss issues ranging from cultural orientation and identity to non-normative sexuality. The use of certain titles for chapters reflects the creative use of language to explore salient issues of public concern, especially homosexuality. Therefore, the study concludes that both authors deploy

unique techniques in their work to enable them to explore critically, what seems like the forbidden themes in African literature, and also bring to the fore peculiar artistic aesthetics in their works.

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