

**TREATMENT OF HIV/AIDS IN FICTION: A FOCUS ON  
MARJORIE OLUDHE MACGOYE'S *CHIRA*, JOSEPH  
SITUMA'S *THE MYSTERIOUS KILLER*, AND CAROLYN  
ADALLA'S *CONFESSIONS OF AN AIDS VICTIM*.**

By  
**Rose Wangui Komu**

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION**

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## DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of learning.

Rose Wangui Komu

Signature  Date 15/07/2005

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors

Dr. Peter O. Wasamba

Signature  Date 22/7/05

Ms Masumi Hashimoto Odari

Signature  Date 15/07/2005

## **DEDICATION**

To Mum and Dad for stating me off the road to education.

To all who have succumbed to the deadly virus.

To all who are writhing in pain from its pangs.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines how Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye in *Chira*, Joseph Situma in *The Mysterious Killer* and Carolyn Adalla in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, have exploited Literature to depict the causes of HIV/AIDS, its effects on the society, their vision for the society in the face of the pandemic, in a fresh and more effective way. We also look at characterization and the literary techniques they have exploited to this end.

This study investigates the hypotheses that, through the use of figures of speech, letters, dialogues and reminiscences, the writers bring out their visions *vis a vis* HIV/AIDS; the portrayal of characters living with HIV/AIDS is an effective way of revealing the theme of the pandemic; and that though these writers are informed by the theme of HIV/AIDS, their views on the disease have similarities and differences.

The study adopts the sociological and stylistic critical approaches.

The study is subdivided into three chapters. Chapter one introduces the study and reviews relevant Literature to the study. Chapter two explores how the various issues surrounding the HIV/AIDS are depicted by the three writers, as well as the vision they offer to the society in the face of the scourge. Chapter three is an examination of how metaphors, similes, symbols, letter mode of writing, dialogue, and reminiscences enhance exploration of the theme of AIDS effectively.

The study reveals that, though the three writers deal with familiar issues of HIV/AIDS, through characterization and the various stylistic devices and literary techniques, they go beyond the statement of “do s and don’ts” that characterize most HIV/AIDS discourses in other fields, to provide a clear vision for the society. The study

shows that the writers also recognise the role of both men and women in the fight against the scourge.

## INTRODUCTION

Presently, HIV/ AIDS is one of the world's main health concerns. This is because of its debilitating effects on the socio-economic spheres of the global society. According to Eunice Ivala and Lucy Kithome in *The Socio-Cultural Contexts of HIV/AIDS Transmission in Kenya*:

HIV/AIDS set in motion a vicious cycle, which is threatening the very survival of the world's people. It is killing people in their most productive years, increasing poverty, reversing gains made in education, lowering labour productivity, threatening food security and slowing economic growth. (51)

It is for these reasons that so much attention is being directed towards curtailing the disease locally and internationally. In Kenya for example, the seriousness of the scourge can be gauged by the government's decision to declare it a "national disaster" in 1999. This meant that the government would engage in deliberate and focused strategies of containing the disease.

The statistics on the disease, which are alarming, indicate the significance of this concern. According to the *Saturday Nation* of March 5<sup>th</sup> 2005, about 89 million people in Africa alone are at the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS by 2015, "unless the world takes tough measures to curtail the epidemic"(12). In a seminar paper entitled *HIV/ AIDS: Overview and Facts in 2003*, Amos Chiguba puts the number of those infected worldwide to 36 million. 22.2 of these are found in Africa and 2.2 are in Kenya. Recent figures contained in the *Sunday Nation* of 9<sup>th</sup> January 2005, estimate



the number of Kenyans who have died from the pandemic to be 1.5 million since 1984; the year the first case of AIDS was reported in the country. Another 2 million is said to be infected, and more than 200,000 Kenyans die from the disease every year.

The magnitude of the pandemic can further be perceived through the phrases that have been used to describe it. Echoing the famous words of W.E. Dubois in, *Up from Slavery* that, “the problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the problem of the colour line,” Maureen Ndumba, in her Masters dissertation entitled, “Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Meja Mwangi’s *The Last Plague*”, has suggested that the problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the problem of HIV/AIDS.

Colin Powell, the former American Secretary of State, in his address to youth groups dealing with AIDS in Nairobi, on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2005, referred to HIV/AIDS as a phenomenon beyond a “health problem.... It is a destroyer of societies; it is a destroyer of economies” (*Sunday nation*, 19). S. Maithufi, in a seminar paper entitled, *HIV/AIDS: Contamination or Curse?* says that South African traditional healers view it as a curse (sefifi/ isthunzi), contracted through sexual intercourse with a woman who has just had an abortion or just lost a loved one. The loved one could be a child, a wife or a husband.

Similar beliefs are found in *Chira* and *The Mysterious Killer*. The title of *Chira* is a Luo name for a curse resulting from sexual misbehavior such as incest or adultery (*Chira*, 49). In *The Mysterious Killer*, HIV/AIDS is associated with Witchcraft (Ndumba, 21). Other famous words that have been used to describe the disease and which capture the danger it poses include “world’s devastating

holocaust” (Kamugishu, 16), “international non-racial, non-sexist and non-class dreadful-killer,”(Ofuoni, 53) and “world’s number one killer”, among others. All these descriptions indicate that AIDS is a social reality that must be confronted, thus the interest of this study to explore how literature has addressed the problems posed by the scourge.

AIDS, which is an acronym for, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, was first reported in the world in 1980. In Kenya, the first case was reported in 1984. Since then, HIV/AIDS is a topic that has continued to capture newspaper headlines, the attention of medical journals and important gatherings, nationally and internationally. It has kept “medical researchers busy in their laboratories long after the last resident has put his lights off,” to borrow the words of Carolyn Adalla in, *The Confessions of an AIDS Victim* (9). New discoveries on its nature; advancements in the search for its cure; and statistics on its spread, it is news that is of concern to those in the medical field and humanity at large. This is because the pandemic affects everybody, irrespective of status.

Basically, AIDS is a disease that destroys the immune system of the victim’s body, making it vulnerable to attacks from other opportunistic infections. Despite its devastating effects world wide, no cure has been discovered for the two decades it has been spreading its deadly pangs around the world.

The anti- retroviral therapies available are expensive and most of the victims in poor countries like Kenya cannot afford them. As Margaret Ogolla, the medical director of Cottolengo Hospice for HIV positive Orphans in Nairobi correctly notes, anti retroviral therapies, though important in the fight against AIDS, cannot solve

the HIV /AIDS problem. This is due to their high cost of purchase and management (*A Word from Rome*, 5).

They also have serious side effects on vital internal organs because of their toxicity on patients after long term use; not to mention the fact that they are just life lengtheners and not complete cures for AIDS. This indicates that the HIV/AIDS problem is far from being solved, especially in developing countries, where other problems like poverty, further aggravate the problem.

From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that since there is no cure for AIDS, the only solution is to put in place preventive measures in order to curb the spread of the scourge. One of the measures, and we can say the most effective, is communication, that is, creating awareness about the disease. People need to be sensitized on the dangers of contracting the HIV virus, how to prevent themselves from being infected, and if infected, how to live fulfilling lives as victims. The society also needs to be educated on how to help the infected and the affected surmount the stigma associated with the disease. This is where literature and other creative works come in.

Presently, awareness is being created through important fora like public *barazas*, the mass media, public seminars and educational institutions, among other gatherings. In this regard, literature has also chipped its contribution. Plays, skits, poems and narratives, have been written and performed in the bid to create awareness about the disease. The texts under study are prose ventures by people who respond sensitively to the needs of their society, which in this case is the challenge posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Literature, as Wilber Scott notes, is not only the work of a person, “but of an author fixed in time, and space, answering to a community of which he is an important” articulate part (Quoted in Tilak, 9). This means that literature is shaped by the needs of the society at a particular time and writers, being members of the society cannot simply turn their backs and ignore these needs. At the moment, AIDS is a crisis that needs be addressed, and writers like Macgoye, Situma and Adalla have addressed it in their works.

According to Lindfors, writers are the “seers” of the community and as seers, they must “communicate their vision of the human condition to those who are too short sighted to see it clearly themselves”(53). This statement is true *vis a vis* the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The fact that the pandemic continues to grow, despite the mechanisms that have been put in place to create awareness on infection modes, is an indicator that there are many people who are still “too short sighted” in as far as the pandemic is concerned.

The fact that the cultural practices that enhance the spread of the disease like, wife inheritance, polygamy, and unprotected sex, among other risky habits, continue to be practiced is an indication of the ineffectiveness of the methods used to create awareness. Hence, there is need for more effective ways of sensitizing people on the disease, and literature can be one of them. By manipulating the wide range of linguistic and literary choices at their disposal, creative writers can depict the reality of AIDS in inventive and creative ways to appeal to the “short sighted lot” in society.

In addition, literature transcends barriers of readership because when these works are placed in the public realm, they can easily be accessed by anyone irrespective of their professional orientations. Hence, literature is capable of creating awareness to any member of the society.

This study focuses on how Macgoye in *Chira*, Adalla in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* and Situma in *The Mysterious Killer* have used their creative talent to portray the various issues on the pandemic effectively. The study also explores the vision the three writers have for the society, in the face of the HIV/AIDS scourge. Though the three authors are incomparable in terms of their literary maturity, there exists points of comparison, and therefore, the study will be both exploratory and comparative. Points of comparison will include their character portrayals, techniques of depicting HIV/AIDS and their effectiveness, and gender perspectives in relation to the pandemic.

### **BRIEF LITERARY BIOGRAPHIES OF THE AUTHORS**

Macgoye is English by origin and Kenyan through her marriage to Daniel Oludhe Macgoye. She was born in England in 1928 as Marjorie King. She was raised and educated there. She moved to Kenya as a missionary bookseller. In 1960, she married Daniel Oludhe Macgoye and has been a Kenyan citizen since 1964. From then, Macgoye has courageously confronted the hurdles of fitting into an alien culture, successfully fitting not only in the Luo culture, that is, her husband's ethnic group, but also, the Kenyan culture at large, as is evident in her works. Today, she

is one of Kenya's most prolific writers who according to Philo Ikonya, "has made a considerable contribution to both Kenyan Literature and culture"(1).

Most of her works are about the social, economic and political changes in Kenya at various historical stages since independence, and how this has impacted on her women protagonists. Even in *Chira*, which is a novel that responds to the HIV/ AIDS pandemic, these issues stand out too. Her literary prowess has led to her novel, *Coming to Birth*, being selected by the Kenya Institute of Education as the prose set book for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, Literature paper from this year that is 2005; a no small feat.

Her works include seven novels and a collection of poems. These are: *Growing up at Lina School* (1971), *Murder in Majengo* (1972), *Coming to Birth* (1986), *Street Life* (1987), *The Present Moment* (1987), *Victoria* (1993), *Homing in* (1994), *Song of Nyarloka and Other Poems* (1977), and the book under study, *Chira* (1997). She has won two literary prizes for her creative writing: BBC Arts and African Poetry Award (1981), for "*Shairi La Ukombozi*" and Sinclair Prize (1986), for her novel, *Coming to Birth*.

Situma, who is a lecturer at the University of Nairobi, department of philosophy, was born in 1965, in western Kenya. He is an emergent writer, who like Macgoye, is cutting a niche for himself in literary circles. Within five years, he has produced three novels. Apart from *The Mysterious Killer*, his second novel, there is *Mpuonzi's Dream*, his first, published in 1999. He has just released his third novel, *Seizing the Night*, this year (2005), which is the first part of a trilogy he intends to write.

He has been described as a writer who, though topical in his themes, (quest for peace in *Mpuonzi's Dream*, HIV/AIDS in *The Mysterious Killer*, Communism and capitalism in *Seizing the Night*), is still grappling with setting out his own identity as a writer because his works echo those of other writers like Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Chinua Achebe, Austin Bukonya, Grace Ogot, among others (Tervil Okoko, *The People*, Jan 14 2000).

Carolyne Adalla is a graduate in Bachelor Science (Agriculture), from Egerton University. She is currently working on a Youth Programme between Kenya and the Netherlands. This explains her interest in the subject of HIV/AIDS. So far, her major work is *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Though HIV/ AIDS is a serious social and health problem, and though a lot has been written on it in the form of poems, essays, plays and novels, there are few critical works on Kenyan HIV/AIDS literature. Nobantu Rasebotsa in *AIDS Fiction in Africa*, blames this on the fact that most of HIV/AIDS fiction in Kenya is written by less known writers. According to her, this makes people consider these works to be popular literature, a term that has negative connotations, in that, it is used to refer to literature that is of little literary value.

Apart from Wahome Mutahi (*House of Doom*), Meja Mwangi (*The Last Plague*), and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye (*Chira*), most of the other writers who have so far dedicated whole novels to exploration of HIV/AIDS are new names. This may explain why there are few criticisms on HIV/AIDS literature. This study is

therefore an attempt to reverse this trend. It is a way of examining whether these works have any artistic and social value *vis a vis* the theme of HIV/AIDS rather than just dismissing them as of no literary value without putting them to the test of rigorous criticism.

Furthermore, the critical works available have tended to concentrate on thematic analyses, as if HIV/AIDS literature is simply content oriented. This has served to enhance the notion that some of these works are simply popular literature, as even in popular literature there is always a message. This study, therefore, while looking at how these writers have explored the various issues on HIV/AIDS, also explores the techniques used, and how they contribute to the literariness in these works in relation to the theme of HIV/AIDS.

There are also few studies that have illuminated the works of young and upcoming writers like Adalla and Situma, especially when there are renowned writers who have written on similar topics as they have. There is therefore need to study these young writers and compare them with those of the older generation, to see how the generation gap creative experience affects their views on important social issues like HIV/AIDS and creativity of their works. This is why the study has settled on Macgoye, an elderly and experienced writer on one hand, and Adalla and situma, as young and emergent writers, on the other.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study aims at examining:



- How the three authors explore the various issues that are associated with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. These issues include factors enhancing the spread of HIV/AIDS, how the society is dealing with these issues and the solutions the authors offer towards resolving the HIV/AIDS crisis.
- The study also examines how the characters infected and affected by HIV/AIDS reveal its reality.
- The study also identifies the stylistic techniques used to explore the theme of HIV/AIDS, and the extent to which they effectively contribute to developing the theme.

### **HYPOTHESIS**

The hypotheses that will be tested in this study are as follows:

- The portrayal of both the infected and affected characters by HIV/AIDS is an effective way of revealing important issues attendant on the pandemic.
- Through the use of figures of speech, letters, dialogues and reminiscences, among other techniques, the writers bring out the various issues surrounding HIV/ AIDS.
- Though these writers are informed by one theme, that is, HIV/AIDS, their views on the disease have similarities and differences, and so they do not explore it in the same way.

## JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study is justified on the grounds that, HIV/AIDS is a serious social crisis and it is spreading very fast, yet it has no known cure to date. Since Literature is a "creative attempt of men and women who are sensitive to the issues of their time, and who exploit the possibilities of language available to them to make permanent their vision of life"(Wasamba 1997:2), we should study works dealing with the pandemic, if not for anything else, but just for their social value.

Though over the years there has been an explosion of information on HIV/AIDS in Kenya, from her numerous institutional sectors, the pandemic has continued to grow. This indicates that people are not internalizing the information, so as to discard life styles and attitudes that enhance the spread of the disease. There is therefore need for more effective methods of communication and literature is one of them.

We should study HIV/AIDS related literature with a view of highlighting how the writers have exploited the power of story telling to communicate information that has become so stale, in a more refreshing and effective way. This study is therefore justified because it seeks to explore the innovative and refreshing ways the three authors address the theme of HIV/AIDS.

The study is further justified because it is through these works that awareness on the HIV/AIDS pandemic is created, and ways of curbing the pandemic suggested. Using poetic license, even taboo topics such sexuality, can craftily be explored by the writer without hurting the feelings of the moralists. This

is a step forward to demystifying the pandemic and, a contribution towards resolving the HIV/AIDS crisis.

The three novels under study are recent publications and therefore, they are yet to be subjected to rigorous critical analysis. This study is therefore justified because; it is one of the first attempts at studying the above works rigorously and highlighting their views on HIV/AIDS.

There are unique qualities in each of the three novels and studying them together is advantageous as each ones' unique contribution boosts the quality of the study. To start with, *Confessions of An AIDS Victim* was published in 1993, *Chira* in 1997, and *The Mysterious Killer* in 2003, a decade's time frame. Therefore, by studying the three works together, we are able to see the changing attitudes, views and developments in resolving the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Each of the three writers uses different protagonists to unfold the theme of HIV/AIDS. Situma, who is a male writer, uses a female protagonist; Macgoye, a female writer and the most experienced of the three writers, uses male, while Adalla, also a female writer, uses a female protagonist. All the protagonists are young. The choice of writers who belong to different age and social groups is justified because professional and social backgrounds are important in helping us to see the views of each generation, profession and social group in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs the sociological and stylistic critical approaches. The Sociological theory is based on the premise that literature is produced in a social context and that it has a social function or domain. It negates the principle of art for art's sake, to encompass one of art for human sake. This means that a literary writer has a social responsibility to communicate his/her vision to the people and to promulgate solutions to human problems. His/her work must highlight social ills and provide direction for dealing with these ills, much as he/she engages in creativity.

As Bernth Lindfors observes in his critique of Soyinka's mode of writing, which has been accused of obscurity due to its over reliance on myth and linguistic manipulations that,

...A writer who wishes to serve as a seer in his society must do more than merely distract his audience from boredom.... In other words he must convey a truth, a lucid social metaphor. A seer must not only be able to see; he must be able to transfer his vision to others. (53)

This means that creative writers write with the society in mind. Literature is viewed as a mirror through which the society looks and sees itself. To sociological theorists, the best writer is the one who is able to pass the message to his readers effectively. Literature on HIV/AIDS can be said to have a social function, in that, it aims at educating people about the disease. The purpose is to make them adopt attitudes that can lead to the curbing of the disease. Hence, this theory is important

in that it will boost our analysis of the thematic concerns *vis a vis* HIV/AIDS of the three novels.

The study also employs stylistic criticism. Stylistics is “a critical approach that aims to show how the technical features of literary work...contribute to the overall meaning and effect” (Barry, 202). What Barry is putting across here is that, through stylistic analysis, we are able to explain how the form relates to the content to bring out the meaning and aesthetics of a work of art.

It is important to note that while in poetry these artistic features are largely linguistic, in prose writing, it includes much more, as it can be seen in the words of Leech and Short:

... Whereas in poetry, aesthetic effect cannot be separated from the creative manipulation of linguistic code, in prose it tends to reside more in other factors (such as character, theme, argument), which are expressed through rather than inherent in language. (2)

Hence, when we talk of style as a means of revealing the aesthetics of a prose work, we must go beyond language, to the study of those features that operate at the extra-linguistic level in order to bring out meaning in the work. According to Ngara:

One must concern himself with details of grammar, lexis, phonology, prosody, meaning, as well as wider issues of deviation from the norm, character and the relationship between the author and the audience. (12)

The stylistic approach is appropriate in this study because we are not only interested in characters and themes but also the techniques used in revealing them.

In this study, our analysis does not cover all the features listed by Ngara, as we are only interested in those features that best reveal the theme of HIV/AIDS like characterization and figures of speech, dialogue and reminiscences

Combining the two theories is therefore important because using stylistics; we examine how the theme of HIV/AIDS is communicated. Using the sociological theory, we point out what the authors have to say about HIV/AIDS, and the solutions they give to the society in the face of HIV/AIDS

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In the review, we examine not only critical works on *Chira*, *The Mysterious Killer*, and *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, as there are very few available, but also other related critiques and studies on HIV/AIDS literature. We also review studies on Macgoye's other works.

In this review, Macgoye has been singled out because she has written other works, which have been subjected to both local and international criticism. There is need to look at these critical works so as to have an overview of her general style and other critical ideas which may be helpful to the study.

Another reason for focusing on Macgoye in this review is the identity debate surrounding her works due to her European background, and which some critics have used as the basis for dismissing Macgoye's works as non-African, in the past. The review will establish how these views have affected critical attention to her works in the past, and how the views have changed with time. Adalla and Situma being Kenyan by origin have been spared these identity debates. Being young and

emergent writers also, they have yet to write many works, which may attract rigorous critiques, as even the few they have written are not considered to be serious by many critics.

### **MACGOYE'S GENERAL STYLE, CONCERNS AND CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING HER WORKS.**

For a long time, Macgoye has paid a high price for what Petra Bitter calls her "in-betweeness," in reference to her dual cultural background. Being white by birth and upbringing and Kenyan through marriage, there are some critics who have felt that her works cannot explore the African experience adequately and therefore declined to recognize her as an African writer.

Two critics, Peter Wasamba and Philo Ikonyo, who have studied Macgoye's works, have lamented, and rightly so, the lack of critical attention on her works in the past. They have blamed this on the politics of defining who is and is not an African writer. Critics like Chris Wanjala (*Season Of Harvest*), feel that African literature is one that is written by black Africans. Others like Chinua Achebe (*Morning Yet on Creation Day*), have dismissed colour as the basis for judging African Literature. To them, African literature is any writing done by any one, no matter his/her skin color, who shares the African experience.

The former group has obviously placed Macgoye, under the "outsiders" bracket despite her efforts to belong, since she is of British origin. As a result, for a long time, most of the critiques of her works have been concentrated in newspapers,

journals and magazines, rather than full length studies; as they have been viewed to be imperialist, that is, they enhance the West's exploitative agenda in Africa.

The trend has however changed especially after she won the Sinclair prize in 1986 for, *Coming to Birth*, and when *Homing in* came second to Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* in the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature, in 1995. As a result her works have started receiving the long overdue critical attention both locally and internationally. As noted earlier, the fact that her novel, *Coming to Birth* has been selected as the secondary school set book for the Literature in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination paper this year, (2005), from the vast pool of Kenyan and African literature, is an indicator of how far this recognition has gone.

There are however still some critics who are yet to accept her as "an insider" in Kenyan literary circles. These critics still view her as an "outsider", though Macgoye herself insists she is an African and Kenyan writer. To them, her western background will always have an imprint on her interpretation of the African experience.

One such critic, Tobias Otieno, in an article entitled, "Insider/ Outsider Perceptions: Ideological Intrusions in Angira's and Macgoye's Poems "*Kisumu*", published in *The Nairobi Journal of Literature* of March 2004, refers to Macgoye as "an outsider." Otieno is even convinced that, Macgoye, and others like her of foreign descent, can never be totally redeemed from their ideological perceptions to become real insiders in the articulation of the African world view.

In his criticism of Angira's and Macgoye's poems both entitled "*Kisumu*", Otieno insists that though the two are talking about the same town, their ideological



positions are different, in that Macgoye as a foreigner “informs Kisumu,” while Angira “is informed by Kisumu.” He further argues that Macgoye is judgmental and defensive: “we the foreigners are good for you” (18), unlike Angira who is simply adoring and welcoming: “you the foreigners are good for us”(18).

To Otieno, no matter how much Macgoye and others in her situation try to fit within the African context, this is a task too immense for them because, “we inevitably imbibe the continuity of our community as we grow up, and while we can improve on it or alter some aspects in life, what changes are flesh and blood; the skeleton remains intact” (11).

He further argues that,

Angira was brought up in the Luo worldview...[while] Macgoye was brought up in a Judeo- Christian culture and encountered the Luo worldview only later in life through marriage. While both may be liberal in outlook and open to other worldviews, their deeper ideological positions (the skeletons) remain permanent, and they see everything from that position. (My parentheses; 11)

This means that Macgoye and her type will always view Africans as inferior to whites because this is a view imparted in to them from their formative years.

We accept that Otieno has a point in that, changing our ideological perceptions totally is a difficult task and we should not assume it should be easy for Macgoye. Indeed, other critics like Petra Bitter have pointed out that, Macgoye’s works are not entirely African and that they depict her in betweenness of being, both an African and a European. Her works are therefore a blend of African and non-African elements in style, characterization and subject matter.

However, any learned behavior can be unlearned with time and ideological positions are no different. They may be difficult to change but this does not mean it is completely impossible, as Otiemo would like us to believe, especially if one is determined to do so. Macgoye has demonstrated a readiness to understand and identify with the African worldview as her person and works testify.

Her works reveal a deep understanding of not only, Luo culture but also, Kenyan culture and history as a whole. Though there may be some ethnocentric elements in her works, it is only fair we acknowledge her contribution to Kenyan culture through literature; and her remarkable sensitivity to aspects of Kenyan life, as much as we criticize her.

On her style of writing, Macgoye has been hailed for her attempts to blend the history of the nation, Kenya, with that of her individual characters especially women. According to Hélène Cixous, Macgoye is concerned with the marginalized women in both her poetry and fiction. Cixous argues that, Macgoye in her novels is interested in narrating historical events from the perspective of ordinary women and that, this strategy “seeks to turn national history into stories of ordinary folk. What is achieved ...is a narrative that reveals the individual being perpetually denied identity within the nation” (134).

The denial of identity is especially worse for women who because of the patriarchal nature of our society, are viewed as the other of men. They must therefore fight for recognition, and Macgoye through her works tries to give them a voice, changing them from mere spectators of the going-ons of their country to participants and contributor.

According to J. Roger Kurtz in journal article entitled, "Historical Perspective, Literary Insight: The national Narrative in Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *The Present Moment*", suggests that Macgoye is concerned with the "Coming to Birth" of her women characters, alongside that of her adopted country, Kenya, within a historical perspective.

Even in *Chira*, in which HIV/AIDS is the main theme, Macgoye still finds a place for history and women emancipation, as the AIDS pandemic is explored against the background of history and women empowerment. For example, though Gabriel is the main character in the novel, as the story unfolds, his girlfriend, Helen, who in the end is actually the heroine of the novel, overshadows him.

She is therefore a writer who is very sensitive to issues of the day in her country, Kenya, and who promptly responds to social and historical events in the country through her works. We can see the chronology of Kenya's social and historical developments since 1963 through her works. This explains why *Chira*, a novel in which she addresses the AIDS pandemic; its causes, symptoms, misconceptions about it and how it can be contained" (Wasamba, 127), is one of the earliest creative attempts of its magnitude to respond to the AIDS pandemic, as the disease is a landmark in the history of the nation.

As pointed earlier, Situma and Adalla are emerging writers in the long history of Kenyan writing, and though their works are very topical, they are yet to be subject to significant criticism.

## THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN ADDRESSING HIV/AIDS.

In *Speech or Silence: The Linguistic Implication of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Spread in Rural Communities*, Joseph C. Ogbodo, in a study conducted in the rural communities of Nigeria has noted that the war against HIV/AIDS has failed as, instead of the numbers of those infected decreasing since the launch of the “war against HIV/AIDS” in 1991, the numbers have increased. This he has blamed on what he calls the “culture of silence and the screaming lack of linguistic information.”

Ogbodo's assertion is true even for Kenya, is willing to talk openly about HIV/AIDS. This is largely because, as pointed earlier, one cannot separate sex matters from the HIV/AIDS discourse, and sex is a taboo topic in most African communities. Hence, people continue to die because, instead of addressing the real causes of HIV/AIDS, which is irresponsible sexual behavior, they latch on to far-fetched explanations like witchcraft and curses. Those who are sick are viewed as either cursed or bewitched. Ogbodo therefore suggests that the appropriate language for disseminating information be put in place.

Nobuhle Ndimande in *Language Inferiority and the Spread of HIV/AIDS: the Case for Rural Families* also identifies language as a major barrier to curbing HIV/AIDS. Nobuhle is also concerned with the appropriate language that should be used to communicate about AIDS to the rural masses. He suggests that awareness campaigns be conducted using “their own languages” meaning, local languages.

In *Education on HIV/AIDS: Overcoming the Language Barrier*. Odunlade Adedeji is in agreement with Nobuhle and Ogbodo that language is a major barrier in curbing the pandemic and that local languages should be used to talk about AIDS in rural areas. He argues that most of the AIDS information is in national languages like English, French and therefore communicating about AIDS to the rural people in these international languages could be difficult because most of them do not understand them. Further, Adedeji notes that the accurate translation of information and ideas to local languages may not only be a difficult task but also an impossible one.

He therefore suggests that we use homonyms and transliteration to transport ideas from one language to the other. This means that the words that have similarities in both sound and meaning in both languages should be used. An example he gives is the Yoruba word "Eedi", which simply means, something to be avoided at all costs. The word sounds very much like AIDS. This word can be used to talk about the dangers of AIDS because its meaning and sound are very closely related to AIDS in the Yoruba language.

In support of need for effective communication, Anna Nkebuka in *The Participation of Women in Communication for HIV/AIDS Prevention in Africa: The Experience of Rural Tanzania* is concerned about women's inaccessibility to information on HIV/AIDS. Nkebuka is of the opinion that "women have special information needs." This is because, there are cultural and traditional factors that deny women adequate exposure to factual information on HIV/AIDS. The factors include:

Heavy domestic workload, low education and illiteracy, the domestication of women, the biased contents of the messages, lacking gender sensitivity and other cultural specifics and inhibitions inherent in skewed gender relations...(41)

According to her, the lack of direct exposure to factual information forces women to place misguided trust in men who they have been socialized to consider as being more knowledgeable than them. This is unfortunate, as some of these men do not even have enough facts on HIV/AIDS.

Where they do, they might sometimes misinform them for their own selfish ends. It is possible for a woman who lacks enough information on HIV/AIDS to be cheated into having sex with a man who is infected and who holds false beliefs about the disease. Therefore, it is important for educators to come up with specific educational programmes for women, especially in the rural areas, so that they too can have adequate information on HIV/AIDS.

Language is indeed a major obstacle in controlling HIV/AIDS even in Kenya. In some cases, people simply do not want to talk about the disease and in others; the communities are too illiterate to understand either Kiswahili or English. If the HIV/AIDS educators cannot understand the local culture, language and euphemisms, then a total communication breakdown occurs.

For example, according to *Nomadic news issue # 2002/02*, there is “a looming crisis” of communication on AIDS because of illiteracy and inaccessibility of information among the Ogiek (12). This means that the Ogiek do not access

information, and when they do, illiteracy prevents them from consuming it .So, creating awareness among them on AIDS is really a difficult task.

To overcome AIDS, there is need to put in place appropriate communication structures such as those suggested by Adedeji, Ndimande and Nkebuka. This study therefore looks into the three writer's views on the communication problems on HIV/AIDS and how they address these problems. Indeed, the whole study is an investigation on how literature has been used to communicate about HIV/AIDS effectively.

### **ROLE OF LITERATURE IN ADDRESSING HIV/AIDS**

Literature provides first hand perception of social reality in that, as we read a novel, a play or a poem, we are in a way experiencing the life of characters therein. It can therefore be used effectively to create awareness about HIV/ AIDS.

According to Debra S. Boyd in *AIDS and the Creative Imagination in Niger*, theatre (a form of literature) was used to propagate historical themes in order to educate people, and encourage pride in ones national identity during the colonial era in Nigeria. It can therefore be used to address contemporary issues such as AIDS.

We agree with Debra that literature can be used as a tool of conscientization, emancipation and creating social awareness. This is because, like in Nigeria, literature has always been used to address social issues in Kenya. One only needs to remember the role political songs played in awakening people to the course of the struggle against colonialism and more recently, get rid of the KANU regime in the 2002 General elections.

The manipulation of Christian hymns by freedom fighters during the colonial era awakened people to their oppressed status and imparted the need to liberate themselves. They therefore went to the forests to fight the colonial forces. Similarly, in the run up to the 2002 General elections, songs like “Yote yawezekana and “unbwogable”, played on the local radio and television became national tunes and were fundamental in influencing voters towards the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) and against the then ruling party, Kenya African National Union (KANU). In the same vein, songs and other forms of literature can be important tools in the fight against HIV /AIDS because, they appeal to our emotions. This study, attempts to explain the role of prose fiction in Kenya in addressing the HIV/AIDS disaster.

Monica Arac de Nyeko in *Poetry of Pain: Poetry and HIV in Africa*, also recognizes the importance of literature in addressing AIDS issues. According to her, when we are ‘hurt, angry, confused and sad’ we turn to poets, songs writers and may be philosophers, to make sense of our situation. Through poetry, one can express anger with great ‘poise and poignancy’. To her, poets use ordinary elements to form extra-ordinary ones. This means that, common and familiar elements are utilized to articulate unique experiences.

Nyeko’s argument makes a lot of sense since poetry appeals to our emotions. Through the careful crafting of words, poetry and other forms of literature can influence peoples’ thinking and therefore transform their behavior. Through literature therefore, we can address the problems of HIV/AIDS.



Nyeko's argument is derived from Aristotle's idea of catharsis. In contrast to his predecessor, Plato, who advocated for the banning of poets from the ideal Republic as they excite "emotions like fear and pity which should be kept in control" (Trans. Dorsch, 17), Aristotle claimed that by literature exciting emotions, "it releases them and hence it has the effect of reducing them.... restoring them to the right proportions." (Trans. Dorsch, 17, 19). This is especially so with tragedies, which are meant to evoke fear and pity. The evocation of the latter emotions and their titration is what is referred to as catharsis.

Catharsis is a crucial idea in relation to HIV/AIDS literature, which is largely tragic. Literature can be used to inculcate the right attitude toward HIV/AIDS, which is generally lacking. Reading about the suffering of characters who are AIDS victims in the literary texts evokes in us the fear of contracting the disease and thus the desire to adopt life styles that will prevent us from contracting it. Also, as we read about the various experiences of HIV/AIDS victims in the literary texts, we pity them and identify with their pain. If we are victims, we are comforted that we are not the only ones affected and this ameliorates our suffering and pain.

If we have close family members and friends who are infected, the pity evoked thereof from reading about the suffering of victims in the creative works, may be transferred to them thus making us treat them in humane ways. Further, as we read about people who have lived positively with the disease (as literature should inculcate positive values), we are encouraged and we desire to emulate their positive attitude. As a result we live fulfilling lives whether infected or affected by

the disease. In general, literature can be used to educate people on how they should treat the infected members of the society and so avoid the stigmatization of the infected and affected.

According to Wendy Ross in *Arts in Action*, art can play the role of not only creating social awareness but also providing an opportunity for people to confront issues through self-expression and sharing. The narrative nature of the novel is especially good at this as its length allows it to examine characters and issues in detail and fuller ways than other forms.

Characters are born, grow, marry, and even die within the plot of the novel unlike other forms like poetry or short story, which concentrate on an individual's most revealing moments of his/her life. We can experience every issue associated with HIV/AIDS through the novel.

From the foregoing argument, it is evident that literature can be an important tool for addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There is need therefore to accept and promote creative works on HIV/AIDS no matter who writes them, because HIV/AIDS literature, whether of the populist or serious kind has its own "artistic and cultural value." (Rosebotsa, 21)

Studying emergent writers like Situma and Adalla is a way of agreeing with Rosebotsa that this literature serves a social function and its survival should be promoted. Furthermore, this classification of writers and condemning their works as inferior just because they are not prominent can only serve to kill creativity in Kenya. Every work should be judged on its own merit and not by comparing them with "canonical" works or the nametag on it.

This does not mean that every work that is of social value is artistic and should therefore pass as literature. Thus, in this study we will also look at the techniques and artistry of the various works and suggest ways in which the writers could improve on their creativity in future, where necessary. After all, literature is not just a “bundle of messages.” Literature is literature because of its unique features that identify it as a unique discipline and this literariness should not be sacrificed on the altar of social utility. Also, the purpose of criticism is not only to point out at the positive elements in a work but also the weaknesses; and AIDS fiction criticism, no matter its social importance, should not be an exception.

In *Literature, Morality and the HIV/AIDS in Kenya*, Tom Odhiambo defends what has been viewed as popular literature; the category under which most AIDS literature in Kenya falls according to Rosebotsa. Odhiambo argues that literature has always been censured on moral grounds. Those who wrote on sex matters like David Mailu, (*After Four Thirty, My dear bottle* and so on, Meja Mwangi *Going Down River Road*) and others, were seen as corrupting both individual and the public morality because of their too explicit depiction of sex and unrestricted use of language on sex matters. He urges Kenyans to rethink their definition of morality in literary creativity especially with the dawn of HIV/AIDS.

Odhiambo’s argument makes sense as with the onset of AIDS, which is spread largely through irresponsible sex, it has “proved there was no much morality to defend,” to put it in his words. People still practice irresponsible sex whether the society censures what the public consumes in form of literature or not. Otherwise, we should have been able to contain the AIDS pandemic by now. What is

necessary is to “democratize the moral space” (Odhiambo) in Kenya so that the talk of sex is not viewed as a taboo. This is one step towards curbing the pandemic because it is difficult to talk about AIDS without talking about sex.

From the on going discussion, it is evident that Literature has a role to play in dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and those who can write should go ahead and use their pens to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

## **REVIEW OF SOME STUDIES ON HIV/AIDS CREATIVE WORKS IN KENYA**

In his PhD thesis entitled, *Gender Perspectives in the Creative Works of Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye*, Wasamba examines the theme of HIV/AIDS in *Chira*. Through characters like Samuel, Julia, the woman and the man watching the pro-life procession, he demonstrates how economic, moral, and spiritual poverty, tradition and denial of the existence of HIV/AIDS, contributes to the spread of the scourge. This study looks at the portrayal of these and other factors that enhance the scourge in, *The Mysterious Killer*, *Chira* and *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*.

On the role of tradition in the spread of HIV/AIDS, Wasamba observes that Macgoye, feels that the “dreaded disease is spread by traditional beliefs that misrepresent the pathology of AIDS as a common wasting disease known among the Luo known as *Chira*” which is caused by “sinful nature” (127). According to him, Macgoye is suggesting that these beliefs mystify HIV/AIDS and hinder its prevention.

He further observes that, by Macgoye creating characters like Makwour, Njooki Thoedre and Helen who are willing to go for screening, she is indicating that “the mysterious nature of AIDS has been demolished and people no longer fear to know their status’ (131). In this study, we explore how HIV/ AIDS is demystified in the other two texts. In *Chira*, this idea will also be looked at in detail, which Wasamba could not do because the focus of his study was on gender issues, not HIV/AIDS.

It is important to note that it is not only in *chira* where Macgoye condemns what she views as non-utilitarian, retrogressive traditions and cultural practices in the Luo culture. Philo Ikonya has pointed out that:

While recognizing the weight of customs, she nevertheless satirizes the customs, which she thinks, overlooks the individual needs. ...Macgoye sees aspects of the Luo culture, which must change if progress is to be made. She argues against those who oppose it (change) by saying that it is a cultural thing. (My parenthesis, 176- 177)

In this study, we analyze her treatment of this theme in relation to HIV/AIDS.

In dealing with HIV/AIDS, Wasamba identifies the use of condoms, change of attitude towards the disease, accepting its existence, HIV screening, going public about the disease, improvement on sexual habits and family life education as some of the solutions the Macgoye offers to curb the scourge. For those infected, the society should accept them and help them, as stigmatization only drives them to early deaths.

In her critique of Meja Mwangi's *The Last plague*, Alina Rinkanya identifies tradition as one of the factors that Mwangi blames not only for the spread AIDS, but also other social ills in Africa today. In an article published in the *Nairobi Literature Journal* of March 2004, Rinkanya argues that, Mwangi is warning the people against "blind worship of the past..."because "it is exactly because of this worship the deadly plague spreads among the villagers"(54). The past refers to traditional practices that enhance the spread of AIDS.

The study agrees with Rinkanya and Wasamba on the centrality of retrogressive cultural practices in the spread of HIV/AIDS and it is one of the issues analyzed in all the three texts.

She further asserts that Meja Mwangi in the *Last Plague* uses HIV/AIDS as a symbol for other evils in the society. According to her, the menace of HIV/AIDS symbolizes other "modern diseases of Africa- from economic marginalization to famine and decade long wars"(54). In this study we have also analyzed how Macgoye has used HIV/AIDS metaphorically to represent evils like corruption whose effects like poverty enhance the spread of HIV/AIDS.

In a dissertation entitled, "*Treatment on HIV/AIDS in Meja Mwangi's The Last Plague*", Ndumba deals with Meja Mwangi treatment of the factors that lead to the spread of the pandemic. She identifies such factors as insensitivity of the leaders who support traditions that enhance the scourge, wife inheritance, traditional circumcision where one knife is used for all candidates, promiscuous sexual habits, especially prostitution and antagonism towards condoms and the living apart of married couples where one spouse, usually the man, goes to work in

urban areas and contracts HIV/AIDS starts to ail, and when too weak to fend for himself, returns to his rural home, only to infect his wife or wives.

Through the analysis of characters like Janet, Musa and Mark, Ndumba brings out the solutions that Mwangi offers to contain the scourge such as pragmatic education, use of condoms and living moral lives. Her study was however only thematic and in this study, we go a step further to analyze the literary devices used in revealing HIV/AIDS.

Ndumba comments on other literary texts on HIV/AIDS. On *The Mysterious Killer*, she points out that, since the villagers cannot fathom the disease, they explain it as witchcraft and turn to ancestral worship and traditional healers. This is because, “the characters are not ready to accept that HIV/AIDS is real. The characters seem to be buried in traditional beliefs and they are not ready to accept the reality, neither are they ready for change”( *The Mysterious Killer*, 21). The role of belief in witchcraft and denial of the existence of the pandemic in the spread of HIV/AIDS is one of the concerns of this study.

On techniques of portraying the pandemic in *Chira*, Wasamba identifies “description with clinical precision” of Samuel, Josefina and Julia, which concretizes the disease and shows its destructive nature. “Dramatic dialogue” between an old man and old woman in which Helen intervenes; this indicates how tradition and religion enhance the spread of AIDS by dissuading people from using condoms.

Victoria Muntu identifies vivid description in *The Mysterious Killer*. In *The Mysterious Killer: A Brief Report* she says that the novel “is truly a story on AIDS,

taking time to describe the disease in detail..." (1). There are many other techniques that are used in these three novels and which previous critics have not identified. This study attempts to identify some of them. The study focuses on all these issues with a view of conducting a detailed examination of what has not been adequately analyzed. We also attempt to include what has been left out.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study focuses on Macgoye's *Chira*, Situma's *The Mysterious Killer*, and Adalla's *Confessions of An Aids Victim*, with a view of showing how the various issues related to HIV/AIDS are treated in the three books. We also analyze the techniques used in illuminating these issues. The study is largely exploratory but comparison is made of individual writers' views on the disease, their vision and the effectiveness of the techniques they use to explore the theme of HIV/AIDS.

### **METHODOLOGY.**

The research will be library and internet based. Critical materials from literary journals, abstracts, seminar papers, books, research papers, the internet and any other relevant material is analyzed to give insight on the topic of study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### HIV/AIDS AND THE WRITERS' VISION.

In the previous chapter, we introduced the theme of HIV/AIDS, reviewed previous literature on HIV/AIDS and laid a background for the study. In this chapter, we examine the theme of HIV/AIDS as depicted by Macgoye in *Chira*, Situma in *The Mysterious Killer* and Adalla in *Confessions of an AIDS victim*. More specifically, we look at their portrayal of the major causes of the HIV/AIDS scourge; stereotypical explanations that contribute to the spread of the disease and the solutions the writers offer towards containing the HIV/ AIDS menace.

In this chapter, we examine the three texts within the context and social milieu of their authors, and therefore, we adopt a sociological approach in our analysis. As Tilak correctly observes, art's relationship with the society is important and the investigation of this relationship may deepen and organize ones' aesthetic response to a work of art (9). This is because writers use social experiences as raw material for their work. The understanding of this relationship is crucial to our interpretation of literary texts especially those that respond to important social phenomena like HIV/AIDS.

The stories that are narrated in the three texts explore a society that is in peril in the face of a new disease, HIV/AIDS, whose nature is not only mysterious, but also spells doom for the society. In all the three works, we are presented with a society that is initially ignorant about the pandemic, but one which progressively becomes educated about the scourge, thereby accepting it as a reality and as a result coming up with strategies of containing it. The works are pedagogical in that they

are designed to educate people about HIV/AIDS and therefore make them adopt positive lifestyles to prevent more infections.

The three writers, Macgoye, Situma and Adalla explore the theme of HIV/AIDS, in reference to what they think are the major causes of the fast spread of HIV/AIDS scourge, its effects on the society and what should be done to contain its further spread. One of the causes that they explore is the extent to which ignorance and denial of the existence of the disease contributes to its widespread.

In *Chira* and *The Mysterious Killer*, texts situated within a rural setting, ignorance is portrayed through some villagers like Gabriel's mother, Josefina and her father, chief Busie, Cecilia and Nuomi. In this setting, characters are portrayed as being uninformed about the disease, its existence and management. The few who are informed like, Samuel and Obura, lack adequate information about it or do not want to accept its reality. Consequently, they deny its existence as evident in the case of Samuel and Josefina, the first victims to die of HIV/AIDS in *Chira*.

When we are introduced to Josefina and Samuel in the text, they are already ailing. We are told Josefina "seems to be sick all the time," while Samuel confesses to not possessing the energy he used to have while at school (8). Gabriel, Samuel's cousin, even notices Samuel does not look "all that strong" (8) on the day he visits him in the city. Josefina's body is wasting from a disease that the villagers cannot understand (15). The symptoms are clearly HIV/AIDS related but neither Josefina nor Samuel knows what they are suffering from at this moment. Samuel thinks his lack of strength has to do with being "bored" (8) because he is jobless. The villagers associate their condition with "chira", a curse for sexual misbehaviour,

which is manifested through the wasting of the body. The two are believed to have committed an abominable act of getting sexually intimate when they are almost like brother and sister, in that, they are first cousins and only ritual cleansing can redeem them.

The villagers' ignorance can be seen in the words of Gabriel's mother. In a letter to her son Gabriel, she writes the following about Samuel's sickness, " We are asking you to come as soon as possible to see your cousin Samuel, who is very sick. The sickness is not understood by us. The doctor at the health centre has not been able to master it" (44). These words indicate that the villagers are yet to be informed about HIV/AIDS. This is why they view the disease as something mysterious.

The words also make us understand why the villagers resort to supernatural interventions against the disease. In the African society, whenever people fail to explain a phenomenon, they always resort to supernatural interventions through prayers, sacrifices and witchcraft.

This is because they believe that any phenomenon that cannot be rationally explained must have its origin in the spiritual realm, as they believe one is either cursed or bewitched. Since Samuel's and Josefina's condition cannot be solved by modern medicine, then, the only other safe explanation is that he must have angered some supernatural forces and therefore, supernatural remedies should be sought. In the case of Samuel and Josefina, the villagers conclude that it must be "chira" and they must be cleansed to get well (46).

Since HIV/AIDS symptoms resemble those of a familiar condition in this community, that is, *Chira* for which they already have an explanation and remedy, they do not bother to explore other possibilities. Even those who do not subscribe to traditional remedies like Josefina's father, have other reasons, not because they realize the futility of such traditional therapies. He declines to perform the cleansing ceremony for his daughter Josefina because of his Christian faith, not because he is informed about HIV/AIDS. In such a scenario, infections will proliferate. By portraying the villagers' ignorance thus, Macgoye indicates and emphasizes the need for public awareness campaigns in the rural areas to sensitize people about the pandemic.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, the author demonstrates ignorance through characters like Chief Busie, aunt Cecilia, Nuomi, Hausa, among other villagers. The ignorance of the villagers' in *The Mysterious Killer* appears to be more genuine than in the case of *Chira*. Even Rachel, the protagonist of the novel, who eventually becomes very instrumental in creating awareness among the Nkulu people, is ignorant of the disease by the time her aunt comes home ailing. She thinks, like everyone else in the village, that her aunt might have been bewitched and suspects that it could have been done by one of the chief's wives, since her aunt is one of the chief's mistresses. It is not until she talks to Rehema and after going to Busaki that she begins to perceive her aunt's disease in a new light, and strategizes on how to save the society from the malady that is threatening their survival.

Since the nature of the disease is mysterious, the villagers believe that, their relatives have been bewitched and therefore they run to witchdoctors to treat

them. They do not realize they are suffering from a disease that has no cure. For example, the medicine man is said to have 'pitched his camp near the chief's homestead' (27) as Chief Busie has been ailing for a long time"(14) and the villagers believe that his 7th wife has bewitched him for kicking her away from her house. This means that he is ever treating him without the chief showing any signs of improvement.

Similarly, when Cecilia, chief Busie's city mistress, arrives from the city looking "not completely well ...low spirited and emaciated"(25-26) and like Gabriel's mother writes of Samuel's condition to Gabriel, confesses to have been sick to the point of death from a disease the doctors all over Busaki could not make out or cure (29), the villagers too believe she has been bewitched by one of the chief's wives.

Cecilia too thinks she has been bewitched and believes traditional medicine will cure her ailment completely. She associates her improvement when she first fell sick in the city to Mzee Kubwa's traditional treatment. That is why Rachel is dispatched to Wauzi to get more herbs when Cecilia's condition deteriorates after she comes back to the village. Hausa, her brother and Nuomi, her other lover, too believe she has been bewitched and they to consult a medicine man who ignorantly blames her condition to bewitchment by one of her uncles. Nuomi therefore offers three bulls for the sacrifice that is expected to heal her condition. The symptoms in Cecilia and Busie are obviously those of HIV/AIDS, but their ignorance makes them resort to far- fetched explanations of witchcraft.

The tragedy of the belief in witchcraft is epitomized in Nuomi, who after offering sacrifices to avert the evil eye on Cecilia, goes ahead to marry her. In the process, he ends up contracting the disease, passing it to his wife Kalara and their unborn baby.

Eventually, both Cecilia and Busie succumb to the pandemic and die, despite all the attempts by the witchdoctors to cure them. This is Situma's way of showing that the malady defies all known remedies, supernatural or man-made, and people should seek new ways of confronting the disease. Like in *Chira*, this also suggests the need for people to be made aware of the reality of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Closely related to ignorance, is denial about existence of the disease. Denial implies that, people are aware of HIV/AIDS but they do not want to accept its reality. In *Chira* for example, the fact that the symptoms of the disease include much more than the mere wasting of the body, which is the main symptom of "chira", and also that, cleansing does not work for Samuel, we would expect the villagers to be jolted to reality and accept that they have a new catastrophe in their midst which requires their serious attention.

Far from that, they continue to hold on to far-fetched and ignorant explanations of the disease. Samuel's mother continues to blame Josefina's father for refusing to conduct the cleansing ceremony, which is ironical, because she conducted one for Samuel and he never recovered. Josefina's father on his part still believes his daughter died of "chira" and blames Samuel for misleading her to commit incest with him. Macgoye here suggests that, by downplaying the disease as

a mere curse, it denies the villagers an opportunity of addressing the disease effectively; this enhances its spread. This denial is also escapist. It indicates the dilemma of people being faced with a tragedy that is beyond their control.

Further, Macgoye indicates that denial is a typical way of dealing with overwhelming challenges in this community. This can be seen in the villagers failure to accept in public that Josefina and Samuel's infection originated from their incestuous relationship. Samuel confesses to Gabriel that, though the villagers know he had had a sexual relationship with Josefina, they maintain in public that he did not (50). One therefore wonders whether those who are ignorant are genuinely uninformed about the pandemic or they just find it too overwhelming to face and so they fake ignorance. As the omniscient narrator in *Chira* points out, "the best defense against the unthinkable is to deny it"(45).

In *Chira*, this escapist denial of the existence of HIV/AIDS is not only restricted to the uneducated rural masses. Relatively well-educated city dwellers like Obura and Gabriel who have heard of HIV/AIDS from the "radio and posters" (45) participate in this denial. They do not want to speak of HIV/AIDS openly. From the conversation between Obura and Gabriel, it is clear that they know Samuel is an HIV/AIDS victim. This can be seen in the way he describes the HIV/AIDS symptoms as manifested in Samuel. Obura tells Gabriel that Samuel is "thin like a person who is eaten by TB ... there are spots on his face...and a beaten path behind his house" (45-46). From this description, we notice that he is just evading mentioning what he thinks about Samuel's sickness. He would rather go by the old peoples' explanations that it is "chira." This escapism and evasiveness

underlies the denial that is rampant in society and which contributes to the unchecked spread of the virus.

Samuel, though initially ignorant, behaves no different from Obura and Gabriel, after he realizes the truth of his sickness. He continues to hold on to “chira” as the explanation for his ailment. From his conversation with Gabriel on the day Gabriel answers his mother’s summon to visit the sick Samuel, it is evident that he has finally been conscientized about HIV/AIDS.

He warns Gabriel to be careful of the girls in Nairobi, as he does not know where they come from (49), and to run away from an injection because there is no way of knowing if it had been sterilized or not (48). He also knows that, “even cutting your finger...” (48) these days can lead to infection. Apart from depicting factors that enhance the spread of the disease, this excerpt shows he is aware of HIV/AIDS and how it is spread. However, he chooses to deny this even to himself and decides to go by the villagers’ explanation that it’s “chira” he is suffering from because this is more familiar and psychologically reassuring and edifying to him as “chira” is common condition in this community.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, denial is evidenced in the great extents some characters go to incapacitate people like Rachel and Father Michael, who have taken it upon themselves to sensitize them about the pandemic. Through these characters, Situma like Macgoye, further makes us realize that the greatest hurdle in dealing with the HIV/AIDS among the rural masses is not only ignorance but also denial. By extension this implies the challenges in the way of those who dare to conscientize society about the malady. Rachel and Father Michael are faced with



numerous setbacks which hamper their efforts to fight the scourge through the creation of awareness.

The hurdles are presented in the persons of Yakobo and Yamo. Yakobo and his accomplices, who do not want to accept the reality of HIV/AIDS, rapes Rachel as a way of “teaching her a lesson”, that is, undermining her crusade against HIV/AIDS so as to stop her from continuing with it. Similarly, Yamo sends the HIV positive Konsa to seduce Father Michael, the moral crusader at Guluba, and so infect him with the disease and thereby halting his preaching against prostitution, which is Yamo’s mainstay.

Rachel’s and Father Michael’s experiences depict the extent to which people can go to evade overwhelming challenges. Like the villagers of Abame in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, who killed the white man thinking that this will stop the white man’s invasion of their land (98), they think that they can wish away the reality of HIV/AIDS by doing away with the messengers who speak about the disease.

They are of course defeated. Rachel stabs the leader of the group, Yakobo, to death. The police discover Yamo’s role in Father Michael’s death and he is accordingly arrested. He is later murdered by one of his mistresses, Mama Baby, so that she can inherit his property before his family lays claim to it. This is Situma’s way of giving hope in the face of all the challenges ranged against the tackling of the disease. By doing away with those who oppose the fight against the disease, he indicates that their ideas have been defeated. The denial is broken and people can now face the reality of HIV/AIDS and stop treating it as just another ‘mysterious

killer.’ Consequently, they can now strive to combat it, because they have accepted its reality.

Thus, through characters like Samuel, Josefina, chief Busie aunt Cecilia among other villagers the two authors exemplify the role of ignorance, denial and traditional beliefs like witchcraft and curses, in enhancing the spread of HIV/AIDS. The writers suggest that, such escapist and endemic beliefs, are pervasive in this era of HIV/AIDS, and as shown in the texts, they hinder any meaningful attempts at solving the HIV/AIDS crisis. Hence, to Macgoye and Situma, if AIDS is to be conquered, people should accept its reality and stop mystifying it. This is because, denial only leads to spread of the scourge and the consequent wastage of resources, which could have been utilized to take care of the victims.

Further, Situma and Macgoye, clearly depict the negative effects of this kind of ignorance and hypocritical denial; it only leads to more and more infections. It is this refusal to accept the reality of AIDS that makes Samuel approach the father of the “girl who helps the tailor” (46), for his daughter’s hand in marriage, even when he seems aware of the nature of his ailment. The girl is lucky as the father refuses to accept his proposal. Nuomi in *The Mysterious Killer* is not as lucky, as he goes ahead to marry Cecilia, his long time lover thus infecting his expectant wife.

There are also the economic implications of this denial. Since people do not want to accept their relatives are suffering from the incurable HIV/AIDS, they spend a lot of resources trying to cure the impossible. The traditional healers take advantage of the situation to enrich themselves, as is evident in *The Mysterious*

*Killer*. When Rachel arrives at Mzee Kubwa's compound, she wonders if anything had happened to him because of the many people in the compound:

There were too many people. As she rode closer, she saw that most of the people in the homestead were ill. Some lay on the eaves of the big magnificent house. A few seemed not to care where they were ...the medicine man had many patients. (106)

The big magnificent house is symbolic of how rich Mzee Kubwa has become, out of the exorbitant fee he exerts from his ignorant patients. Rachel herself pays a whopping eight thousand shillings for her aunt's herbs. Worse, she is deceived like many others that her aunt will get well, a fact she later realizes is false.

Similarly, by the time Nuomi develops full blown AIDS, we learn that, the once rich man is already poor because when he started getting ill, he could no longer work and the farm chores were left to his wife and elder son (211). He had also spent a substantial amount of resources on Cecilia's ailment. On the day he is taken to hospital, his wife who accompanies him is said to be wearing "a torn but clean coat" (211). In *Chira*, there is 'one cow and one calf' (48) left in Samuel's family's Boma as the family had spent all the resources in getting whatever "treatment they saw fit for him"(51).

By graphically portraying the effects of ignorance and denial, the authors are satirizing those who continue to practice them and suggesting that they are expensive practices that will amount to no good for both the sick and the society.

They suggest that people should change and stop mystifying the disease so that they can address it meaningfully.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, the demystification of HIV/AIDS is portrayed by making the elders realize the existence and gravity of the pandemic and therefore, issuing a decree banning all sexual intercourse in the village. In the meantime; authorities support the elders' decree and help in enforcing it. The neighbouring communities like Guluba, borrow a leaf from the Nkulu people and enforce similar decrees. Characters like Nuomi who were opposed to the sensitization campaign finally see the light and accept the reality of HIV/AIDS, though too late to prevent getting infect. This realization is important though as it helps them to avoid infecting more people.

In *Chira*, Macgoye depicts the defeat of denial by portraying characters like Njooki, Makwour, Gabriel, Helen, Theodore and Elizabeth who are willing to go for HIV/AIDS screening. Njooki is even willing to confess her positive status in the church, while the youths who are ill come to Pastor Theodore for counseling. Hence in the two books we see a society that moves from total ignorance, anathema and denial of the disease to awareness and acceptance of its existence. They are therefore willing to contribute and participate in attempts to contain it.

In *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, a novel with an urban setting and where most of the characters are informed about HIV/AIDS and educated, the reaction of those infected is different from that of the villagers in *Chira* and *The Mysterious Killer*. Catherine, the protagonist and AIDS victim discovers her HIV positive status accidentally during a mandatory HIV test before proceeding for further

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studies in Texas, USA. Though her grief knows no bounds, as she is aware of the magnitude of being HIV positive, instead of denying her HIV/AIDS status, accusing others of bewitching her and rushing to witchdoctors like Cecilia and Samuel, she accepts the fact, consults medical journals and doctors to acquire more information on the nature of the disease and its management.

This can be attributed to her high level of education and previous exposure to information on the pandemic. She had already heard about the killer disease from Brian her boyfriend, at the age of twenty, when AIDS was first diagnosed in the world in 1984. Unlike the less informed villagers in *Chira* and *The Mysterious Killer*, she is therefore spared the unnecessary expenses of consulting witchdoctors and offering sacrifices.

Her researches on the disease from medical journals and doctors are also crucial in that they help her to make very rational decisions for her own survival and for the society's good. For example, she chooses to change her lifestyle so that she does not continue to spread the pandemic.

Nuomi, Kalara, chief Busie, Cecilia, Josefina and the villagers, because of their low education levels and lack of exposure to information, waste their money on witchdoctors and unknowingly continue to spread the virus. Hence, in Adalla's novel, we are shown the importance of education and awareness about HIV/AIDS in addressing the HIV/AIDS menace. Those who are educated and informed know how to manage the disease better than the uniformed masses. By extension, this underscores the need for creating awareness on the disease.

Macgoye also suggests that there are differences in the levels of awareness on the pandemic between the rural and urban settings. The urban dwellers are better informed than the rural masses. For example, Samuel, while “skipping” along the pavements of the city with his cousin Gabriel, is confronted with all sorts of posters. One poster reads that “clean living is the real safeguard” while another, “babies live, and rubbers perish”(2). The fact that Samuel who hails from the rural areas cannot decipher the message in the posters shows his ignorance. He is oblivious of the contentions in the control of HIV/AIDS.

The posters in the city streets indicate that the urban dwellers are aware of the existence of HIV/AIDS. However, ideological polarities such as whether using condoms to prevent infection amounts to the killing of babies or not, effective control of the disease is still a problem. Consequently, they are no better than their rural counterparts in the rural areas who are yet to be informed about the disease and therefore accept its reality. By contrasting the levels of awareness in rural and urban areas, Macgoye is suggesting that awareness programmes on the disease should be tailored to meet individual needs.

The other factor that the three writers blame for the spread of HIV/AIDS is irresponsible sex and moral decadence. All the three writers depict this as the leading causes of the spread of HIV/AIDS. Their approaches to the topic though, vary. Situma is concerned with common prostitution of the so-called commercial sex workers and how it contributes to the spread HIV/AIDS, not only among the commercial sex workers, but also among all the other members of the society. To Maccoye and Adalla, the definition of irresponsible sex includes much more than

commercial sex. Even liaisons that can be considered “commonplace... and fairly normal in Kenya” (Adalla, 75), are dangerous and can lead to infection with the HIV virus.

In *Chira*, for example, Josefina and Samuel are just innocent teenagers who make a mistake so many teenagers make in the process of growing up, due to natural body changes yet they end up being victims. The same applies to Gabriel, whose status is not very clear at the end of the book following the death of Julia from the virus, given that his affair with her was not “her first time”(18).

In fact, Gabriel thinks engaging in premarital sex is a normal thing and does not understand how “just having a girl”(49) can lead to infection. So when he discovers Julia, though young, is not a virgin, his disappointment is for shallow egoistic reasons and not for fear of contracting a disease from her. He would have wanted to be the first man in her life, so that he can feel he has conquered somebody. Thus, through Samuel, Josefina and Gabriel, Macgoye, suggests that there is need to change our attitudes and redefine our meaning of irresponsible sex. This is because; any sexual contact no matter how innocent can be an avenue for contracting the disease.

Makwour’s (*chira*), and Catherine’s (*Confessions of An AIDS Victim*) affairs may be a bit overboard but as Catherine the narrator in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* points out they are not what is defined as real prostitution in the Kenyan social context. They are respectable people who have relationships with respectable partners in the society, yet from these liaisons, they contract the HIV virus. Makwour for example though married to two wives has three other



girlfriends, a common practice among prominent men in Kenya. He is lucky to have tested negative even when Njooki one of his girlfriends tests positive. The results would have been disastrous, as he would have ended up infecting his wives and the other two girlfriends, just like the man in *Confessions*, who infected his three wives, leaving sixteen children as orphans. By Makwour's testing negative while Njooki testing positive, the author implies that HIV/AIDS is a paradoxical disease. Therefore, it is necessary for both partners to undergo screening no matter the results of one of the partners.

In *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, the role of irresponsible sex is examined through the narrator, Catherine, her former classmate Jane and her boyfriends like Alex. Catherine confesses to have had many affairs with men of different ages and professions after parting with Brian, partly out of frustration, and partly to obtain money to take care of her son while in the university and after being employed. The relationships (especially those while in the university) are short-lived, and what she calls 'parasitic' on her part and exploitative on the part of the men (68). She wants money and other material favours from them while they want to satisfy their lust.

So when she is infected, she cannot really tell whom among these "dignified people" could have been the source of her infection. Nevertheless, the realization that loose morals are the source of her infections is vital, as she decides not "to help spread the disease through sexual contact with men"(3) further. Adalla views this as the right spirit, which could help in the control of the pandemic. This is because if any infected person decides to spread the disease intentionally, the

consequences can be catastrophic, as is evidenced in the case of Catherine's former classmate, Jane.

Adalla uses Jane to depict some of the wrong attitudes that she feels contribute to the spread of the scourge. Like Catherine, Jane gets infected through irresponsible sex with multiple partners for materialistic and vain ends. She is described as:

The type who believed in good life and to this end had a chain of men friends... one weekend she would be dining expensively at Imperial Hotel, dropped home in a Mercedes, the next she would be in Osiepe bar drinking humbly with a man intent on spending his last cent on her. She is said to have remarked.... "I have painted Kisumu red. There is no pub I haven't been to worth calling itself pub. The same she said goes for discotheques."  
(57)

She later discovers she has contracted the killer disease and instead of slowing down, like Catherine in her promiscuous liaisons, she continues with her "wild lifestyle"(57). As a result, she ends up infecting sixty-one out of her sixty-eight partners as only seven of them insisted on using condoms.

Her bizarre act of leaving a list of sixty-eight names of her alleged sex partners alongside the suicide note and placing a star against seven names that she claimed insisted on using condoms (58), though can be viewed as an attempt at self-redemption in her last moments. She wants those who are left to know whom she has infected and therefore avoid relating with them sexually. The morality of this is of course debatable, but all in all, it is a positive effort towards curbing the disease.

Another attitude that Adalla is condemning can be seen through Alex, Catherine's boyfriend. When Catherine, Alex's girlfriend of three years informs him of her positive status and suggests that he should go for testing so that he can know his status, he categorically refuses to do so. Alex belongs to the type that would rather not discover the unknown because what they do not know won't hurt them, and so, he refuses to go for a test. He feels that knowing his status "will kill his spirits as well as make him die faster" (80) incase he tests positive. This means that incase he has contracted the disease, he will continue to pass it on given his promiscuous character.

Through Catherine Jane and Alex, Adalla is suggesting that those who are infected have a responsibility towards the society. They should adopt lifestyles that will prevent further infections because they are like time bombs. If they choose to deliberately spread the disease, like Jane, they can really cause real catastrophe. Also, from the kind of people that Jane and Catherine associate with- very dignified members of the society-it is clear that HIV/AIDS behaves like a combine harvester that mows anything on its way. Anybody, irrespective of one's social status is at risk of being infected. Hence, her prescription for people living like monks and nuns to avoid infection applies to everyone their statuses notwithstanding.

The story of Jane and Catherine in *Confessions of an AIDS victim* is also an indicator of the low level of acceptance of condom use among men. Of all the sixty-eight partners of Jane, only seven insist on condoms. Catherine thinks that any of the men she has had affairs with could have infected her, which means none of

them could have used condoms. Brian actually admits to Catherine that condoms are not popular with most men because of the misconceptions they hold about them:

Take the use of condoms for instance. I must say few men, among my friends that is –would voluntarily choose to use condoms to protect themselves against infections; they use condoms to prevent pregnancy in a woman. One guy in our office amused us by likening the use of condoms to the deduction of income tax from his pay. Another guy said use of condoms is like eating a sweet with a wrapper on. (48)

Though amusing, such views underplay the dangers of the disease because these are the same men who sleep with prostitutes and irregular sex partners especially when they are drunk. This exposes them to the virus, which in turn they give to their wives, hence perpetuating the vicious cycle of infection.

Further, Adalla suggests that promiscuity, and by extension, the spread of the HIV virus in men especially, is enhanced by alcoholism. Reckless consumption of alcohol especially in bars interferes with rational decision making on the part of men making them engage in risk sexual habits with women whose moral backgrounds they do not know. This is clearly evident in the responses of Catherine's men friends as to why they "pick any women in sight after gobbling down three or so beers" (74). One of them argued, "When a man drinks, he finds himself needing a woman.... [and] a bird in hand is definitely worth two in the bush...." (75). This means that, whichever woman in sight, will do for him. It does not matter whether he knows her past or not.

Another man justified himself by arguing that:

After my fifth bottle, all ladies in the bar start to look beautiful. After the seventh they are all angels, looking sweet and decent. I use my sweet tongue and the balance of my money in my pocket to hook the angels. We end up in a lodging or somewhere in bed. The next morning, oh holy shit! How did this ugly woman come to share my bed? That is when I begin to think of VD's and AIDS. (My parenthesis, 75)

What Adalla is condemning here is not consumption of alcohol, but irresponsible consumption of alcohol, which interferes with rational decision making on the part of men, especially on sexual matters. She suggests that people should drink sensibly and responsibly so that they do not find themselves in risky sexual liaisons.

However, it is not only the drunkards who engage in affairs with women whose antecedents they do not know. To Adalla, most men are generally irresponsible on sexual matters, as they are ready to pick any beautiful woman they meet without finding out if she is infected or not. Catherine, the protagonist in the *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, personal experience with men in both the office and social places exemplify this state of affairs. From these experiences, she cannot help musing to herself if passing the infection is that easy. On the day she resumes work, the administrative manager of her company approaches her and suggests a coffee date. From her experience with men she knows this is just the beginning of an intimate relationship as “within less than a month of the lunch and coffee dates you end between sheets with one more recruited to the glory of AIDS” (52).

The trend is the same in restaurants where she goes for supper and is approached by three different men of varying ages in a few hours. She manages to turn all of them down due to her vow not to spread the virus further; we cannot stop wishing she had done this much earlier in life. This indicates that there is need for people, especially men, to rethink their casual attitudes to sex.

As Peter Mwikisa, in *Constructions Of Masculinity In Traditional African Culture* notes, culturally irresponsible sex has always been associated with women and promiscuity among men has always been viewed as a sign of vitality. “Traditionally boys are always encouraged to have a string of girlfriends so that when they get married they should have enough experience of women... a boy with many girlfriends was regarded as a hero or a stud”(14). However, with the HIV/AIDS scare, this is no longer acceptable, as everyone, whether male or female, has the responsibility of avoiding promiscuous liaisons.

As pointed earlier, Situma is concerned with the role of commercial sex in the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is explored through Rachel who is an eyewitness of how the “oldest profession in the world” is ruining Busaki through bars like Cloud Nine. Her experiences especially in Cloud Nine Bar during her epic journey to Wauzi through Busaki,, revolutionize her from an innocent village girl to an informed person on the complexity of human nature in general and HIV/AIDS in particular. They become an eye opener concerning the disease which is killing thousands in the city and is now slowly creeping to the rural areas like Nkulu through promiscuous characters like Cecilia. Consequently, she becomes a fervent crusader of both women rights and HIV/AIDS.

Through her conversations with Lelei, an olu security man of the bar, Rachel unearths gradually the lives of the famous prostitutes like Mama Baby as well as her their partners. To her shock, she realizes her adored aunt was actually a prostitute and must have contracted HIV/AIDS from the trade. Her own boyfriend Edison and college mates like Rehema and Ahmed, also partner with the prostitutes like Mama baby and pimps like Yamo.

Through her therefore, we are shown how prostitution sustains the intricate web of infection in all cadres of the society as commercial sex workers derive their clients from all sectors of the society. For example, Mama Baby starts an affair with Yamo the moment Cecilia leaves the city, and when Yamo is arrested, she spends the night with Frank. Frank is a man of loose morals who finds it difficult to spend a night alone when his wife is away.

Since Yamo who was Cecilia's love is infected with HIV/AIDS, Mama Baby is likely to be sick too and might pass the virus to Frank. Her other sex partners like Edison, Rachael's boyfriend, might also be infected. Yamo might also pass the disease to Rehema, Rachel's roommate in the university with whom he has an affair, who may in turn pass it to her boyfriend Ahmed. We are therefore presented with the vicious cycle and intricate web of infection, which is not easy to resolve as long as prostitution continues to thrive. Situma is therefore implying that effective measures to stop prostitution need to be put in place because, unless this is done, the disease will continue to wreck havoc in society.

Yet, to Situma, wiping out prostitution is not an easy task, due to the attitudes of those who practice it. Some characters like Mama Baby have no regrets

for their promiscuity. She confesses to Cecilia that prostitution is “a sweet life” (78). To others like Yamo, it is a source of livelihood and are therefore willing to go to any extent to protect its existence. This includes bribing those in power like the police, or incapacitating those who are fighting it like Father Michael, to ensure they carry out their activities with immunity.

The fact that Yamo can bribe his way and carry out his activities with impunity indicates the ulcerative nature of corruption. It affects all spheres of the society leaving its mark on the fight against critical social problems like AIDS. After Yamo bribes the authorities, he goes on to infect others and to perpetuate prostitution, which to the three authors’ under study, is the leading cause of HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately, the recipients of the bribes are not aware that their action is a contributory factor to death through HIV/AIDS. This reveals that sickness in one sphere of the society indirectly affects other spheres; hence to cure the society of HIV/AIDS, a total societal therapy is necessary.

The role of prostitution in the spread of the pandemic is significant, given the nature of AIDS. As Rachel observes, “the disease’s incubation period takes many years and by the time a person is identified as suffering, he or she may have infected hundreds of people”(*The Mysterious Killer*, 158), as in the case of Jane in, *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*. Most people will only realize they are victims after many years of living with the disease. The preacher, Theodore Maina, in *Chira*, actually observes that many of the young men he tried to counsel did not look like AIDS victims at all (15). By exposing prostitution’s contribution to HIV/AIDS, the



authors are suggesting that the society should deal with the causes that perpetuate it to curb the pandemic.

Adalla also blames the spread of HIV/AIDS on patriarchy, which makes women helpless and dependent on men. She views patriarchy as the main cause of women's economic woes because it conditions women to rely on men instead of fighting for their own economic independence. Through Catherine, Adalla notes that, "a girl is just a family's investment who grows up to be a wife whose rightful place is in the kitchen and who should be submissive to her husband. They grow up knowing that they have to rely on men to provide economic security. (77). This means that most women do not bother to strive for their economic independence because they are made to believe that men should be the providers.

Patriarchy also ensures continued discrimination of women in terms of access to educational opportunities and jobs. Whenever there is not enough money to educate all the children, families will opt to educate their sons instead of daughters. It follows that women will also hold the lowest paid jobs, if they are lucky to get any, which exposes them to sexual exploitation by men at work places. Those who cannot get any job sometimes turn to prostitution to make ends meet. This is why Catherine the narrator in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, writes to Marilyn that she "can not help but to think that AIDS has come to exploit the low status woman in African society (77). This is because girls "as young as fourteen" are forced to turn to prostitution as a means of livelihood" (76) when they cannot get other jobs given their low educational status. Through prostitution, they contract

HIV/ AIDS not because they are not aware about its existence and modes of infection, but because they have no other better way of earning their daily bread.

Those who are lucky to get jobs mostly hold the lowest and poorly paid positions, which also exposes them to sexual exploitation by men while in the job and even in the process of acquiring these jobs. This is because, it is mostly the men who hold the positions of decision making in most organizations. Catherine further writes to her friend Marylyn about this kind of exploitation of women in the work places:

...Others are young pretty secretaries, clerks... and other female employees who would only be too willing to entertain the boss in bed for a few favours.

There are also the female jobseekers who sleep with the manager, hoping that he will fix them up on the list of the employee. (82)

More often than not, these promises are not fulfilled and the girl is sometimes left, in addition to her other problems, HIV/AIDS.

Since women are so dependent on men economically, The “ the men obviously ask for a small price for ladies dependency – the woman’s body to fulfill their lust.” (77)

It also follows that men have the last say in everything including matters of HIV/AIDS infection. Men decide “when to wear condoms, and when not to with little help from women” (77). Hence just as they are dependant on them to ‘fulfill their economic and security needs they are also dependant on the good will of men not to infect them with AIDS and other venereal diseases

Patriarchy also interferes with effective dissemination of information on HIV/AIDS. This is evident in *The Mysterious Killer* where some villagers do not want to listen to Rachel's counsel on HIV/AIDS simply because she is a woman. Elders like Mzee Nzuki do not understand how a woman can have the guts to stand before the elders "worth their salt"(187) and influence them to listen to her ideas. Instead of them perceiving the importance of her message, they only see her femininity. Her own father almost exposes her to sexual exploitation by Benjamin, who had earlier tried to take advantage of her when he tries to force her to travel to Busaki with him (Benjamin).

Hausa believes that women are inferior, no matter how many books they have read, hence should always know their place (68), that is, it is under men. This means that Rachel should obey her father without questioning the morality of his commands. Rachel though, stands her ground and does what she thinks is right for her and the society in both cases. Her father ends up respecting her for both decisions.

In *Chira*, Otieno is perplexed by Helen's intelligence and outspokenness. This shows that according to Gabriel, women should not be too submissive. This is the kind of socialization he acquired in the process of growing up as his father was "an example of traditional living", whose food was always served first and all women in the house "whether related or not, scuttled to obey his orders" (34). In fact, none of the women ever dared to oppose him. So, Otieno finds it shocking that a girl like Helen can just speak her mind in the presence of men.

Rachel and Helen are examples of the writers' perception of ideal women. To them, it is high time women strived to be visible in society, despite all the odds stacked against them. It is also time they took charge of important matters affecting them, such as those involving sex, because if they don't, they will remain victims. By making Rachel in *The mysterious killer* and Helen in *Chira* the heroines of their novels, who advise people on important issues such as HIV/AIDS, the two writers suggest that women should not be ignored in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Just because they are women does not mean they do not have anything important to say. There are women who are more intelligent than men; like in the case of Helen and Gabriel, hence their views on important matters should be heeded. It is for this reason that Rachel is made a major force in creating awareness about HIV/AIDS while Helen is a pillar from which Gabriel gets support and advise. She is the first one to suggest that they go for HIV/AIDS screening, a proposition Gabriel agrees to.

Also, it is imperative that women empower themselves economically and intellectually so that they can be able to determine their destinies. That is why in *Chira*, Helen though poor, is made by the author to be very versatile in her search for economic independence. She works first as a hand help in a garage where she "used to take no nonsense from garage hands and customers at the petrol station" (63) and later at a Saloon. She talks of opening her own salon unlike her boyfriend Gabriel who is content to remain an employee. Since she is not relying on Gabriel in any way, she is able to keep him at bay and only go to his place when she so chooses. Gabriel on his part ends up respecting her for her independence.

As shown earlier, it is partly due to poverty that Catherine in *Confessions* becomes promiscuous. Since she has a job now and can support herself and her baby, she is able to make a very morally appropriate decision of not spreading the virus. In *The Mysterious Killer*, Rachel is not only educated, but has a very good profession, architecture. So, she is able to secure a well paying job. She is also principled, hence able to keep away from the likes of Edison who wants to exploit her sexually.

Further, the three authors blame certain traditional cultural practices for the spread of HIV/AIDS. Polygamy is one such tradition. Polygamy is viewed as a luxury that is no longer culturally sustainable in the face of the new disease by all the three. This is because, if one woman gets infected, she will infect her husband who will in turn infect all the other wives. The danger the practice poses is depicted through Nuomi, Kalara and Cecilia on one hand and chief Busie's family on the other in the text. Nuomi contracts the disease from Cecilia and then passes it on to his first wife Kalara. Eventually it is the innocent Kalara who is on the receiving end as by the time the two die, most of the resources in the homestead are already depleted and she, though sick, has to fend not only for herself but also the children who are left behind.

The case of Chief Busie also in *The Mysterious Killer*, is even more pathetic, as he ends up infecting all his seven wives. Sylvia points out that the "home is a chilling sight" as HIV /AIDS has "wrecked the once prosperous home"(240) leaving only orphans without a future as the father and all the wives have died. In *Chira* had MaKwour tested positive, he would have infected his two wives.

Sadly, the women are never consulted when men decide to marry other wives, yet they are expected to accept the new comers in the homestead without a murmur. Adalla and Macagoye challenge women to refuse this kind of exploitation by deserting such relationships before it is too late. For example, Helen's mother in *chira* runs back to Kenya from her Tanzanian partner when he marries a second wife (31), while Alex's wife in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* opts to leave him for his "extra marital affairs (32).

Traditional circumcision is another practice that contributes to the spread of the virus. This is because one knife is used for all initiates. Those who do it believe that a special bond forms between boys who share the same knife (*The Mysterious Killer*, 159). To Adalla and Situma, this is a high-risk cultural tradition because, if one boy has the fatal virus, then the others who are cut with the same knife could also be infected. Through Rachel's address to the villagers elders on the day she is summoned for her open discussion of sex matters at Cecilia's funeral, Situma suggests that circumcision, though an important feature of the community's identity, because of the HIV/AIDS scare, it should be reformed so that it does not end up being a disease transmitting occasion.

There is also wife abduction as in the case of Rachel, who is abducted by Yokoba to stop her from talking about the HIV/AIDS. The abductors justify their act as *hutubuta* (grabbing a girl and taking her to your house even without her consent), which is a normal way of getting married in this community. Incidentally, the male judge who tries Yokoba's accomplices, as Rachel stabs Yokoba to death during the act, does not seem to see the danger the practice carries in the era of

AIDS, because he sentences them to only ten months in jail each, to Rachel's surprise. Villagers like Nuomi see nothing wrong with the practice and are surprised that the judge convicts the men at all.

One wonders what will stop the other irresponsible men from raping women in the name of culture if the sentence is that lenient. Situma, through Rachel feels that *Hatubuta* as simply a form of rape, which undermines the dignity of women and exposes them to HIV/AIDS. This is because; the women's consent in such occasions is never sought. Rachel the protagonist in *The Mysterious Killer* points out that, "the practice has destroyed many women...and with the virus of AIDS *hatubuta* spells doom for women"(245). It almost destroys her when she tests accidentally positive and nearly commits suicide. Situma therefore suggests that the society needs to rethink its functionality in light of the AIDS pandemic

The role of the belief that sex is a taboo topic that should not be discussed in public in the spread of AIDS is also evident in all the three texts. In *The Mysterious Killer*, this is graphically depicted through the elders' reaction to Rachel's blatant reference to sex matters during Cecilia's funeral. After her address, the mourners are left gaping with astonishment that she can dare talk about sex in public. Her father is also disconcerted and threatens to beat her up for her daring step. When she is later summoned by the elders to be reprimanded, her uncle compares her behavior to that of a lunatic. He tells her the following:

You have betrayed the honor of your family by speaking like a woman of unsound mind. Matters of sex are extremely delicate. They are not matters

that a child of our age can properly talk about. Why did you speak about sexual matters at your aunt's burial (187)?

Mzee Lizuki is equally shocked and even angered by her "abominable act" (187) of talking about "sex as if she were talking about pebbles" (188). This is partly the reason he incites Yokobo and his village gang to rape her. Their reactions demonstrate that they view Rachel's action as completely out of the norm and discourteous. This indicates how deep rooted the belief that sex is a taboo topic is in this community.

The extent to which this belief is deep rooted in our African communities can be seen in that, even educated characters like Catherine in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* have not shed it off. For example, Catherine, in spite of her education and exposure, finds it embarrassing that Brian can talk about sex matters without shame as "she was raised up to believe that any topic on sex matters was a taboo" (48). She is so ashamed of the talk that she decides to keep quiet.

In *Chira*, this belief is portrayed through the conversation between the man and the woman watching the pro-life procession. The fact that the woman finds it embarrassing that the man can talk about condoms in public indicates the dilemma facing HIV/AIDS community educators. It is difficult for them to educate people if just the mere mention of matters involving sex makes people uncomfortable, as in the case of the woman

Since HIV/AIDS is basically a sex related disease, it follows that no one is willing to talk about it in public. Yet it's this public that needs to be made aware of how irresponsible sex contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS.



It is also hypocritical that people should refuse to talk about sex matters yet they are the same people who engage in promiscuous sex. Hence by Rachel, Helen and Brian talking about sex in public, Macgoye, Situma and Adalla are implying that the society needs to be liberated from such beliefs so that we can freely talk about HIV/AIDS openly, which is one of the most effective ways of containing the disease.

However, Situma feels that there are still certain cultural practices that could be invoked to a bid to control the pandemic. An example is what happens in Nkulu after Rachel convinces the elders on the seriousness of HIV/AIDS. They go back to their culture and remember how in the past the breakout of sexually transmitted diseases was controlled. The elders prescribed a ban on sexual activity for such a period of time as when the disease can be completely wiped from the living members of society. The penalty of breaking the decree is death (185). So, in *The Mysterious Killer*, the elders of Nkulu go ahead and apply the same. Of course, this is rather an extreme suggestion on the part of Situma because there are few societies that can accept such kinds of decrees, but the implication is that there are cultural practices, which can be put in place to curb the spread of AIDS and we should exploit them.

Further, Situma suggests that there is need for all members of the society to be involved in the fight against the scourge. He illustrates this through Mheshimiwa Mwamba, who supports the Nkulu elders' sex ban decree and orders the police to enforce the sex moratorium (189). They also protect Rachel against those who are against the ban and who blame her for their deprivation, and are

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Furthermore, the church is also answerable for setting up impractical moral standards for its members. In *Chira*, Macgoye does not mince her words in her criticism of the conservatism of particularly the Catholic Church. The church forbids its members from using condoms as they regard them as a form of birth control. To the Catholic Church, family planning is a sin because it is equated to the murder of unborn babies. Yet, the people's adherence to the church's teachings is almost blind, as can be seen in the woman's words, "me I obey the priest..."(33).

Macgoye suggests that the church has a role to play in the control of HIV/AIDS and it should not fail its members by setting too rigid standards that overwhelm the fight against HIV/AIDS thus sustaining its spread. This is because, if the church's teachings are flawed, the members perish. She therefore, presents us with her view of the ideal church leader in the person of pastor Theodore Maina.

Theodore is an accessible young pastor who is very practical in his brand of Christianity. He is willing to discuss matters of faith and sex with his followers in a

realistic and personal manner and offer workable solutions to their problems. Under his charge, characters like Otieno are molded to become ardent and mature human beings.

His concern for his followers encompasses both their spiritual and material well being. Thus, he helps them solve their day-to-day problems not by prayer alone but also by counseling and giving them material assistance as in the case of Esther when she is robbed. Gabriel for the first time feels that he has come a cross a preacher “ who really knows how they live”(22). It is not surprising therefore that it is to him that young men and women like Njooki, who are infected with HIV/AIDS, run to, for solace, when they have nowhere else to go. His concern for them is so genuine that one might have even thought, “he was the sick one” (152) from the way he was affected by their suffering.

He advises his followers to voluntarily go for HIV/AIDS screening before marriage and lives by example by being the first one to be screened with his fiancée Elizabeth, before their union. Through Theodore, Macgoye suggests that, HIV/AIDS will not be overcome by conservatism of the church, holding on to beliefs that are no longer practical in the contemporary setting. The church should accept that AIDS and other problems like high population growth are serious social concerns and therefore allow people to use condoms in a bid to tackle them.

The parallel of Theodore's in *The Mysterious Killer* is Father Michael. He is a cheerful and dedicated priest who is an inspiration to his parishioners. His celibate life offers him an opportunity to dedicate most of his time to them, as he has no family responsibilities. He is willing to forego personal comforts like good food so

as to help his poor followers. Like Theodore, who leads by example, he advocates for clean living and faithfulness as the remedy for HIV/AIDS. It is this teaching that moulds the likes of Rachel into responsible members of the society who are very instrumental in fighting the scourge.

It is therefore ironical that such a man falls to Konse's temptations. He gives in to her persistent seduction, impregnates her and later contracts HIV/AIDS from her. This appears to be the author's indirect criticism of the catholic institution of celibacy. He is telling us that priests are human beings with needs, which sometimes can make even the most dedicated fall. Hence, the church needs to re-evaluate the relevance of some of its doctrines in view of modern challenges like HIV/AIDS.

Father Michael's desire to run away from sin is genuine. It parallels that of the biblical Joseph, who literally runs away from the persistent advances of the wife of Potipher, in the Bible. He literally chases Konse and her parents from his house when they visit in the name of advice one evening, which is unlike his character. In his dream, he jumps out of the window to run away from her (95). Later he petitions for a transfer to Galuba and moves a way without letting anybody know his destination to keep her away from following him.

Her determination to make him fall is equally strong as she manages to trace him to Galuba, makes him succumb to her advances, thereby infecting him with the HIV virus. The fact of being HIV positive is too enormous for Father Michael to handle and he decides to commit suicide (216). Situma, therefore suggests that, the Catholic Church's institution of celibacy is to blame for the fall of priests and with

the AIDS scare, it needs to be re-evaluated so that the priests do not find themselves falling to antics such as those employed on Father Michael by Konse

From Father Michael's experience also, the author explores how conflict of interest in the society can be a major setback to HIV/AIDS control. Those who benefit from institutions that enhance HIV/AIDS like prostitution need to be targeted in the campaign against HIV/AIDS so that they do not frustrate awareness efforts, as Yamo does by getting Father Michael infected with HIV/AIDS by Konse.

According to Adalla, parents have a role to play in the war against the scourge. Catherine in the *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* blames her contraction of the virus to the lack of parental guidance. Nobody advised her on how to handle her emerging sexuality when a teenager. No one told her that at adolescence, attraction to the opposite sex is normal and infatuation is not love. She was left to explore on her own through trial and error. Thus, she easily falls prey to unscrupulous men like Henry who only want to use and dispose her while she is still in school.

All her life, Catherine has a problem in relating with men, which has its origin in the lack of parental guidance during her formative years. Due to the frosty relationship between her parents, they could not team up to advise their children. She has no idea of a healthy limit in her relations with men. This is how she comes to conceive out of her relationship with Brian, while still in college.

When she conceives, instead of her parents admitting their role in their daughters predicament, hence allow her to make the best of the situation by

marrying the willing Brian, their narrow mindedness comes into play; they refuse for the sheer reason that Brian is a Luo and not a Kikuyu like them. They even threaten to curse her if she went ahead with the marriage (67). Their daughter would rather be a single parent, than marry across tribes. This is a big blow to Catherine, as Brian's departure makes her feel "as if the man at the controls of her life had been shot and the vehicle had subsequently lost direction"(69). She starts drinking and having affairs with men so as to fend for her baby and to surmount her frustrations. She feels her parents spoil the one good chance she had of ever, getting married (68) and consequently exposing her to promiscuous life styles that led to infection with HIV virus. Thus through Catherine, Adalla underscores the need for proper guidance of the youth on sex matters.

Macgoye in *Chira* also decries the lack of sex education to the youth from both the fathers and mothers. This is seen through Gabriel who observes that neither his father nor his mother spoke to him about sex matters (34). This was left to the grandmothers and fathers whose numbers are not many today (34) or are not willing to advise the youth as they view them as more educated than them. The situation is worse in towns where according to Gabriel, is "a matter of hit and miss" (36). Without this guidance, the youth are left to their own devices, which sometimes leads to infection

Given the parental failure in their role of advising the youth, writers suggest that the church should step in and bridge the gap. It is Christian teachings on morality that make Rachel overcome the challenges of growing up at home and in college in *The Mysterious Killer*. While her friends like Rehema and Edison are

swept into the liberal college life and the city, she remains steadfast; she refuses to be part and parcel of their escapades. While her friends expose themselves to high-risk lifestyles like premarital sex, Rachel refuses to even consider it. It is this firmness that Edison admires, hence his desire to marry her.

In *Chira*, Theodore's teachings shape young people like Gabriel, Helen, and Esther making them adopt positive attitudes not only to the pandemic but life in general. It is Theodore's teachings that make Gabriel and Helen decide to go for HIV screening just before their marriage and Njooki accept her status as an AIDS victim. In *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, Catherine recalls how Christian Union members were different from the other students in the university as while the other students "struggled for places in Pumwani maternity wing as if competing to see who would out shine the others in delivering babies"(63), they remained morally upright; and therefore out of danger of contracting the deadly virus.

Situma also views the government as a conspirator in enhancing the spread of HIV/AIDS by downplaying the infection statistics for economic benefits. In *The Mysterious Killer*, the ministry of health and tourism issue a joint statement to the effect that:

Contrary to the claims by a section of the media, the prevalence of AIDS in the country and in the major cities and tourist attraction centers is low. Statistics show that, overall, those infected with the virus are 5% of the countries population..... (116)

This is a way of telling people to stop bothering about the disease as only a small fraction is infected. However, from Rachel's accounts of the spread of the

disease at Busaki and Wauzi, this is obviously a conspiracy and a cover-up for materialistic ends. Accepting that the statistics are high is likely to drive the tourists away from the country, which is economically incapacitating.

The government's denial indicates that they are doing little to contain the disease. As Rachel tells Edison, even if the figures may be that low, it is difficult to tell who is included as the symptoms take along time to manifest (127). Hence, no matter the statistics, the government should stop ignoring the facts of the spread of HIV/AIDS and look for ways of dealing with it, instead of imagining the problem will vaporize on its own. As Catherine observes in *Confessions of AIDS Victim*, "facts do not cease to exist just because they are ignored"(6).

Further, the three writers explore the physical and psychological effects of the disease on the infected and the affected members of the society. For the HIV/AIDS victims, the realization that one is HIV positive is psychologically traumatizing and disturbing. Catherine, in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, points out that being an AIDS victim, "... is a human tragedy' that shakes one to the core of the heart (1) she also calls it a "fatal blow" and 'lethal' (2). That is why some victims like Father Michael and Rachel in *The Mysterious Killer* decide to end their lives rather than face the reality of being HIV/AIDS. Others like Alex prefer not to know their status at all while the likes of Njooki and Samuel in *Chira* ostracize themselves from the rest of the society. These reactions indicate the psychological effects being HIV positive to the victims.



Also, when full-blown AIDS finally sets in, the symptoms are heart rending as evident in Julia, Cecilia, Josefina and Samuel, when they are at the last throes of their lives. Mama Fibi describes Josefina to Mama Gabriel as follows:

You should have seen the child's face, mama Gabriel; or rather no, it is better you did not see. So thin, the skin drawn tightly over the bone and rough with sores... and her body and legs also... it is good he took her for surely no man would have brought dowry on her. (55)

Julia's picture is even more touching. We are told:

Gabriel saw a tiny figure wrapped in a *shuka*' and tugged gently to uncover the face. Spotty emaciated ...the stench was tremble. She had been too weak to part her clothes when diarrhea struck and even the wrapper was wet. She trembled with cold, her legs were a mass of sores and Gabriel senses, though he could not see, that her protruding bones scrapped. ...(163)

The image of Cecilia, and Samuel is no different. These descriptions vividly depict the embarrassing and the painful nature of this disease.

Given the psychological and the physical implications of the disease, the society needs to show love and empathy for the infected and to avoid stigmatizing them as this only drives them to more suffering. It also leads to spread of the disease, as those who are infected are not willing to speak out of their status for fear of stigmatization. The three writers clearly depict the negative effects of stigmatization and discrimination of AIDS victims on both the society at large and the infected members.

In *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, for example, when Catherine learns that she is HIV positive; her worst fear is that people will know her status and gossip about her. She therefore prefers to remain “as silent and discrete as possible.... until the symptoms develops and make it impossible for the secrecy to be maintained any more” (3). That way she can keep stigmatization at bay for the time being. This is a dangerous attitude because she might end up infecting her unsuspecting partners in case she decides to behave like Jane because they do not know she is sick. Jane continues to pass on the disease till the symptoms become manifest upon which she commits suicide.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, the misconceptions about the disease that lead to stigmatization and its effects on the AIDS sufferers is exemplified through the inmates’ mistreatment of Yamo in the cell. The inmates are so uninformed about HIV/AIDS that they think they could contract HIV/AIDS if Yamo touches them with his “tortoise like hands”(220). This makes his health deteriorate. Through Yamo’s experience, the author highlights the impact of discriminatory treatment on the victims. It impacts negatively on their mental and physical health, making them die faster.

Stigmatization is also seen through Waynberg who changes his mind about offering Rachel employment, when she accidentally tests positive for HIV/AIDS. He now has to consult the boards of directors, and then communicate officially to Rachel (232). We suspect this is a soft way of telling her there is no place for AIDS victim in the organization. This is very inhuman on the part of Waynberg because he knows very well the factors that led to her condition. She was raped. Yet he still

discriminates against her. It is like being HIV positive automatically makes the victims undesirable, the way they contracted the disease notwithstanding. It is this treatment that makes Rachel to almost kill herself for she feels that she may not achieve her life dreams. Rachel's experience indicate how HIV/AIDS victims are discriminated against at work places, that is, they are denied the chance of earning money they badly need to meet their medical costs.

In *Chira*, Macgoye depicts stigmatization and its effects through Samuel and Julia. Otieno's mother believes that her children will contract Samuel's illness by playing near his hut. This kind of discrimination makes Samuel withdraw from society and live like a hermit. According to Obura, Samuel only sleeps in his *Simba* and does not eat or sleep (45). This makes his health deteriorate so fast and within a period of less than six months, from the time the symptoms become evident on his body, he dies.

For those like Julia who have no family, the levels and effects of stigmatization are even worse. Julia can be said to be the epitome of society's stigmatization. This is depicted through the pathetic condition Gabriel and Helen discover her in. she is reduced to the level of an animal, living and dying in the streets, though very sick because all those he knew her chased her away when her condition deteriorated.

In *Chira* Macgoye demonstrates how great the extent of stigmatization is in our society through the patient who dies of tuberculosis at one of Makwour's Super Health centers at Kisumu. Since the symptoms resemble those of AIDS, like wasting of the body, no public means of transport is willing to take him to a bigger

hospital. When he dies, the other patients discharge themselves, possibly out of fear that they might too, contract the virus.

Through this patient and Julia also, the author indicates stigmatization cuts across all sectors of the society. Even the hospitals where AIDS victims are supposed to receive care, they are discriminated against. Otieno cannot take Julia to the hospital in the clinic's ambulance because he would lose his job if he 'let anyone in that filthy condition near the vehicle' (164). Even if he did take her, she would not be admitted, "even if she had money" because, nobody would want their relatives to sleep on a bed that had been occupied by a person in her condition.

This is ironical because hospitals' work is to treat the sick, yet they want nothing to do with the HIV/AIDS victims. In the face of all this one wonders what hope is left for the victims especially those that have no families like Julia, to take care of them.

Rachel later tests negative during a second test while being treated after the accident. The relief she feels indicates the psychological burden of being HIV positive. Since not many patients get a second lease of life like Rachel, the best the society can do for them is to accept and show them love.

From Rachel's experience also, Situma is indicating that, doctors too can make mistakes during HIV/AIDS screenings, hence the need to carry out numerous tests before declaring peoples' HIV status. Also, the doctors should be extra careful when screening because being HIV positive is a devastating experience, which may lead to extreme reactions such as suicide as in Rachel's case.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, Situma demonstrates the need for the society to treat the victims in a fair way. This is by showing us that, not every AIDS victim is to blame for his or her predicament. A case in point is the boy whom the doctor mistakenly gives an injection using the syringe he had used on Cecilia who is already infected (105). As the doctor worries, he will probably contract the virus. Others in *The Mysterious Killer* include the likes of Rachel who are raped and Father Michael who is a victim of unscrupulous men like Yamo. There is also the “unsuspecting spouses, mainly wives” (*Confessions of AIDS Victims*, 74) who are infected by their promiscuous husbands. He therefore suggests that we should treat HIV/AIDS victims with love and avoid generalizing that any HIV/AIDS victim is promiscuous.

This does not mean we should discriminate against those who contract it through irresponsible sex. As Rachel puts it in *The Mysterious Killer*, no matter how one contracts HIV/AIDS, “they all need mercy” (156). According to Rachel, even the likes of Yamo should not be discriminated against because this only increases their suffering.

Given the physical effects of HIV/AIDS on the body, one does not expect the victims to fend for themselves and the burden is left to well wishers, friends and relatives. Those who get sick in the city like Cecilia in *The Mysterious Killer* move back to rural areas to seek refuge in their relatives and kins-men hence further depleting the already meager resources available. Some like Cecilia leave orphans who must also be taken care of during their sickness and after their death. The situation in Hausa’s house resembles that in Charles Dickens’ novel, *Oliver Twist*,

as there is never enough to eat when he combines his family and that of his sister Cecilia. The poor Hausa has to helplessly watch as the “children clear their plates and look expectantly towards the kitchen” for more as they were “never satisfied”, and this was “frequently the case” (238).

Being HIV/AIDS positive also means that you may not achieve some of your goals in life. In *Confessions of an AIDS victim*, Catherine cannot further her studies. She has already asked for a study leave at her place of work and has been granted. Her parents are “already making a proud show in the village, happily telling everyone that their daughter is traveling abroad” (5). She has to explain to her boss, parents and colleagues why she cannot proceed to Texas, which is not easy. Her lie has to be convincing enough because if the truth of her condition leaks out, she will be stigmatized. She will also be unable to achieve her dream of acquiring a second degree. In *The Mysterious Killer*, Rachel’s prestigious job at Waynberg and Associates is at stake when she tests positive. She writes to her father:

You brought me up to look forward to good life and prepared me adequately to realize that good life. But now am bitter because all my dreams and hard work have come to naught”. (245)

Rachel’s situation is worse as she is a victim of men’s malice and retrogressive cultural practices; unlike Catherine who can at least say I deserved it for “living a reckless life”(confessions, 80). She also has a first hand experience on the disease as she had witnessed her aunt suffering as an HIV/AIDS victim. Though suicide is not the best solution, no matter the magnitude of the problem, her drastic

step to take away her life is therefore understandable. This is the writers' way of appealing to employers and educational institutions to be more empathetic to their HIV/AIDS positive employees and students respectively.

The writers suggest that in dealing with the pandemic, the society need to accept the existence of HIV/AIDS and put in place the right strategies to contain it. Those who are ignorant need to be informed. As the elders of Nkulu ask Rachel, "how can we face that which we do not know"? (*The Mysterious Killer*, 154) The answer is: it is not possible. That is why she goes ahead to explain to the illiterate elders the symptoms of the disease, how it is passed, and what they should do to control it.

In *The Mysterious Killer* Situma uses Rachel to portray his vision for the society in dealing with HIV/AIDS. Rachel is depicted as an initially naive and ignorant girl on HIV/AIDS. Her decisions after she gets conscientized about the pandemic during her journey to Wauzi though, epitomizes a true example of a responsible and patriotic member of the society. As a character, she explicates the deliberate and conscious search for knowledge about AIDS not seen in *Chira*. She decides to find out more about the disease by reading extensively. She purchases a book, *AIDS: FACTS AND FIGURES* to this effect. Armed with her hard found knowledge, she goes back to Nkulu a changed person, with a fanatical readiness to spread the "gospel" of HIV/AIDS and bring change to her people.

The odds against her are multiple. To start with, she is a woman and a young one at that. She is therefore not fit enough to stand not only before men but also the elders in her community which is portrayed as patriarchal and conservative, treating

women as second class citizens. The topic of HIV/AIDS also involves talking about sex, a taboo topic in this community (151). She however realizes it is a life and death issue and therefore decides to talk about it no matter the outcome. Her first opportunity comes during her aunt's burial where she does the unspeakable. Rachel breaks away from funeral traditions by courageously forcing her way to the microphone and letting every one know not only of the facts she has unearthed about HIV/AIDS, but that it is actually the cause of her aunt's death. By Rachel speaking the truth about her aunt's death, at her burial, Situma is suggesting that one way of dealing with the pandemic is by people speaking overtly about the causes of the death of their relatives.

When the elders summoned her to reprimand her for her daring action, she takes the opportunity to educate the ignorant villagers about the disease. Her approach is an example of effective education, which is generally lacking. Though she is more knowledgeable than the elders, and therefore has an edge over them, she does not lord it over them because she knows their pride will be hurt, making them listen to her. She is therefore very respectful as culture demands of her. She consistently refers to them as "wise elders" and even passes to them the burden of suggesting the solution to the problem in the way they know best. This appeals to their vanity and therefore they listen to her.

Through Rachel, the author suggests ways of surmounting the problem of the ineffectiveness of public campaigns on HIV/AIDS; educators on HIV/AIDS need to arm themselves with factual information on the scourge. Rachel is only able to educate her people because she takes it upon herself to dig out more information



on the disease. She buys a book entitled AIDS; FACTS AND FIGURES, which helps her to concretize her experiences and observations on HIV/AIDS. They also need to have a genuine zeal to change their people. This includes going against those cultural beliefs that may interfere with their zeal such as the view of women as inappropriate to address men, and sex being considered a taboo, as Rachel does.

Her understanding of her people's language obviously gives her an advantage. It enables her to effectively translate English words to their equivalent in her language. For example, instead of using the term antibodies, which may not have a direct equivalent in her language, she replaces it with *soldiers*. Situma is suggesting here that the elites of the society have a role to play in passing the AIDS message. Since they understand their languages and cultures well, they are better placed to educate the villagers than strangers. Thus, through Rachel, we are presented with an archetype of the appropriate attitude and character needed in curbing the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

It is our argument though that Rachel has been romanticized at some moments in the novel. For example, the ease with which she convinces the elders to accept her message on HIV/AIDS is not entirely convincing because they do not offer the message credible resistance.

Another remedy is that, the sick people should also try to understand the nature of the disease they are suffering from, because, by so doing they will be able to live more fulfilling lives. In *Confessions of an AIDS Victims*, Catherine consults doctors and medical journals to acquire more information on the disease. It is this

information that makes her come to accept her new status and therefore go on with life. At the end of her confession, she is even thinking of making her status public.

In addition, since AIDS is a mysterious disease in that one partner may be affected while the other is not, as Catherine's doctor advises her, it is necessary to inform one's partner if you test positive so that he or she can also check himself or herself. This way, they will be able to prevent themselves from being infected if they are not, and spreading the disease further, if they are.

In addition, it is not only those whose partners are sick who need to go for screening. According to Macgoye and Situma, people should go for screening before marriage. In *Chira*, Theodore and Elizabeth go for screening before they marry. They both test negative. This helps them to face life with a lot of certainty as evidenced in the contentment in Elizabeth during her pregnancy as opposed to Helen who is not so sure of whether she will have an healthy baby or not. This is partly the reason why Helen and Gabriel decide to go for the test.

Njooki and Kamau also go for voluntary testing in preparation to their marriage, where Njooki turns out to be positive. She informs her other boyfriend, Makwour, to test but he turns to be negative. We are not told of Kamau's status but we can deduce from the fact that he takes off from Njooki after seeing her results, he must have tested negative. Though they all abandon her, the screening is vital because Makwour is able to save his wives from infection, as he might have been infected them if he had continued his affair with Njooki. The way Njooki is affected by their neglect is Macgoye's way of suggesting that those who test

negative while their partners are positive should treat them in a compassionate manner, to ease their suffering.

In conclusion, in this chapter, we have explored Macgoye's, Situma's, and Adalla's treatment of the main causes of HIV/AIDS. These include: ignorance, denial of the existence of the disease, promiscuous sex, conservatism of the church, patriarchy, poverty and retrogressive cultural practices like polygamy, traditional circumcision and the view of sex as a taboo topic. We have also examined the psychological, economic and social implications of the disease to the infected, affected and the society at large. We have also explored the solutions they offer towards containing the disease, such as, massive public education campaigns, voluntary HIV screening, going public about the disease breaking the silence on sexual matters and parental guidance. In the next chapter, we explore four stylistic devices that have enabled the three authors to convey these issues effectively. These include: figures of speech, dialogue, letter mode and reminiscences.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TECHNIQUES AND STYLISTIC CHOICES IN EXPLORATION OF THE THEME OF HIV/AIDS

In the previous chapter, we explored the portrayal of the causes, effects and possible solutions to the HIV/AIDS scourge, as depicted by Macgoye, Situma and Adalla. This chapter evaluates the stylistic devices that are used to enhance the theme of HIV/AIDS. We examine how the use of figures of speech (metaphors, similes and symbols), letters, dialogue and reminiscences enhance the writers' exploration of the theme of HIV/AIDS. We also explore the differences in the use of these devices as well as unique features that are characteristic of the individual authors.

Before analyzing some appropriate techniques and stylistic devices utilized in the three texts, it is imperative that we examine the various definitions of the word style in order to delineate the most applicable for our purposes. Jeremy Hawthorn has defined style as the:

Manner of expression characteristic of a particular writer, or literary group of a period; writers' mode of expression, considered in regard to clearness, effectiveness, beauty and the like. (203)

From Hawthorn's definition, it is evident that style is subjective and particular, and has the role of enhancing effectiveness in unfolding of the concerns of the literary texts. In this study, we shall focus on the second and third facets of the definition because; our interest is not only to explain the stylistic devices' contribution to the

artistic beauty of the three texts under review but also, to expound on their effectiveness in unfolding the theme of HIV/AIDS.

David Crystal and Derrick Davy adopt similar definitions of style in, *Investigating English style*, where they view style in four ways:

Style may refer to some or all of the language habits of a person as when we talk of Shakespeare's style ...more often it refers in this way to a selection of language habits, occasional idiosyncrasies that characterize individuals' uniqueness. (10)

Since it is not possible to discuss all of a person's habits, they point out that the "concentration is only on those features in a person's expression which are particularly unusual or original" (10). From this definition we note that even when writers write on a similar topic, as in the case of the three authors under study, their works will always have differences in the way they approach the topic.

They also define style as the language habits of a group of people at one time or over a period of time. In other words, we can point out some similarities in style from writers of a particular historical period even though the writers may be writing on different thematic concerns. The third definition is where style is viewed in "an evaluative sense." Here, style refers to the effectiveness of the mode of expression or saying the right thing in the most effective way. This view is subjective as it implies making a "value judgment consciously or unconsciously on the overall effect of language on ourselves" (10). From this definition, we note that style is viewed as "a dress of thought" and that it is not an end to itself but a means

through which ideas are transported. Hence any study of style has the aim of illuminating its contribution to content.

The fourth definition is the widespread use of the word, which refers solely to literary language, where style is seen as a characteristic of “good”, effective or beautiful writing. This implies that style is not solely a means of communicating ideas but a means through the aesthetics of a work of art is achieved. Since none of this definition are self sufficient, in this study, we adopt the third and the fourth views because we attempt to illuminate how language and literary techniques are exploited to capture the core issues of HIV/AIDS in the most convincing and aesthetic way. Since we are dealing with different authors, we shall also adopt the first definition to account for their unique differences.

It is important to note that in literary criticism, the study of style is always purposeful and a goal-oriented endeavor. Crystal and Davy have asserted that, a study of style is to:

Identify those features, which are restricted to certain kinds of social context; explain where possible why such features have been used as opposed to other alternatives and to classify these features into categories based upon a view of their function in a social context. (10)

In a nutshell, the aim of studying style is to identify, explain and classify features according to their artistic and social function in the text. Similarly, in this study, we shall identify those stylistic devices that best reveal the theme of HIV/AIDS and attempt to explain their effectiveness in advancing the theme.

Michael Short and Geoffrey Leech, in *Style and Fiction: An Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, also establish similar reasons for studying style. According to them:

The study of style is rarely undertaken for its own sake... we normally study style because we want to explain something. In general literary stylistics has implicitly or explicitly the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function.... The motivating factors are not so much *what* as *how*. From a linguist's angle it is *why* does the author choose to express himself in this particular way, from the critics' viewpoint, it's *how* such and such an aesthetic effect is achieved through language (13).

In this study, we explore some of the language habits and techniques that the authors have deliberately chosen to reveal the various issues surrounding the theme of HIV/AIDS. These include: figures of speech (metaphors, similes, symbols) letter mode, dialogue, and reminiscences.

In the three texts, the authors have extensively utilized similes and metaphors to capture various aspects of the theme of HIV/AIDS. Indangasi defines a simile as "a direct overt comparison" which uses "verbal elements *as and like*", while a metaphor is an "indirect overt comparison" (*stylistics*, 105).

Similes and metaphors fall under the wider classification of figures of speech. Generally, all figures of speech extend meaning by inviting us to view a phenomenon or an idea in relation to another. This is done by the use of figurative language, "an integral part of imagery in literature" (*Stylistics*, 103). Indangasi defines figures of speech as "speech, which operate on the principle of

comparability”; he adds that, “By comparing phenomena in nature it becomes easier for us to cognize reality . . . in its fullness (103).

The purpose of expanding the meaning of words by literary writers is in order to deal with new experiences and articulate new meanings about these experiences. Roland Barthes, in *Metaphors and symbols*, argues that, metaphors (and we can say all the other figures of speech) are designed to communicate new insight and we often invent them to add beauty to artistic work or when we find literal language too restrictive for what we want to say. Thus, figures of speech, whether similes or metaphors or other types like personification, synecdoche, metonyms and symbols, are important in literature as they help us to recognize reality by comparing the unfamiliar world with the familiar one. In the HIV/AIDS topic, figures of speech are central in helping us concretize our perception of the scourge and its ramifications, in a vivid way.

In the *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, for example, the metaphor of the underground train is utilized to capture the fast spread of HIV/AIDS. The way HIV/AIDS spreads is compared to the underground trains of Amsterdam, Netherlands, which in a letter to Catherine, Marilyn describes as swift and are boarded by large numbers of people because nobody bothers to find out if one has a ticket or not (73).

Adalla feels that, by people “sticking to high risk behavior and refusing to alter their lifestyles” (74), they are like people boarding the swift underground trains because this leads to rapid and unrestrained spread of HIV/AIDS. Like the underground trains in which no one bothers to check for the passengers’ tickets,



those who engage in high-risk behavior do not bother to check the status of their partners. With this blindness the rate of infection will remain high and the virus, which is invisible, just like the underground train will permeate and continue killing people indiscriminately. These high-risk practices include among others, prostitution, wife inheritance, and polygamy. Through the simile, the author makes us perceive the nature of the pandemic and the danger of persisting with practices that enhance the spread of the scourge.

Similes and metaphors are used to depict the psychological trauma that accompanies being HIV/AIDS victim. For example, in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, after the doctor confirms Catherine's HIV positive status, and informs her of the symptoms of the various HIV/AIDS stages, she says that she shifted on her chair as though she were "sitting on a crown of thorns"(8). The simile concretizes the pain she feels upon learning of the physical suffering awaiting her when she finally develops full-blown HIV/AIDS. Since we can imagine the pain of sitting on thorns, the simile helps us to form a mental picture of Catherine's psychological pain and thus we empathize with her.

Catherine compares her memories of a happy past with Brian to "taking tranquilizers and drifting to sleep", which she would prefer "not to be shaken from (52). This juxtaposes her happiness in her relationship with Brian, as compared to the suffering she is going through at the moment as an AIDS victim. We sympathize and feel with her that her parents were very unfair in forcing her to end the relationship. This also indicates the psychological torture that the AIDS sufferers go through. Their present is always stained by the knowledge that they

have the virus and only through engaging in nostalgia, that is, thinking of the good old days, that they can experience real happiness.

The indiscriminate nature of HIV/AIDS is compared to “a blind beggar who can stop at anybody” (2). This shows that the disease is not a respecter of persons as it can attack any one, just like the blind beggar, who does not see whom he or she is begging from. It emphasizes the fact that everybody in the society is at the risk of contracting the scourge, in spite of his or her social status. Hence, every one has the responsibility of living morally upright lives.

The simile, “to live as uprightly as monks and nuns” (10) makes vivid the level of moral uprightness that Adalla through her protagonist Catherine feels is needed to curb AIDS. She suggests that, the solution to HIV/AIDS is total abstinence from sex, just like the catholic nuns and monks are supposed to do.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, Hausa compares those who deny the existence of HIV/AIDS, and continue to live lives that enhance the disease to “the fly that throws caution to the wind to dare bite”(240). Just like the fly knows too well that it might end up being killed for its action, those who persist with high-risk practices know very well that they might contract the killer disease. The simile is used to make vivid their foolishness and depicts how denial is merely an escapist tool that will not solve the HIV/AIDS catastrophe.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, when Yamo is arrested, the inmates remark that he was behaving like a “pregnant woman” (133), in reference to his vomiting and frequenting of the toilet, as he had diarrhoea. He is also said to have been “coughing like a bad engine” (220) which indicates the dryness of his cough; his

hands are said to be “tortoise like”, which captures the roughness of his body, caused by a skin infection often associated with HIV/AIDS. These instances are examples where similes are used to reveal the symptoms of the disease. This is by creating vivid images that bring out with immediacy the harrowing bodily manifestations of the disease on victims. The similes are also used to depict the level of stigmatization of HIV/AIDS victims. The negative images indicate how the victims are rejected and discriminated against in all spheres of the society.

The simile, “ they are perishing like poisoned rats”(179), is used by Rachel to capture the fast rate at which HIV/AIDS is claiming lives in *The Mysterious Killer*. Through this image of the dying rats, the magnitude of the HIV/AIDS catastrophe is brought out. Further, it brings out the dehumanizing level the scourge has reduced our societies in that people are dying in large numbers like poisoned and helpless animals, besides capturing the tragic intensity of the disease.

Rachel also uses the metaphor “devil’s den” (77) to portray her perception of the activities that take place in the Cloud Nine Bar. They are so evil that the place can only be compared to the devil’s hide out. This graphically and allusively depict the immoral activities that take place in the bar, which leads to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The behavior of the women in cloud nine reminds Rachel of “mating dogs” (32). This animalizing metaphor conveys the level moral decadence in the society. The prostitutes have multiple partners and do not exercise choice but indiscriminately take in any man available and willing to pay. It is this trend that has created a fertile ground for the spread of the HIV virus.

Besides similes and the metaphor, Situma also uses symbols to capture the phenomenon of HIV/AIDS in the society. In *The Mysterious Killer*, the *Fiumo* tree is used symbolically. From its description, it stands out from the other trees in that it is huge and ringed. People in this community view it as an important landmark that is used in pointing out direction. When it is cut, Rachel cannot find her way to Mr Dhavo's house and so she gets lost in the labyrinth of the forest. She has to be rescued by good willed woman, who later instructs a man to show her way home.

The *Fiumo* tree is portrayed in such a way that it acquires a centrality in the life of the people of Nkulu. It becomes representative of institutions like the church, which people look upon to find their direction in life and therefore escape the HIV/AIDS scourge. Traditionally, religion is regarded as an institution of social control that provides guidance and solace to the society. Destruction of the *Fiumo* trees by charcoal burners of Nkulu, can be likened to the destruction of these institutions by the likes of Yamo, who get rid of Father Michael by getting him infected with the HIV virus. When this happens, people are left with no way of knowing what is right or wrong; making them prone to risky behaviours that can lead to HIV infection, for lack of moral direction or guidance.

They have to rely on the goodwill of characters like Rachel for direction, the same way Rachel relies on the goodwill of the woman, to show her way back home in the absence of the *Fiumo* tree. Together with the *Fiumo* tree and the charcoal burners, therefore, the woman becomes symbolic in the picture Situma is moulding. While the *Fiumo* tree symbolizes direction, the charcoal burners symbolize the destruction of the institutions of direction by antagonists like Yamo.

Likewise, the woman becomes a symbol of rescue and solution in a state where all the other means have become obsolete. By extension, Rachel, because of her education and character, is later in the text endowed with the role of the woman, to show direction where the traditional institutions like the church and the council of elders cannot match the challenges of the new menace of HIV/AIDS. She counsels the villagers on the disease and at the same time, launches Busaki University Aids (sic) Awareness Society (BUAAS), a special symposium for AIDS at Busaki University.

In *Chira*, Macgoye uses the simile “thin like a person eaten by T.B” (45) to indicate the loss of weight in Samuel after he develops full-blown AIDS. Tuberculosis is a disease that has been in the society for long and therefore; people in this society are familiar with it. Otieno can therefore perceive the extent of the weight loss in Samuel when Obura uses this image. This makes him realize that Samuel is very sick. Otieno therefore goes to visit him, in spite of his dire financial state, as this is the culturally appropriate thing to do.

This simile also explains some underlying misconceptions that have surrounded the disease and which have resulted to stigmatization of those suffering from diseases that have symptoms that resemble those of HIV/AIDS. For example, the borderline between the symptoms of HIV/AIDS and T.B is very thin because, both are manifested through wasting away of the body. It is for this reason that those suffering from T.B in the text are confused for HIV/AIDS victims, and are victimized, as people have a tendency of associating any disease that is manifests itself through weight loss with AIDS. An example is the patient who dies in

Makwour's Super health clinic in Kisumu because no vehicle was willing to carry him, for fear that he has HIV/AIDS and one might contract the virus by being close to him. Thus, through the simile, the author explores some reasons for the misconceptions surrounding HIV/AIDS.

In *Chira*, Macgoye compares people's denial of the existence of the disease to smearing 'over the cracks with repetitions like cow-dung' (45). This indicates that people know the reality of HIV/AIDS but choose to escape and bury the reality by denying and pretending that it does not exist. This is portrayed as the root cause of the continued spread of HIV/AIDS in *Chira* and *The Mysterious Killer* as people continue to engage in practices that put them at risk.

Macgoye also metaphorically uses certain characteristics of the HIV/AIDS pandemic to vivify some of the factors that she perceives as responsible for the spread of the AIDS. One such factor is corruption which Macgoye perceives as the main cause of poverty, and by extension HIV/AIDS. Macgoye draws a parallel between the healthy carriers of HIV/AIDS who, because they have no outward evident symptoms continue to spread the disease to their unsuspecting victims; and corruption in the public sphere, which she views as the major cause of street families, increase in crime rates, and general poverty in the society. She says the following:

And in the society at large the carriers flourish too. Close to them funds drain away into privy channels or trickle into malodorous corners... and the society continues to smile upon the carrier... (153)

The corrupt leaders are compared to healthy carriers of the disease because they spread poverty to the masses the same way healthy looking HIV carriers spread the virus to their unsuspecting victims. This is by misappropriating funds meant for schemes to benefit the poor.

The effect of corruption to the society is compared to eruption of the once “smooth and tender skin into blotches and black heads which draws offensive matter” (153) in HIV/ AIDS victims. Similarly, corruption ruins the schemes and organizations that are supposed to bring development and therefore alleviate poverty, leaving people frustrated, increasing crime rates and the numbers of street children among other social problems. Through this image, the destructive nature of corruption is made concrete using a familiar figure of one of the HIV/AIDS symptom.

Macgoye also likens those who execute the evil schemes of the corrupt leaders to opportunistic diseases which are responsible for the increase in “death statistics” and high demand for doctor’s attention in hospitals” (154) among HIV/AIDS victims. Just like the opportunistic infections add to the number of deaths among HIV/AIDS sufferers, in the same way the criminals increase the society’s social economic problems by executing the evil plans of the well placed corrupt leaders.

In addition, like the AIDS virus, which is only manifested through opportunistic infections, the actual people who are responsible for corruption “seldom put in an appearance”(154). It is the small people who they use as pawns

who face the wrath of the society in the place of the big fish who use them to enhance their greed. Macgoye points out that:

Just as the opportunistic diseases detract from the credit of *Ukimwi*, spreading the death statistics, demanding the doctor's attention, so does the opportunist hug the limelight in the public body. The hit man who is found with the weapon, the auctioneer disposing the disputed plot, and the shareholder who has the audacity to complain the clerk who failed to locate the missing file. (154)

Since concentrating on the management of the opportunistic infections does not rid the body of the virus. So too the society will get nowhere in the management of corruption by dealing only with the economic opportunists. Due to difficult economic conditions, the economic opportunists are always available and easily replaceable.

Through this comparison, the author vivifies corruption and captures why it has continued to be such a thorn in the flesh of our society. The real culprits are never brought to book as the society only sees the puppets they use to carry out their evil schemes. Macgoye is suggesting that, unless the society identifies these actual culprits and deal with the big picture, corruption will continue to grow just like HIV virus continues to spread through the healthy carriers. It follows that its economic effects will continue to be felt, thus perpetuating poverty, which we have identified as a major cause of HIV/AIDS spread.

Julia, for example, due to poverty, is willing to be sexually exploited by Gabriel for a petty twenty shillings. Young girls like Njooki and Adhiambo engage



in high-risk relationships with men like Makwour in order to survive economically, thus exposing themselves to the virus. Njooki is already sick and Adhiambo escapes narrowly as Makwour mysteriously turns out to be negative.

Thus, the comparison helps us to perceive the gravity of corruption and its effects. Since the effects of the scourge on the body are visible to us, by using HIV/AIDS as a metaphor the author concretizes corruption, which is abstract. Consequently, we perceive its destructive effects on the economy, which contributes to the spread of the pandemic. By using the image of HIV/AIDS to vivify corruption and its effects, the author is in a way asserting that even in the face of HIV/AIDS, there are other societal ills that are as serious as AIDS and they should be dealt with from their roots. This is because; the high spread of HIV/AIDS is just but a manifestation of their effects.

Through these figures of speech, the writers are able to bring out important aspects of HIV/AIDS in a very familiar and immediate way. By using HIV/AIDS as an image, Macgoye metaphorically concretizes social ills like corruption and poverty and their effects. Adalla and Situma, use images from the environment to represent various aspects of the disease. The two writers illustrate AIDS using familiar figures to show its effects on the body and the society at large. Macgoye goes further and sees AIDS as a metaphor that can illustrate the society, hence revealing the dialectical relationship between HIV/AIDS and social ills like corruption.

The letter mode is also used to effectively explore the pandemic especially in the *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*. In this novel, Catherine the narrator is

making a confession to her long time friend about her infection, what led to her being infected, her intimate fears, feelings and experiences as an AIDS victim. The confessions are therefore truthful, frank and believable because Catherine is opening up to a close confidant and friend. This is because personal letters are meant for the receiver's eyes only and not the public's as personal letters are confidential correspondences. She notes the following to Marilyn about their friendship:

Marilyn, you are a dear person to me that is why, with a good reason, I choose to address these letters to you. You have proved to be such variable and selfless friend in high school, campus and thereafter. We have shared the memorable moments of our adult life together up to nine months ago when you left for Netherlands in pursuit of high education. Even then we still share out thoughts in form of lively communication of long letters, which could easily pass for pamphlets. And you are such a talented writer...another reason why I address this unique letter to you is that I do not want the news of my condition to reach you through hearsay...The shock will be greater that way, and the news will be impersonal.... (2)

Through the personal letter technique, Adalla able to explore even the taboo topics even those involving sex as Catherine is able to confidentially speak out her deepest secrets, which would be too embarrassing if spoken in publicly. She confesses about her promiscuous lifestyle and the circumstances that led to it, her feelings towards her parents and even embarrassing episodes like her attempts to attract men during school outings by wearing fancy hairstyles, as Catherine has no

secrets to keep away from Marilyn. All these have a bearing towards her HIV positive status later in life. Consequently, using the letter mode, the author is able to explore some of the reasons that contribute to the widespread of HIV/AIDS pandemic more adequately. The letter has established a confidential connection between them, which enables Catherine to talk about herself freely.

The letter technique also gives the story an autobiographical quality as Catherine is narrating the story of her life. This makes the story more credible. Autobiographies, being stories that are told by a person about their lives, are supposed to be truthful accounts of peoples' lives. Hence her views on HIV/AIDS can be believed because, these are things she has experienced.

On the other hand, the word confession is associated with religion, whereby people atone for their sins by talking about them frankly to their religious "shepherds". We therefore imagine that this is what Catherine is doing to her best friend, Marilyn who is endowed with the role of an advisor to Catherine in the novel, as seen in the note she scribbles in Catherine's autograph at the end of their High School term at Nairobi school. She writes to her, "Cathy, watch out for cunning men...do not fall prey for their honey talks or professed love. Fall for reason and for moral strength but never let emotion guide you." (42)

Hence, her views on HIV/AIDS are candid, as they are real experiences of her life. Since the letter mode gives her views a truthful quality, the story of her life becomes a moral story from which others can learn. It is for this reason that, at the end of the book, Catherine wants to make the letter public, and as she feels, its contents can help in transforming sexual mannerisms in the country. This is the

author's way of exploring the idea of going public about one's HIV/AIDS status as one way of resolving the AIDS pandemic.

Letters are also a means of bridging geographical gaps between people. In HIV/AIDS creative works, they are very revealing as they are a means through which people inform those far off the various aspects of the disease. In an attempt to bridge the geographical gap between characters, important attitudes and issues on the scourge are revealed. In *Confessions Of an AIDS Victim* it is the need in Catherine to bridge the gap between her and her long time friend that the author ends up exploring the theme of HIV/AIDS, as the whole novel is written in form of a letter.

In *Chira*, Gabriel learns about Samuel's sickness through a letter from his mother. It is also through this letter that the author develops the idea of ignorance among the rural people. In the letter, Samuel's mother confesses of the villagers' ignorance of Samuel's ailment. Hence, from this letter, we have a first hand confession from an affected member of the community, about their ignorance of HIV/AIDS. She actually uses the word *we* which indicates she is not just putting across her views, but those of a whole community.

In *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, the role of lack of parental guidance in the spread of AIDS is examined through the minor letters within the long letter. Catherine is informed about her parents' worsening relations through a letter from her mother. Another letter from one of her brother's informs her of her father's marriage to a second wife making the family polygamous. The parents cannot sit down together and counsel her appropriately. They only come together when they

think she has misbehaved by having an affair with her half brother to discipline her. They do not realize how they have contributed to this scenario by their failure to provide her with parental guidance. This sows seeds of rebellion early in her life, which later contributes to her later HIV/AIDS status.

In addition, polygamy is one of those cultural practices that enhance the spread of HIV/AIDS in the novel. As it often happens in polygamous relationships, the father virtually abandons Catherine's mother save for important duties like paying the school fees of her children and attending their graduations. The children have to fend for themselves for some of their basic needs. In Catherine's case, this contributes to her infection in that she has to turn to promiscuity to meet her basic needs. Thus through this letter, the writer manages to highlight causes of the spread of the AIDS virus.

Henry's letters to Catherine are also significant, they indicate the effects of lack of parental guidance to the youth. In his first letter to Catherine, requests her to delay going home for holidays by a day " so that they could have some time for themselves" (24), a proposition she easily gives in to. She does not realize this is Henry's ploy to lure her into the trap of pre-marital sex. This indicates that without parental guidance, the youth begin engaging in sexual encounters while still in school, hence exposing themselves to the HIV virus.

His second letter reveals how the girls end up being on the receiving end of such premarital associations because once the boys satiate their sexual appetites curiosity, they move on to their next conquest. Henry writes to Catherine, after their intimate encounter, "I thought you would go home and forget about me so I got

myself a new girlfriend called Nancy. Unlike you she is principled, won't take alcohol and enters no hotel room. That is the hot stuff I need to keep me going" (30). Henry will possibly use his tricks to break Nancy's principles and then move on to another girl.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, due to the intensely private and immediate nature of personal letters, Yamo's "confidential" letter to Father Michael accentuates the shock Father Michael gets from the news that he has been infected with the HIV virus. In the letter, Yamo informs father Michael that he had sent the HIV positive Konse to seduce him and so infect him with the deadly virus. This explains why Father Michael decides to commit suicide after reading the letter. The letter also indicates the challenges that are in the way of efforts to control the disease. For example, through Yamo letter to Father Michael, Situma suggests that, those who benefit from set ups that enhance HIV/AIDS, will always sabotage efforts aimed at fighting the scourge. Such people should therefore be targeted in anti HIV/AIDS campaigns.

Through Rachel's letter to her father, Situma reveals the psychological turmoil that goes on in HIV positive people. Rachel feels devastated when she tests positive, though it turns to be a false diagnosis. It is this psychological turmoil that makes people like Rachel and Father Michael decide to commit suicide. Cultural practices like *hutubuta* that contribute to the spread of the disease, are also highlighted and condemned by Rachel through this letter. In the letter, Rachel blames her supposed infection on the practice of *hutubuta*, which gives men the freedom to rape women in the name of acquiring wives.

We are also provided with a gender perspective to the disease through the letter, in that, men support practices that make women vulnerable to infection as evident through the judge who sentences Rachel's rapists to only ten months. Since the society is patriarchal in nature, women have very little say on when to stop these practices. It follows that they have limited choices on whether to protect themselves from infection or not. It is through one of these practices, *hutubuta*, that Rachel contracts a venereal disease, and supposedly HIV/AIDS.

Thus, in the suicide note to Edison, Rachel begs him to "try to change the world –the men's attitudes towards women and laws of this country with respect to the injustices meted towards women"(246). Through the letter therefore, solutions to the gender disparities that contribute to the spread of the disease are depicted in Rachel's plea to the educated men like Edison to try to give voice to the voiceless women

Since this information is expressed in the form of a suicide note, and that is supposed to be read when the person is dead, it carries more weight, for the pain of loss in the bereaved may make people re-examine their attitudes *vis a vis* HIV/AIDS. These suicide notes also reveal how weighty the experience of being HIV positive is, making people resort to extreme measures like suicide.

Thus, in *Confessions of the HIV/AIDS Victim* the use of the letter technique, enhances the credibility and confidentiality of the message, which is crucial in discussing HIV/AIDS matters. In *Chira* and *The Mysterious Killer*, letters are used to mainly bridge geographical gaps and through them important attitudes towards the disease are revealed. In all the three texts, letters on expound on the themes,

move forward the plot, and portray the psychological effects of HIV/AIDS on the characters.

The theme of HIV/AIDS is also reinforced through dialogues. Henry Indangasi defines dialogue as a,

Strategy where characters talk in fiction and the author makes the conversation resemble real communication in life...you will encounter features such as false start, hesitation, held syllables, all manner of intonation and of course oddities such as hyperbole. (117)

Dialogue is important because through conversations, the characters' perceptions and thoughts on issues are exposed. Since dialogues are verbalized, we get an insight into the characters' outlook on things from not only their words, but also, from other speech features such as intonation, stress, and hesitations that accompany their words. In all the three texts, we have very revealing dialogues.

In *Chira*, the conversation between Njooki and pastor Theodore exposes the society's discriminatory attitude towards HIV/AIDS victims. It also indicates how discrimination impacts on AIDS sufferers.

"... You eat well, sleep?"

"Yes when I remember to. I do not sleep well. But you see, I cannot be cleansed. I carry the sickness within me."

"Praise the lord at least you know it...you will do no more harm"

"I will try, but it is hard, and I do not know how much harm I have done already."



“That is something none of us knows. When we repent of spreading rumour, we do not know how many lives the rumour has touched, but still we can be made clean.”

“Clean, really clean?”

“And the sugar daddy, is he all right?”

“He chased me away. I do not know how he is.

.....

“And the other boyfriend?”

“That one I have no news of.... perhaps I was a fool (to go for HIV screening).”(My parenthesis, 148).

Through this dialogue, we understand why people do not like to go for HIV screening. They fear being abandoned by the rest of the society if they test positive, as all Njooki’s lovers abandon her, leaving her lonely and helpless. The conversation reveals the psychological effects of discrimination. The HIV/AIDS victims are so affected by the discrimination that sometimes even normal processes like feeding and grooming become a problem for them. Further in this dialogue, Njooki is also said to be evading people she knew before which indicates further the effect of stigmatization to her. Thus by making the characters articulate their troubles through dialogues, the Macgoye is appealing to society to treat AIDS victims in a fair way.

It is through this dialogue that the role of the church in the control of the pandemic is illuminated. Through pastor Theodore, the author suggests that the church should accept and give hope to the AIDS sufferers. Through him, Njooki (as

well as Julia later in the text) sees a ray of light in her otherwise very dull world. Theodore assures Njooki that, there is hope for forgiveness and acceptance by both God and the church. He and his church members like Gabriel and Helen, also comfort Julia during her last days before she succumbs to a harrowing death from the virus.

Njooki's surprise at his words that she can be forgiven and cleansed indicates the pessimism that accompanies being HIV positive. "Clean, really clean?" (148) This shows that, since the society treats the victims insensitively, they also tend to believe that they are of little value to the rest of the society including God. That is why Njooki, thinks being positive is an "evil" that even God cannot forgive. She is surprised when Theodore assures her that she can be forgiven. Her surprise at his words also indicates the yearning AIDS victims have for acceptance by the society.

The dialogue between the man and the woman in the crowd watching the pro-life demonstration clearly shows how the society feels about open discussion of sex matters.

"They used to tell us at the clinic that there are better ways ...but now the condom is not so much to stop the baby as to stop the infection. Even people who think they are not fertile should use them.

"Oh shut up your dirty mouth," protested the woman walking beside him."

These are not the things to talk about in public. Embarrassing I call it."

"If you saw the state people come to our clinic in, that would embarrass you a lot than just talking about it."

“ When I was a girl you never heard those things...”

.....

“Me I obey the priest but I do not go shouting in the road about it”

“Stupid” announced Helen to the whole world in general (33).

Through this dialogue, Macgoye captures how the treatment of sex as a taboo topic hinders the meaningful discussion of the sex topic and thus HIV/AIDS. From the man’s words, it is clear that the community is aware of HIV/ AIDS and its preventive methods like using condoms. However, as long as sex remains a taboo topic, conscientizing characters like the woman who hold such beliefs, will always be problematic. Macgoye uses the exclamation “oh” to depict the woman’s shock that somebody can just talk about sex in public.

The dialogue further reveals how the blind adherence to church doctrines can be catastrophic in the era of AIDS, as exemplified by the woman who obeys the priest without bothering to meditate on the social value of his teachings. Macgoye’s stand on such retrogressive beliefs and blind worship clearly comes out through Helen’s intrusive comment. It is simply “stupid” for people to hold to such beliefs when the society’s survival is threatened.

As Wasamba (2000) points out, the fundamental question Macgoye attempts to address in this dialogue is: “Do we keep quiet, turn a blind eye to the painful reality around us and dogmatically preach abstinence even if it means sacrificing a whole generation to the dreaded AIDS?”(130). According to Wasamba, the “author indicates that, doing that would be a sign of great irresponsibility”(130). We agree with Wasamba’s observation.

In the dialogue, Macgoye is appealing to society to make a choice between the “two evils” and decide which is the lesser one; allowing people to freely discuss HIV/AIDS and thus sex matters or hypocritically holding on to unrealistic moral standards and letting people die of HIV/AIDS. It is obvious that the former is the most sensible choice.

The dialogue between Mama Fibi and Mama Gabriel reveals the stereotypical explanations that enhance the spread of the disease. In this dialogue, HIV/AIDS is associated with peoples’ eating habits and curses. According to Mama Gabriel, Samuel and Josefina’s sickness can be associated with eating red fish.

“They said she got very thin and could not keep food in her stomach... The doctor said he could do nothing.”

“Just like Samuel.”

“Yes, just like Samuel.”

“Oh dear. It is that red fish they eat down there. My mother always used to warn me about it and I have impressed it on my children. If you must have fish, have Ngege. It is the only safe one.”

“But people do not say it is a food disease, my sister in law. They say it is *Chira*”(54).

This reveals the rural peoples’ ignorance of HIV/ AIDS, and that is why they associate it with food and curses. In this misrepresentation of the true nature of HIV/AIDS, people cannot address it effectively, thus there is need for people to be sensitized on the truth about the pandemic, so that they can deal with it appropriately.

After the burial, Mama Fibi goes to see Mama Gabriel again, so as to thank her for “watching” over her children. In their conversation, the author conveys the effects of the pandemic on important communal practices like burials. According to Mama Fibi, people no longer take their children for burial possibly because with the advent of HIV/AIDS, they have become too common and therefore it is expensive to always travel with the family. Earlier in the novel, we learn that some of Samuel’s classmates did not attend his burial, something that is culturally out of place in this community.

His death is not even announced in newspapers or radio, as is the custom because such announcements have become too expensive due to the increased number of HIV related deaths. Gabriel even thinks that those who never attended Samuel’s burial, conveniently decided to evade by faking lack of knowledge, possibly because deaths have become too common hence traveling to attend burial ceremonies frequently is expensive. All this indicates the large number of people the pandemic is claiming in this community turning once communal practices into private affairs.

In *Confessions of an AIDS victim*, it is through highly one-sided dialogues between Catherine and her doctor, during her consultations that the author provides us with immense clinical information on HIV /AIDS. We learn about the common medical terms and symptoms associated with the disease, stages one has to pass through before developing full blown AIDS, and changing trends concerning the disease, as doctors try to find cure for it from these dialogues. The dialogues also

introduce to us the novel's medical register, as the doctor's words are full of medical jargon. One of the dialogues runs like this:

"I still have a number of things I wish to know. Last time you mentioned something about pre-AIDS conditions. I have been wondering what this are."

"Oh yes I assume a lot in most cases, thinking everybody understands my language. Now, I must have mentioned that after the asymptotic phase, some patients progress to pre-AIDS conditions before suffering full-blown AIDS. There are two known pre-AIDS conditions. One is PGL, in full Persistent Generalized Lymphadenopathy... Lymphadenopathy simply refers to the swelling of the lymph glands within the lymphatic system. Now PGL describes the condition, which is characterized by persistent swelling of lymph glands ion many places. ...."The other condition is known as ARC which stands for AIDS Related Complex in full... this condition is very similar to AIDS but the difference is that in ARC the symptoms are not as severe as in fully expressed AIDS and can respond to medication...."(59)

In these dialogues, we are presented with medical facts about HIV/AIDS in a creative way.

The dialogue between Brian and Catherine on the first day he invites her to his house, places the disease in its historical perspective. Catherine's relationship with Brain in this dialogue is one of teacher- student, in that he offers information that Catherine does not posses. As a result, he informs her of every aspect of the disease as she prods him to tell her more. Thus, the writer is able to highlight the history of

AIDS discovery, reasons behind its name (AIDS), infection modes, prevention and so on. Since the information is from a medical journal, it is as medically factual as the one that she gets from her doctor. Thus, we are informed about the history of the disease in a creative manner.

Significantly, it is in this dialogue that we have a thorough discussion of the biases surrounding the use of condoms. We learn that, most people only use them as birth-control devices and not to prevent infections from the HIV virus and other sexually transmitted diseases. It is also in this conversation that the economic vulnerability of women is highlighted. Women are poor economically and therefore, prone to sexual exploitation by men, which often lead to their infection with HIV/AIDS.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, the dialogue between the patients when Nuomi is admitted, though overtly didactic in its presentation, is also significant. Through it, the author explores the negative effects of HIV/AIDS on the public health infrastructure. Almost every one in the ward is an AIDS patient.

In addition, through this dialogue, the author demystifies HIV/AIDS. This can be seen in the dialogue between the patients. When Nuomi gets to the ward, the young man casually ask him, "Are you suffering from AIDS?" (212). When Nuomi says he does not know, another man rhetorically points out " what else can it be"(212). The fact that people can talk about the disease so openly indicates they no longer treat it as a mystery nor do they fear talking openly about it. The fact that they regret their mistreatment of people like Rachel who dared talk about the

disease earlier, symbolizes the breakdown of denial. This, as seen in the previous chapter, is a step forward towards dealing with the pandemic.

The dialogue between Rachel and Rehema when Rachel goes to Kiba for a holiday after the rape ordeal indicates some of the challenges that need to be addressed in dealing with the pandemic. In this dialogue, it is evident that it is not only the uneducated who embrace attitudes and engage in practices that hinder effective management of the disease. Even educated people like Ahmed and Rehema, do not want to go for HIV/AIDS screening because they fear to know their status. They also engage in sexually promiscuous acts, which contribute to the spread of AIDS

...I was also involved in other reckless liaisons... Still I wonder if I can get over some of my past dirty activities

Like what? Rachel asked with curiosity

One of the places I used to frequent was Cloud Nine. There I met a gentleman called Yamo....

You met Yamo...did you have an affair with him...you would better go for an AIDS test. Rehema shook her head. "Neither I nor Ahmed can stand an AIDS test.(201)

Through this dialogue, Situma further indicates that the solution to HIV/AIDS lies greatly on the individuals' moral decisions and character. Ahmed and Rehema belong to a very strict religion, Islam, which teaches and enforces rules against irresponsible sexual behaviour, especially on premarital sex. This though, does not stop them from engaging in sex outside marriage, and in Rehema's case



sexual relations with Yamo. Rachel, who has the freedom to do what she likes, chooses to live an upright life.

Rehema and Ahmed are also highly educated and informed about AIDS. It is Rehema, a medical student, who first informs Rachel about the disease, yet she and Ahmed engage in risky sexual behavior, which exposes them to the virus. Since Yamo is already infected, chances that Rehema is also infected are very high. This means that she will pass on the disease to Ahmed, thus perpetuating the cycle of infection.

Hence dialogues are important in the three texts in revealing the characters' states of mind as well as various aspects of the disease.

The writers also reveal the theme of HIV/AIDS using reminiscences. Reminiscences are “evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment”(Hawthorn, 5). Through them, characters relive events in their past which have an implication on the present.

In the three texts under study, reminiscences are important as they depict how characters' past lives impacted on their current HIV positive status. Because of their psychological nature, in that they are relived in the minds of the characters, they reveal the characters' deepest thoughts. This may include their fears and regrets of their past which they may be unwilling to overtly speak about. Since AIDS is associated with sex and other related practices that are either a taboo or have shameful connotations, characters can only mull about these events in their

minds. Thus reminiscences are vital in portraying even the characters' private and secret pasts.

In *The Mysterious Killer*, Cecilia's reminiscence in which she regrets sending her niece Rachel to collect money from Mama Baby and Yamo at Busaki, is used to reveal important Characters like Cecilia, Mama Baby and Yamo. Fearing for her niece, Cecilia relives the place and the character of the people she associated with there like Yamo and Mama Baby. She recalls the tricky ways of Yamo and her association with Mama Baby. Through the reminiscence, we learn about the nature of life they led and the type of people they are. Yamo is a womanizer who has "a charming face" (77) that he uses to lure women and "he was never satisfied with one woman" (78). Mama Baby is revealed as money minded individual, who has no scruples about prostitution. This reinforces the text's position that commercial sex workers contribute enormously to the increase in HIV/AIDS cases as was seen in the previous chapter. With characters like Yamo and Mama Baby, prostitution will continue thrive and so HIV/AIDS unless deliberate steps are taken to deal with it.

This reminiscence also creates an ominous atmosphere as Cecilia worries if Yamo will apply his traditional antics of charming women, on Rachel. We therefore fear for Rachel and we become eager to know what transpires after she meets with Yamo and Mama baby. This creates suspense in the story. It is also through this reminiscence that we learn about Cecilia's past. Like Mama Baby, she was a prostitute and she must have contracted the HIV virus from this "profession".

The reminiscence also exposes the helplessness of women in determining their destiny when it comes to HIV/AIDS infection. Men like Yamo, through their

sexual adventures, contract the disease, only to infect their innocent wives or girlfriends like Cecilia. By highlighting this, the author is challenging women to rebut such exploitation. Through the reminiscence, the author manages to explore the role of promiscuity and patriarchy in the spread of AIDS.

Another reminiscence in the *The Mysterious Killer* is Rachel's reminisces of her aunt Cecilia's last days on her deathbed:

Images of Aunt Cecilia kept dancing about her. There was that last moment when she had stood by Cecilia's bedside. Cecilia had been a ghostly shadow of the great beauty that she had been. Any one who hadn't ever encountered Cecilia in her prime would not have realized that she had been beautiful.  
(242)

This reminiscence paints a graphic picture of the effects of the malady on the body. Cecilia's physical image is so piteous that it sticks on Rachel's mind and that is why long after her aunt's death, she still remembers how pathetic her aunt looked like. It is these memories of her aunt that Rachel uses as reference to her decision to commit suicide when she is accidentally diagnosed with the HIV virus. She can not imagine herself going through what she saw her aunt experience, thus the reminiscence becomes important in enhancing the plot as well as revealing the impact of AIDS to those whose friends or relatives are infected.

In the *Confessions of an AIDS victim*, most of what lead to Catherine's infection is revealed through her reminisces of her past. The story in this text, because of the letter mode of narration that Adalla adopts, is revealed through

remiscences. Thus, the writer is able to extensively explore some of the causes that lead to HIV/AIDS infection through Catherine's story.

Catherine reminisces about all the men she has had affairs with both as a student in college and as an adult, in her bid to establish who could have infected her with the deadly virus. This reveals her promiscuity. In a period of less than one and half years, she is involved in four affairs with men of different backgrounds and ages. Even after she settles down in her relationship with Alex, she is not faithful to him just as he is not faithful to her. She writes to Marilyn.

But am no angel, I will be damned if I fail to mention that despite this tranquility [of their relationship with Alex] Alex was not my sole lover within these three years. I have had a short affair with a university don; spent one weekend out of town with a prominent businessman; had sexual experience with a gynecologist and a secret affair with a manager in a leading textile factory here in Eldoret. (My parenthesis; 71)

It is through one of these affairs that she contracts the deadly virus.

This reminiscence indirectly reveals how the liberal life in universities can contribute to the spread of the pandemic. This is also evident in *The Mysterious Killer*, where we are shown how the liberal life in Busaki University exposes students like Edison and Rehema to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. By portraying the danger that this freedom poses, the writer is wondering if the students are mature enough to handle such freedom. The answer to this can be seen through Rachel in *The Mysterious Killer* and the morally upright Christian union students Catherine the narrator in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* admires. They

remain sober even in this freedom; hence the writers suggest that the problem is not the liberty in the universities but individuals' character.

Catherine also relives the reaction and the fight that followed when she revealed her positive status to her boyfriend Alex. Through this reminiscence, Adalla communicates to us about the anger, anguish and the distress that accompanies the realization that one is HIV positive:

He remained silent and apparently composed for some ten minutes, all the while staring fixedly at the wardrobe. I looked up at Michael Jackson, half expecting the superstar to intervene. Instead, my eyes caught the words scribbled carelessly at one corner of the portrait *who's bad?* Ironically, that seemed to be the question in our minds. When Alex did come round, he turned to me slowly with such rage that for a moment, I feared he would hit me. Instead he said articulately, 'you bitch! You couldn't do better than ruin my life in this manner?'(33)

The exchange that follows is so bitter that it leads to a vicious fight between them for almost two hours, where is furniture broken, in addition to both getting physical injuries. Alex also walks out of Catherine's life and refuses to even consider going for HIV screening.

Through this reminiscence, we note that Alex's reaction is the complete opposite of Catherine's who, though overwhelmed by the news, wants to know more about the disease and its prevention modes. By contrasting the two, Adalla conveys what she views as the appropriate and the inappropriate attitude to the

scourge. Catherine embodies the correct attitude while Alex embodies the wrong one.

Reminiscence is used to reveal Makwour 's immoral life in *Chira* as in the case of Catherine in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*. In the reminiscence, Makwour lists his wives and girlfriends. There is Evangeline, his first wife, and Justina, his second wife. Girlfriends include the overbearing Adhiambo, Njooki, the girlfriend who tests positive, and Janet, his recent conquest.

The fact that he has all these affairs reveals his promiscuity. This also indicates the danger posed by polygamy in the era of AIDS. The reminiscence also provides us an insight to these women characters' traits from a perspective of a person who knows them best. From Njooki's description, that she is naïve and unassuming, we deduce that it is her naivety that made her engage in associations that got her infected. In this reminiscence the author, indicates the powerlessness of wives in determining their fate *vis a vis* HIV/AIDS infections. If Makwour had tested positive, all these women, including his wives, might have ended up being HIV positive.

Reminiscences are therefore crucial in AIDS literature because through them, the writers are able to explore how events in the past impacted on the victims' current status. All the three writers use them to capture how the victims ended up being HIV/AIDS victims. Also given the letter mode she adopts, Adalla's novel is narrated largely through reminiscences.

In conclusion, this chapter explored the stylistic devices and techniques that the three writers use to reveal the theme of HIV/AIDS. We have established the role

of figures of speech in concretizing and vivifying various aspects of the disease. We have also noted how the letter mode, because of its confidential and autobiographical nature, enhances the exploration of even taboo topics. It also enhances the use of other devices like, reminiscences in the, *Confessions of an AIDS victim*. The dialogues reveal stereotypes associated with the disease in *Chira*. Together with reminiscences, dialogues are used to reveal the psychological effects of HIV/AIDS on the victims in *The Mysterious Killer* and *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*. Generally, reminiscences are used to reveal the characters' pasts and how they have contributed to their present HIV positive status.

## CONCLUSION

The study set out to examine how Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Joseph Situma and Carolyn Adalla explore the various issues related to the HIV/AIDS scourge; how the characters infected and affected by HIV/AIDS reveal its reality; and how the writers use various stylistic techniques to explore the theme of HIV/AIDS.

The study was guided by the assumptions that, through the use of figures of speech, letters, dialogues, reminiscences, among other techniques, the writers bring out the various issues attendant on HIV/AIDS; that the portrayal of characters living with HIV/AIDS is an effective way of revealing the theme of HIV/AIDS; and that though these writers are informed by one theme, HIV/AIDS, their views on the disease have similarities and differences.

The study has demonstrated that some of the causes of HIV/AIDS Oludhe Macgoye, Joseph Situma and Carolyn Adalla identify include, ignorance and denial of the existence of the disease; irresponsible sexual behaviour; cultural practices like polygamy, circumcision (where the same incising instruments are used on the initiates) and wife inheritance; poverty; patriarchy; lack of parental guidance; and conservative church beliefs.

The study notes that the effects of HIV/AIDS include: psychological trauma on both the infected and the affected and their financial pauperization, as the sick cannot do meaningful work to earn a living. The orphans they live behind have also to be absorbed by society, further stretching the already strained economic situation in the society.

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The study has shown that, to curb the further spread of the disease, the writers suggest the use of condoms, effective and pragmatic public education efforts against the disease, the liberalization of the church's doctrine of abstinence to allow for condom use and the discardment of retrogressive cultural beliefs that enhance the spread of the scourge, so that the levels of infection are minimized.

This study has demonstrated that the authors feel women are the most vulnerable social category *vis a vis* HIV/AIDS, and therefore, their role in fighting the pandemic is important. In this connection, the writers advocate for the economic and intellectual empowerment of women so that they can determine their destinies and avoid being sexually exploited by men. This will minimize their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Consequently, the study has noted that the three writers deal with familiar and common causes, effects and solutions to the pandemic, and that they exploit their creative abilities to depict them in more aesthetically and convincing ways. This is largely achieved through character portrayals and the use of appropriate literary techniques.

By assigning, various roles to characters, the writers are able to explore both the wrong attitudes that enhance the spread of AIDS and hinder its management and the right attitudes that should be encouraged to address the scourge.

The study has shown that the writers have exploited a variety of stylistic features to develop the theme of HIV/AIDS effectively. For example through the use of reminiscence, they place the lives of characters into perspective thus

revealing the factors that led to their contraction of HIV/AIDS; thus making us more empathetic to the plight of the victims.

Reminiscences and dialogues also enable the writers to delve deeper into the minds of characters affected and infected by HIV/AIDS and therefore reveal the psychological implications of living with HIV/AIDS. The readers are able to empathize with the experiences of the affected through the story. This is crucial in influencing the right attitude towards HIV/AIDS victims.

Figures of speech in the form of Metaphors, similes and symbols deployed in the works of the three writers help to concretize and vivify the disease in more familiar terms. This way we are able to perceive HIV/AIDS in a better manner since it has been familiarized using images drawn from the African environment.

The letter mode enables the three writers to explore taboo topics like sex because of the confidential and autobiographical nature of letters.

Thus, from our findings, we can argue that literature can be an effective tool of addressing social issues like HIV/AIDS.

Even though the focus of this study has been on the theme of HIV/AIDS, the study has revealed a gap in relation to the role of gender *vis a vis* HIV/AIDS, which requires further critical exploration. In other words, there is need to conduct a gender based criticism of creative works dealing with HIV/AIDS in order to illuminate the gender perspectives in the fight against the scourge.

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