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Of Patriarchy, Madness, Mythology, and the Queer in Nation Making: A critique on tropes of sexualities in post-colonial African Literature

This research report interrogates how queer sexualities are represented in postcolonial African literatures. It queries representations of queer sexualities and their place in the fiction of the nation. It deploys queer as the coopted marker of pride and liberation that was deployed by gender and sexuality activists in the gay liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and subsequently, gender and sexuality scholars in contemporary times. It relies on this articulation of queer to locate homosexuality and same-sex desire at the centre of an argument about the development of the idea of the African nation, and how this idea continues to locate same-sex desire and sexuality outside of or hidden in discussions about dominant modes of sexuality expressions. It reads Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958/1962) in conversation with Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) to explore the discursive modalities through which queer sexualities circulate in these seminal works, and to interrogate the extent to which they employ Achebe's fictional world as integral to what it means to be African. This exploration is located within a set of assumptions about how the African nation is reproduced, and how modes of living and existing, are determined in African literature. Central to its argument, it meditates on the narrative closures employed by Achebe, Dangarembga and Duiker to determine how they facilitate, challenge, affirm or disrupt the sanctity of the heterosexual African nation through the circulation of patriarchal constructions of masculinity and same-sex desires and sexuality. The report explores the extent to which the texts deploy mythology and madness as points of entry into transgressive modes of existence within the nation. It further considers the role of the archive in imagining the queer body in the nation and the power dynamics that instruct the reading of same-sex desiring and homosexual bodies as non-normative. It argues that due to the exclusion of same-sex desiring and homosexual bodies in what constitutes the imaginary of the African nation in negotiating the nation's anxiety about benefiting from the nations affect schema, the excluded bodies are burdened with the work of excavating from historical archives to legitimate their existence. In using the archive, the report argues that queer bodies enact resistance by un-silencing the archive and excavating the costs of a collective forgetting process that facilitates the postcolonial project of civilized sensibilities. This work is undertaken to perform historical commentary that trespasses the dominant modes of erasure that continue to locate the queer body as outside the

experience of Blackness. The report ultimately makes a case for the productive capacity of interrogating and reporting Black abjection in order to construct epistemological frameworks that enable a pedagogy that re-memories and re-members those that the nation opts to erase. It argues for a disavowal of fictions about progress that are predicated on a desire that fits within the scope of liberal conceptions of progress and civility. As a mode of re-memory-ing and re-member-ing, this report proposes an affinity for irresolvability with regards to conceptions of subjecthood in order to negotiate nation-making projects that are liberatory for those who have been historically placed outside of the complicated and irresolvable matrix of national sentiment that privileges heterosexual sexuality expressions.

Keywords:

Things Fall Apart, Nervous Conditions, The Quiet Violence of Dreams, Queer, Nation, Sexuality, Gay, Lesbian, Incest, Archive, Queer Ancestry, Mythology, Same-sex desire, Homosexual, Heterosexual, Postcolonial, Disavowal, Subjecthood