Swimming Against Binary Tides: The Gender Queer's Use of Religion, Family and Advocacy as Escape in Selected Narratives of Diriye Osman's *Fairytales for Lost Children*

By

Cynthia Derx Techie, Philomena Yeboah & Daniel Okyere-Darko*

Abstract

The constraints that African youth go through in their attempt to optionally pursue and declare their gender/sexual orientation and identity in their heteronormative societies is an issue that calls for critical attention. Like the protagonists in Osman's *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013), they face troubles and subsequent rejection by their family members. They must disguise themselves if they want to be religious and survive. And they must forever be at their wits end to defend themselves through advocacy in order to avoid harm or persecution. This paper examines the two-edged nature of queer people's strategies of escape through how Osman, fictionalizing his autobiography, depicts them, with his choice of characterization, plot types, motifs, symbols and language use, with tropes and elements like repetition, flashback, contrast and detailed description. Using Freud's psychoanalysis and Saunders' autobiografiction as lenses to examine and critique LGBTQ+ of a typical African society and culture and its youth in *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013), the paper reasons that a critical analysis of Osman's narratives reveal his literary output. Hence, it concludes that such optional pursuance of gender/sexual orientation expression is not only perilous, but futile. Additionally, the paper suggests that as a people, Africans need to clearly distinguish between the non-binary or queer from non-conforming gender identities and sexual orientations. The findings of the paper have implications for policy makers in aiding them to formulate policies to protect the queer youth and demonstrate our stand as a people on gender matters.

Keywords: sexual/gender orientation, Diriye Osman, fictionalized autobiography, literary output

1.0 Introduction

On account of the fact that the concept of LGBTQ is unwelcome in most African societies, non-binary people (also known as queer) who are perceived as being associated with the movement are discriminated against. 'Homosexuality is viewed not as a human rights issue but as a form of social cancer that the entire society must vigorously combat' (Gyasi-Gyamerah et al., 2019). The United Nations define intersex people as those born with physical or biological sex characteristics, such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns, which do not fit the typical definitions of male or female. It explains that these characteristics may be apparent at birth or emerge later in life, often at puberty, and that such individuals can have any sexual orientation and gender identity (UN Free & Equal, 2013). These intersex/non-binary/queer individuals, a minority group, are marginalized. Because of their disposition and their non-conforming gender and sexual orientations that fall outside the heteronormative structure, queer or non-binary people form part of the LGBTQ+ community. Sometimes, for being queer, they face discrimination. According to the UN Free & Equal campaign, people whose gender expressions do not fit into society's norms and expectations such as men perceived as 'feminine' and women perceived as 'masculine' often face harsh sanctions including physical, sexual and psychological violence and bullying. As a result, in order to protect themselves and run away from humiliation and rejection, they adopt strategies, consciously or not, to escape being judged as non-conforming and thus avoid victimization.

This paper identifies advocacy, marriage and religion as some strategies employed by the queer to prevent other people from coming at them. Incidentally, members of the society can employ the same institutions to help and rehabilitate the queer. For, if the heteronormative misunderstands the intersex in Africa, like how the 'falcon cannot hear the falconer' (Yeats, 1944), things will fall apart, and there is bound to be chaos on the continent. Of the many strategies available to writers in achieving such aims, autobiography has little been exploited. Thus, it is important to create awareness in the area through research into queer literature and through the study of fictionalised autobiography. By analysing the narratives, 'Tell the Sun not to Shine', 'Shoga', 'Pavillion' and 'Your Silence will not Protect You', from Diriye Osman's

Fairytales for Lost Children (abbreviated to *FLC* in this paper), this research aims to demonstrate the writer's reformative and therapeutic motives as well as his literary output to readers, critics and researchers. The work seeks to:

(i) critically explore Osman's literary techniques of fictionalizing his autobiography as a contemporary African Muslim Gay writer to inaugurate a form of reinterpretation and reconstitution of queer experiences that contest predominant myths and history in African literature.

(ii) demonstrate how Osman's narrative strategies and rhetoric, when examined within the postulates of autobiografiction and classical psychoanalysis, reveal the queer person's use of religion, family and advocacy as strategies to survive in an antagonistic heteronormative African society.

(iii) depict and explicate fictional diegeses, with reformative and therapeutic intents, to reveal murky sides of LGBTQ that represent Osman's scars and substantiate that the African queer youth's pursuance of sexual identity is futile and perilous.

2.0 The Problem

Queer/non-binary persons' non-conformity to known gender and sexual orientations has always been a puzzle to the binary/heterosexual world. While researchers like Duntun and C. Williams (2017) denounce LGBTQ+, support for the group is evident in such works as Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018), Chris Abani's *GraceLand* (2004), and Chinelo Opkarnta's *Under the Udala Tree* (2015). None of the sides seem to be unbeaten. Hence, there is the need for a research that enlightens both the binary and non-binary using the common institutions that both sides adopt to defend their rights to demonstrate that from these same institutions a resolution can be obtained. This paper identifies marriage, religion and advocacy as important mechanisms that serve a double-sword purpose of resolving the LGBTQ issues in Africa. It analyses the metaphor of Diriye Osman, using his identity as a gay African writer in his *FLC* to warn African youth that optionally pursuing one's sexual orientation or identity is a perilous and futile adventure. In other words, the study examines Osman's narratives as a fictionalized autobiography in order to portray Osman's metaphoric queer identity in protagonists, while revealing the fictional strategies that enable the author to warn

readers of the perils of pursuing sexual orientation and identify.

By exploring style generally and fictional techniques specifically, this research will therefore demonstrate technically how Osman in his narratives overtly reveals himself for the benefit of others. The work will hence provide solution for individuals, families and even leaders who are at their wits end in tackling and answering questions concerning their stand on queer issues. It will also serve as an eye opener to alert people of the problems and plight of the queer in Africa. Again, it will help especially the youth to take a stand concerning LGBTQ. Osman's *Fairytales for Lost Children*, as fictionalized autobiography, is acclaimed for its informative role on LGBTQ but hardly for its reformative role for the phenomenon. This work therefore comes to highlight the autobiografictional novel, *FLC*, as a reformative and therapeutic tool that worked to heal its author and hence can work to heal readers in similar predicaments.

3.0 **Methodology**

Since this research is a qualitative one, the data collection and organisation technique for the study was document analysis. A critical look at the contents of the novel showed that though the stories have seemingly different protagonists or narrators, they all culminated to tell and enact the life story of the author. This limited the choice of research design to the narrative method considering that the tenets of other qualitative designs such as ethnography, grounded theory, case study and phenomenology made demands that were in one way or the other impracticable for the research.

The choice of the narrative method is hinged on the fact that it is an interpretative method focused on understanding phenomenon in a comprehensive, holistic way. The approach weaves together a sequence of events, usually from just one or two individuals to form a cohesive story. To employ it in a qualitative research, one conducts in-depth interviews, reads documents and looks for themes and then tries to answer the question: how does an individual story illustrate the larger life influences that created it? Interviews with individuals in an identified persona can provide the details that help describe the culture whether it is a person living with multiple sclerosis, a working mother, or a gay African Muslim. When the method is employed, the final narrative, though not in chronological order, can reconcile conflicting stories and highlight tensions and challenges which can be opportunities for innovation.

Since the narrative approach can be an appropriate method for building a persona, it was applied in this study to portray the persona of Diriye Osman and or his protagonists. 'In qualitative research, and qualitative studies, the main instrument is the researcher himself or herself.' (Delamont, 2004). The researcher collects, measures and analyses data related to his subject and hence becomes the tool for the measurement. Since attempts to get personal interviews with the author proved futile, details that help describe his culture were hence obtained from articles in his blogs, namely, 'The Queering of Sleeping Beauty', 'Why We must Tell our own Stories', 'How to Weaponize Boredom', 'Resilience is King' and 'Chronicling Queer African Lives' in addition to the author's note dated August 5, 2013. Interviews he has granted, such as the one with Binyavanga Wainaina (2014), on literature and life in London, were accessed from YouTube. These served the purpose of an in-depth interview because they answered any questions concerning his life, career and writing that could possibly be probed. This option together with the narrative discourses offered the researcher and readers of this study enough sample size or detail to generalise and make recommendations based on the findings. Freud's classical psychoanalysis (2014) and Saunders' Autobiografiction theories (2009) served as theoretical framework for the analysis.

4.0 **Autobiografiction and Psychoanalytic theories**

Autobiografiction, a term coined in 1906 by the British writer, Stephen Reynolds (1881-1919) and adopted by Max Saunders to sufficiently describe the special connection between modernism and autobiography was adopted to help interpret discourses in this work. An autobiografictional novel is a novel that merges autobiographical and fictive elements. Because the autobiografictional novel is partly fiction, it has the following characteristics which Saunders has noted and which inform our analysis in this paper. In an autobiografictional novel, the author does not ask the reader to expect the text to fulfil the autobiographical pact. Names and locations are often changed and events are recreated to make them more dramatic but the story still bears a close semblance to that of the author's life. While the events of the author's life are recounted, there is no pretence of exact truth. Events may be exaggerated or altered for artistic or thematic purposes. There must be a protagonist modelled after the author and a central plot line that mirrors events in his/her life. The

emphasis is on the creation of a work that is essentially true; often in the context of an investigation into values or some other aspect of reality.

It is worth noting that Osman is one writer who, as Ellah Allfrey of *The Telegraph* describes, has moved from 'East Africa. South London. Queer. Displaced. Mentally ill. … and has the impossibility of categorisation.' Consequently, his work of art reflects all those struggles in his life. Hence, adopting Saunders' autobiografiction with Freud's economic model of the psychoanalytic theory in analysing Osman's fictionalized autobiography grants interpretation that is deep. It is a theoretical framework that permits our entering the subconscious of the protagonists to reveal the principles at war in their psyche, which inform their actions as demonstrated in his stories.

Employing the psychoanalytic theory as the theoretical framework for this research enabled the research to illuminate the deeper meaning of themes, characters, settings and language use, based on the author's own concerns and conflicts. That way, the work's aim – to use Diriye Osman's motives, emotions and experiences to interpret his fictionalised autobiography, and to reveal its inherent reformative and therapeutic potentials – would duly be realized. Freud describes the form as an 'economic model', in that, discovering an author as a unique individual amounts to a discovery that puts a burden on us to reach out to recognize that uniqueness before we can fully comprehend an author's writing. Since this work is preoccupied with examining D. Osman's lifestyle in relation to his work and as it informs his choice of style, the approach is selected among others as a better option for the research.

We therefore employ Sigmund Freud's economic model of the human psyche in psychoanalytic criticism, which we find relevant to the topic of this research because it best explains the phenomenon under study. Freud's economic model of human psyche offers a means to understand the author in order to interpret his work, but leaves room for probing into the psyche of the author for a psychological investigation and interpretation. This is why Freud's economic model of human psyche comes conveniently to support interpretation in this work. These two schools of thought (Freud's and Saunder's) combine as theoretical framework to show the fictional aspect of Osman's narratives while deeply unveiling the psychological aspirations and idiosyncrasies of their characters.

5.0 Tell the Sun not to Shine

The first story with which D. Osman depicts the escape strategies of the queer is 'Tell the Sun not to Shine'. In this story, the narrator/protagonist employs advocacy, while the antagonist escapes with religion and marriage. Advocacy is defined, for the purpose of this story, as a reason or explanation given to justify a fault or offence. It also means the practice of using action to achieve a result.

The story is the second of the collection and marks the genesis of the narrator's life as gay. He employs contrastive or comparative literary tropes which enables him to indicate that there are two sides to everything in life and hence the bad person may get away with wrong doing whilst the innocent becomes a victim. Likewise, the non-binary is excused for their wrong doings while the queer person gets punished. This he does through his choice of the tragedy narrative, red herrings technique, vernacular language use and flashback.

The anonymous narrator leaves us to ratiocinate that he is the author. He begins by telling us how boredom from loneliness in the Eid season leads him to honour an invitation which takes him into a mosque at Peckham, London. At the mosque, he seems to be attracted to the worshipers' clothes and his description of their colours appeals to our sense of sight. This, he does in order to prepare us for the contrast he wishes to achieve in the main part of the story. Emphasizing visual imagery in his description by contrasting bright, light colours with dull, dark colours, he says:

> The Asian and Somalia men wore gray and white. The Nigerian men were dressed like sapeurs shirts the colours of flamingos, shoes made from crocodile skin. (Orange green and back) The Asian and Somali women were … grey and black. The Nigerian … dresses the colour of Fanta, shoes with clear heels. (P.7).

Contrasting bright colours (white, orange, green) with dark ones (black, grey) in the introduction or early parts of the narrative is the writer's way of pointing to the effects of light against darkness, good against evil, predator against prey and victim against victor, themes which he hopes to share with readers. He then continues to draw our attention to details, especially of colours and race, which he emphasizes with repetition. This is shown in his description of the first person he meets at the mosque – the Asian kid who guided him to perform ablution. In the description, he alternates the action they take with what he perceives.

> 'Go like this', he said, washing his hands and wrists three times. I

> noticed he had bite marks on his toffee-brown wrists. I copied him.
> 'Go like this, he said, rinsing his mouth three times. I noticed his bottom lip was purple and fat like a plum. I copied him.
> …'Go', the boy said,
> 'Go like this', he said, drawing water into his nose and then blowing it out three times. I noticed his nose had a cut the colour of pastrami across the bridge. I copied him.
> 'Go like this, he said. So I went. (P.7)

With interest, we go along with him as he 'notices' the colours of the sensual parts of his guide's body during the ablution performance – brown-toffee wrists, fat purple bottom lip like a plum, nose bridge cut, the colour of pastrami. All of them are edible and tantalizing, suggesting that while the boy was preparing him for prayers, he was thinking of 'eating him'. The protector is prey. This is ironic. And in anaphoric frenzy, he repeats phrases that are identical in structure at the beginning of successive sentences, to highlight and present these lousy thoughts of his at the mosque.

The stylistic technique enables our narrator to covey, emphasize and reinforce the meaning that he actually had for the ablution. That, to him, the ablution process was meal time instead of cleansing time. Juxtaposing culinary and gustatory images with pictorialization and visual images is one of his peculiar ways of preparing us for the ironic blast to come at the climax of his narration. The effort he makes contrasting bright colours (white, orange, green) with dark ones (black, grey) in the introduction or early parts of the narrative is the narrator's way of pointing to the effects of light against darkness. This idea relates to that of good against evil, the present against the past and victim against aggressor which he hopes to share in the story. Even the atmosphere at the mosque was contrastive and suggested mystery. 'The mosque smelt of cologne and samosas' – two dissimilar scents; one, perfume the other, food. 'The carpets of the mosque felt like moss against the walls that were white'. Of course, mossy carpets and white walls contrast. All these were to prepare readers for the bombshell that was to come.

He then enters the mosque and, just when prayers begin, notices with unpleasant perturbation that the Imam leading prayers was Libaan, who was once a house boy for his family. Incidentally it was Libaan who had introduced him to smoking and homosexuality to which he has now become addicted. What an irony! As Libaan the Imam called out 'Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!' the narrator recognized his voice instantly and, thereafter, the service was a tragic drama of painful re-recollections. He presents the recollections of past activities between him and the Imam, and the present activities as they unfold in the mosque with a rhythmic combination of anaphoric and epiphoric repetitions of the phrase, 'I remembered… he …I …' thus:

> I remembered the first time we'd met…I was fourteen, he was eighteen.

> …
> I remembered him towering over me …. He introduced me to cigarettes … Now I smoke twenty a day…
> I remembered giving him my bed and sleeping on the floor … he would tell me about being a goatherd in Somalia. I told him about my school in Somalia…
> I remembered the first time I saw him naked. He was sleeping and his bed-sheet had slipped down… I leant closer… (p.8-9)

The repetition of 'I remembered….' is followed by eventful experiences in his life with Libaan, now Imam. All of the past events that he remembers were events that took him gradually away from innocence to venality. Libaan being older than him at the time should have known better than to lead him on to homosexuality and weed smoking. Osman employs the literary device of stream of consciousness to reveal the narrator's memories, against what he thinks and feels presently. A greater part of the action of this story takes place in the protagonist's mind, as descriptions of the narrator's reaction to internal and external impressions and memories.

In order to make readers feel the frustration he feels about the situations, occurrences and experiences in this story, Osman adopts a flashback narrative technique in the plot. By this the narrator takes the story back in time, and the events go back and forth between the past and the present. Again, he alternates the bad activities of the ungodly past experiences with present godly happenings. He describes Libaan the Imam as wearing an 'egg-white Khamiis and skullcap standing in front of the congregation' but he (narrator) could remember or rather sees only his dark skin as he towered over him in their Nairobi home back then. As the loudspeaker cracked with the Iman's recitation of Surah Al-fatiha, Osman only hears Libaan's baritone voice that was still as smooth as water; 'a voice sweeping and diving like a kite around the Arabic syllables'. And as Libaan recited Surah Lahab after Al-Fatiha, he hears him say 'You'll get there kid' as he (Osman) had choked on cigarette smoke when Libaan introduced him to them. When Imam says Allahu Akbar! and bows, narrator remembers and sees when he sat next to him on the bed and squeezed his buttocks gently. Osman is thinking of when Libaan had told him, 'Let's not mention this', at the time that he was afraid that Libaan would tell his parents the homosexual act that had happened between them.

And so when near the end of service, Libaan, now Imam, says 'Allah hears those who praise Him,' Osman remembers how he could not look him in the eye the day after they had sex, and responds in a low tone, 'Praise be to you our Lord' with a face that was heated up. When Imam booms Allahu Akbar! and the whole congregation prostrate, Osman remembers that night when Libaan had lowered himself onto his mattress, slid his hand under the blanket, gripped his penis, and stroked him until his thighs were

moist and his throat dry. He had gone to sleep satisfied and scared and hopeful. These recollections in the flashback technique help the author to explain his relationship with the Imam to readers, while demonstrating the deceptive nature of homosexuality.

Ironically, Libaan became a priest after he had introduced the then innocent boy into homosexually. What makes the issue distressing and disquieting was the realization now that Libaan's actions at training him to be a homosexual were deliberate. This fact can be deduced from these lines: 'Every time he did this, he smiled a gold-toothed smile that said, "Nothing happened". He was trying to dodge a life of complications. But at night he would place his hands, lips, tongue inside my world of complications.' (p. 8).

It was indeed a life of complications for the fourteen year old Osman because at that stage he was only grappling with the problem of his classmates calling him refugee and had confided in Libaan expecting him to help in solving his problem. Again it hurts because Osman has become a victim for life after this experience. And Libaan the bad boy, of all professions or roles in the world, becomes an imam, a chief priest of a homosexual-intolerant sect who leads a congregation of high standing prominence as that of Peckham Mosque, London.

Therein lies the irony that the author has all along been preparing us for with his heap of contrasts. The contrasts he drew in the colours of male and female members of the congregation at the mosque, the detailed description and contrast drawn between the mosque guide's activities and that of the narrator's imaginations, and the flashback to characterize both protagonist and antagonist were all geared towards the shock that the realization of this irony brings. It is ironic that in life, the bad person or aggressor can go scot free while the victim rather suffers. The irony is that the person who introduced the narrator to homosexuality and drug abuse and who was expected to be an expert had rather turned out the very opposite of our expectations – a married priest with a child! The narrator is struck with shock and melancholy. And out of desolation, he bemoans:

> I felt an urge to speak to Libaan.
> I wanted to tell him that I once date an Irishman named Simon.
> I wanted to tell him that I saw his face whenever I made love to Simon.
> I wanted to tell him that my parents disowned me when I came out to them.
> I wanted to vomit these words out. (p.10-11**)**

The incident is a freak of an irony and our author chooses another set of anaphoric repetition different from the others already employed to unleash the pain of the narrator. The sentences in succession here are piled up; they follow each other without a break for explanation. The effect is that, they overwhelm the reader just like the speaker. The irony in the incident is exclusive because it is three packed – it is made up of situational, dramatic and verbal

ironies. It is situational irony since readers learn at the same time as the narrator that the imam in egg-shell white khamiis and skullcap is Libaan the homosexual houseboy. Its dramatic irony begins when the man that the narrator crouches next to in the mosque says, 'I hope you find peace', to which he replies, 'I hope so too'. Little did he know that peace was what he would not find but, rather, will find its opposite. The assertion also passes for verbal irony. But the verbal irony is demonstrated more as the imam prays at the end of the mosque service and says: 'May Allah bless you and your family on this joyous day. May you find peace and comfort.' (p.10***).*** The imam's prayer exhibits dramatic irony because as he prays for peace for all the worshipers, he does not know that his prayers and even his presence has been a living hell for one of his members. The imam's prayer is exactly the opposite of what Osman, our narrator, had been ushered into upon coming into contact with Libaan the Imam after many dormant years.

The narrator has not been blessed with a family as the prayer suggested, the day has been a very sad and tragic one, and peace, comfort and a sense of fulfilment are the exact opposite of what he has found. No wonder Osman employs all those contrastive literary elements to prepare readers for this tragic moment in a tragic irony. As a bombshell, it achieved its effect of devastating the characters concerned and extending the vicarious empathy to readers. Readers cannot help but commiserate with the narrator, who is a victim of circumstance. The effect of the traumatic revelation is invoked by the anaphora employed in relating his feelings.

The phrase, 'I wanted to tell him' is repeated in three consecutive anaphoric sentences to show emphasis of the urge he felt to get the pain he was feeling off his chest to the imam. To show him the fruit of the seed he had planted in him and left unattended for years. Finally, at the end of the anaphora is an eventuation – a metaphoric sentence that breaks off from the anaphora to end it: 'I wanted to vomit these words out'**.** This sentence begins with 'I wanted to…' just like the other sentences preceding it and hence gives the impression initially that the sequence continues. But the ending of this sentence is made different from the others to briefly give the reader a break. A break from the ride of wave of tensions: the mystery, suspense and conflict between protagonist and villain. The tension at this point has reached its peak, fuelled by the anaphora. Readers have their hearts in their mouths. The denouement, hence, comes to relax the reader a little. It is as though we have been holding our breath for the whole story and the denouement is our last chance to exhale. It's a metaphor that compares action to throwing up all the pent up frustration and pains. The break is not definite though. Readers still want to know what happened finally after the short break of 'vomiting'.

Osman's timely use of suspense in this narrative is remarkable. His success with the technique is dependent on his apt

use of red herrings technique. When he went on about the leaflet in his mailbox that invited him to the mosque on Eid day, we were made to think the story was going to be about Eid celebration but it was only a red herring. Then he raised our curiosity by talking colourfully and expansively about the Nigerians and Asians and Somali men and women again making us think the story was going to be about them. But no. He then recounts the steps that the 'Asian Kid' takes him through at the ablution area and how he felt about each step yet the story was not about him either. He goes on and on in the rest of the paragraphs that follow about how he knew the priest who was leading the service. Yet it was only at the last paragraph of the narrative that the issue he set out to address is laid bare.

The red herrings technique help prolong the mystery and suspense at the heart of this story. Like any plot twist, they keep the reader's attention by surprising them without ultimately revealing the secrets of the plot. Our initial response to each red herring is "Wow, I totally fell for it!" Because we as readers fall for the red herrings, we become more inclined to mistrust our own instincts, and so find it harder to make up our minds about what's truly going on in the story. Osman has very effectively used this for creating and sustaining tension which he required for a sustainable climax and resolution for the narrative. Employing red herrings as a literary technique in this narrative effectively leads or even lures readers gradually until they get to the crux of the matter; what upset our narrator so much as to break his defences and make him run.

The crux of the issue lies in the ending of the narrative (last paragraph) where the plot is at its falling action. A woman and a young boy walk up to Libaan, the imam; he hugs the woman and lifts the boy unto his shoulder, indicating that Libaan is now not just a high priest, but a family man as well. Only then does Libaan notice Osman, in the congregation, who has been watching him and wanting to talk to him. Libaan virtually begs Osman not to break the news that he has been his coach at homosexuality and weed smoking. He tried to smile a gold-toothed smile that said many things: 'not here, not now'; 'I'm sorry'; 'I'm scared'. (p. 11**)**

The contrasts between bright, light colours and dull, dark ones, of races of Nigerian, Somali and Asian men and women, or the meaning attached to religious activities all make sense now. Like the Imam, a bright, prominent person, ideology, or entity may have a dark side that may be hidden by the bright side. Queer people may have their gender identities and sexual orientations hidden by their professions, marriage, relations and or positions in society. And the psychic war between the conscious and unconscious of these queer people and their relations wages on to affect their personalities. The resolution of 'Tell the Sun not to Shine' is made up of a one sentence paragraph: I ran. (p.11).

Running is all Osman does. And that is all that most LGBTQ

victims do when they are not courageous enough to hide behind such social institutions as religion and marriage. For now, their main modes of escape are the social institutions and they can save their lives by hiding behind them.

One striking fact of this story is the time and effort that Osman devotes to the mosque scene. Obviously, he does that to draw our attention psychological implications the mosque and its experience has on the consciousness of the protagonist. In psychoanalytic considerations, we can say that the whole experience at the mosque serves as a free association therapy for Osman. This therapy, according to McLeod (2017), is a simple technology of psychoanalytic therapy in which the patient is made to associate with, or experience a number of words or scenarios and as the patient's memory identifies with issues in his subconscious, he/she immediately responds to them. With that, it is hoped that fragments of repressed memories will emerge in the course of free association.

Freud, the originator of the therapy, had reported that his free association patients occasionally experienced such an emotionally intense and vivid memory that they almost relived the experience. Such stressful memory that feels like it is happening again is called an abreaction. If such stressful memory occurred in a therapy and one felt better, relieved or cleansed later, it would be called catharsis. Unfortunately, Osman ran before the healing could take place – before he could break down and weep out his woes to be healed. Nevertheless, since this work is reformatory oriented, the experience shared by the narrator can be a lesson for readers who may be in similar situations but who might continue the process to experience a catharsis and be healed.

Psychological therapies such as this rather than conversion therapies could be encouraged for the queer. The term 'Conversion Therapy' refers to any form of treatment or psychotherapy which aims to change a person's sexual orientation or suppress a person's gender identity. It can range from electric shock treatment to religious teachings or talking therapies designed to change someone's sexuality. The practice is already outlawed in Switzerland and areas of Australia, Canada and the US. Since 2018, two UK prime ministers have promised to ban Conversion Therapy but campaigners are still waiting for action.

On 16th December 2020, Harry Farley reported on BBC News that more than 370 Religious Leaders from around the world are calling for a ban on Conversion Therapy – the attempt to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The signatories to the declaration represent all the world's Major Faiths and many are known LGBT advocates. They include South African cleric Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Chief Rabbi of Ireland David Resen. The Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, Paul Bayes, and Mary McAleese, the former president of Ireland, are also among those who have called for a declaration for a ban to be launched at

a conference sponsored by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The declaration calls for 'all attempts to change, suppress or erase a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression community known as "conversion therapy" to end, and for these harmful practices to be banned'.

However, many conservation religious groups across different faiths say that a ban could infringe on religious freedom. They are concerned that a ban would mean the government regulating what faith leaders can and cannot teach. Peter Lynas, UK Director of the Evangelical Alliance which represents 3,000 churches in the UK told the BBC a ban could risk 'criminalising counsellors, pastors and even those asked to pray with people'. Other Religious figures said a ban could risk criminalising pastors. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has reported a promise to ban Conversion Therapy, saying that the practice was 'absolutely abhorrent' and has no place in the country.

One of the potential hold ups according to the BBC reporter concerns the definition of the term 'Conversion Therapy' and how it relates to all LGBT people. A 2018 Survey of 108,000 mentors of the LGBT Community in the UK suggested 2% have undergone the practice, with another 5% having offered it. While government figures have shown that trans-people undergo conversion therapy at the highest rate of any LGBT group, some campaigners fear that any government changes could exclude conversion therapy based on gender identity and only focus on sexuality. Others fear the changes will go too far.

All the same, per the tenets of autobiografiction which this work adopts, the emphasis is on the creation of a work that is essentially true often in the context of an investigation into values or some other aspect of reality. To that end, our narrator/ protagonist/author, like a real person, is growing. Which means that he will have another opportunity in his life as the investigation continues, in another occasion, to undergo this catharsis therapy in which he may be healed. That being so, the war between his unconscious and the conscious is on-going at this stage of his life and is in line with Freud's model of the human psyche. Till the unconscious reigns supreme in this psychic war for a reflection of it in the conscious, our analysis continues.

6.0 Shoga

Osman continues to demonstrate the war between the conscious and unconscious in 'Shoga' as well. In this narrative, unlike the previous analysed, the queer person escapes the complexities of life as gay not by running, but with advocacy. He gives reasons or explanations to justify his non-conformities or offences. Osman employs dialogues, flashback, alienation and detailed description to portray this attribute of the queer in Africa.

The narrator lives with Ayeeyo, his grandmother in

Nairobi, Kenya, after policemen had shot his parents and dumped their bodies in the Athi River. Ayeeyo makes frantic efforts to give good upbringing and care to her grandson because he is all she has. She is fond of him and ensures he behaves well. Yet the boy is also fond of being a 'lady-boy'. His old grandmother operates a small import-export business with part of the life insurance money that she inherited and uses the rest to educate her grandson. As the years pass, she realizes she could hardly bend over to clean and cook. She needs help around the house and she wants someone strong enough to carry water, clean, cook and also protect them from burglars. A woman could not fit the role; consequently, Boniface, a refugee from Burundi, is brought in to serve the purpose. Meanwhile, unknown to Ayeeyo and contrary to her norms and that of their society, Osman, her grandson, is homosexual. He says: 'My grandmother did not know that I was gay. I've always loved being gay. Sure, Kenya was not exactly queer nation but my sexuality gave me joy.' (p. 33).

This discrepancy in gender perception between the narrator and the grandmother and other characters forms the conflict on which the action of the narrative is hinged. And this paper illustrates the literary techniques employed by the author to portray how the protagonist uses advocacy as escape from the complexities of LGBTQ+. First, the dialogues. The dialogues between the narrator and his grandmother at the exposition and at the rising action stages of the plot reveal his strategy. Later, Ayeeyo finds out about her grandson's gay activities with Boniface, the houseboy and confronts him after sacking the houseboy. He still talks his way through. And this can be worked out in these lines:

> 'The man was a thief!' says grandmother.
> 'What did he steal?'
> 'Something that can't be replaced.'
> 'Like what?'
> 'Does it matter? The fact is the man is a thief and I don't tolerate thieves in my house. Or drug addicts for that matter.'
> 'Boniface is not a drug addict! What the hell are you talking about?'
> 'Then why were the two of you smoking weed in his room last night? And the night before?'
> 'We weren't smoking! We were just listening to music.'
> 'I can forgive a little marijuana but the two of you were doing something else in that room. Something that makes me want to retch!'
> 'Tell me, Ayeeyo, what were we doing in the room?'
> 'I will not let a fanys kazi corrupt you. You will not become a…a –'
> "Go on, Ayeeyo, you can say it. I will not become a khaniis? A shoga? A faggot? Well, tough luck! My ass is a khaniis. I am a shoga. I am a faggot." (p.40-41)

Even without the introductory phrases or sentences, the dialogue between these two engages us as readers and infuses the story with drama. We can capture much information that is more meaningful since it is coming from the characters themselves. Through characterization and plot development, this dialogue is

ultimately a source of critical information in helping readers understand the story. Because the characters each have a distinctive voice, the dialogue introduces them to us in ways that show their most important attributes. Since it is the teenager who has been caught in a wrong act, we expect him to be apologetic. However, it is in the older grandmother's speech rather that we find short, clipped speech and slang during the interaction whilst the angry teenager rather asks her questions as though she is the offender. That shows how defensive the queer person can be with speech.

The dialogue gives us subtle hints about the characters' personalities, backgrounds and interests that continue to develop throughout the story. We know from the dialogue that the grandmother is deeply pained by her grandson's behaviour; to say the grandmother is disgusted by homosexuality is an understatement. Osman's behaviour of defending his homosexual acts and his subjecting the grandmother to psychological torture has psychological implications that can best be explained with psychoanalytic concepts. The psychoanalytic explanation that can be given is that the young man's subconscious fears of being found out by the grandmother have been outed into the conscious. Thus, he feels threatened and so is unconsciously applying a defence process of displacement and projection. In other words, he 'takes it out' on the grandmother who is less threatening than the one who caused his frustration and anger and hurt. He also tries to ascribe the problem and guilty desire to the poor grandmother and not even the boy, his accomplice, and then condemns her for it, in order to deny that he has the guilt himself.

The dialogue is also critical to the plot's advancement since the conversations between the two characters provide critical moments of conflict or turning point. What they talk about affect the decisions they make later on. It therefore increases the tension between grandmother and grandson, creating suspense about the story's possible outcomes. The two never get on well after the dialogue. Osman admits this fact as he says, 'My relationship with my grandmother was never the same again. She stopped speaking to me altogether and we became two strangers bound by blood and bad history'. (p.41)

Hence, the dialogue becomes also a tool of foreshadowing – the presentation of details that look forward to future events in the story. And the foreshadowing in the dialogue gives readers subtle hints about the characters and events while it paves the way for future action of this gay young man's escape strategies.

Apart from the dialogue, the author employs flashback and alienation effectively to portray how our protagonist hides behind his advocacy as a gay. This, he does, right after the exposition when he is just done introducing his setting, main characters and even the conflict to readers. At the time that he has given readers the reasons for loving to be gay, he suddenly breaks to take readers

back to his childhood with its awful experiences. In that event, he, in an authorial intrusion, addresses readers directly as he plunges into his history thus: 'But I've missed a beat, my bambinos. A narrative without a back-story is like meat with no bone; there is no juice to it. So let me take two steps back'. (p.34)

Addressing his audience directly in an authorial intrusion – an interesting literary device wherein the author penning the story steps away from the text and speaks out to the reader – Osman establishes a one to one relationship between himself and the reader where the latter is no longer a secondary player or an indirect audience to the progress of the story but is the main subject of the author's attention. Employing this device helps him to achieve his bid of exemplifying the art of escaping the complexities of LGBTQ through advocacy.

Consequently, he takes us back in time to tell us about the experiences of his childhood. He tells us how his family fled from the war in Somalia to Kenya and about how he witnessed the brutal killing of both parents by the police. According to him, the family were driving home from Tritoria restaurant one night when they got stopped by the police. They shot three times into the head to kill his father when he refused to get out of the car. And shot at his pregnant mother's tummy to kill her for screaming. They found the bodies floating in the river the next day. With this flashback, he attempts to justify his inclination to his sexual orientation as gay. He even offers an explanation in an authorial mediation to rationalise the possibility of those traumatic experiences, being the cause of his gender orientation. He says**,** 'it was years later that I learnt the precise term for what my family and millions of other Somalis had experienced during the war: post-traumatic stress'. (p. 34).

By this argument, he suggests to readers that like him, the African youth that undergoes traumatic stress could easily, for want of love and attention or care slip into homosexuality. The flashback, hence, serves the purpose as a literary strategy that portrays the ability of a gay or queer person to use advocacy for escape from post-traumatic stress effects.

Finally, Osman employs detailed description to talk his way out of the danger of being blacklisted for being gay. His description of how his parents died above is a typical example.

Pavilion

In this story, a comedy, the protagonist, Cat Power, uses advocacy and law as escape from his LGBTQ related issues, particularly of cross-dressing, discrimination and homophobia at the work place. Osman demonstrates how the protagonist/narrator gives reasons and explanations to justify his queer condition in order to defend him. Through his choice and exploitation of characterization, language use and plot type, Osman shows how the queer can use advocacy to escape adverse conditions, especially at their work

places. First, characterization. According to Gioia and Gwynn (2006), 'modern writers have tended to see characterization as an element of fiction that is equal to plot or even more important than it'. Osman has carefully portrayed his characters, primary and secondary alike, to develop the story as well as justify himself in order for readers to sympathize with the queer. He employs both direct characterization and indirect characterization and these enable him to develop the characters' personalities in the limited space and time of a short story.

With the direct characterisation, he develops the main characters through different methods of characterization, description, action and reaction. Through the voice of the narrator, he reveals aspects of himself that identify with the protagonist to us. By virtue of direct characterisation, Osman creates a narrator/ central character, Cat Power, a transvestite nurse whose co-workers harass and which motivates him to take action or react to the maltreatment being meted out to him in order to achieve the purpose of showcasing defensive strategies of the queer. With such a character, he tries to appeal to readers to sympathise with the queer.

Nurse Cat Power is the narrator of the story and, thus, carries the meaning of the story. He is a character who has encountered several odds and places and has met a lot of people. This fact about him can be deduced from how he introduces himself to readers. He says**,** "I have been called **queen** and country**."** This short self-introduction suggests that when he is in some places, he is thought of as and, subsequently, addressed "queen." Such an honourable title as "queen," much probably comes from people who sympathise with his queer gender orientation. On the other hand, people who want to be sarcastic about his being a tranny may ironically call him "queen" to tease him. At some other quarters too, he is considered country and addressed as such. In other words, Power Cat is a thick-skinned character who has survived ridicule and which is why he can stand all names called him. Such a character is poised for 'mission advocacy for defence', and is aptly represented in the story. Osman builds the story around Cat in such a way that he is able, not just to change perceptions and experience epiphanies, but to take action. This is seen in the action he takes when Riley, the antihero in the narrative who keeps harassing him and overstepping his liberties, fondles Nurse Cat till he eventually fights back. He recounts:

> I was preparing breakfast for the patients one morning when Riley snuck into the kitchen and grabbed my ass. I turned and faced him. He flicked his tongue. 'Wanna fuck me?' he said. I laughed, I don't fuck devil-spawn."… When I started serving breakfast, Riley entered the dining hall, bubbling with spite. "Fuck you, Gaylord! He shouted. I ignored him and handed out toast. Didn't you hear me, you fucking fag? You are the one who belongs in here. Not us! You look like a crazy bitch! At first it was all talk. But with each passing moment, he

> took more liberties. "I didn't file a complaint when he put his hands in between my thighs. In fact I let him cop a feel. His tobacco stained fingers ruffled up my skirt. But I let him enjoy. I let him caress me like we were badly drawn lovers in a weird, psychosexual edition of Mills & Boon. I didn't cringe when I caught his whiff. I didn't curl up and die when he started touching himself. I let him. And when he was done smacking his salami, I smirked (as you do). He enjoyed a free-for-all piss-take, which pissed me off. As he enjoyed my chicken cutlet boobs, I began to calibrate my retaliation. Homeboy had to be put in check. The idea hit me while I was on night- duty. (p. 62).

The episode above shows readers the manner of living of a transvestite in order to help readers understand their way of life. Nurse Cat is in skirt, has make-up on, padded his breasts and probably in high heels. Yet, that does not prevent him from executing his duties as a psychiatric nurse at work. Cat is diligent at his duty as a psychiatric nurse. Even with the disturbances from the patients, he continues to do his work and ignores the bullying and insulting remarks from them. This scene also goes to support that transvestites are not baits or homosexuals as people generally assume. Encyclopaedia Britannica states emphatically that 'transvestism often was mistakenly associated with homosexuality'. It adds that most transvestites, in fact, are 'men who comfortably fill male roles in society and are satisfied with their biological sex'.

However, when some men see a man dressed in women's clothing with make-up and looking all feminine, they assume that they are homosexuals who cross-dress to attract other males. And so, like Riley, such men make moves at transvestites, resulting in embarrassment, frustration and humiliation. The scene above circumstantiates that a transvestite is not a homosexual and does not cross-dress to attract males or females. According to Nimbi, Ciocca, Limoncin et al. (2020), 'LG people show a variety of sexual expressions that are hard to categorise referring to the heteronormative sexual standards that permeate literature and clinical practice'.

In fact, Cat is angered by another man touching him. He makes us aware of this with the description he gives in the passage. Saying 'I didn't curl up and die when he started touching himself' may confuse the reader since we know Riley couldn't be touching himself and offending Cat. What it means is that Cat has no feelings whatsoever as Riley touched him. So it was just as though Riley was touching himself as he caressed him (Cat). He indicates that he could endure the insults, bullying and even the pinching and touching for the sake of duty. But to be sexually assaulted was a hit below the belt and so he gets enraged. With that, he says: 'he enjoyed a free-for-all piss-take, which pissed me off. As he enjoyed my chicken cutlet boobs, I began to calibrate my retaliation. Home boy had to be put in check.' (p. 62).

Being a round character, Cat the protagonist has the possibility of expressing emotions, is motivated to achieve a purpose and so

reacts and acts to achieve it. He endures the disrespect from Riley who is an inmate of the mental hospital where he works, but then, makes a decision to discipline not only Riley, but the entire group of workers that will make them stop harassing him. He says: 'The idea hit me while I was on night duty. Riley refused to take pills from "a sket queer" and I figured it was time to correct him.' Whereupon he waits till all others went to bed and, in the night, sneaks into Riley's room with a syringe filled with water. He then sticks the needle against Riley's neck and, shoving him awake, orders him not to make a sound. The frightened Riley complies. He then tells him that the syringe contains a poisonous chemical called Pavulun and that just a prick of it would kill him in three seconds. Cat goes on to warn him that he will be forced to kill him with a slow painful death if he continues to harass him. The petrified Riley hyperventilates and agrees to be of good behaviour. He even cleans his room when Cat requests him to do so. Action as a literary technique is realised in the narrative in this scenario and also in the interactions between Cat and madam Zippy.

Cat's response to madam Zipporah is another episode of advocacy worth noting. This happens when Cat comes to work in his usual cross dressing – wearing stockings, weave, acrylic nails and walking around with an 'ostentatious spirit'. That morning, Miss Zippy, in an effort to disgrace Nurse Cat asks him loudly, while smiling and to the hearing of the others, if his lipstick was not too much. She asks that on purpose, hoping the poor man bows his head in shame. But Cat takes control and retorts quickly to turn the situation around. He replies that 'you can't have too much of a good thing'. To this, Miss Zippy, bent on embarrassing him replies, 'I think you can', and this, by then, has attracted the attention of other workers. Cat then reaches for his lip gloss, smeared some more on his lipstick-coated lips and struts down the corridor as he does so, amidst catcalls from the co-workers. And then he calls out to Miss Zippy and says, 'See? You can never have too much of a good thing.' Miss Zipporah's smile freezes. With his actions, Cat has demonstrated that when pushed to the wall, the queer can escape disgrace and/or humiliation from the homophobia by being defiant.

However, our protagonist in this story is tragically flawed or has imperfections of character. As readers, we wonder why a man should put on skirts, stockings, high-heels, lip-stick, lip gloss, weave and acrylic nails. We could turn a blind eye to some ladies' trousers, shirt, shoes, thin voice etc. but it appears Cat takes his transvestite gender orientation too seriously. And that is what brings about all the hate, ridicule, bullying and harassment from the others. However, this flaw makes him convincing as a character, especially because the narrative is a fictionalized autobiography. It is only a make-believe character that is stereotyped and does everything perfectly with no faults. And this is one way Osman tries to endear this queer character to readers.

Through this character's character, Osman advocates for the queer because readers can identify with him as a normal human being with shortcomings, just like anyone else.

Miss Zipporah, another primary character through whom the defence strategies of the queer are exhibited via direct characterisation, is the head of the department who 'rules the roost'. She, on the other hand, is a thorn in the narrator's flesh. She is a 'dashiki-wearing earth-woman with soft hands but soulless eyes and a babyish voice'. She is always in opposition to Cat, the protagonist, and is actively hostile to him although we have been made to believe Cat is not necessarily a bad person. She is the antagonist that the narrator uses to build the conflict of the story. Her hostility towards Cat and his ways is spelt out by the narrator thus: 'she didn't like me. She disliked the idea of a man wearing stockings to work. She disliked my weave, acrylic nails and ostentatious spirit'**.** (p. 60)**.** That is the narrator's nice way of informing us that Miss Zipporah dislikes Cat because of his transvestite sexual identification; this suggests that she may be homophobic. To limn Zipporah's character for his readers to appreciate and be convinced of her bad behaviour, Osman directly tells us that she is 'the ruler of the roost' (p. 59), 'a dreadlocked sadist' (p. 60), a carer/drug dealer (p.61).

She is said to be an earth woman who has soft hands and a babyish voice. These soft characteristics of hers which make her appear angelic are in oxymoron fashion sharply contrasted with harsh ones such as 'soulless eyes'. In the end she turns out to be a devil in disguise. Her name is biblical and denotes the wife of Moses, the holy Prophet of God who was said to have interceded for her husband when God wanted to kill him. (Exodus 4:20-26) Yet, in this narrative, this Zipporah discriminated amongst patients by calling those who obeyed her 'my little ponies' and those she didn't approve of 'my little Piggies'.

> 'Little ponies' were treated to extra servings of slop, cigarettes and sedatives while 'little piggies' were manhandled in the corridors, stripped and injected in the ass by Zipporah's goon squad. And after the 'little piggys' have been drugged and left lying on the floor, Zipporah would pat their heads, while smiling, and say, 'Rest well'.

Her hospital is similarly described as a heaven with a code of ethics dabbed 'Five Steps to Paradise' – Virtue, Discipline, Patience, Temperance, Reverence. These ethics are akin to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22 of the Bible – which are: love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, and faith. Yet, this hospital, paradoxically, is described also as a place where not only patients, but workers, especially the queer, are harassed. In the words of the narrator, 'those who tripped on the way to Heaven landed on the "naughty step". For staff, naughty steps meant less hours, fewer holidays, night shifts, harsh reviews. Obedience was the trait Zipporah adored most in others.' (p. 60).

Yet she did not obey any of the rules that she herself has made. So through Osman's characterisation of her, we get to know that she is disobedient and disrespectful. She is also hard hearted and spiteful. This aspect of her character is indirectly done because we are led to deduce those personalities of her through what the narrator tells us, but he does not mention them in words to us. We can fold up on Miss Zipporah's characterization by saying that Osman employs both direct and indirect means to portray Zipporah as the antagonist in the story. This role makes it possible for Osman to show how some heads of departments and superiors at work places mistreat the queer, pushing them to the wall, in such a way that they have no choice but to fight back with one means they have: advocacy.

Riley, an 18-year old inmate of the clink, who doubles as Zipporah's lapdog, is the antihero in the narrative. His ability of acting and, reacting, expressing emotions and being motivated to achieve a purpose or goal makes him a round character. Osman explores in depth the background, personality, motives, actions of this character. That is why he necessarily tells us his history. Utilizing direct characterization, he informs us that,

> Riley had a history of violence. He enjoyed dancing with snow white, which muddled his head. He started mistaking his mother for the Royal Mint and tiefed from her ass like she was bricking blocks of gold. When she called the cops he grabbed a knife and sliced her salami-pink face. The police busted him. But the devil danced in his eyes. He pleaded insanity and landed here, where Zipporah served as the perfect carer/drug-dealer, plying him with all the Xanax, Ativan and Valium he could need…. Naturally, he had to earn his 'keep'. If an obstinate patient refused to leave their room, Riley was sent to harass them out. (p. 60-61).

He is also initially antagonistic towards Nurse Cat since he has ideals contrary to that of Cat. Being of a straight gender identity, he disapproved of Cat as nurse because of his transvestite gender identity. He goes through mental conflicts within himself and this fatal flaw impacts the decisions he makes. Because of his psychological problem, he needed drugs to soothe him. Zipporah was all forthcoming with his needs. He therefore teams up with her to get some rewards. To him, he was doing the right thing for personal reasons rather than for the greater good. Had Cat not come up with a plan to scare them away, the harassment would have continued unabated. The lesson that Cat teaches him and the others pay off. It convinces him that if a person is queer it does not mean they are dimwits.

Many months after he had been discharged from the hospital and was leading a well-balanced life, 'smelling good with a healthy glow in his cheeks', he meets Cat again in the street. 'Cat realizes he was trying to light his cigarette and holds out a lighted lighter for him. He thanks Cat, who replies with a smile, "mon plaisir".' Hence, ultimately, he comes to appreciate the ways, goals

and desires of the hero. He is the character that elicits sympathy from readers because they can connect with him on a more personal level since his tragic flaws resembles flaws that most readers may have from time to time in real life. He is hence an antihero in the narrative and his role helps to illustrate how some people harass the queer just to follow blindly what opinion leaders say but not because they themselves have anything against the queer.

Riley and Zipporah made good companions like the narrator describes them: 'they made for a surprisingly compatible duo. He was a rough skinhead from Stoke-on-Trente; she was a dreadlocked sadist who loved sycophants. He slobbered, she lengthened her leash' (p. 62). Osman pitches the duo against Cat to show how sometimes those who rise up against a queer person can be made of a team or group. The queer person can still, through the use of advocacy, stand up to them.

In applying indirect characterization, he reveals the personality of the secondary characters as well to readers, telling what their thoughts, feeling, and actions are by describing their appearance, actions, reactions and behaviours. The other nurses, namely, Blessing, Providence, Corinthians 13, and The Holy Bible, Dr Feldman, the chief-of-staff, and Riley's mother are all secondary characters who are part of the story, but not central to it. They are flat characters who follow and ensure they execute reverently Miss Zippy's orders in order to please her and maintain their jobs in the clinic. They are stand-ins for ideas and don't experience emotion, don't react, or take action. The only action of these other nurses is their making cat calls at the protagonist. Yet, Osman peopled the narrative with them to develop the story and does not spend a great deal of time describing them in the story. Though they chose Christian names to show how devoted they are to the Christian principles and creed of Zipporah and her hospital, they are very quiet about the injustice that goes on in there. That scene gives us the contemptuous impressions and feelings that the rest of the workers had for nurse Cat just because he was a tranny.

In a way, Osman creates these secondary characters in order to expose and criticize, though subtly, the hypocrisy of some self-acclaimed Christians who criticize LGBTQ as sinful and, yet, look on when wrong things are being perpetrated to their fellow humans. The irony in that paradox requires little explanation.

Language use is another technique that Osman employs to illustrate queer people's defence strategies. He manages the popular pronoun and titles of his queer protagonists so well that one can hardly realize the usual problem associated with talking about being queer or non-binary or gender nonconforming in English, a grammatically gendered language. This feat is commendable because as Miriam Berger, a staff writer reporting on foreign news for *The Washington Post*, asks, 'What pronoun do you use to identify yourself? He? She? They? Something

altogether different? It's a question asked increasingly often as acceptance of a spectrum of gender and sexual identities grows.'

Some languages, like Chinese, Persian, and Akan don't assign nouns a gender or already have a gender-neutral form for people built in. But in languages whose grammar is traditionally based on exclusively male or female options, the answer to this question can still require an explanation. And it can be dangerous; in the United States, hate crimes against the LGBTQ community have been rising the last three years, according to the FBI (USA Today, 2019). The paper goes ahead to look at some possible answers for English: 'They' as singular and gender-neutral English grammar doesn't distinguish between genders except in assigning a masculine or feminine singular pronoun. In 2019, the Merriam-Webster dictionary added 'they' as the pronoun to use for a 'single person whose gender identity is non-binary' (Merriam-Webster, 2019). Two years earlier, in 2017, 'they' as a gender-neutral form was added to the *Associated Press Stylebook* (Washington Post, 2017), the gold standard of sorts for journalists. The *Washington Post* itself made the style guide change in 2015 (Poynter, 2015). Critics of the change have argued that 'they' as both singular and plural can be confusing and muddy a sentence's syntax. Shakespeare and Jane Austen, among many other famed English writers, didn't think so. They used singular 'they' and 'their', as was the standard in English until Victorian-era grammarians shifted course and imposed 'he' above all (NPR, 2016).

Lera Boroditsky, a professor of Cognitive Science at UCSD, is quoted as saying, 'Even what might be deemed frivolous aspects of language can have far-reaching subconscious effects on how we see the world' (Ranka, 2021). In some languages, where all objects are classified as masculine or feminine, she has found that this classification actually impacts how people perceive the object.

Osman does not really subscribe to any of these gender precepts, yet he makes his case. Rather, dialogues, slang and organized discussions are accountable for this. The dialogues in the narrative are deliberately placed to expose the types of speeches and language that push the queer person to their farthest inconvenience. The dialogue between Riley and Nurse Cat, at the time Cat sneaked into Riley's room to frighten him, is different. It shows how the queer person can react when pushed to the wall.

> "Don't move, (I hissed). Don't make a sound. In fact, don't breath". What? You're a determined little fucker, aintcha? What do you want?" (His voice was shaky)
> "Poor baby, (I tutted) don't you like the other side of harassment? You disturb my peace, I return the favour."
> "You won't get away with this."
> "This needle is filled with Pavulon. One little prick of this bad boy and your heart will stop in three minutes. You my friend, will die a swift but agonising death." (He was petrified. He began to hyperventilate. I leant closer)

> "If you remain a bad little piggy, I'll be forced to kill you. Comprende?"
> (He nodded)
> "Good. ,,, I'd clean this room if I were you. It smells like death."

The protagonist uses language that invokes danger. His choice of words likens him to a poisonous snake. He *hisses* his first command – Don't move. I hissed. Hissing is an intimidating sound snakes make when they want to warn predators. Snakes have developed a number of defences to protect themselves. One of the most successful of these defensive tactics is the snake's hiss. It is an auditory imagery that he invokes because we virtually hear the 'ssss' sound he makes in the dead of the night. Again, Cat informs Riley that he is only *attacking back* because he has disturbed him. (Just like snakes usually do). Also he has a needle filled with *poison the venom* of which will kill swiftly in three minutes just like a venomous snake. This episode in which Cat *sneaks stealthily* into Riley's room at night to hiss his warning and promise of potential poison are vivid physical movements and actions meant to appeal not only to auditory senses of readers, but also to elicit the imagination of the reader to envision the scene or images based on the intensity of feelings and depth of meaning. It is hence a figurative kinaesthesia. The image and language used in this dialogue is very effective and it is little wonder that it achieves its aim of petrifying Riley.

This particular episode is important in this narrative because it enacts the strong statement the narrator author/protagonist wishes to impart about the queer person. The imagery is also symbolic in the sense that it captures and depicts the situation of the behaviour of a queer person when they find themselves in unwelcoming environment or society. The African LGBTQ situation is an example. It needs no scientific investigation to know that queer people are usually sensitive people trying to keep to themselves because of their peculiar sexual and gender identities and challenges. It stands to reason that when they feel too threatened beyond what they can bear, they may attack back to defend themselves just like the snake does. Under psychoanalytic considerations, we can best describe the defence mechanism as projection. That is, ascribing our fears, problems or guilt to the accusers and condemning or punishing them for it in order to deny that the problem comes from us. And Osman has been successful at illustrating this trait of the queer even as he demonstrates how the queer defend themselves through advocacy in the use of these literary devices.

He deploys dialogue in the episode to advance the story, reveal character, reveal conflict, and develop the plot. Adopting the dialogue further allows him to dramatize the story – to show readers what is happening, and not just tell them. This enables readers to gain a more vivid insight into the LGBTQ situation and

learn to be warned that coming out as queer is not easy.

The prevalent use of slang in this narrative also has a bearing on the use of language as a technique to exhibit advocacy as a defence mechanism. According the 23rd October 2016 edition of *The Guardian*, slangs are words that are not part of standard vocabulary or language and which are used more commonly in speech than writing to identify members of a subculture. We find words in slang used especially by Cat, the protagonist, Riley and his mother. These incidentally are the characters, apart from Miss Zipporah, who wished to make a case on the queer. In the narrator's speech, he uses phrases such as 'dancing with snow white', 'tiefed from her ass', 'bricking blocks of gold', 'boy was now...', 'no one else gave a shit', 'don't fuck devil-spawn', 'cop a feel', 'homeboy had to be put in check', and 'shit-scared'.

In Riley's speech, we find 'wanna fuck me?', 'Fuck you, Gaylord!', 'you fucking fag', 'crazy bitch'. In the speeches of Mrs. Granger, Riley's mother, we find slang expressions such as, 'You fucking tranny!', 'the fuck are you on about', 'this bloody queen threatened to kill my son', 'You heard me, Titty La Rouge!', '… it's a hospital for fuck's sake!', 'what the fuck is…'.

Slang helps people belong. Slang is often used as a way to appear friendly to someone or to show that you belong with a certain group of people or that you understand popular culture. It shows that you are part of the "in crowd" and that the slang you share is part of your secret language. With these slang expressions, our narrator moves the story forward to its ending. It allows him to develop the characters – personality, views, opinions, thoughts, impressions. In its totality, Osman employs language use as a literary device to reveal the intensity with which people express their emotions when they argue about issues that concern the queer.

Osman also organizes discussions amongst the characters. And this gives opportunity to the protagonist to speak out in order to advocate for the queer. This occurs when he is summoned by authorities of the hospital to answer why he threatened an inmate. He shares his experience thus:

> The next morning, I was summoned to the meeting room. There was a circle in the centre which consisted of chief of staff, Dr. Feldman, Zipporah, Riley and his mother. Dr Feldman tapped his note book. Zipporah was poised, pen at the ready. Riley's mother was sweaty with rage. Riley quivered at the sight of me... (p. 63)

Obviously, the house was as ready to pounce on him as would a hungry roost for an unlucky cockroach. This short interaction that ensued between the members of the meeting afterwards says it all.

> What's the problem? (I said)
> You fucking tranny! (Screamed Riley's mother,) I can't believe you'd allow a tranny to be a nurse!
> Mrs Granger, please, (said Dr Feldman.) This is a circle of trust.

> The fuck are you on about? She shouted. This bloody queen threatened to kill my son!
> Excuse me? (I said)
> You heard me, Titty La Rouge! I am not about to have my son sectioned for life because some homicidal transfanny tried to top him. It's a hospital for fuck's sake! And you're his nurse!
> Look, (I turned to Dr Feldman) when I signed up for this job, I knew there would be challenges. But it didn't include transphobic slurs and murder accusations.
> Nurse Cat – (began Dr Feldman, nervously.)
> Admit it! (Burst out Zipporah)
> Admit what?
> That you tried to kill this boy! (Chimed the enraged mother.) Admit it.
> What did I threaten to kill him with? (I asked) This stumped everyone for a second. (P.63)

But after Riley was unable to prove what he was threatened with, Cat jumped at the opportunity and says:

> Not to make this anymore awkward for you. … But not only will I take this incident to an employment tribunal, but I will also sue the bejeezus out of this hospital for transphobia. You have repeatedly victimised me. Why, because I wear tights and a bit of slap? You compromised my physical and emotional safety by encouraging an environment of naked hostility towards me. To then accuse me of trying to murder a patient is despicable and unjust. (p. 64).

With these discussions that ensue at the meeting, Osman demonstrates how mercilessly rude people can be to the queer even in organised systems. And then, he as well makes us see that the queer can really talk their way out of danger. Again, the organised discussions go to establish that the queer are not unintelligent people who can be taken for granted as many may think. That is why we find Cat, the transvestite nurse's speech containing particles of French here and there, especially when he speaks to Riley – 'comprende?', 'mon plasir', etc. Osman does that in juxtaposition to the speeches of Riley and the mother which are full of curse words and slang. We can also notice that the language used by Cat before the hearing session is quite informal and contains some slangs too. But his language during and after the meeting changes to that of aplomb, bereft of any slang or traces of informality. This is an attempt by the author to establish that queer people may appear naïve on initial encounter but after interacting with them we may find that they may be intelligent, even learned folks who cannot be taken for granted.

Osman chooses to write this story as a comedy. On the surface, 'Pavilion' is a caricature on the lots of the transvestite but underlying this witty representation is an unnerving recognition of the reality of LGBTQ+. The story has the features of a comedy since Cat the happy fun protagonist finds a happy ending after triumphing over difficulties and adversities. The narrative focuses on the LGBTQ issues that ail the world. It exposes and ridicules stupidity and immorality but without wrath of the reformer.

The issue of harassment of the queer in work places is a sensitive one. Many people think queer persons do not even have the right to live. Expressing his sentiments about such a sensitive subject with a comedy takes away some of the tensions, which is a good foot on which to begin convincing an audience. It is a known fact that the queer are a minority within a minority group. This implies that Osman realises that most of his readers will be cisgender or even homophobic. Such people may have minds made up rigidly against the phenomenon. Due to this, advocating for LGBTQ+ rights with a tragic plot would have complicated their already unsympathetic feelings towards the subject.

The gaiety that drives the plot serves his therapeutic purpose better. It makes us laugh over the plight of the queer in a heteronormative world, the way we would laugh at a politician in a circus. The narrative, 'Pavilion', is the sixth in the collection of narratives. It comes just after he has shared the first five stories that recount his ordeals as a gay person. It stands to make sense that the protagonist in this story is neither gay nor a lesbian as is the case in all the other stories. He is only a transvestite and is placed in the middle of gender identities. This narrative as a comedy gives readers a break from the readers' continuous exposure to harsh emotional episodes to make them laugh a little and to bring some relief.

Your Silence will not Protect You

'Your Silence will not Protect You', one of the few stories whose protagonist bears the author's name in the collection, is one in which we see a queer person use religion and family as an escape or defence mechanism. In this story, Osman gives us an insight into the life of a queer person from an angle, a bit unlike what we have seen in previous narratives analysed in this paper. This time, the gaze is not on a queer protagonist who replaces or represents the author but on a narrator who is the protagonist and at the same time the author. The story mentions the need to speak out in order to get help. An Akan (mfantse) proverb that says '*Se eton wo yarba a nna enya naano edur*' (literally meaning, 'If you put up for sale your illness, then you would get a remedy') best summarises the author's message. In other words, if by optionally pursuing one's sexual and gender orientation as queer they encounter problems, they must speak up to get help.

As a related theme, it also encourages us to support members of the family, no matter their gender and sexual identity. And then stresses that though family affinity and loyalty is critical to our existence, love of ourselves is even more crucial. Silence as opposed to advocacy is discouraged because as a defence mechanism for the queer person, it is dangerous since it weakens all other defences until the unconscious, exhausted goes overboard. Hence, it is advocacy that will grant a queer person the liberty to live freely to dream and soar.

Osman serves us this exotic sweet-sour narrative, applying dialogue, the motif of supplication or prayer and self-insertion. These themes are linked to Osman's ideology which he expresses about the propinquity of God to humanity. In explaining this position, he draws on the situation of a psychotic who, for fear of exposure, chooses silence as defence instead of advocacy. He likens his life situation to that of a person who refuses to open up to God for traditional reasons. He tells us his own experience as he employs self-insertion as a technique to demonstrate his point.

Right at the exposition, we encounter the protagonist/narrator, Diriye, a psychotic, experiencing a psychotic episode in his room. This condition of his is due to his withdrawal from the other members of his family and relations in an optional pursuance of his sexual and gender identity. Voices that he alone could hear torment him and make him sweat in anxiety. He says: 'as the voices grew louder, I began to tremble. I hadn't slept or eaten properly for weeks'. (p. 103). He was so weak that he needed strength to call somebody for a 'primal and urgent' help. So he prays a simple prayer: '*Allah, you have brought me here. Please help me*'. And instantly, he is able to get up. Presently, the ambulance people arrived and took him to the hospital.

This illustrates God's ability to answer heartfelt prayer which he talks about. We can pray to God in times of distress and God will grant us instant relief no matter our gender identity and condition. As long as he is the one who created us, he will hear and answer us in due time. In line with the focus of this thesis on the reformative and therapeutic concern of Osman's collection, this expression of belief in God is an advice to readers who are in one way or another affected by LGBTQ issues.

As regards LGBTQ, it is about the openness of queer persons about their sexuality to their close associates as their defence. The title he chooses for the narrative serves a good purpose for transporting this idea. "Your silence will not protect you", put in another way, can be, 'Speak up to defend yourself'. This implies that if your silence will not protect you, then your speaking out will defend you. If we think about the title on these lines then we realise that it is an appeal or request. And then we wonder who is being addressed or appealed to? Is it the queer person who is being requested to speak up to defend themselves or their relations who know about their sexual and gender identity but who are quiet or pretend not to know about it? The title is the first impression the story makes on us. So it is in order that Osman uses it in this narrative to create anticipation and expectation. Readers want to know what it is that the speaker will not be protected from when he keeps quiet. Titles usually lead us or give a clue to the theme of a piece. And the title of this narrative presents the theme of advocacy as a defence strategy for the queer.

Osman does not leave it at the title but continues to let the message of the title resound throughout the story as a motif. From

the very onset of the story, he recounts a period in his life when he needed urgent help and had to make a call – to speak out – in order to receive attention. He says: 'It required strength to make the call… I closed my eyes and in the pitch-black babble of voices and hysteria I found myself getting up from the settee and picking up my mobile phone. I entered the number without thinking about it. 999.' (p. 103). His effort at requesting for help yielded results, for the help came when his call was answered.

> What's your emergency? Asked the female operator. I'm having a psychotic episode, I replied in a shaky voice. How long have you been feeling this way? Two months. No, two weeks. Two days, I think. Okay. She sounded sceptical. What are your symptoms? I'm hearing voices, I'm anxious and I'm sweating. I need help. I choked on the last word. Do you have any knives or sharp objects lying around? I am not going to kill myself. I need help. What's your address? I gave it to her. The ambulance is on its way. Remain calm and they will be with you shortly.

This interaction is the first representation of the motif of supplication or request for help, made in an earnest manner. Indeed from the above, we realize that speaking out and not keeping silent is what brought him relief which we can relate to as a form of protection. In the short interaction, we can count three of the clause, 'I need help'. The repetition of 'I need help' is an appeal from our protagonist not only to the relief service that he called, but symbolically to the non-binary, who are a minority of the society. It is a statement which is a clarion call to queer persons and their relations to speak out for the course of the queer. Prayer, a solemn request for help, as a motif in the narrative is a literary technique Osman uses to illustrate how the queer use advocacy as defence mechanism.

This representation of request for help is re-echoed in the narrative as action rises. His sisters report his sexuality as gay to their other brothers. Thereupon, his elder brother threatens to have him killed. So he goes to the police to press charges against his family members for homophobic abuse. While at the police station, he reflects on his action in a stream of consciousness to reiterate the message or idea expressed in the title:

> A few years earlier, I had been in the middle of a different kind of mental distress. I could barely talk and my life was spent in silence and imagined danger. But now, I was faced with the possibility of real danger and my voice had to come through. No word could be wasted. I had to express myself clearly and eloquently and I did. After I pressed charges, my brothers pulled a disappearing act. I realized then that the only way to deal with bullies is to hit them where it hurts. The police treated my case as a hate crime and put me in contact with the Victim Support Unit, who sent a locksmith to reinforce my door. My flat was turned into a fortress. (p. 112).

So, once again, just like the instance at the beginning of the story when he cried to God and received strength and also called

the health workers for help and received assistance, he calls on the police and receives support and security.

The next representation of the motif of supplication as advocacy takes place as Osman reflects upon his gay situation in an interior monologue. This happens right after he has separated himself from his family and is fully engaged with JT his lover. He thinks aloud: 'As a gay man I had to learn that I live in a country where I don't have to suffer in silence; that there are laws that protect my rights.' (p. 113). He contemplates the rights that he has in foreign land as a gay person that gives him the right to press homophobic charges against his own siblings and succeed to have an injunction placed on them from the law court. By this reasoning, it becomes obvious that the advocacy which he talks about is limited to the queer in developed countries. How can the queer in other places where non-binary is not tolerated such as Africa use law and advocacy as defence?

Again, *w*e wonder whether these ideas of liberation are really his. He appears not sure of himself but just parroting someone else's ideas. For how can he be sad of what he is doing in one breath and be rebellious in another? That will be discussed when we analyse the scars being gay has left on our author.

Faced with the difficult situation of having to live without the usual company of his family members; a condition he has brought upon himself by choosing his gay lover over his family, he ponders over circumstances. He shares:

> When I am faced with unpleasant experiences, I take a breath and listen to calming music. **And I pray. Not the prayer that my parents taught me, that I had been caned and cajoled into repeating when I was younger:** this prayer requires me to close my eyes and allow the thoughts to float around in my head until they turn into colours." (p. 115).

The first part of this statement about prayer (highlighted for emphasis) is a twin to the one at the beginning of the story. Obviously, the twin statements about prayer are to draw attention to the request and answer motif that Osman hopes to emphasize. Incidentally, it is here that we realize the last of the representations of speaking up in prayer for attention as a motif demonstrated in this narrative. The repetition of the prayer scene in the narrative affords Osman a rhetorical technique to add emphasis, unity, and/or power to this statement about rote prayers that he makes. Bergan and Schwan (2004) have said that through repetitions we fine-tune our sensitivities to God. Repetition is also a common technique orators use to help us remember particular lines of a story. Thus, this kind of repetition has been an essential part of oral storytelling and can be found in legends, folk tales, and religious texts. Because of the work's inclination to autobiografiction and also because of the reformative and therapeutic role of Osman's narratives, the technique is significant. Repeating the motif of

supplication is hence Osman's appeal to the queer to adopt advocacy in the form of prayers in the struggles for survival.

This time, as a way of ending the narrative, he leads us to the source of the literary allusion from which he derives the title: the African-American, lesbian, feminist, poet, and essayist, Audre Lorde. He continues:

> I remembered a quote by Audre Lorde that I had once read online and smiled. She had said: 'Your silence will not protect you'. In honour of that quote I created a little comic strip on my phone and posted it on Facebook that night. I went to bed afterwards tired but undefeated. The comic strip was an image of a toddler knelt in prayer and the caption I placed beneath it read: I didn't know I was here. But I am now. There's beauty in grace. I will continue to dream wide awake. I will continue to soar. (p. 114).

He goes on to share his life experiences in this vein:

> I was the fourth child in a family of twelve, and even though I was creative and ambitious, even though I was studying on a prestigious course and trying to create a life for myself, my father had always harboured bigger dreams for me, dreams that I had always fallen short of fulfilling. Out of all my siblings, he had invested the most time, money and energy in me. When we were living in Nairobi I was the one who was sent to the expensive private school, whilst my more academically-gifted siblings were denied that privilege. During my teenage years, while my brothers and sisters were working hard at their studies, I was out getting drunk and smoking inordinate amounts of weed, stumbling home and vomiting on my bed. My father … wanted me to succeed and the fact that I didn't frustrated him greatly. In a sense, he viewed my mental illness as yet another failure on my part. He didn't see my psychosis as illness, but as an inability to square up to reality and become a responsible adult. To him, even psychosis could be remedied with plenty of exercise, a healthy diet and unceasing activity. His pragmatism was an attempt to gain power over something that was simply beyond his control. (p.105).

His description of his childhood shows that he was somehow 'different' from his other siblings and probably other children. His father must have noticed this and that could explain his father's extra attention for him. Obviously, because he had not yet reached puberty stage, he ran around and got along without much trouble. The troubles started only during his teenage years. What we can make of this through the psychoanalytic lens of our analysis is that in his teenage years his secondary reproductive hormones develop with their corresponding feelings. He experiences these feelings that are contrary to binary male desire for the opposite gender. And because he does not understand nor is able to share them with anyone since it is contrary to the culture he knows, he lives in fear and imagined danger of his predicament being found out by other people. He keeps quiet about it and then takes to excessive smoking and drinking probably in order to drown those feelings. As with many drug abusers who do so in the hope that the drugs will help in relieving them of their frustrations for good, the

problems persists and because it becomes unbearable for him, he ends up with a psychotic break down.

His poor father does not understand and assigns a layman's interpretation and suggestions for solution. He blames his son's mental breakdown on his 'inability to square up to reality and become a responsible adult'. The solution he suggests: 'plenty of exercise, a healthy diet and unceasing activity'. That could serve for some child with a problem of laziness; not a queer child. Like Osman rightly says, 'his efforts were an attempt to gain power over something that was beyond his control'. One requires a good deal of empathy and psychoanalytic knowledge to understand a queer person.

Though his father's efforts at helping him get total relief are virtually useless, there is no doubt that his company and that of the other members of the family are essential to Osman's homoeopathy. He therefore admits that he needs his family and feels safe and secured with them. He tell us that he 'was raised in a culture where family was the most important thing'. (p. 113). So the queer person needs the family for companionship, to build his confidence, trust and solidarity that leads to their well-being. It therefore stands to reason that he feels threatened at losing his family through his behaviour. He says: "Even thou it was mentally and emotionally draining, what was more traumatic was the fact that I was losing my family. I grew up in very close –knit family where everything was shared and I was now an outcast in a very real sense." (p. 112).

The medications given him at the hospital for the desired relief and solution worked but only for a while because the psychological conditions that break his defences are still present. He feels shamed. He says "my father and my brother took me to the family home but I didn't want anyone to see my shame." His breakdown moves to the next level. He resorts to another escape mechanism: false perception and silence. This worsens his condition because the superego represented by their Somali culture that he tries to escape is unknown to him, ever present. He recounts:

> Even my niece who is an adorable toddler, became a source of obscure resentment. The line between my conscious thoughts and the part of my subconscious that harboured unlimited secret was kicked over by false perception. Silence became my self-protection. I holed up in my flat in Peckham, threw my mobile phone away and stopped speaking to anyone. I gave strict orders to my family stop calling or visiting me as I wanted to recover without feeling any guilt or shame over my condition as I did so. In Somali culture, mental illness is a taboo subject and I wanted to hide, which I did. … I went from being a gregarious apparently happy young man to recluse who didn't speak to anyone and was suspicious of everything. (p. 106).

From the description above, and from our deductions from the psychoanalytic theory, it is the shame he feels before members of his family that pushes him into his shell. His situation is

paradoxical in that he needs company especially when he has an attack and the most convenient company available is that of the family. Yet, it is the same family that become his source of disquietude.

He makes this fact known in subsequent utterances that he makes thus. 'I had always thought of a family as a fixed all powerful entity' and 'Interestingly, ever since I distanced myself from my family, the voices I used to hear in my head have stopped'. The question is: why does he feel shame before his own family? Answer: the family members are the ones who know that the destructing behaviour of homosexuality which he is suffering from is a taboo in their culture. This means that it is not really the family per se that generate the shame, it is his knowledge of their Somali culture which is common to the family that makes him feel the others look down on him. Hence he feels ashamed. The culture then becomes the superego.

Osman's psychological history begins in childhood experiences in the family, goes through a pattern of adolescent and adult behaviour that is the direct result of those early experiences. He knows he has a disorder but it is his not realizing when it is influencing his behaviour that gives it much control over him. According to Freud, the unconsciousness comes into being when we are very young through repression – the expunging from consciousness of these unhappy psychological events. So repression submerges our deepest psychological experiences and emotions or fears. However, it makes us organize our current experiences as we unconsciously behave in ways that will allow us to play out without admitting to ourselves our conflicted feelings about the painful experiences and emotions we express. And until we find a way to know and acknowledge to ourselves the true cause of our repressed wounds, fears, guilty desires and unresolved conflicts, we hang unto them in disguised, distorted and self-defeating ways.

It follows then that if Osman does not realize that he still longs for the non-binary intimacy that he could never have from his family relations, he is liable to stay aloof as a way of satisfying his desire. Even if he realizes that he has this kind of psychological issue with his family, it is difficult to recognize when he is acting it out on them. In other words, he will believe that what he really wants is for the relations to love him back. He reacts to the self-definition, 'I'm unlovable'. The point is, it is only by recognizing the psychological motivations for his destructive behaviour can he hope to begin to change that behaviour. Thus, his case is the psychological condition Freud calls displacement. That is, the condition of taking it out on someone or something less threatening (his family) than the real person or thing that causes his fear, hurt or frustration.

The Somali culture is the super ego that limits or controls his id and ego. "In Somali culture, mental illness is a taboo subject and

I wanted to hide, which I did." (p. 108) and then 'the Somali community is all about tradition and that sense of tradition comes with an air of secretiveness, suppression, puritanism. I had no desire to live in secrecy anymore'.

Another point that Osman seems to make with his choice of prayer or request for help as a motif is the controversy about whether queer people are accepted by God. That is why he repeats 'I prayed on it. Not the usual prayer that my parents had taught me, that I had been caned and cajoled into practising when I was younger: this was more primal and urgent. … It was a simple prayer'. (pp.103 & 115). He repeats *it* at the beginning and the end of the narrative to demonstrate that prayers are communication or requests to God by his creatures. A queer person is God's creature too. So he says, *'Allah, you have brought me here.* Consequently, it is not the doing of non-binary or queer people to have appeared on earth the way they came. Therefore, the creator who made them and brought them here hears their prayers like any other creature of his. So it is not the rote prayers that children, especially, are forced to rehearse or recite that is necessarily answered by God. And also, that God hears our prayers depending on how urgent and primal the prayer is said.

This sentiment is shared by Chimamanda Adichie in her story, 'The Shivering' in *The Thing Around Your Neck* (Adichie, 2009). Chinedu, the gay person in the story shows great faith in God by praying and fasting when he makes a request to God. He says, 'I know my God will deliver'. And then later, 'God is faithful'. Ukamaka the binary female, on the other hand, shivers when she is in the presence of God. With the two portrayals of characters as they pray to God, Adichie attempts to make her readers think about how God reaches people and how people receive him. Whereas some shiver as they interact with God, others simply utter their words in deep thought. But all of them, gay or not, are God's children. She draws our attention thus to the fact that God relates to the queer as well as the heteronormative person. By extension, she suggests that being of a third gender orientation does not offend God and is hence not a sin.

9.0 Conclusions, Findings and Recommendations

The psychic war between queer people's conscious and unconscious selves and between them and their relations wages on to affect their personalities. As such, they may have their identities and their sexual orientation hidden by their professions, marriages, relations and/or positions in society. When they are unable to hide behind these institutions to save their lives, most queer people 'run'. Thus, queer people need to be helped so that they can be absorbed within their societies and communities. They can be helped with psychological therapies such as the free association therapy, in which the individual is made to associate with or experience a number of words or scenarios so that as their memory

identifies with issues in their subconscious they immediately respond to them. With that, fragments of repressed memories may emerge in the course of the free association process leading to an abreaction (experiencing an emotionally intense and vivid memory that makes you relive the experience and then to catharsis) for the affected individual to be rehabbed.

As well, the queer person needs the family for companionship and to build their self-confidence, trust, solidarity and overall well-being. Though they can be defensive (with speeches like Osman's in 'Shoga,') when their unconscious fears of being found out as non-binary are outed, and though they feel threatened and unconsciously apply defence mechanisms of 'taking it out' on whoever they think threatens them, they need the support of their families. In other words, they attack the one who finds out about their sexual orientation rather than the behaviour that confronts them. Parents and guardians should support family members no matter their gender or sexual orientation.

Again, the queer require sympathy and empathy from the binary, especially the religious. A queer person is God's creation too. It is not their doing to have come to the world the way they are. God their creator hears their prayers just like any other creature of his. Therefore, being of a third gender does not offend God and is not a sin; rather, being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is. The difference must be made clear and the later discouraged. Like the binary, the queer are humans just like all others. It is ironic for the religious to preach that we love all humans and protect the weak and vulnerable, yet, look on when wrong things are done to the queer and turn round to criticize them as being sinful. Instead of criticizing the queer, the religious should empathise and encourage people to sympathise with the queer. They should see them as their fellow humans and help them solve their problems.

Furthermore, society must sympathise particularly with the transvestite and desist from harassing them. They should recognise that not all such people are homosexuals and hence do not cross dress to attract males nor females.

The African youth that undergoes traumatic stress could easily, for want of love and attention or care, slip into homosexuality. If the non-binary can use advocacy to escape the effects of post-traumatic stress, then the same can be employed by the binary to rehabilitate them in their societies. Most transvestites for example are men who comfortably fill major roles in society and are satisfied with their biological sex. They do not cross dress to attract same sex nor others.

Activists and linguists around the world for example, have championed more inclusive language by creating entirely new non-binary terms and by retooling already existing words and grammar constructions. Trying to be more gender sensitive in everyday language use can help our unfortunate brothers and sisters.

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***About the Authors:** Cynthia Derx Techie (cynthiaderx477@gmail.com) is a Lecturer, Department of Liberal Studies, Cape Coast Technical University, Ghana; Philomena Yeboah (philookyeso@yahoo.ca) is a Senior Lecturer, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana; Daniel Okyere-Darko (dan.okyere-darko@ucc.edu.gh) is a Lecturer, Department of English, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

