

HOMOSEXUALITY, CONVERSION THERAPY AND JUDE DIBIA'S *WALKING WITH SHADOWS*

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Abstract

This paper analyses the depiction of homosexuality and the issue of immutability in Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*. This study examines the protagonist Adrian's journey as a battleground for debating the treatability of same-sex desire in modern Nigerian society, utilising Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of psychosexual development and Edmund Bergler's conversion therapy paradigm. Dibia's narrative delineates Adrian's formative experiences, internal struggles, and the societal pressures that drive him towards a heterosexual marriage, providing a nuanced exploration of how familial expectations, religious tenets, and cultural stigma function as significant catalysts for repression and efforts at conformity. The novel presents Adrian's six-year marriage as a temporary triumph for Bergler's theory of mutability, illustrating how external influences and therapeutic measures can momentarily suppress same-sex attraction. The inevitable revival of Adrian's repressed inclinations complicates any assertion of permanent transformation, indicating that immutability is neither an absolute biological reality nor a definitive therapeutic result, but rather a condition influenced by context, memory, and trauma. The study posits that by contextualising Adrian's inner experiences within wider social and institutional frameworks, Dibia opposes homophobic practices, including coercive conversion efforts and moralistic ostracism, while also engaging in psychoanalytic discussions regarding the origins and permanence of sexual orientation. Ultimately, *Walking with Shadows* serves as a literary exploration that defies simplistic conclusions: it portrays identity as a continuous negotiation among desire, societal expectations, and the repercussions of repression, thereby highlighting literature's ability to reveal the moral and psychological intricacies of queer life in Nigeria.

Keywords: Homosexuality, Sexual Immutability, Psychoanalysis, Conversion Therapy, Nigerian Queer Literature

Introduction

This paper examines Jude Dibia's literary expression of queerness and characteristic distribution of queer desires in *Walking with Shadows* (2005). It analyzes the psychic implications of same-sex attractions, the psychosocial complications, and the resultant traumatic relationship between homosexual characters and their surroundings. It also evaluates the manifest and latent aporias that characterizes "queer"/"straight" interactions in contemporary

Nigerian societies, paying attention to the derivatives of both conscious and unconscious elements of the human mind that might provide insights about the intellectually begging question; "whether or not homosexuality is immutable". The study interrogates the symptomatic actions and/or inactions of queer characters in the text that explains the Freudian principle of "return of the repressed" for the purpose of establishing, what available therapeutic chances there is to the challenge of "queerness" as represented by Dibia.

Thus, Sigmund Freud's theory of psycho-sexual development and his suppositions about homosexuality is placed side by side with the text in order to understand the psychic inclinations of queer people with regards to the consequences of "conversion therapy" on both queer and straight individuals.

Homosexuality remains one of the most contested subjects in 21st-century academic, cultural, and religious discourse, particularly within African contexts where legal, social, and moral prohibitions against same-sex relations are pronounced. In Nigeria, the subject is further complicated by the intersection of colonial legal legacies, religious doctrines, and prevailing cultural norms that frame queerness as deviance and immorality. Jude Dibia's 2005 novel *Walking with Shadows* emerged as one of the early Nigerian literary texts to center a gay protagonist, Adrian, and to explore the psychological and social consequences of living as a queer individual in a hostile environment.

The novel engages directly with debates on the origin and mutability of homosexuality by placing Adrian's personal experiences alongside competing psychoanalytic frameworks. On one hand, Freud's theory suggests that homosexuality arises from a developmental arrest and that any attempt at change is likely driven by external compulsion rather than authentic desire. On the other hand, Bergler's conversion therapy model posits that homosexuality is treatable through punishment, embarrassment, and psychological confrontation, placing the burden of change on the individual. Dibia's narrative weaves these positions into the lived reality of Adrian, who undergoes social stigmatization, familial rejection, and violent "spiritual" interventions aimed at altering his sexuality.

Given this context, this study situates itself at the intersection of literary criticism and psychoanalytic theory to interrogate how *Walking with Shadows* represents the question of queer immutability. It seeks to understand how the text uses character development, symbolic dreams, and traumatic encounters to negotiate the broader socio-psychological discourse on sexuality in Nigeria. By doing so, the paper contributes to

ongoing conversations on the role of literature in mediating marginalized identities and in challenging dominant narratives about the nature of sexual orientation.

Methodology

The paper adopts a qualitative approach, which involves close reading, combining literary analysis with psychoanalytic criticism. The study reads *Walking with Shadows* as a psychosocial text whose narrative elements, such as characterisation, focalisation, plot, and dialogue, reflect and contest dominant cultural understandings of sexuality. The Primary text is Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*. Supplementary texts include selected writings by Sigmund Freud and Edmund Bergler, scholarly literature on conversion therapy and queer studies in Nigeria, and relevant sociological reports on Nigerian attitudes toward homosexuality. The Procedure used is identifying scenes, motifs, and narrative structures that dramatise Adrian's sexual development, repression, and attempts at conformity (marriage, therapy sessions, familial interactions).

Theoretical Frameworks

Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory of Psychosexual Development and Its Significance to Homosexuality

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of psychosexual development asserts that human personality develops through five distinct stages, each defined by the focus of libidinal energy on particular erogenous zones. The stages—oral (0–1 year), anal (1–3 years), phallic (3–6 years), latency (6–puberty), and genital (puberty onward)—formulate an individual's psychological framework, where unresolved tensions may lead to fixations that affect adult behaviour. Integral to Freud's theory is the phallic stage, during which the Oedipus Complex (in males) or Electra Complex (in females) is crucial for the development of sexual orientation. Successful resolution entails identification with the same-sex parent and the rejection of the opposite-sex parent as a primary object of affection, ideally culminating in heterosexual adulthood. Freud saw humans as inherently bisexual, suggesting that homosexuality is a developmental variant or

stagnation, frequently associated with unresolved Oedipal conflicts or excessive maternal attachment, rather than a fundamental disease or moral deficiency. He upheld a therapeutic pessimism toward the modification of sexual orientation, viewing it as a deeply entrenched result of intricate interplay among biology, psychology, and environment.

Edmund Bergler's Paradigm of Conversion Therapy

Unlike Freud's more tolerant view of homosexuality as a variant of sexual development, Edmund Bergler (1899–1962) proposed a more pathological framework that characterised homosexuality as a treatable neurosis. Bergler, while expanding upon and notably differing from Freudian concepts, characterised same-sex desire as a form of psychic masochism—an unconscious self-punitive mechanism stemming from early developmental disruptions. He said that there are “no healthy homosexuals,” framing homosexuality as an overarching psychological illness rather than simply a sexual orientation. Bergler ardently supported the malleability of sexual orientation via rigorous psychoanalytic treatment, notably asserting a 90% success rate for determined patients participating in confrontational therapy.

His methodology prioritised the confrontation of the patient's masochistic defences, frequently utilising components of shame to destroy resistance, and categorically dismissed growing sociological perspectives, such as those of Alfred Kinsey, that legitimised homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. Bergler's seminal publications, notably *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* (1956), encapsulated the prevailing psychiatric perspective of homosexuality as a treatable ailment before its removal from the DSM as a mental disorder in 1973.

Utilisation of Freudian and Berglerian Theories in the Examination of Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*

In Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*, Freud's theory elucidates the protagonist Adrian's formative experiences and internal psychological difficulties, particularly the repression of same-sex

attraction in the face of formidable familial, religious, and cultural influences within contemporary Nigerian society. The novel depicts Adrian's psychosexual growth, characterised by unsolved tensions that emerge in his attempt to adhere to heteronormative standards during a six-year heterosexual marriage. This married stage seems to corroborate Bergler's theory of mutability, indicating that external influences, societal stigma, and therapeutic or coercive interventions can effectively inhibit gay tendencies, if briefly.

Nonetheless, the eventual revival of Adrian's repressed urges challenges assertions of permanent transformation, challenging both Freud's developmental arrest theory and Bergler's optimistic curability hypothesis. Dibia integrates psychoanalytic concepts into the narrative to condemn coercive conversion procedures and homophobic ostracism, portraying sexual orientation as a dynamic interplay of intrinsic desire, traumatic memory, societal conditioning, and psychological resilience. The novel ultimately overcomes simplistic binaries of immutability and curability, validating literature's ability to reveal the complex moral and psychological realities of LGBT existence within a repressive socio-cultural framework.

“Conversion Therapy” and Jude Dibia's *Walking With Shadows*

The question whether or not homosexuality is “immutable” has raged on in the 21st-century public domain, especially in academia. The word “immutable” is suggestive of anything unchangeable or lacking the tendency to undergo mutation. While homosexuality provokes such divisive tendencies in historical, sociological, political, cultural and even biological discourses as to whether or not it can be controlled, cured or contained, the psycho-sexual condition champions an attitude in Freudian psychology that defines it to be a perversion of, or a deviation from, the normal psycho-sexual developmental process—a proclivity that is in itself a ‘real’ possibility. In other words, the average contemporary notion about homosexuality in psychological debate is of a “natural disorder” yet. This, however, forms the organic understanding from which Dibia's

Walking with Shadows proceeds. It is, in fact, on the basis of this that critics such as Lindsey Green-Simms construe the text to be an attempt by the author to humanise homosexuality.

The book *Walking with Shadows* discusses a queer protagonist (Adrian) who happens to discover during his younger age that he is more sexually attracted to his own kind (men) rather than to women. In the text, Adrian confessed to being gay; “He knew this ever since he started having sexual urges as a child. He had always known he was different from his other brothers and other boys”. But the choice of the word ‘different’ is not in any way accidental; it is Dibia trying to understand homosexuality as ‘another’ kind of sexual behaviour, distinct and complete in its character. Thus, like Sigmund Freud, Dibia interprets homosexuality as a ‘variety’ of sexuality, but while Freud understand the condition to be caused by a certain ‘arrest’ in the developmental process of sexuality in human beings, Dibia settles on the innocence of the individual homosexual as a victim of ‘that’ arrest in a process that is literally unconscious and technically beyond their management, like ‘creation’ itself. The book then proceeds to expound on the troubles and trauma of being gay in contemporary Nigerian societies, especially with the generally grim attitude accorded to the practice of homosexuality. To this end, therapy as a rehabilitative process becomes a necessarily welcomed endeavour in this part of the world, especially where male homosexuality is concerned.

But ‘Conversion therapy’, being a pseudoscientific practice of trying to change an individual’s sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual using psychological or spiritual interventions (Drescher and Zucker 2006:126,175), remains a socially, medically, morally and even psychologically controversial phenomenon.

While numerous analysts/psychologists have argued for and against the practice, it is the works of Edmund Bergler, the radical, confrontational therapeutic propositions they author, with a thread that accentuates to “Blame the victim” (Terry, 1999) that most properly represents the homosexual discourse in

Nigeria in real and general terms and as represented by Dibia in *Walking with Shadows*. Bergler argued that punishment is an important therapeutic instrument, relevant for its unique, corrective quality of bringing the homosexual face-to-face with the reality of their masochism. In this way, bullying, abuse and mortification become significant tools that might be used to achieve the desired effect of/in “homosexual conversion therapy”. Hence, the gay person must be exposed (for the purpose of being embarrassed), openly criticised, and made to feel worthless (Terry, 1999: 308-314). At the helm of Bergler’s submissions is the notion that gay people could be cured if they wanted to change.

While the submission “if they wanted to change” might portend an even more exciting socio-academic complex, one can simply see that there is precisely no shortage of Bergler’s prescriptions at work in Jude Dibia’s *Walking with Shadows* that are recognisable from Adrian’s experiences in the text as a gay man. From Tayo to Nkechi to the entire staff of DialPlus, Mama to Ada and Chiedu as well as the surrounding community of Lagos in which Adrian lived, Bergler’s therapeutic advisement described Adrian’s life and experience and typifies an experimental procedure of militating against homosexuality or correcting the sexual condition. From the beginning of the text, Tayo has just exposed Adrian to the world as a homosexual, a quality his social experience had forced him to suppress for a long time. Tayo’s act is absolutely therapeutic even though his intentions, rather than being designed to provide therapy, were hinged on revenge. Dibia, however, created the situation subconsciously as a tool within the larger framework of conversion therapy to analyse homosexuality around the inquisitional inclination towards understanding whether or not the sexual condition is immutable. And satisfying Bergler’s proposition, Adrian is made to experience a certain deficiency within him that generates a crude feeling of negative difference with regard to his social reality.

It had started with a phone call at the office and then the harsh reality hit him. He was going to lose his family.

He was going to lose his life; a life that has taken him a long time to build. ...the sheer guilt of living a lie for so long pricked him. But he had gone straight, suppressed a lot of feelings and had even denied himself so much and now this, that one phone call that was to change his life. "You bastard!... I am going to tell them" (P. 20)

The apprehension that grips Adrian in the wake of this threat of exposure represents an important effect in Bergler's theory of conversion. "He had broken out in cold sweat after that call. He knew exactly what it meant, and he knew he had put off facing this moment for a long time now" (20). Thus, the threat of becoming 'worthless' in actuality might stimulate the necessary readiness within Adrian to not just abandon homosexuality but also to embrace heterosexuality as a defunct alternative. The follow-up attitude that greeted Adrian, given his recent exposure as a homosexual man, also matches Bergler's formula for same-sex control or treatment; "Today as Adrian walked into the office, people were stealing glances at him. There were muted whispers and even discreetly pointing fingers" (65). This is typical of Nigeria's social-cultural aversion to homosexuals and homosexuality, where stigmatisation remains a near-natural consequence against queer people.

This stigmatisation is, however, supportive of Bergler's strategy of dealing with homosexuality, for it serves to ransom the individual's consciousness in a charge to sustain the sense of worthlessness that their exposure may have engendered. Hence, the willy-nilly discussions about Adrian's sexuality, the new attitude of isolation he received from his colleagues including the company's security men who previously would have washed his car and rush to bid him farewell in anticipation of the hundred naira note he would squeeze into their palms (83), as well as the company's management decision to send him away on a compulsory leave for two weeks, combine into a robust therapeutic providence for Adrian at least given Bergler's submissions on 'gay conversion therapy'. Bergler's proposed techniques for treating

homosexuality, more importantly, stressed 'punishment' as a basic practice in the process of conversion therapy. This ideology subtly finds expression in Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*. Apart from the disciplinary action taken against Adrian by the management of DialPlus, the gay protagonist was made to endure a lot more penalties developed subconsciously by Dibia as therapy, designed to satisfy his personal anxiety about the question of immutability in general queer knowledge. These penalties were put forward by Dibia in a way that highlights different levels of approach in gay therapy, which creates a variety of effects necessary for a wholesome conversion of an individual from a homosexual to a heterosexual. These are physical, emotional and mental effects. On the physical level, Adrian endured a number of dehumanising abuses, ironically in the name of spirituality, as a means towards altering his sexual orientation, one which is considered by most characters in the text as atrocious. At Pastor Mathew's place, where he had been invited by his brother Chiedu, Adrian was brutalised and abusively battered in a therapeutic process that sought to cure him from homosexuality for good.

"Pray with me!" Pastor Mathew screamed, cutting Adrian short. "Close your eyes my brother and pray with me for God's mercy and strength." ...Adrian Cringed in horror. He felt his shirt being ripped off his body, rendering the upper part of his body naked. He watched in disbelief as the pastor withdrew a long five-pronged whip from behind one of the chairs and headed for him. ...By now raw fear had seized Adrian. ...Then there was the first sharp and searing lash of the whip on his bare back. It was an unbelievable pain ...He ground his teeth tightly and tried writhing away from the hands that bound him to the floor. With the next lash, his eyes flew wide open and he cried out in an agonizing shrill that momentarily startled the pastor who was in the motion of whipping him again. But the pause was just momentary, as the

pastor continued in his mad fervor.
(174-175).

Thus, while the physical punishment Adrian endured would include the all-round stigmatization he suffered, the open resentment he endured from the likes of Mama, Chiedu, and Nkechi, the perceived rejection from his parents and playmates since childhood, Ada's reactionary dismembering of their family as a result of her recent discovery etc..., all combine to represent a correctional procedure for Adrian, his emotional/mental ordeal which explicate the traumatic effects of confusion, depression, fear and anxiety that became a part of his daily living throughout the text culminates to provide a compact process of therapy. But to weigh the results of Bergler's therapy from the experiences of Adrian, and also to consider the question whether or not homosexuality is immutable, it is pertinent to pit Bergler's argument against Sigmund Freud's perspectives on the sexual condition, especially the possibility of cure.

In 1921, Freud wrote a letter to an American mother who grew anxious about her son's queerness (homosexuality) and had pleaded for the former's expertise. Freud's letter, which is thought to harbour a wholesome summary of Freudian appreciation of homosexuality, rather than answer the question of homosexual immutability, sought to interpret the question. For Freud, the question whether or not homosexuality is immutable is deceptively simple and practically unnecessary. For if a homosexual can change their sexuality if they want to, the willingness to change in the thinking of Sigmund Freud is pragmatically unverifiable. To him, the basis for wanting to convert is as important as the conversion itself. He posits thus;

If he comes to be treated at all, it is mostly through the pressure of external motives, such as the social disadvantages and dangers attaching to his choice of object, and such components of the instincts of self-preservation prove themselves too weak in the struggle against the sexual impulses.

Freud thus believes that the homosexual is not able

to give up the object that provides him with pleasure, and convincing him that if he made the change, he would rediscover in the other the pleasure that he has renounced (Nicolosi 1999) is fallacious. However, his submission that homosexuals enter treatment due to 'external motives' as social disadvantages and other dangerous consequences technically complements Bergler's argument that the homosexual can change if they want to. To this charge, the external motives Freud speaks about represent important 'techniques' in Bergler's theory of conversion, such as embarrassment, punishment, and mortification, necessary for a wholesome therapeutic process. In other words, regardless of the impetus for seeking treatment, there exists the possibility of change. But the cautiousness with which Freud handles the subject of 'conversion and homosexuality' represents the organic quality of Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*.

As a literary piece, *Walking with Shadows* analyses the character of Adrian, a queer man in relation to his society. The book represents 'a contemplation' of the subject of homosexuality in the light of possible immutability and/or treatability of the sexual condition. In this way Dibia, while factoring the 'innocence' of the individual homosexual as a pervert and the rather ordinary response to queerness from the larger straight Nigerian society, the author describes a therapeutic session that sought to contribute to the larger argument of queer immutability. In this way, Bergler's conversion theory finds representation in the attitudes of Mama, Ada, Chiedu, Pastor Mike, and the entire staff of DialPlus, whose contemptuous response to Adrian's sexuality is complementary to Bergler's understanding on the treatability of the former's condition. Growing up as a queer effeminate boy, Adrian led a traumatic life born out of dejection, rejection and depression facilitated by his personal disorientation about his status as an "other" even as he struggled to forge an identity for himself and to determine a place for his kind within his own family/society. This trauma was manifest in a dream Adrian shared with Abdul, a dream he had experienced not once but three times during his childhood through adulthood. In the dream, Adrian was in his

childhood room when his mother came in to demand his presence in the parlour to meet with some strange couple who had a striking resemblance to his parents. His mother had decided that he must remake himself to be presentable. She commanded him to comb his hair, tuck his shirt, walk straight and not slouch. On getting to the parlour, his father protested for him (Adrian) to meet his real parents (122). According to Sigmund Freud, every dream represents a certain desire in people that has been repressed in reality and thus seeks fulfilment through the dream. With its power of massively distorting reality and metaphorically replacing real-life entities with several other materials, Mama is thought to represent society and its requirement for order, especially with its insensitivity to the notion of individuality and selfhood when she asked that Adrian dress well and appear presentable.

Of particular interest to this dream is the fact that Adrian had lived a long life of emotional want, given the mostly cold attitudes of his two parents towards him. His heart yearned for their love, affection, approval and acceptance. These he seemed to have acquired from the two strange parents in the dream who smiled at him and had that proud expectant look in their eyes as he met them. Thus, the two new parents are representative of the queer utopia that Adrian had unconsciously been hoping for. While questions remain as to whether or not their smiles and proud looks were dependent on his outlook which Mama had imposed on him, expressions such as ‘Walk straight’, ‘don’t slouch’ and ‘real parents’ are telling of the subject’s traumatic experience as a gay man struggling to fit into a society that won’t tolerate his independence, ...their therapeutic role could not have been overemphasized. However, it is the subconscious recognition of ‘queer reality’ as implicitly expressed by Mama that bears the organic consequence of the dream, employed by Dibia to establish queerness simply as the ‘denied normal’, hence her demand for Adrian to adjust himself for the occasion.

As he came in contact with numerous therapeutic situations in life that ranged from abuse, resentment, punishment and violence, Adrian was not only subjected to the whims of

Bergler’s rather radical proposals, he was made to overcomplicate the critic’s strategy by consciously undertaking to alter his sexual orientation. However, while Freud warned that, though homosexuality is a perversion, even a conscious undertaking to “change” one’s sexuality does not translate into such a conviction, an argument to which Adrian’s experiences again representatively validate. Thus, the contemplation of this complex is the organic idea that Dibia presented in *Walking with Shadows*. This he did by segmenting the novel to highlight distinct but complementary models of experience about his central character in a way that allows the reader to consider the question of ‘homosexual immutability’ by appreciating a three-in-one Adrian that chiefly substantiate Bergler’s conclusions on conversion therapy and his insistence on the possibility of immutability, Freud’s cautionary pessimism about the practice (conversion), and his (Dibia’s) own queer and salient analytic judgement of these two aforementioned positions.

Adrian consciously turned straight. He abandoned his homosexual desires and embraced heterosexuality. He married Ada, created a family within which he led a straight life as father and husband. For six years, Adrian remained resolute in his decision and never engaged in any homosexual affair. It is this resolution that Bergler construe to be the single most important tool needed for the treatment of homosexuality. Even as Freud would insist that there is no empirical way to determine the reality of such determination as independent, it is clear that Adrian’s resentment of himself and sexuality was personal. Dibia described thus;

Abdul had said the night before that it seemed Adrian was ashamed of his past; what Abdul actually wanted to say was that he was ashamed of his sexuality. He had been for years. He had wanted it to be his little secret. He had even hoped that he would wake up one morning and find himself cured, straight. (65)

But while it must be noted that Adrian’s shame and desire to be cured of homosexuality were individualistic, the impetus for such desire was

socially reflexive. There is no proof that, without the social pressures Adrian faced, the desire to change would have arisen within him and the above quotation would have mainly represented Freudian conclusions that such a decision is only compulsive, especially when attention is paid to the phrases "...his little secret" and/or "...ashamed of his sexuality".

While the ability of Adrian to stay straight for six years might substantiate Bergler's argument about the treatability of homosexuality, time is completely insignificant and cannot be an indication of a successful conversion therapy, for repressed desire, according to Freud, shall simply stay repressed until they find expression and this might happen when a real-life event provides the opportunity or reminds the mind of that forgotten wish. Thus, the Osanaya case, represents a very significant moment in the life of Adrian in specific and as far as Dibia's walking with shadows as a whole is concerned, for it served to bring Adrian face to face with the 'reality' of his sexuality of a gay man in an utterly homophobic society—a situation he had fought so hard to avoid. While the Osanaya case might have served to uphold Freudian understanding as regards the immutability of homosexuality, it is important to understand that there is no existential guarantee that any situation might ever arise that might force a remembering of suppressed desires. To this end, one might say that if the Osanaya complication did not occur, Adrian would have remained straight and this could have favored Bergler's position that homosexuality is after all mutable. However, in almost as fast as the same breath, one can argue that the 'Osanaya' case is completely insignificant considering that it was for the negative social attitude towards queerness that Adrian ever desired to be straight to begin with. Thus, a careful examination of these two complexes would reveal that aside from the binaries of mutability and immutability, Dibia's walking with shadows submits homosexuality to be non-mutable, whereas non-mutability portends the question whether or not homosexuality is immutable as mainly relative.

Findings

The novel's early experiences and

connections indicate internal conflicts that align with Freud's assertion that childhood relational patterns influence adult desire. Depictions of intimate same-sex interactions, along with themes of guilt and secrecy, suggest initial erotic imprinting followed by subsequent repression. The novel consistently presents denial, relocation, and sublimation as reactions to societal judgment. Adrian's redirection of affection into socially accepted positions (work, marriage) serves as a transient sublimation but fails to address the fundamental yearning. Adrian's six-year heterosexual marriage seems to support Bergler's assertion that same-sex attraction can be deflected by social and therapeutic influences. Nonetheless, narrative markers such as dreams, flashbacks, and repeating fantasies indicate that suppression, rather than conversion, transpires; the resurgence of same-sex desire signifies that the perceived mutability was temporary.

Dibia portrays treatment, spiritual guidance, and familial pressure as measures intended to normalise Adrian. The novel attacks these techniques by emphasising the resultant harm, heightened self-alienation, trauma, and subsequent relapse. The revival of desire reinforces the paper's assertion that immutability is relative. Sexual orientation in the story is influenced by social context, memory, and trauma, rather than being entirely flexible or completely immutable. *Walking with Shadows* serves as both a critique of homophobic institutions and a sophisticated examination of Freudian assertions regarding origin and transformation, utilising Adrian's inner experience to complicate binary perspectives on treatability.

Conclusion

The concept of queerness is investigated as an emerging complexity within the framework of Nigerian life and living in this investigation. Specifically, it places an appreciation for homosexuality in relation to the highly contentious issue of immutability. Through the use of Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*, it examines the various ways in which homosexuality is shown in modern Nigerian writing. Particular attention is paid to the topics of family life, coming out, and the consequences of being gay in a country that is

homophobic, such as Nigeria. As a result, it goes on to investigate the ability of literature to force ideas on readers in a conscious, subconscious, and subconsciously manner through the organisation and development of characters. In order to accomplish this, two opposing viewpoints regarding the feasibility of curing homosexuality were positioned in relation to *Walking with Shadows* in order to ascertain the answer to the

question of “homosexual immutability.” In light of this, the text itself is appraised as a practical evaluation of the contrasting ideas held by Sigmund Freud and Edmund Bergler regarding the viability of a cure for queerness from a psychological point of view. This is the argument that the paper makes in response to the question “whether or not homosexuality is immutable, is relative.”

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