



**EXPLORATION OF NDEBELE CARNIVAL LITERATURE POSTED ON FACEBOOK  
WALLS AND HOW IT PROVIDES AN ESCAPE ROUTE FROM CENSORSHIP IN  
ZIMBABWE**

BY

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I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



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SIGNATURE

*24 November 2020*

DATE

## **DEDICATION**

To my children Reamogetsoi, Kagiso Zuzumuzi and Katlego Kwandokuhle: do not be slaves of any education system but let education free your minds.

## Acknowledgements

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is an exploration of tabooed literary creations that it terms carnival literature. To achieve the objective of establishing the effectiveness of posting material on Facebook walls of the selected group and individual accounts to escape censorship, the thesis compared traditional graffiti, particularly latrinalia, to ‘cyber’ graffiti (social media) with Facebook as a case study. Lev Vygotsky’s Activity Theory helped the study link graffiti, vulgarities, humour and Facebook to the Ndebele society’s response to tabooing of carnival literature. The thesis argued that participating in traditional graffiti production and coming up with posts on a Facebook wall is a deliberate effort with a target audience just as other genres of literature have. However, society tends to condemn carnival literature as a rebellious genre that deserves exclusion from ‘normal’ interaction. Carnival literature is therefore censored through tabooing its themes and language. The term carnival literature is derived from medieval performances that were named the ‘carnavalesque’ by Bakhtin and have equivalents in Africa as a continent and in Zimbabwe as a nation. The characteristics of carnivality are found in both traditional graffiti and ‘cyber’ graffiti. These, among others, include sex and sexuality as themes, obscenities, vulgarities, and all language that is considered offensive. Interestingly, these elements of carnivality evoke laughter of one kind or another. Latrinalia from selected public toilets from the city of Bulawayo was photographed and subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis with attention being paid to carnivality, Bakhtinian dialogism and humour and its impact on the interaction process. Posts on walls of the selected Facebook group and individual accounts were subjected to the same treatment that was given traditional graffiti. The thesis argues that social media can perform a similar function to that of traditional graffiti with added advantages. Social media has created world communities that are brought together by common interests and platforms where they meet and share ideas. The study also established that messages have layers of meaning, making it unreasonable to ban certain messages since they serve a particular purpose. Social media, particularly Facebook, provides pockets of privacy for candid and unfettered interaction that service specific audiences among the Ndebele; hence can function as the escape route for carnival literature from cultural censorship in Zimbabwe.

## **KEY TERMS:**

literature, carnival literature, censorship, social media, Facebook, Facebook wall, graffiti, humour, culture, latrinalia, taboo, identity concealment.

## **List of Abbreviations**

- AIDS** Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
- HIV** Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- ZESA** Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority
- NUST** National University of Science and Technology
- UWC** University of the Western Cape
- NSSs** Networking Social Sites
- AT** Activity Theory
- CBD** Central Business District
- CDA** Critical Discourse Analysis
- ZAPU** Zimbabwe African People's Union
- ZANU PF** Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction and background to the study

Society is characterised by control that restricts content and language usage in literary texts. Human lives are run by unwritten rules which, when not observed, ‘normalcy’ of society becomes questionable. Since literature is said to be a mirror of society, creative literary works have tended to be subjected to the same control that human society is subjected to. Some issues can be handled by literature without any clashes with societal norms while others cause an outcry and condemnation because published literature occupies public space and has identifiable creators who are answerable to what they create. The language used in creative works is usually subjected to societal rules and regulations; hence it can be declared fit or unfit for public consumption depending on whether or not it passed the morality test. Society has therefore tended to divide life into private and public. Texts have, as a result, been considered as being good for public consumption or suitable for private consumption.

To avoid condemnation, creators of free texts have tended to self-censor. Publishers, in line with directives from government, also censor literary texts that they reckon impinge on societal morals and norms. Those who have no time for formalities or the wherewithal to go through the rigorous scrutiny of formal publication of their ideas usually resort to scribbling on walls of public places where there are no rules and regulations on what to and what not to write. That writing is called graffiti. As society has evolved due to technological advancement, social media have come into the picture, resulting in the creation of virtual communities that have their sub-society within the ‘normal’ society that the world used to know, providing almost everyone with the opportunity to share their ideas without hindrance by the system that controls societal behaviour and communication. Literary material that is usually condemned by ‘normal’ society is today found on Facebook walls where any member of the virtual community can scribble what is ‘on their mind’. This research therefore intended to establish if posts on Facebook could perform the role of escaping censorship to communicate messages that are commonly viewed as taboo and are usually communicated via graffiti.

Carnival literature has tended to suffer a stunted growth or stagnation since its suitability for consumption usually falls short when it comes to society's normal standards. Public opinion courts or even courts of law, through censorship, usually outlaw the handling of certain themes and language. Carnival literature, according to the Bakhtinian Theory of Carnival is:

A form of popular, "low" humor which celebrates the anarchic and grotesque elements of authority and of humanity in general and encourages the temporary "crossing of boundaries" where the town fool is crowned, the higher classes are mocked, and the differences between people are flattened as their shared humanity the body, becomes subject of crude humor (Aschkenasy, 2007:437).

The type of literature that is described by the Bakhtinian Theory of the Carnival above is usually condemned by society; hence it is generally a victim of censorship. Due to fear of condemnation, there has been a tendency to hide identities when handling themes that can be said to be vulgar or unlawful. The condemnation of carnival literature has resulted in a dearth of literary forms such as jokes and ritual insults, yet posts on Facebook walls indicate that these are an integral part of society. So many groups can be found on Facebook exploring and sharing ideas on matters that cannot be discussed in public in a 'normal' society. Most of the issues are discussed in closed up groups and revolve around sex and sexuality. Zuvela (2012: 32) quotes Otta (1993) who points out matters that form the core of what graffiti addresses by saying, "All events that occur around them much like hunting was part of the prehistoric peoples' lives and of course not forgetting sexuality as the key subject matter – that is the key of all human existence". Facebook walls, particularly those of groups that are named after themes that imply the carnivality of material that is addressed, are most probably taking over traditional walls of public places where graffiti was commonly found. Some of these places are public but the writings are only accessible if someone uses those places like toilets and bars just like groups on Facebook which, in some cases, have to be joined or 'liked' if one is to access their walls.

Graffiti has tended to be a useful tool for those who want to express their real opinions and feelings without fear of condemnation or without being stopped from doing so. Graffiti, according to Andrea and Waynesboro (1989), "is the act of inscribing or drawing on walls for the purpose of communicating a message to the general public". Usually, such messages are those that one would not be allowed to freely communicate in public; hence they resort to the

wall for all to see. In most cases, the identities of those who engage in communicating via graffiti are hidden. Bruce (2004:102) postulates that; “Rather than mere embellishment, graffiti is a composition in traces: an enigmatic address by an author who is absent to an audience of unpredictable strangers”. It is the message that is important, not the messenger. Those who engage in writing on the wall want to be heard but societal rules do not allow them. This research argues that graffiti usually handles serious matters that, under normal circumstances, society would ‘sweep under the carpet’ or would declare out of bounds for public handling. Issues that are generally declared not suitable for public consumption are: carnal matters, political matters, matters that relate to the lower parts of the human body and all those that blur age differences amongst members of society. Such matters are the ones that dominate writings and inscriptions that are found on physical structures such as walls and Facebook walls of most of the closed up groups. These would hardly ‘see the light of the day’ under ‘normal’ traditional publishing.

Grouping people according to interests is the strength of Facebook in African societies where issues of sexuality and the necessary language for handling them was dealt with outside normal interaction. Such matters could only be privately dealt with, by chosen members of a society of the same age, as games or rituals. Some educationists have tried to bring into the school system language that is used for discussing issues of sexuality resulting in a huge outcry. This study, concurring with Heivadi and Khajeheian (2013:553) who “conclude that nearly 40% of the sample definitely or likely benefit from fake profile(s) to surf Facebook”, argues that Facebook has the advantage of allowing its participants to hide their identities just like in graffiti communication. With hidden identity, human beings easily handle issues that are normally regarded as taboo in society. Issues that are regarded as taboo like sex, sexuality and parts that are found in the lower region of the human body are hardly explored in ‘normal’ society, resulting in them being less understood or misunderstood. Bakhtin’s theory of the carnival demystifies these issues that are viewed as taboo, thereby allowing people to discuss and learn about them as Hoy (1992:774) points out:

That once-taboo topics like sex and death can be treated with such hilarity during the carnival is a signifier not just of the carnivalesque reduction of all cultural sublimations to their folkloric roots, but even further the desecration of all that a

culture considers "sacred" or meaningful to nothing more than another of the merry rogue's clownish jests.

Creating groups on Facebook where participants can conceal their identities by creating multiple accounts for each specific group where they can 'freely' engage in carnival behaviour and explore the matters that are considered taboo by conventional society, can play the same role that was played carnivalesque in the medieval period.

Social media in its various forms has brought about some relief and opportunity to creators of works that are inclined towards being unacceptable texts such as jokes and some elaborate pieces that discuss controversial matters using the language that is 'normally' deemed indecent. Social media platforms such as Facebook give room to the underprivileged and minority of society to express their ideas and feelings because, under normal circumstances, the underprivileged are not allowed to communicate their views freely hence they take refuge in concealing their identities. These are the members of society who rely on graffiti for commenting on serious matters. Graffiti is often performed by marginalised groups who feel they have no other political recourse (Toenjes, 2008:8). It is for the foregoing reason that Junco (2014:109), commenting on the Chief Executive Officer of Facebook (CEO) Mark Zuckerberg's views on identity concealment, contends that "Zuckerberg's view on identity indicates just how privileged Zuckerberg as a wealthy, white, heterosexual male really is—in other words, someone who has nothing to fear from being transparent about his life, and no need to maintain two different identities". Those who occupy high positions in society usually promulgate laws that control the less privileged thereby restricting their freedom of expression. Beninger, Fry, Jago, Leps, Nass and Silverster (2014:23) are of the idea that social media offers "space in which people could be outspoken, lie and exaggerate". Exaggeration plays an important role in beautifying literature, hence the talk about hyperbole as a literary device in the appreciation of literature.

This research considers graffiti as a rare form of literature that has not been fully explored resulting in it being dismissed as a criminal activity. The content of graffiti has not been scrutinised thoroughly enough because the practice of writing on the wall is viewed as low class and a preoccupation for the deviant. With regards the foregoing claim, Bates (2014) reasons that very little is known about the nature of a graffitist due to the perception that graffitists are

regarded as less mature than people in general and their sole pursuit is just the attainment of humour. Carnival literature, like graffiti, has not been recorded in books because of societal moral standards that condemn it as crude or vulgar. Efforts are being made by various organisations to control members' participation in social media activities by coming up with policies against members' participation in social media-powered interaction.

Censorship plays a crucial role in controlling the flow of literary material by declaring some fit for public consumption and some not. It is a tool that is used by governments and society 'vigilantes' to whip creators of imaginative works into line. Censorship has two types, namely: externally imposed censorship and self-censorship. Producers of the so-called controversial literature who reveal their identities are usually hunted down by governments of their countries or are harassed by society's self-appointed moralists whom this research views as society's vigilante groups. According to Thu (2017:9), censorship is "an abuse of powers to forbid speech, writing, and images they considered a threat to their authority or contrary to divine law". The tone of the above statement implies the view that censorship is a negative type of control that targets speech, writing and pictures; elements that anchor the art of literary expression. There is therefore a need for a route to escape this harsh treatment of creators of literary works if creative writing is to prosper. Social media is a phenomenon that looks promising to help producers of literary works if their products are to reach their targeted consumers with reduced restrictions. This research investigated the extent to which social media can help condemned literary works develop and flourish in the face of determined cultural, political and religious attacks.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Humorous literary texts that deal with what is deemed taboo by moralists, culturists and those in positions of authority, have always found it difficult if not impossible to be published, yet they refuse to disappear from society and are thought-provoking. Tabooed literary texts, expressions and subjects such as sex and sexuality as well as the bodily lower stratum are superficially understood, especially by African communities. As Shoko (2010:637) contends, "African traditional religion in Zimbabwe subscribed to a view of sex which silences any discourse relating to it". This study argues that tabooing texts, subjects and expressions deprives language



users of an alternative way of handling and fully exploring aspects of life leading to a superficial understanding of the tabooed themes.

A lack of full understanding of phenomena results in tension in human relations. Traditional graffiti, employed as a method of evading censorship, lacks the sophistry needed for evading censoring of carnival literature. Social media provides many platforms for the sharing of such texts. One of them is Facebook, which provides reasonable privacy for its account holders to share such material far from the traditional censorship machinery. It was therefore the aim of this study to analyse tabooed literary texts posted on Facebook walls of selected individual and group accounts in comparison with graphic presentations from walls of selected toilets in the city of Bulawayo to bring out their literary value to consumers of Ndebele creative literary texts. This study argues that Facebook walls, like walls of public structures where graffiti is usually found, offer society “discursive spaces on which to construct alternative discourses especially in a context dominated by unconditional master codes, characterised by general impunity”, (Mangeya, 2014:6). Generally, individuals who write on Facebook walls and hide their identities become elusive to censoring agents in Zimbabwe. The above scenario provides graphics on walls of public buildings; texts and pictures on Facebook walls, as good fodder for analysis to establish the extent to which posting material on Facebook walls, like graffiti on walls of buildings used to do, can function as an escape route for carnival literature from censorship.

### **1.3. Aim of the study**

The study took the stance that posts on Facebook walls are of literary value since they have layers of interpretations that can be drawn from reading them as ‘cyber graffiti’ or carnival literature. Tabooed texts and expressive presentations like the afore-mentioned are not taken seriously; hence they are not usually subjected to serious scholarly analysis. The main aim of the study was to establish the role of social media in ensuring that themes and language usage that are censored through cultural tabooing can escape that censoring. Facebook was selected as the case study based on the researcher’s familiarity with the platform and the number of users it attracts. This study, therefore, expects academics to be persuaded to take a keen interest in Facebook as a source of material that can be subjected to critical analysis and generate the needed knowledge on how to solve some social challenges of day-to-day life.

### **1.3.1. Research objectives**

The research was guided by the desire to:

**1.3.1.1** Explain carnival literature.

**1.3.1.2** Compare and contrast traditional graffiti and posts on Facebook walls.

**1.3.1.3** Explore the role identity concealment plays in the production, development and recording of carnival Ndebele literature.

**1.3.1.4** Examine the reasons for viewing posts on Facebook walls as carnival literature that is taking over graffiti to escape censorship.

### **1.3.2. Research questions**

The following questions guided this investigation:

**1.3.2.1** What is carnival literature?

**1.3.2.2** What are the similarities and differences between traditional graffiti and posts on Facebook walls?

**1.3.2.3** How does identity concealment help in the production, development and recording of IsiNdebele carnival literature?

**1.3.2.4** Why would Facebook walls effectively take over from traditional graffiti on walls of public buildings as a platform for sharing tabooed literary texts to escape censorship?

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

Social media has taken the world by storm so much that academia cannot ignore this phenomenon. There are several benefits that can be derived from social media; hence Amedie (2015:3) argues that:

Through social media, anyone online is empowered by an unrestricted flow of information to add to their knowledge bank. In today's world, it is undeniable that social media plays an important role in impacting our culture. It fosters creativity and collaboration with a wide range of commentators on a number of issues such as education, the economy, politics, race, health, relationships ... etc.

Social media has impacted in a variety of ways on different people's cultures. However, not much has been done in terms of research that relates to finding out the role that social media can play in widening opportunities of growth and diversity for African languages, particularly their literary forms. Carnival literature has for a long time been targeted for censorship by the so-

called responsible authorities. All forms of imaginative works that are considered by ‘conventional’ society to be taboo usually dominate spaces on Facebook walls as they do on public walls as graffiti. These forms seem to suffer the same fate that ritual insults have always suffered. Ndlovu (2015:113) calls ritual insults *izichothozo* and opines that “the game is appreciated by the youth, especially male Ndebele youth, as a verbal duel. However, some people seem to see it as a dirty genre that spoils children.” The attitude towards these alternative methods of expressing one’s ideas has resulted in a gap in the study of this genre of African languages. It is this gap that the study explored and advances the argument that giving carnival literature the publication space that it is denied by traditional publishers but is offered by social media, particularly Facebook, is beneficial to society. The examples that are given in this study will serve as stock for studies in this section of literature.

There have been claims that Africans do not have a culture of reading (Fabunmi, 2010) and that their creativeness is doubted, yet these jokes prove that there are people who are creative in the area of carnival literature but cannot come out in the open due to public condemnation that they stand to be subjected to if they are known. The social media platforms that include Facebook are awash with lighthearted literature like jokes whether rude, crude, or barbaric to certain sections of ‘conventional’ society, proving that jokes and other expressions that are considered taboo have consumers out there as long as the identity of both the composers and consumers is manipulated. These jokes are popular because they are witty, humorous, short and to the point. What can be said by a book with volumes of pages is said with a few lines of these jokes. It is in light of the foregoing argument that this study sought to bring to the fore the importance of allowing carnival literature space as opposed to stifling creativity by tabooing it.

Facebook posts have certain advantages that this study explored. One of them is that they are fast at reaching many consumers at the click of the ‘post’ button. Voolaid (2013:73) explains how fast messages on Facebook walls move by pointing out that “by their nature, posts are an epistolary folklore phenomenon, a sub form of the Internet memes which spreads by one click from wall to wall, forming a human chain from the posters”. African languages must not miss out on this phenomenon at the expense of censorship but harness social media to break new grounds by evading censorship and defying time constraints in sharing ideas, thoughts and

feelings instantly. Internet-based interaction in general, and Facebook in particular, provides an alternative to material that is viewed as acceptable to those who take it upon themselves to determine what is acceptable and what is not by providing a platform to those who are creative in an ‘unconventional’ way by helping them conceal their identities. Identity concealment is achieved through the creation of an online identity that is different from an offline one. Jo and Kai (2015:3) argue that:

Because of the disembodiment and anonymity created in computer-mediated environments a new mode of identity production was occurring ... This new mode had the important characteristic of enabling or encouraging creation of online personas that were said to differ from ‘real life’ identities.

It is this facility that internet-based interaction provides that allows participants to interact and share using constructed identities to escape censorship of whichever type. This study explored tabooing of targeted themes and language usage as a form of censorship. What was viewed as key in this study was the value of the message in the selected literary texts as opposed to the platform on which they were expressed.

### **1.5 Definition of key terms**

*Carnival literature:* This term is derived from Mikhail Bakhtin’s carnivalesque which is an exploration of laughter and the culture that it is associated with. The carnivalesque was a festival which, according to Gesicka (2003:395), involved “contradictory events and images that free people from the fixed constraints of their social roles and destabilize any coherent category, norm and rule that organize everyday political, social and cultural life”. What is key to the concept of the carnivalesque is the disregard for day-to-day societal rules in order to share and explore areas of life in a manner that stands condemned as inappropriate in ‘conventional’ society but provokes laughter. Carnival literature, therefore, refers to literature that provokes humour of various types.

*Literature:* Some of the posts on Facebook walls were subjected to a test to determine whether they qualify to be literature following the definition of literature this study adopted. This study concurs with the prototype definition of literature that is given by Mayer (1997:7) who says “a prototypical literary work contains many weak implicatures, so that readers are invited to think of many propositions which are only weakly present”. Effectively, literature must not have one

simple factual meaning but must provoke different feelings helping readers engage in an intimate experience with the writer.

*Facebook*: “Facebook is a popular social media tool that support information exchange ... Initially, it was designed for social interaction purposes, and later on it became a great potential for broadcasting information and speeding up the learning process” (Al-Mashaqbeh, 2015:60). Texts of all types can be shared on Facebook including pictures and videos. This means that a variety of messages can be posted on Facebook.

*Facebook Wall*: This term refers to space on a Facebook account where the account holder can write what is on their mind. One usually finds space where there will be a question that invites them to express what is on their minds as follows; ‘what’s on your mind?’ Voolaid (2013:74) explains how posting on the Facebook wall works by saying “if you post it on the wall/timeline of your profile, it immediately shows in your friends’ news feed, so that each member of the community can see the new posts on the opening page of their Facebook account, this way having a good overview of their friends’ walls”. Friends on Facebook can therefore share anything by posting on their walls.

*Graffiti*: Farnia (2014:48) avers that:

Graffiti could be regarded as freedom of expression ... whose writer is often anonymous and is normally restrained by personal inhibitions and social norms to freely express himself/herself ... a *second diary book* which represents the voice of people, in either public or private places, to convey their anger, instantaneous thought, love declaration, political proclamation, outcry, etc.

The foregoing resonates well with the thrust of this study which is the argument that graffiti needs to be viewed as a form of self-expression which handles issues that are usually avoided by ‘conventional’ communicators, as opposed to viewing it as an act of criminality.

*Censorship*: Censorship is generally an enemy of free communication. According to Moore (2013:46), “censorship is generally understood to be the official suppression or prohibition of forms of expression”. It is about controlling what is to be accessed and shared as information. Officialdom takes it upon itself to determine what is to be accessed as information whether politically, socially, or morally. Little (2014:4–5) gives a comprehensive definition of censorship by saying that:

Censorship ... shifts from government silencing what powerless people say, to powerful people violating powerless people into silence. Censorship can even be self-imposed—either by virtue of internalized social norms, taste, or spontaneous personal judgment.

Many other interest groups also join the government in controlling information that is to be made available on the public domain hence some members of society are forced to explore alternative measures of sharing information, like graffiti. There is also the element of self-censorship where individuals avoid certain topics in order not to violate social norms.

*Humour:* There seems to be no one simple definition of humour, signifying its importance and its varied causes. However, its benefits make it worth pursuing. Martins (2012:88) expresses the difficulty of defining humour by saying it is “a biological and instinctive action and reaction to social and communicative behaviour, as a joyful state of mind or simply as something we are able to identify but not define”. McGraw and Warren (2010:1141) define humour as “a psychological state characterized by the positive emotion of amusement and the tendency to laugh”. What can be gleaned from the two definitions is that for humour to be invoked the mind has to be appealed to.

## **1.6 Literature review**

Control of the media or any information-sharing means such as books is closely linked to cultural control where certain subjects are declared taboo hence cannot be discussed in public without participants in those discussions being sanctioned. It is in this vein that certain subjects are banned from public discussions and traditional media in the name of some things being inappropriate to be said ‘in a family newspaper or radio/television station’. There has to be strategies to evade social control and one of them is to use certain genres of literature or platforms of sharing thoughts and feelings about tabooed subjects. Hu (2012) argues that copycatting was a culture that was used in China to escape social control by cloning activities of conventional society to freely express themselves and at the same time revolt against authority. Hu (2012) draws parallels between copycatting culture and Bakhtin’s carnival and points out that Bakhtin’s carnival was a way of creating a platform where activities were conducted in a festive mood with rules and regulations on behaviour being disregarded. This study argues that posts on Facebook walls, especially on walls of specific groups, tend to disregard rules of conventional society and are viewed as carnival literature which is a response to social control. While Hu’s

article does not deal with Facebook, this study borrows ideas from the carnival that the article discusses.

Diabate (2011) discusses problems of declaring taboo discussions on genitals and their functions as oppression and deprivation of certain members of the society of the opportunity to benefit from using their body parts as sources of power and control. Diabate (2011) points out that the author of *I Saw the Sky Catch Fire* had to resort to fictional prowess to handle the subject of genital power where characters in the text bared their private parts as a form of protest against societal tabooing of discussion of issues to do with human private parts. This study explored the possibility of using social media, particularly Facebook, as a tool for resisting and evading social control and tabooing of issues that are expressed in a carnival, candid and uncompromising manner. The Doctoral thesis by Diabate (2011) discusses how women in selected texts aggressively used their genitals to prove their power and the fact that banishing them from public discussion was oppressive and could be resisted. Forming groups on Facebook to handle subjects in a carnival manner is viewed as an alternative manner of communicating feelings and resisting censorship or tabooing of certain subjects or manner of handling certain them. Mode and Mallam (2015) explain taboos but do not discuss their implications on society, giving the impression that taboos are always good. This study adopted the view that taboos stifle creativity, leading to the exploration of alternative forms of communication such as graffiti and Facebook group accounts that are joined by those who are interested in the subject that is put up for discussion by selected groups.

Zuvela (2012) discusses graffiti as a form of communication in which participants are anonymous so that they can be heard. This study argues that Facebook walls allow participants to communicate issues that they would not handle offline by using pseudonyms or offline identities to evade public scorn or attack. In the foregoing sense, Zuvela's ideas help in unraveling the relationship that exists between Facebook walls and walls of public infrastructure where graffiti can be found. Joe and Kai (2015) are of the idea that online identity is deceptive while offline identity is real. This study argues that it is the other way round. Offline identity is the one that is pretentious while online identity, which, ironically, is the adopted one, is real in the sense that it allows individuals to present their true feelings without fear of condemnation and being judged

or even sanctioned by those responsible for censoring what can be discussed by members of society in public. Heivadi and Khajeheian (2013) argue that “Facebook users negotiate their relationships and identities through an array of activities using the features and applications the site offers and these activities are engaged with in relation to their offline experiences”. While the foregoing can be true, this study contends that online individuals can hide their identities to express feelings and opinions they would not express in face-to-face situations due to fear of being labeled. Qiu et al (2012) posit that Facebook allows its users to disclose more positive emotions than negative emotions. This study did not judge emotions and classify them as positive or negative but sought to analyse selected posts on Facebook walls as literary texts with messages that can help society with ideas that improve their lives.

Mpofu (2013) avers that social media has allowed individuals to construct identities and discuss both popular and unpopular issues, something they could not do on public media. Mpofu further argues that that aspect of social media has placed it on a high pedestal of liberating the public sphere where acts of silencing debates can be challenged. Mpofu’s article concerns itself more with political issues than with social ones which this study concerned itself with because they also face silencing in the public media that is known as the traditional public sphere. Social media such as Facebook afford society an alternative channel to discuss issues that are not acceptable in the conventional public sphere.

Musangi (2012) discusses humour that is generated from pictorial representations of President Mugabe of Zimbabwe on the internet and calls that humour ‘e-humour’ because it is internet-driven just like the humour on Facebook walls that this study interrogated. This study also looked at pictures and written texts that are a source of social humour. Musangi argues that humour can be used as a form of subversion in contexts of autocracy, paying particular attention to humour that is derived from political situations. Those who offend politicians through jokes are usually arrested, according to Musangi (2012). This study, however, concerned itself with humour that is derived from social human relations that is suppressed and condemned through tabooing; hence has to find an alternative platform in the form of Facebook walls.



Many researchers have investigated the contribution of graffiti as a social practice. Lopez (2015) discusses different discourses of graffiti and how the media in Latin America views it. Some of these scholars include Peiris and Jayantha (2015) who talk about different types of graffiti written by visitors who were jogging along Mahara Jogging Path. Bates (2014), Choi (2007), Harjanto and Sabana (2014) and Blommaert (2016) view graffiti as an artistic presentation. Mangeya (2014) views graffiti as a social practice in Zimbabwe that occurs in urban areas focusing specifically on Harare City and Chitungwiza town. All the researchers that have been referred to above have not directly linked graffiti to the phenomenon known as social media, particularly Facebook, which this study views as having characteristics of graffiti and further argues having the potential to take over the function of public infrastructure walls that are sometimes used as ‘publications’ for those who have a different view of matters from that of those in authority.

### **1.7 Conceptual framework**

Research has to be guided by a framework that helps to make collected data make sense. A research framework gives a study direction and structure. There are arguments about whether one is directed by theoretical framework or conceptual framework but those arguments are not part of this study. This study, however, was directed by a conceptual framework which, according to Ngulube, Mathipha and Gumbo (2015:48) “shows the relationship between concepts and their impact on the phenomenon being investigated ... provide understanding, rather than offering a theoretical explanation”. A conceptual framework helps a researcher define and explain concepts that are central to the phenomenon that is under investigation. Concepts that were central to this research are carnival literature (tabooed literature and jokes), graffiti, Facebook (social media), censorship (tabooing) and identity concealment. The foregoing concepts needed to be fully appreciated if sense was to be made of this research. These concepts assisted in appreciating the use of Facebook walls to evade censorship for individuals to share feelings about social issues just like it was the case with writing on walls of public structures like bars, by graffiti writers. Creswell (2014:) propounds that “researchers increasingly use a theoretical lens or perspective in qualitative research, which provides an overall orienting lens for the study of questions of gender, class, and race (or other issues of marginalized groups)”. It must be appreciated that these lens are concepts that can make up a theoretical framework at the

end of a study. Writers of carnival literature were considered, in this study, to be disadvantaged in the sense that, like graffiti writers, they are deprived of the right to express their feelings freely and have to duck censorship.

The Activity Theory guided this study in clarifying the concepts that need to be appreciated for the study to make sense and have direction. Explaining, Hashim and Jones (2007: 5), say that Activity Theory, “uses the whole work activity as the unit of analysis, where the activity is broken into the analytical components of *subject*, *tool* and *object*, where the *subject* is the person being studied, the *object* is the intended activity, and the *tool* is the mediating device by which the action is executed”. The Activity Theory helps in analysing and describing what is being studied by breaking it into explainable concepts in line with the qualitative approach to research. In this study the ‘subject’ denotes the users of Facebook walls, the ‘object’ (purpose of the activity) is the expression and sharing of feelings via carnival and tabooed literature and the ‘tool’ is the internet (Facebook). Activity Theory views the integration of technology as a tool that mediates social action (ibid.). Participating in sharing carnival literature constitutes the whole activity system in this study.

Hasan and Kazlauskas (2014:10) further explain elements of the Activity Theory by pointing out that “The relation between subject and community is mediated by *rules* and the relationship between object and community is mediated by the *division of labour*”. It is important to note that even in the sharing of posts on Facebook walls some rules guide members of a particular group, those rules being derived from the purpose of the group. It is crucial to point out that “Activity theory serves here as a clarifying and descriptive tool rather than a strongly predictive theory” (Berglund, 2004:67). The Activity Theory was useful since this study did not employ other data collection instruments such as interviews and questionnaires. Posts on Facebook walls were, however, subjected to triangulated analysis. Hashim and Jones (2007:8) argue that:

Activity Theory is a valuable tool for researchers to incorporate into their repertoire as it enables a means of discovering human activity without the express explication of tasks by participants, instead, through the mediated study of the participant’s tools an understanding of activity is revealed which includes tacit and explicit actions.

It was with the understanding of the above argument that the Activity Theory was chosen to anchor and guide this study.

This study is located under the transformative philosophy of research which is explained by Creswell (2013:38) who avers that:

A transformative worldview holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever levels it occurs ... specific issues need to be addressed that speak to important social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation.

It is the strong view of this study that consumers of carnival and tabooed literature are oppressed since the sharing of such literature is suppressed through censorship thereby depriving those of society who are inclined to communicating and expressing their feelings and ideas in this alternative form of communication and expression, the opportunity to do so freely. The suppression of carnival literature has a history which this study argues, resulted in the scribbling of messages by anonymous writers on walls of public structures and has evolved to posts on Facebook walls where composers of messages who use language in the so-called ‘unconventional’ manner, find refuge in concealing their identities. The ‘privacy’ that Facebook affords account holders is viewed as a way of empowering those who express their feelings in the so-called unconventional manner and are generally the powerless who are denied access to traditional media to express their views and exercise their creativeness.

### **1.8 Research methodology**

This study described problems that carnival literature faces in society and argues that social media, particularly Facebook, can function as the escape route from censorship for such literature. Data, in the form of inscriptions on walls of toilets and posts on Facebook walls, was attained, described and interpreted in line with the qualitative approach that encourages the description of issues in their day-to-day settings without relying on standardised procedures. The qualitative approach accounts, analyses and explains data in a bid to establish patterns and regularities of the issue under investigation. Cohen et al (2007:461) postulate that “qualitative data analysis ... is often heavy on interpretation, and one has to note that there are frequently multiple interpretations to be made of qualitative data – that is their glory and their headache”. As this study set out to analyse texts on Facebook walls, it took cognisance of the fact that

literary texts usually have various interpretations. Humour analysis is another research tool that helps qualitative procedures as explained by Sen (2012:2) who argues that “Jokes consist of either written or spoken words; therefore, analyzing jokes entails the analysis of the words (in the form of phrases or sentences). This fact alone makes it clear why humour analysis can be regarded as a qualitative research tool”. Jokes and other selected tabooed texts that were obtained from Facebook walls were analysed in their naturalistic state as per the dictates of the qualitative approach since responses to chosen posts constituted part of the data that was analysed.

New information technology has brought about web-based interaction and the phenomenon known as social media which has various platforms that include Facebook. Social media platforms operate as parallels to traditional and conventional structures of sharing information and self-expression. They tend to have populations of their own. Traditional graffiti and Facebook were used as case studies in this research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:253) remark that “A case study is a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle ... it is the study of an instance in action”. The population for this research is therefore virtual and as such the internet or Facebook itself was employed as a tool to conduct this research.

The advent of social media has seen society being transformed into having a ‘shadow of itself’ in the form of internet communities. Today’s people talk of their real friends and families that they interact with on a face-to-face basis and friends and families on the internet, particularly on Facebook where one can have friends and family members that they have never met in person. There are societal structures on Facebook that are parallel to those that are found in real society. Where individuals would seek advice from certain members of the family, they can now join a group on Facebook that is dedicated to tackling specific issues, especially those that one cannot discuss with other members of society in their physical presence without feeling insecure. In these Facebook groups, identities are concealed, in most cases, by constructing new ones through the use of pseudonyms. Hiding behind these pseudonyms, issues that can be embarrassing or are considered to be taboo are thrashed out, in most cases, under a carnival and candid manner. The study therefore explored matters that were shared in these groups and drew parallels with how they were handled in ‘conventional’ society. The groups functioned as samples of virtual

community structures that mirror certain structures within ‘conventional’ communities. Identity management was explored to understand the role that identity plays in the discussion of matters that are regarded as taboo. Parallels were also drawn between graffiti on walls of toilets and posts on walls of Facebook groups which are virtual communities with a parallel life of their own that mirrors structures that were or are still found in conventional communities. The link between Facebook walls and public buildings’ walls is that both are platforms for relatively free communication where participants express what is on their minds whether acceptable to ‘conventional’ society or not with the former inviting participants by posing the question ‘what’s on your mind?’

The main focus was on the *Enhlanyeni Mental University: Advanced Faculty of Madness*, *Enhlanyeni: The University of Insane Creativity*, *Makhox Women’s League* and some selected posts from the researcher’s ‘friends’ on Facebook. Posts that were selected were those that mainly bordered on taboo or are considered not good for public consumption or would not pass the test of traditional publishing. The researcher was a participant observer. Cohen et al (2007:396) give the strength of observation by arguing that “the distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from naturally occurring social situations”. By liking or joining the above-mentioned groups, the researcher gained access to and the opportunity to study these groups in depth by analysing the texts those participants in these groups exchanged. Selected posts that constituted collected data in the form of tabooed texts were grouped under three themes, namely: sex and sexuality, vulgarities and offensive material and were subjected to critical discourse analysis. Tabooed texts that were found on selected Facebook walls of group and individual accounts were gathered and analysed with the view to interpreting them so as to bring out the fact that such texts can have various meanings and therefore can be of literary value. Textual analysis is housed under the broader framework of critical discourse analysis that, among other frameworks, guided this research. Fairclough (2003:3) proffers the view that, “I see discourse analysis as ‘oscillating’ between a focus on specific texts and a focus on what I call the ‘order of discourse’, the relatively durable social structuring of language which is itself one element of the relatively durable structuring and networking of social practices”. Writing on the wall, whether on

Facebook or public structures by creators of graffiti, is a form of discourse; hence it had to be interrogated and analysed.

### **1.9 Ethical considerations**

Research is a double-pronged exercise involving the researcher and participants. It is therefore crucial for the researcher to consider a fair treatment of the participants, also known as informants. The need for upholding ethical standards cannot be overemphasised. Creswell (2013:132) contends that “researchers need to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions”. Researchers therefore, according to Hewson and Buchanan (2013), need to think about autonomy, dignity and consent of participants to protect them and make sure their research exercise does not raise ethical issues.

The protection of participants has to be balanced with the attainment of naturalistic and undistorted information from informants. New technology has brought about complications about whether there is a need for participants’ consent or not because researchers can now access information from social networks where the information may appear public but publishing it still constitutes violation of participants’ privacy and invite litigations and moral responsibilities to researchers. According to the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (2016), “Even if social media posts are publicly available, a number of ethical concerns remain ... If gaining informed consent is not possible, quotes should normally be paraphrased and usernames/pictures de-identified in order to protect the ‘participants’”. This study was anchored on analysing texts posted on Facebook walls and the foregoing counsel guided it. Names of Facebook account holders that were not distorted or identities not concealed, were left out where direct quotations were made.

### **1.10 Scope of the study**

This study explored the effectiveness of Facebook in affording composers and consumers of carnival literature the escape route from censorship by providing the walls where they can post their feelings and views about issues anonymously. Posts on Facebook walls are viewed as witty literary texts with literary value that are an alternative to ‘conventional’ literature that is studied

at institutions of learning. Chapter 1, being the first one, introduced the study by focusing on its background, the statement of the problem, the aim of the study, research questions to guide it and also its significance. Chapter 2 scrutinises the literature that is related to key concepts of the study and how they link with the problem of suppressing ideas and feelings that are expressed via carnival literature. The third chapter deals with the conceptual framework that guided the study. Chapter 4 discusses the methodology, indicating data collection and data analysis methods. Chapter 5 takes care of data presentation while chapter 6 presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations for possible future investigation.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

This study examined the effectiveness of social media in general and Facebook in particular, as a case in providing a platform for those who incline towards ‘unconventional’ ways of expressing their views and feelings about social issues. It is argued in this study that there is literary value in carnival literature because under this type of literature one finds literature like ritual insults which help the young explore issues they cannot deal with in the presence of elders. Censorship is viewed as suppressing the creativeness of those members of society that have a highly developed sense of humour. The examination and analysis of texts that were posted on selected group and individual Facebook account walls revealed a sizeable number of members of society who engage in and enjoy using the alternative methods of expressing themselves. The background to the study, statement of the problem, aim, objectives, research questions, justification, a brief allusion to the review of related literature, the conceptual framework, research methodology and the scope of the study were presented in this chapter. Chapter two is constituted by a detailed review of literature that is related to key concepts of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents various concepts that combine to bring out human attitudes towards different aspects of life as expressed through literary texts. The previous chapter introduced these concepts and a particular medium of communication that is considered an alternative to traditional ones; the internet via Facebook, as a platform for social interaction. The key concepts that this chapter explores include the general and traditional conceptualisation of literature, carnival literature (which is also referred to as the Bakhtinian Theory of literature in this study), graffiti as a traditional medium of communication adopted to escape censorship and Facebook as an alternative ‘publisher’ or platform for expressing one’s self in ‘unconventional’ fashion. The chapter adopts the funnel structure of presentation where focus starts from the global level, comes down to continental level where contributions from African scholars are examined before finally coming to contributions by Zimbabwean scholars on the key aspects of the study.

#### 2.2 Global conceptualisation of the key concepts

Traditional definitions of literature have tended to exclude lighthearted literature like jokes and tabooed literature. Eyong and Mufuaya (2004) define literature as “a body of written or oral works, such as novels, poetry, or drama that use words to stimulate the imagination and confront the reader with a unique vision of life”. The foregoing definition excludes literature from ‘informal’ sources. Comic presentations stand ignored by this definition that does not incorporate them as examples. The traditional view seems to limit the understanding of literature to orthodox examples that are susceptible to censorship and exclude carnival literature. Another limiting definition is given by Steen (1999:114) who postulates that “Literature may be argued to be the superordinate of genres such as the novel, the poem, and the play, each of which displays a number of familiar subgenres, such as the western, the detective, and so on”. Giving examples of genres of literature such as those in the above two definitions, limits the scope of what can be considered to be literature and by extension, stunts opportunities of creativity in conveying views and feelings about tabooed themes using tabooed language.



An inclusive definition would be open and exclude examples or incorporate in its examples uncommon genres such as carnival literature to imply creativity in the way literature can be employed to address day-to-day issues. The inclusion of technology as a vehicle for sharing literary products also helps to move the conceptualisation of literature from the traditional perspective. Krystal's (2014) definition gets close to a definition of literature that incorporates lighthearted literature such as comic strips. However, it does not directly mention jokes and tabooed literature. Krystal acknowledges the inclusion of even electronic mediums of literary texts like films but leaves out the internet and social media platforms that include Facebook. The omission of internet-driven forms of publishing and sharing of literary texts as part of the literature stable indicates a hesitance to accept texts that are published on platforms other than the conventional ones. This study deliberately targets graffiti on walls of public buildings, particularly toilets and posts on Facebook walls because of what it perceives as ignored literary value in those compositions. Krystal also ranks literary texts according to tastes, arguing;

We live in a time when inequality in the arts is seen as a relativistic crock, when the distinction between popular culture and high culture is said to be either dictatorial or arbitrary. Yet lodged in that accusatory word "inequality" is an idea we refuse to abandon. I mean, of course, quality. (Krystal, 2014:93).

The focus of this study, though not disputing the fact that the quality of literary texts varies from one text to another, is not to grade carnival literature that is on walls of toilets and that which is posted on Facebook walls but to analyse it under various thematic categories. Culler (1997) also grades literary texts according to quality, contending that some texts are richer, more powerful and more exemplary than others. The question that this study seeks to answer is whether or not carnival literature also has the qualities and characteristics that are used to categorise acceptable literary texts.

Lighthearted literature, especially short jokes and tabooed literature, is usually not considered serious literature, and this study needs to account for that. This study focuses on these short texts with a view to establishing the availability of literary value in tabooed and lighthearted expressions and texts, especially that which is shared traditionally on walls of public buildings and social media currently. A reasonable number of experts have explained what they understand to be real literature. Structure and stylistics, among other aspects, seem to be the key characteristics defining literature. Language theorists as discussed by Eagleton (1996) adopt a

judgmental view of literature using language usage and the structure of a text as a yardstick for it to qualify and be accepted as literature, arguing that literature has to deviate from everyday speech. Another aspect is for it to be published, yet publishers tend to censor what they publish, resulting in the exclusion of texts that use language in an unusual manner. Words in literary texts have to be considered as a product of a social system hence their use has to be acceptable to a certain class. This view of literature is considered by this study as dividing society into classes, whereas carnivality instructs that literature cuts across classes and other considerations such as age, position held in society and morality. This study focuses on the type of literature that may not fit onto the traditionally moralistic and elitist template of literature where literature has to appeal to those with a particular taste. Literature and its composers need to be allowed the opportunity to operate and be interpreted in a free atmosphere and it is crucial to establish whether or not the social media, particularly Facebook, must be accepted as alternative media of expression and sharing of feelings and ideas just like writing and scribbling drawings on walls of public buildings was.

The concept of carnivality owes its proper description to Mikhail Bakhtin, who argues that François Rabelais was a genius of satire and generation of humour using folk culture. Bakhtin (1984) argues that Rabelais' literature was among the best in generating laughter and instigating change and renewal of society by collecting wisdom from elemental forces of the ancient idioms, proverbs, sayings and school farces from the mouths of fools and clowns. Rabelais favoured the unofficial type of humour where the main actors were clowns, giants, dwarfs, fools and jugglers in the parody of literature belonging to a style known as folk carnival humour. This kind of usually light-hearted and tabooed literature presented behaviour which was parallel to serious official behaviour associated with the church and government. The main source of humour, when expressing ideas and feelings about critical issues, was the bodily lower stratum; the zone of the genital area. Bakhtin emphasises foregoing argument by pointing out that: "We know that defecation played a considerable role in the ritual of the 'feast of fools.' "During the solemn service sung by the bishop-elect, excrement was used instead of incense" (ibid: 147). Literature, where characters used the bodily lower stratum products like excrement and urine for expression, was popular during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance at the city market place, the town fair and carnival square. This practice ridiculed officialdom and its serious approach while glorifying grotesque humour and revolutionising power that is all-embracing.

The imagery that was popular during the medieval and the Renaissance periods was the unofficial type, the one that offended the official seriousness of conventional life. It bordered on the extremes of small and big, short and tall, enough and extravagancy. There was always a twist or reversal of the norm. Bakhtin, when describing the imagery and language of this period, talks of the 'praise-abuse' approach to the speech where all speech was said to have dual meaning; positive and negative. The praise-abuse approach was made popular by a French poet Clement Marot who penned two humorous poems entitled "The Beautiful Breast" and "The Ugly Breast". Afterwards, poets began to 'blazon' women's body parts, particularly the mouths, eyes, ears, teeth and tongues in line with the praise or denigration approach. Explaining the blazon, and quoting Sebillet (1548), Bakhtin (1984:427) says: "The blazon is a continuous praise or constant abuse of the object to be blazoned ... both the hideous and beautiful, the bad and the good can be equally well blazoned." The praise-abuse approach is referred to by Bakhtin (1984) as the carnivalisation of speech which freed it from the official seriousness. Bakhtin analysed literature of the renaissance period and established the carnival nature of it which mirrored a popular practice then. The current approach to the publication of literary texts seems to portray a picture of society where life is always serious and formal by barring the publication of literature that uses unconventional speech and imagery as if there is no part of society that patronises such literature. This study considers material that is posted on Facebook walls of the selected group and individual accounts as literary texts that indicate the cry for freedom by society to be afforded the platform to engage in carnival literary creativeness.

The carnival, according to Keller (2007), is alternative life of common people that is free of rules of respect for authority, and the participants who are usually in a celebratory mood can participate in all normally prohibited activities except for violence. The activities of this practice include uncontrolled laughter, obscenities, emphasising grotesque-like human private parts and unusual fatness. More emphasis was on sex and the concerned body parts, indicating human inclination towards procreation and craving for renewal. The carnival was a festival where social rules and order were temporarily suspended to afford the downtrodden of society the opportunity to poke fun at life in general and those in positions of privilege. The activities and participants in the carnival were such that they were on the extreme negative presentation of common human activities and bodies and were generally offensive to a normal order of life. "The carnival participants were not romantic, purposeful, or contemplative, but licentious, chaotic, and

intoxicated. The carnival mood did not inspire sublime emotions, but the animal compulsions to feed and copulate” (ibid: 101). The disorderly behaviour during the carnivalesque was meant to give, especially the common folk of society, temporary relief from daily stiffness of social order and publicly present some activities that are usually engaged in privacy together with body parts that are not normally displayed in public. This was an exaggeration of life as is commonly known.

Keller (ibid) likens Eminem’s music to the carnival in content and mood. Eminem gives himself the freedom to express what otherwise would not be possible to express outside his music. His music advocates violence, disorder, rebellion and defiance of authority, uses foul language like ‘fuck you’ as contrasted to orderly and calm adult world. Offstage and out of the recording studio he hardly engages in violence. “Nevertheless, the carnival rebellion of Eminem’s work lasts only so long as the CD spins, the video flashes, or the concert lights burn. The audience is returned to a state of normalcy following the riot of sound and adrenaline” (ibid: 103). It is Keller’s (ibid.) argument that Eminem’s music and performance, like the carnival, is an alternative to the ‘normal’ and orderly manner of expressing the perpetual human yearning for renewal and change. The carnival and Eminem’s performance, especially his lyrics provide a ‘stage’ for the majority of society who are always under pressure from control by those in authority and institutions like the church and courts which enforce respect for social order, leading to those who have no access to institutions of communication resorting to the carnival, lest they burst with emotions. Keller (ibid.) further contends that the carnival acts as a pressure valve for the “release of potentially negative and revolutionary pressures” (ibid: 102). The same goes for the youth who attend Eminem’s shows who dance to his music shouting after his lyrics, but after the show, they go home exhausted and calm and to the order advocated by their parents. While participants in the carnival and Eminem’s audiences engage physically in their activities of the carnival and Eminem’s shows, account holders and members of groups on Facebook engage emotionally but in a similar defiant and deviant manner only to return to normal social order once they log off. It is in this light that this study went beyond considering and viewing posts on Facebook walls as just pressure valves to let out built-up emotions but as an alternative method of expressing and sharing crucial messages that can build societies. It was the emphasis of this study that the participants in the carnival, those who engage in the sharing of tabooed and

grotesque literature on walls of toilets and Facebook walls, believe in candidness and are intolerant to the hypocrisy that they accuse social order enthusiasts of.

Elliot (1999) argues that the carnival from Bakhtin's carnivalesque theory is a reversal of the norm by celebrating the poor fool who becomes the king at the expense of the powerful who are ruined. Laughter replaces quietness by encouraging movement and dynamism as opposed to order and stiffness, which tends to be barren. The carnival allows the multiplicity of voices, leading to multiple meanings of situations. The carnival represents the unofficial world in contention with the official world of civil and religious authority. As opposed to the seriousness of the official world which intimidates, the carnival advocates laughter that conquers fear since it has no limitations. The carnival is viewed by Elliot (ibid) as the peasants' world which is resistant to the official world. The carnival's disruptive force defends independence of thought and is revolutionary. Bakhtin's carnival was a platform for the voices of the poor. This study contends that writing on walls or any other public surfaces in the past performed a function that is similar to that of the carnivalesque and Facebook as a platform, similarly, has the potential to allow those who have an alternative approach to express their views regardless of whether they are poor or rich. Facebook, like graffiti, allows account holders the possibility to hide their identities and participate in expressing their ideas and feelings. Even those in positions of authority who could not participate in the carnival can participate on Facebook under the cover of a pseudonym.

The argument that sounds central to those who are explaining Bakhtin's carnival theory is its association with the common members of society and the fact that it is believed to be folk culture or practice for the-not-so-modern. Folk culture is generally about primitiveness, lack of sophistication and industrialisation in society. Fools, cheats and jesters usually belong to this lower sector of society. In line with the carnival spirit of ruining the powerful and crowning fools as kings, in most literary works, including those of William Shakespeare, what fools say usually carries the day. Hu (2012) discusses the Carnival Theory as festival carnivals in the Western folk culture and literary works; the carnival sense of the world as encompassing the forms, rituals and characteristics of the carnival; carnivalisation which is the transformation of the carnival and the carnival sense of the world into literary works. The foregoing implies infusing jests and foolery into literary works to lighten the mood as these literary products are presented to consumers. Hu

(ibid) further argues that a product of carnivalisation is grotesque realism where “fools, jesters, cheaters are the main characters; the essential principle is degradation” (ibid: 123). The carnivalisation of the carnival and carnival sense of the world, from a western culture perspective, is about generating laughter through ridiculing authority and social order as has already been pointed out.

Copycatting is a Chinese practice that is likened to the carnivalisation of the carnival and the carnival sense of the world by coming up with a parallel community that disregards normal order. According to Hu (ibid: 125), copycatting is carnivalised because, from the very beginning it, “is the imitation of the popular brands of electronics by changing some of the letters or characters of the original names. For example, they change the famous mobile phone brand Nokia into Nokio or N0kia to attract the consumer’s attention”. In a sense, the carnival is about imitating reality but presenting it in a light-hearted manner. Jokes and tabooed literature that is posted on walls of public buildings and Facebook walls belong to a community that is parallel or an alternative to the conventional one. This study, however, does not view writings on walls and posts on Facebook walls as a degraded literary form but an alternative form of communication that is of literary value to society and is worth subjecting to scholarly analysis.

Gesicka (2011), while sharing with other analysts the argument that the carnivalesque is opposed to the orderliness of officialdom, brings up the contention that the carnivalesque has its own rules and these rules are that it “brings together, unifies, weds and combines sacred and profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, and the wise with the stupid” (ibid: 395). Bakhtin’s Carnival Theory does not advocate complete chaos but an alternative view to the stiff and suppressive official one. The carnival is dialogical and inclusive since it brings together the ‘wise’ and the ‘stupid’, sacredness and profanity and places them side-by-side so that the audience and the reader have access to varied voices. It is this flexibility of the carnival that makes it an attractive alternative to officialdom. The carnival is a hybrid made up of opposites and is hence multi-voiced. The carnival offers societies the opportunity to self-introspect and realise their folly as opposed to officialdom that adheres to rules that deprive society of the opportunity to look inwards and improve itself. The carnival is therefore transformative. Gesicka (ibid.) argues that Bakhtin termed the carnivalesque the ‘alterity’, meaning a “defining condition of all perception and all representation” (ibid: 396). Bakhtin’s ‘alterity’ is a package of opposites

in one place so as to get a refined product. There are no boundaries between the official and unofficial because it is believed that “boundaries make our perceptions blind to certain things” (ibid: 401). Tabooed expressive art is found on walls of public structures and social media, particularly Facebook. It is viewed as prudent in this study to analyse them so as to ascertain how they can function as alternative to the official or conventional platform.

Gesicka (ibid) also discusses the issue of degrading language, obscene humour, festive laughter and excesses. Grammatical rules are ignored in the carnivalisation of language in what Rabelais termed grammatical *jocosa*, a form of grammar that is liberated from correctness and rules. This was some verbal rebellion, also known as the ‘marketplace speech’, characterised by swearing and ‘dirty jokes’. The obscene language in the carnivalesque is closely related to the reference to the bodily lower stratum which Gesicka (ibid) calls the ‘the material bodily principle’ and embraces the rich imagery that represents the material functions of the human body and its sensual existence, hence excrement and defecation, sexual acts, birth and death are common imageries of the carnival. The perpetual reference to urine and excrement connects readers to procreative genital organs that are at the centre of birth and fertility hence renewal and transformation. At the end of the day, the activities of the carnival invoke ambivalent laughter which brings everyone together since it is the universal language.

The Bakhtinian Theory can be used to define or even redefine and analyse various types of literature, thereby giving a fresh understanding of existing texts that have been given a bad label and consequently excluded from academic analysis. Karimova (2014) analyses advertisement from a carnivalesque perspective or the Bakhtinian perspective, giving a refreshing view of advertisement as a marketing practice. Karimova’s analysis focuses mainly on advertisements that deal with sensuality, the genital organs, and the products that these genital organs are conduits of out of the human body, such as urine and excrement. The advertisements are said to be influenced by the carnivalesque spirit and practice of the Medieval and Renaissance periods. The carnivalesque aim is to inspire ambivalent and grotesque laughter by employing the use of oxymoronic expressions where praise and abuse are brought together. Of interest to this study is the nature of advertisement in terms of form and size. They are usually brief but evoke a lot of varied emotions, just like most jokes and lighthearted posts that are found on Facebook walls. Although not meant for selling commercial products, graffiti and texts that are posted on

Facebook walls, the Bakhtinian theory can be employed as an analysis tool for these messages. It is therefore the thrust of this study to unpack the contents and messages behind graffiti on selected toilet walls and posts on Facebook walls that are carnivalesque.

Carnivalised literature, like the carnival feasts of the Medieval and Renaissance periods, handles material that defies religious and conventional social order. Such literature freely discusses obscenities by making reference to the lower bodily stratum and reversing gender roles thereby offending the conventional, strict and rigid adherence to social rules and authority of those in positions of leadership and power in society. The freedom and defiance engaged in during the carnival and in carnivalised literature bring about a multiplicity of voices on various issues resulting in them being viewed from different and unfamiliar angles hence bringing a better understanding of those issues. The suspension of rules and reversal of roles in the carnivalesque and carnivalised literature provides an alternative platform for interrogating issues that affect society as a whole without leaving out those in positions of power and authority. It is this temporary freedom of expression experienced during the carnival and in carnivalised literature that results in texts of the carnival nature being unpopular with traditional publishers, officialdom and religious authorities. The censored material is usually forced to find recourse on informal media like walls of buildings and social media platforms such as Facebook. This study views posts on Facebook walls as a modern form of graffiti due to the similarity in form, language usage and issues the two literary forms handle.

Scratching and making marks on surfaces as a means of expressing one's self is a practice that is now associated with urban spaces as if in rural areas such practices are never experienced. The rock paintings by the Koi and the San are the most popular forms of scratching on surfaces but this researcher grew up observing shapes that were made on tree trunks by herdsmen using axes. Most of these shapes resembled private parts of the animals that they looked after and even of human beings, particularly the female private parts because they were easier to produce than those of their male counterparts. Most definitions of graffiti as a phenomenon tend to lean towards urbanism. It is not the aim of this study, though; to dwell on whether the definitions should take a side or not but the aim is to put into perspective the role of graffiti as a social method of self-expression which did not find favour with officialdom.



Graffiti ... means “scratching”, and has become synonymous to acts of applying, scratching, marking, painting of shapes and words to a physical media on public or privately owned properties. Graffiti in general is made using spray paints and wall paints in the form of tags, stencils, images and colorful murals with new inventive tools used such as tapes to create images (Harjanto and Sabana, 2014:20).

The tools for producing graffiti that are referred to in the above quotation, such as spray paints, stencils and colourful murals all sound urban and modern as if graffiti is only a modern phenomenon yet it is an ancient practice. Facebook walls do not seem to discriminate along the lines of urban or non-urban areas since one only needs access to the internet regardless of whether the account holder is in a city or not.

The tendency to grade or classify literary texts is evident in Harnjanto and Sabana (2014) where they describe some types of graffiti as meaningless scribbles and others as artistic and colourful. Such a description smacks of elitism that is also found in common analysis of literature which is condemned by Bakhtin. This study is not judgmental about the types of graffiti but is interested in messages that are being expressed by creators of graffiti as opposed to seeking sophistication of the practice of scratching one’s messages on the wall. The main reason for rejecting the sophistication of graffiti is that this study regards graffiti as a platform for those who are denied access to official platforms, who are usually the downtrodden of society. Graffiti therefore gives them, as the carnival did to the lower class members of the Medieval and Renaissance periods, temporary relief by allowing them to vent out their frustrations on walls. There is therefore little time for being artistic and sophisticated. In most urban African societies, graffiti would only be found on walls of public but secret places like toilets and could, according to oral evidence obtained from general talk of common members of this researcher’s community, be scribbled even using faeces as opposed to colourful spray paints.

Various views about graffiti include categorising it as art or an act of vandalism. Municipal authorities have spent huge amounts of money trying to clean streets of graffiti (Hasley and Young, 2002; Cresswell, 1991). Hasley and Young (2002) further argue that graffiti is more complex than just being labeled art or crime because it can also be viewed as a culture that has been evolving with times. Graffiti is said to have been a victim of under theorising hence the simplistic labels such as it being art or crime. This study understands graffiti as art not in terms of it being presented in beautiful colours (where one needs different colours of paint and

sophisticated implements) and shapes but in the sense that it is a product of creative imagination just like other literary texts. The criminalisation of graffiti emanates from it being associated with popular phenomena such as the hip hop culture in America, and political movements. The association of graffiti, as a practice and a culture, with movements or practices which ‘take the world by storm’ strongly links it with the advent and popularity of the internet and social media, particularly Facebook.

Hasley and Young (2002) are against the condemnation of graffiti and labeling it as a practice for the defiant youth and trouble makers. It is crucial to state at this point that social media as a platform that facilitates the participation of citizens in expressing individual opinions publicly has received the label of being unreliable and lacking in seriousness. Social media is dismissed as unreliable. While this study is not recommending social media as the solution to issues of reliability and the quality of information shared on internet-powered media platforms, it views social media, particularly Facebook, as a tool for fighting curtailed media freedom and evading censorship. Hasley and Young (ibid) also interrogate the location and accessibility of graffiti by arguing that as it was used to make individuals popular and make their ideas move fast, graffitiists used moving trains as their ‘walls’. In the same vein, Facebook walls have the advantage of being accessible at the speed of a click once a message has been packaged and is ready for ‘throwing up’.

Graffiti is understood and interpreted differently by different analysts due to their different standpoints. Those in positions of authority or those who view themselves as victims of the phenomenon of graffiti as a practice, consider it a crime. They also view it as vandalism or destruction of property. Rosewarne (2005) analyses graffiti from a feminist viewpoint and labels it a violent crime where males, particularly boys, aggressively express masculinity and mark their territories through graffiti. These boys are accused of engaging in graffiti production to compensate for their personal problems, thereby injuring or destroying public property and instilling a sense of insecurity for women. Trying to establish the personal problems that these boys might be going through does not seem to be an issue for Rosewarne (ibid). The definition of graffiti as, “cultural production through destruction ... sign of intent to damage or destroy ... says fuck you to society” (ibid: 6), implies a judgmental attitude towards creators of graffiti and outlaws the practice. The article under review accuses composers of graffiti of being sexist, but

in the process, the writer of the article also reveals semblances of reverse sexism by condemning boys who engage in graffiti production without fully exploring their reasons for doing so. This study avoids judging the composers of graffiti as criminals and describing graffiti as a despicable crime but an alternative form of communication in a system that suppresses different voices. It is also the view of this study that posts on Facebook walls, which it likens to graffiti due to their form and content, do not indicate whether their creators are male or female since account holders can use pseudonyms and alter or conceal their identities. What is of paramount importance to this study is the message contained in graffiti expressions and those posted on Facebook walls and seeks to find out if Facebook walls can function as an alternative to the traditional public and private building walls.

Graffiti is a phenomenon that has received so many insults and negative metaphors with the media joining the elite or being used by them to rubbish graffiti. Cresswell (1991) brings up an interesting angle to the argument about graffiti and the denigration of graffitiists by contending that graffiti is said to be dirt, obscenity, disease and madness on the streets of First World and must be performed in Third World countries. The foregoing argument raises issues of geography as opposed to the common sociological route of querying the messages of graffiti. Similarly, jokes and carnivalised literature such as vulgarities can only be offensive when published in the conventional media but when shared on social media, on walls of individual accounts and specific groups on Facebook; such literature is enjoyed responsibly by those who can access it. This study avers that by being posted on Facebook walls, graffiti has changed geography, moving from public structures to the 'privacy' of Facebook. The virtue of Facebook walls is that they are accessed by those who need to access them, unlike traditional graffiti that is found on public walls.

Carnival literature has always borne the brunt of censorship with those in authority deciding what is and what is not good for public consumption. Issues that do not escape the attention of those charged with monitoring the flow of literary material include, among others, sex, sexuality, politics and the mentioning of organs found in the lower stratum of the human body. There are different views about censorship, depending on whether one is in a position of authority or not. Officialdom views carnival literature like graffiti, which this study considers similar to posts on Facebook walls, as improper for public consumption and subjects literary material to censorship

to sift out carnivalised elements in potential publications. This study argues that material that is excluded by officialdom is usually useful to the downtrodden of society and platforms like graffiti walls and Facebook walls provide a haven for the powerless and less privileged to interact, share and enlighten one another on how to handle the tabooed issues which are part of everyone's life. Those who restrict the majority from accessing such material have the wherewithal to access such material in the privacy of their mansions or offices. It is crucial at this stage to delve into what censorship means to various sectors of society.

Censorship is a controversial practice that is favoured by those in positions of authority as a regulatory tool on information access while composers of carnivalised literature may view it as a denial of knowledge to their target audience. Moore (2013) perceives censorship as exclusionary, classifying information into the speakable and the unspeakable, pitting libertarianism against protectionism where certain information is made accessible but some inaccessible. Those in authority take it upon themselves to determine what should be accessed by society and what should not since censorship entails the official suppression of various forms of expression. It is the supervision of public communication by the powerful and has silencing effects on communication. Censorship is therefore a negative form of power that counters the democratic principle of free speech. Moore (ibid) seems to concentrate on censorship of books even though there is mention of communicative forms but does not discuss the effect of censorship on the creativity of composers of literary texts of all genres. This study, though also not intending to consider all literary genres, targets tabooed and light-hearted literature and goes further to consider the impact of censorship on creativity. The article under review also does not proffer alternative means of escaping censorship, an issue that this study addresses.

The world has known censorship for as long as it has been in existence. Censorship with its dialectical regulatory role and restrictive nature remains as controversial as it is necessary. In defence of the practice of censorship, authorities claim it preserves decency, political correctness and the common good, concepts which are difficult to define. O'Leary (2016) points out that that is usually political, moral, and religious or a combination of the three. This study deliberately concentrates on religious, moral or social censorship because a lot has been researched and discussed in the area of politics and political censorship is usually too obvious but the religious, moral and social forms of censorship tend to be part of a people's culture and too subtle to

notice. The article under review is evidence of the attraction of political censorship for most researchers as it cites examples of political restrictions to freedom of expression during difficult political circumstances in countries like Russia, post-Civil War Spain, East Germany and post-independence Zimbabwe where purveyors of alternative political opinion were victimised. The censorship that targets humour generating texts like jokes that poke fun at religious, social and cultural issues is not given due attention by the article under review.

Of great interest to this study is O'Leary's (2016) revealing comment that theatre can be an alternative platform where people seek political commentary. Although revealing the inclination towards politics when discussing censorship and buttressing the argument that researchers tend to concentrate on political censorship, the fact that theatre is proposed as an escape route from censorship gives leverage to this study to suggest graffiti on walls of public and private buildings as traditional and posts on Facebook walls as contemporary, trendy, accessible and a generally cheap escape route from censorship, especially on moral, religious and social issues. Anonymity and safety of theatre that are mentioned in the article under review correspond to the safety and anonymity that walls of buildings and Facebook walls provide account holders through its privacy settings and the fact that pseudonyms can be employed to conceal the true identity of account holders from religious, social and moral ridicule if they handle issues that are viewed as morally, religiously and culturally taboo.

The restriction and control of information flow, knowledge creation and dissemination has always been the essence of censorship since time immemorial. Interestingly, Oppenheim and Smith (2004) contend that librarians can be part of the censorship system by selecting which books must be in their libraries and which ones must not. They argue that librarians can be as irrational and discriminatory as other censors indicating that there are various levels of censorship in the whole system of restricting access to information. One would expect that libraries and librarians would defend unfettered access to information but due to outside pressure from religious moralists and politicians, they find themselves having to censor, in most cases, already censored books. What makes censorship such a controversial practice is the fact that it deals with topical issues such as politics, sex, religion, social aspects and obscenities, issues whose acceptability as properly or improperly expressed is relative. It is therefore the contention of this study that efforts must be made to evade censorship so as to let creators and consumers of

carnivalised literary texts interact with little restriction. Facebook among a host of social media or internet-driven platforms of information sharing can help evade even librarians since they can be used to create and distribute information without the mediation of the library and librarians.

Despite censorship being viewed as retrogressive by most pro-democracy nations and communities, Pietiläinen and Strovsky (2010) argue that Russians favour censorship over democratisation of information. They further reveal that types of censorship differ in Russia from those in the United States of America where in the United States of America, pornography and hate speech are treated as separate elements whereas in Russia the distinctions are not clear since the two elements are found under moral censorship. Censorship, therefore, can impact different nations differently. One other variable in the acceptance or rejection of censorship as revealed in the article under discussion is the level of education, age, economic status and political positions. The elderly, women, those with low levels of education, low social status and those who live in rural areas tend to support moral censorship while political censorship is supported by those who have moved up the hierarchy of managerial positions. The censorship that is discussed in the article under review is of conventional media which authorities and the legal system seem to have control over. The control of conventional media through monitoring by legislated organisational bodies is what makes sharing of carnivalised literature difficult thereby stunting the growth, study and research on this type of literature. This study argues that carnivalised literature can find a platform on social media, particularly Facebook, where a whole citizenry can access and share the traditionally banned and tabooed literature which has proved to be popular with contemporary communities, especially those on internet-powered information-sharing platforms. The popularity of the carnivalised literature is hinged on the ability by its composers to generate humour and share information in the same instance.

Analyses of the above contributions undoubtedly reveal that graffiti is a complex concept that is as popular as it is notorious. Those in authority generally view it as a crime while its writers view it as a method of self-expression. An effort to fight graffiti is expensive and no authority has won the war against graffiti regardless of the amount spent on the fight. If graffiti is made official by treating it as an artistic effort that can be used as a tool for official communication, its carnivality and function as an alternative form of communication are taken away. This study argues that graffiti functions well as an alternative to conventional sharing of ideas and handling of social

issues and it must stay like that. It is in the foregoing sense that posts on Facebook walls of selected account holders of individuals and groups are considered as modern graffiti meant to reach a wide audience but escape censorship. Posts on Facebook walls are, in this study, considered literary texts that are carnivalised to generate humour but are, in most cases, helpful and enlightening commentaries on social issues just like graffiti on walls of buildings.

Social media has become so popular in information generation and sharing so much that conventional agents of information dissemination are finding it difficult to cope or even compete against this phenomenon. There are many web-driven platforms of information sharing such as Twitter, YouTube, Whatsapp and many others. Records indicate that Facebook leads in popularity surveys (Guy, 2012) and Acar, Takamura, Sakamoto and Nishimuta, 2013). Different types of information can be generated and shared on Facebook because it is a multimedia platform that can broadcast texts, videos and pictures. One of the key concerns of Facebook users is privacy and the use of pseudonyms as indicated by Jonson, Egelman and Bellovin (2012). Facebook, to a large extent, gives its users security of use in terms of feeling free to express their views since access to what they say on Facebook can be controlled through privacy settings and identity conciliation. Facebook is also cheap and communication on this platform is instant unlike in conventional media where one needs approval from the editor who may even censor content. Generally, the empowering aspect of Facebook as a communication platform is its affordability, accessibility to a large audience and security from the prying eyes of censorship through privacy ensuring settings and management of individual identity. Most academic research, though, has tended to focus on the use of Facebook as an educational tool but rarely as a tool for facilitating evasion of censorship, a gap which this study fills up.

Guy (2012) states that social media, generally, facilitates interaction across a wide range of stakeholders and mentions Facebook in particular as a very popular platform since it can employ the use of videos, photography, audio and text for communication hence it has become a network of choice. The article established that social media platforms, including Facebook, were popular among students for personal use and advised that social media be incorporated into sharing and collaborating in academic activities. The article under review argues that social media technologies are fast taking over as the supplement to the conventional learning environment. The article also concludes that college and university students perceive social media to be helpful

in enhancing their understanding of issues and made online learning a good alternative to traditional methods of studying. Social media leads to collaborative learning through the use of blogs and other applications that enable picture, video and text sharing. Social media can go a long way in facilitating information sharing and creating opportunities for the generation of carnivalised literature which seems to be popular among users of Facebook but has been a victim of censorship in conventional media.

Web technology has enhanced accessibility to information in a revolutionary fashion, thereby making it compulsory for progressive members of society to embrace this type of technology. Liu (2010) advances the argument that web technology has transformed communication practice from mere information distribution to an interactive exercise where consumers are also creators of information and the most active contributors. Advanced communication technologies have democratised communication and empowered traditionally passive consumers of information and turned them into active contributors. Technological advancements have weakened efforts of restricting interaction amongst individuals and communities. The article under review bases its argument on research in the area of education where it established the popularity of social media tools such as Facebook, Wiki and YouTube among others. The popularity of social media platforms like Facebook is anchored on affordability, directness, quick feedback on results and ubiquity. Although the study was conducted at Houston University, not disregarding unique aspects of the social and economic setting, the results of the study can apply even in developing countries like those in Sub-Saharan Africa due to globalisation and technological advancement. That social media, due to its qualities that are pointed out in the article under review, can be used as an educational tool also means that platforms like Facebook can be harnessed to distribute information in various forms as fast as possible with little or no restriction if its users are conversant with private settings.

### **2.3 African views on key concepts**

The structure seems to be a key characteristic when the literariness of a text is considered. Even African analysts strongly argue for structure when discussing the literariness of texts. Udofia (2017), in addition to asserting that literature has to imaginatively capture reality, argues that it has to meet formal requirements like length and textual complexity. Such an understanding of literature excludes short texts like jokes and graffiti. This study is of the view that although short,



jokes and graffiti qualify as literary texts and are also valuable for academic analysis since they also have an aesthetic value and are rich in messages that can improve humanity. The stance of this study resonates well with Mikhail Bakhtin's argument as propounded by Hoy (1992), who points out that Bakhtin was opposed to ordering literature into genres. Hoy (ibid: 765) contends that "Novelization" as Bakhtin sees it is fundamentally opposed to the ordering into genres and canons that is characteristic of most literary systems". Bakhtin deviates from the general characterisation of the novel as a super genre, high culture, or good art, to include even other texts that are traditionally viewed as popular culture or subculture for the lower classes of society. Bakhtin's analysis therefore made it possible to include genres such as magazines, comic strips, advertisements and popular music. From Bakhtin's list, graffiti is missing; a literary text which this study submits is an old version of posts on Facebook walls and has characteristics of carnivalised literature both in content and in language usage.

A language in which a text is presented is an important aspect for the characterisation of literature, especially when it comes to African literature. "Over time some scholars have attempted to define literature in terms of the material language they are advanced in raising questions of what really defines literature" (Ndede, 2016:1). There has always been controversy and divergent opinion from prominent African literary icons like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Obi Wali. Ndede (ibid) reveals that Ngugi and Wali condemned the presentation of African literature in non-African languages. Wali described African literature that is in European languages as a 'dead end' since it did not qualify to be African literature. Ngugi views language "as the means of spiritual subjugation" (ibid: 3). He even translated his works that were in English to his Gikuyu home language to express his strong opinion about the language to be used to present African experiences. On the other hand, Chinua Achebe embraced the use of English in presenting African experiences as an opportunity to communicate with the whole world and making African experiences, including colonisation, accessible to a wider audience. Ndede's conclusions demonstrate his support for African literature that is in European languages by arguing that "African literature is thus defined by the experiences of African people not the language of expression" (ibid: 9). The foregoing argument indicates that literature must be defined by its content as opposed to being defined by language. Bodomo (2016) argues for prototypical definition of African literature in terms of the importance of the language in which it is presented. Bodomo (2016) also brings up the seemingly irreconcilable opinions of Chinua

Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiongo on which language African literature is to be written in. The prototypical approach points to the fact that there are many African literatures that one can talk about. "...we now have a pluralized agenda for African literature; we can no longer talk of African literature but African literatures" (Bodomo, 2016:267). It is, however, Bodomo's contention that indigenous African languages are the prototypical languages for presenting African literature. This study, however, does not delve into the politics of language. Literature in Ndebele is chosen only as a means of delimiting the amount of carnival and tabooed literature shared on walls of toilets and Facebook walls.

This study notes that although carnival literature has not been a priority to traditional publishers and hence ignored by researchers, analysts and selectors of texts for academic study, it meets most of the expectations by some theorists of literature. It is the key objective of this study to bring out some of the characteristics that carnival and tabooed literature has which other forms of 'good literature' also display. It is also crucial to state at this stage that the main objective of this study is to demonstrate the literary value or message that can be extracted from carnival and tabooed literature. It is the argument of this study that the definition of literature must be anchored more on the content than the structure and language since literature needs to be separated from linguistics.

Carnival literature is scarce in Africa; hence even critical works on the genre are limited. That Tembo (2011) and Umezurike (2018) had to analyse the same text by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (*Wizard of the Crow*), is viewed, in this study, as clearly demonstrating the poverty of the genre of literature in Africa. Be that as it may, the two above mentioned critics highlight the issue of resistance to the powers that be, where those in the lower 'bodily strata' of society are given the latitude to demonstrate their impertinence towards those in authority and normally expected behaviour (Tembo, 2011). Such impertinence usually does not only invoke humour in the participants and the audience but also addresses pertinent issues. The above is achieved through satirising, degrading, critiquing and interrogating dominant power through vulgarity, farce and buffoonery.

Umezurike (2018) argues that authors of creative literature in the form of novels usually employ grotesque realism to describe relations in strife-torn communities and nations. In such communities and nations, novelists present a tension-filled society where rulers are pitted against

the ruled masses. Grotesque imagery and language are employed to tell this story of alienation between the dominant group and the dominated. In this regard, Umezurike (2018) analyses Ngugi wa Thiong'o's text *Wizard of the Crow* where wa Thiong'o uses the masses to ridicule state power through satire where grotesque imagery of urine, excrement and the generally lower bodily strata is employed. Wa Thiong'o presents a scene of a platform next to a pool of faeces and urine to degrade authority. Another moment of scatological imagery is when a character in the novel uses a bucket containing his seven-day urine and shit as a weapon to attack prison wardens (ibid). Women, in Africa particularly, expose the lower parts of their bodies as a sign of protest to demonstrate their disgust at particular issues. Wa Thiong'o employs this strategy "where the women together lift their skirts and expose their "butts to those on the platform, and squatted as if about to shit en masse in the arena" (ibid: 10). Lower bodily stratum exposure by women is meant to debase, degrade and ridicule authority. It is the thrust of this study to establish the availability of material like the one in the above description in terms of subject and language found on walls of buildings and Facebook walls.

Society has so many members so much that it is unfair to expect all of them to behave uniformly. In this vein, it is not fair to expect members of any given community to express themselves in a manner that will be acceptable to everyone. Generally, those who express themselves in a manner that is condemned by the self-appointed 'social police force' of society such as those in positions of authority, are denied the platform to express themselves hence they resort to scratching their messages on public structures. The foregoing is evident from one of Oganda and Mogambi's (2015) definition of graffiti where it is described as writing or drawing scratched on a wall and may consist of quotations from poets, idle words, obscenities, love addresses and satirical remarks. The content of graffiti as pointed out in the foregoing statement demonstrates that it can be understood from the Bakhtinian theory since it can be acceptable in a carnival situation or where the identity of the composer is concealed. Oganda and Mogambi's (ibid) article analyses graffiti on public transport in Kenya. Public transport serves as a mobile platform which is quite close to the platform that this study considers alongside with Facebook walls.

The language of graffiti is one other aspect which is of interest to a Bakhtinian analysis in the sense that it disregards syntactical rules, in most cases to generate humour. Oganda and Mogambi (ibid) argue that graffitists employ the use of short expressions or even single words

which are pregnant with wisdom, fragmented sentences, non-standard language and code mixing to generate that humour. It is this humour which Oganda and Mogambi (2015) refer to as structural humour that is attained through misspelling words, morphological humour where words are divided or cut out at unusual points and syntactic humour where words in a sentence can be chained in an unusual way. Humour seems also to be at the core of posts on Facebook walls of some account holders and particularly so for those groups whose theme is mainly to share jokes or handle issues that are better handled in a carnivalised atmosphere.

The wall is generally considered a safe place for that which is outlawed since it gives voice to those who would, without it, be condemned to permanent silence. Agnes, Dave and Waihiga (2014) argue that wall writing has been used since time immemorial by those groups who feel muffled up. These are groups that have been denied platforms for public expression with wall writing being the favoured option. The above-cited writers contend that adolescents and students are the common victims of structural restrictions of the adult run society which deprives them of the opportunity to publicly express their thoughts, fears, interests, attitudes and opinions regarding the world around them. Faced with the foregoing scenario, the youth find refuge in graffiti writing which provides them the privacy and anonymity, safety and unlimited freedom to express themselves on issues of interest and concern to them. While this study agrees with the argument of the writers cited above, it further argues that the youth are not the only ones who are disadvantaged by societal restrictions to freedom of expression but there are several other groups and individuals who are saved by graffiti writing from perpetual silence on issues that are of concern to them and would like to express their opinion on. Facebook walls function as modernised walls for graffiti writing by providing the disadvantaged members and groups from all communities of the world the opportunity and platform to publicly express their opinions, fears and thoughts.

Agnes, Dave and Waihiga (2014) reveal that graffiti used to be on almost all public surfaces indicating that, due to lack of an official platform for public expression, graffitiists would write on any surface they came across. The above-cited writers also point out that their research was aimed at also examining the messages contained in the graffiti writings. They also comment on the nature of graffiti texts which they say included different types ranging from drawings, single words and even conversations. Jokes that this study interrogates constitute conversations in some

cases but some of the posts on Facebook walls are predominantly short utterances with responses or comments on them forming part of the material that is analysed.

Although graffiti is traditionally viewed as a criminal nuisance, Agnes, Dave and Waihiga (2014) reveal that some universities in the United States of America now regard graffiti as a source of information for authorities on students concerns, resulting in the authorities creating some graffiti corners where students write their graffiti without fear of being accused of vandalism and criminal behaviour. Such corners would find matching equivalency in Facebook groups where authorities would visit their walls to check for issues being raised there. This study investigates the benefits of treating posts on Facebook as graffiti with the hope that authorities would, in the same manner that American universities now view graffiti, embrace it as an alternative medium of communicating individual and groups' feelings and opinions about topical social issues instead of criminalising and banning it. Issues that are handled by graffitiists in research under discussion include forbidden topics like sex and love, politics and religion, vulgarities and obscenities. The above-mentioned subjects constitute risky areas to interrogate since they can hardly be handled in public without facing reprisals if rules of conventionalism are not suspended in the same manner they were suspended during the carnival festivals of the Medieval and the Renaissance periods in the West. This study explores and analyses graffiti on walls of toilets in the Bulawayo Central Business District (CBD) and posts on Facebook walls to establish how effective the carnivalisation of literature by the posters is.

Censorship in African countries is generally concerned with political issues and consequently targets the press. According to the *Global Campaign for Free Expression* report of 1995, press in Kenya is under immense attack from the government for reporting the goings-on within the government that are not in good taste to the public. The banning of newspapers for reporting unfavourably on government activities constitutes censorship since harassment may lead to self-censorship. The other form of censorship practised in Kenya is the denial of broadcasting licences to private media houses. The report under review does not make critical comments on the press repression in Kenya but only highlights the incidences of press restriction on political matters ignoring other forms of censorship. The concentration of attention on political incidents demonstrates that political censorship is the one that gets more attention than the rest of other

forms. This study deliberately downplays political censorship so as to address other forms of censorship.

Goerg (2007) examines and critiques censorship of film in West Africa during the colonial era and highlights the fact that the governments had to play a precarious balancing act in censoring films that commented on soldiers making sure that no one made fun of the soldiers but at the same time retaining humour. It is quite interesting that the retention and control of humour was part of the censorship exercise. This indicates that humour generating literature is usually a victim of censorship. It is therefore crucial to find a way of avoiding censorship so that lighthearted literature is accessed by individuals in their privacy.

Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (2015) employ the Technological Determinism Theory which argues that a society's technology drives its development of social structure and cultural values, to explain the impact social media has had on the African community. The theory further explains that when new systems of technology are developed, the culture of society changes to reflect those technological changes. Old technology is disposed of as the new one replaces it. Members of society then use new technological equipment or software to sustain their culture or to embrace a new culture which might not necessarily be theirs. Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (ibid) describe social media as media for interaction which are largely informal and quite popular because they can easily be accessed from a variety of gadgets like tablets and smartphones. They further posit that social media's source of popularity is that they lack strict institutional gatekeeping when compared with traditional media, hence users of social media can post all sorts of material including that which can be viewed as not socially responsible and ethically right. Such a lack of strictness qualifies social media platforms like Facebook to be viewed as fairly helpful in escaping censorship that is rife in traditional media to the detriment of freedom of expression and access to carnivalised literature. Furthermore, social media outlets are not paid for. All one needs is to be connected to the internet, register and open any communication channel. The ease of access and affordability accounts for the huge numbers of users of social media platforms like Facebook.

New media technologies, through social media, according to Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (ibid.), have created new spaces for the amalgamation of varied cultures. They further argue that social media can serve as a repository for cultural material for the sustenance of African culture.

African culture faces the danger of going extinct if not archived via technology like social media but faces less likelihood than lighthearted literature like jokes and tabooed literature which is shunned by traditional media yet it is ubiquitous on social media platforms and is viewed, in this study, as an alternative method of addressing topical issues in carnivalised fashion. It is no coincidence that comedy, especially standup comedy, has realised phenomenal growth at the same time social media has been gaining popularity, but a clear indication that social media can be harnessed to popularise certain genres of literature that have not been given space to flourish.

#### **2.4 Zimbabwean perspectives on key concepts**

Critics of Zimbabwean literature also tend to concentrate on novels, drama and poems as if they are the only products worth subjecting to scholarly analysis as is demonstrated by Mangena (2015) who, for her doctoral thesis, analysed what she calls counter-discourse in Zimbabwean literature where novels were selected for the study. Although the study under review does not consider graffiti or texts from Facebook, the counter-discourse approach resonates well with this study's approach to analysing tabooed expressions found on walls of buildings and posts on some walls of the Facebook group and individual accounts. It is the view of this study that tabooed language usage and subject handling; constitute counter discourse in the sense that it seeks to pursue an alternative form of self-expression where cultural expectations are disregarded. Generally, Zimbabwean critics, when dealing with anti-establishment literature or any other creative art which they sometimes call protest literature, tend to revolve around politics and, in the case of Mangena (ibid.), feminist ideology. Literary compositions that employ the usage of tabooed language in handling tabooed subjects, to the knowledge of this researcher, have hardly been subjected to scholarly analysis. Also, the analysis has tended to focus on literature in English as if to say Zimbabwean literature is only one that is written in English. Mangena (ibid), while acknowledging that Zimbabwean literature takes various forms, still chooses to deal with novels written in English arguing that "The decision to limit the study to Zimbabwean literature in English is influenced by the fact that the English language tradition represents the mainstay of Zimbabwe's literary heritage" (Mangena, 2015:15). The current study, because of the nature of the material that must be analysed, ends up dealing with a conglomeration of languages but the aim is to select expressions that are in an indigenous language; IsiNdebele where a desired point can be made without including other languages.

The length of texts, generally, seems to be at the centre of the conceptualization of literariness by critics and Zimbabweans seem to be no exception. However, Nyambi (2016) comes close to analysing short expressions or texts by analysing titles of selected novels by Zimbabwean writers who write in English. Nyambi contends that titles of novels, when viewed from an onomastics position, can reveal a lot, including that Zimbabwean literary products have gone through various stages over time. Zimbabwean literature has evolved making its own history socially, politically and economically and that can be deciphered from titles of novels. Nyambi (ibid.) proposes an extra-textual reading of titles as short expressions or texts in order to decipher meaning from creative texts. He further refers to Muponde's presentation of a seminar paper on 'bewitching potentialities images and other forms of graphics on book covers of literary texts' messages as being the closest critical scholarship to recognising value in analysing short texts like titles of novels. This study, though not analysing titles, seeks to establish the potential that graffiti on walls of buildings and posts on Facebook walls, considered unconventional, have to function as creative literary messages that can help humanity cope with social challenges.

The Zimbabwean conceptualisation of literature is similar to that of the generality of the African continent in that it incorporates the language issue and protest as referring to political and some social issues. Jackson (2018) adds to the contestation of language choice when producing African literature, the issue of plurality of approaches which include, among other aspects, structure, development throughout history, civilisation, and social function and ideology. Zimbabwean literature is said to be 'liminal' in approach, with critics being generally antagonistic to the point of presenting plurality as contested in the sense that protest marks Zimbabwean literature. Interestingly, talk about protesting against the moralising language usage in creative works abounds, resulting in the exclusion of texts that employ the use of tabooed language to handle tabooed subjects. It is in this light that the current study seeks to engage in scholarly analysis of tabooed subjects and expressions.

African societies in general and Zimbabwe in particular, are known to be strict on language usage with expressions to do with sex, sexuality and courtship believed to be kept out of any public discourse. Chiwome (1996), however, reveals that there were instances among the Shona when such strictness would be suspended. It was during courtship where the youth could engage in love songs and dances. The peculiarities of songs and poetry are clear in the following



statement: “Songs momentarily disregard the restrictive customs about close body contact between sexes. The poetry provokes passion which is essential for the promotion of heterosexual behaviour which is the basis for the survival of humanity” (ibid: 24). It is further pointed out by Chiwome (ibid) that clan praises that alluded to sexuality were reserved for occasions and instances like lovemaking where their function was to indicate mutual appreciation of the two involved in the life perpetuating act. The above analysis indicates that carnival literature could also be encountered among the traditional Shona communities of Zimbabwe.

Ndlovu’s (2013) *izichothozo* is one aspect by a Zimbabwean analyst of Ndebele language usage that comes quite close to Bakhtin’s Carnival Theory. *Izichothozo* is explained as ritual insults or a game where insults are used to generate folk humour and the process is known as *ukuchothoza* (to belittle). *Izichothozo*, like Bakhtin’s carnival, is characterised by dealing with themes that touch on tabooed social subjects like obscenities, parody of religion and political satire. The handling of tabooed subjects in the game of *izichothozo* is said to be forbidden and is not done in public but is preferred by the youth from the Ndebele society. That the practice is forbidden in public spaces and in the presence of respectable members of society, juxtaposes the *izichothozo* game with the carnival. As already pointed out in the preceding discussions, *ukuchothoza* is an unofficial practice that offers an alternative way of interacting, sharing ideas and defying officialdom in both the use of language and subject. Like in the carnival, in the game of *izichothozo*, “excretory and sexual exploits are common ... emphasise the theme of the obscene in the genre” (ibid: 115). The lower body parts are used to insult, as, for example, small sexual organs or big excretory body parts. The use of the internet, particularly Facebook, as a platform, is mentioned but the messages that are carried by the whole exercise are not fully analysed in the article under review. It is therefore one of the key objectives of this study to analyse tabooed literature as it is found on walls of buildings as graffiti and the one that is posted on Facebook walls.

Bakhtin’s carnival humour seems to be generated by offending a party by another. Insults and nicknames generate folk humour when a group uses them, wittingly or unwittingly, to ridicule the other group. Ndlovu (2017) refers to the foregoing situation when discussing what is termed ethnophaulism between the Shona and the Ndebele in Zimbabwe when one group mispronounces ethnonyms and toponyms of the other. Mispronouncing these ethnonyms and toponyms of the

other group is said to, like most insults or unofficial speech acts according to Bakhtin's Carnival Theory, generate humour or amusement to the offending group. In ethnophaulism, mispronouncing ethnonyms and toponyms of another language results in a sound play that can be lighthearted and at the same time generate alternative terminology for the receiving language though they would have begun as offensive and unofficial. Terminology generated under these circumstances usually ends up forming part of the offending language. Although this study aims not to describe ethnophaulism, the phenomenon can help in understanding the generation of humour through some writings and scribbling on walls of buildings as graffiti and posts on Facebook walls which cannot be elaborative texts but by content and nature of presentation, generate humour and demonstrate how unfettered freedom of expression may not lead to linguistic creativity only but also to literary creativity.

Hugh Mangeya is the only prominent researcher who has dedicated himself to subjecting graffiti to scholarly analysis in Zimbabwe. In his doctoral thesis, Mangeya (2014:ii) interrogates graffiti "as a unique social practice in Zimbabwean urban areas", paying attention to a cross-section of subjects that graffiti in selected urban areas of Zimbabwe directs at general politics of Zimbabwe, power utility Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA), social and sexuality issues. The doctoral thesis argues that graffiti is a socially useful practice but does not directly interrogate the reasons for art to be found, mainly, in public buildings such as toilets. This study aims to find out why graffiti is an informal form of communication and hidden as opposed to being in the open and formal. This study also compares graffiti with posts on Facebook walls, an issue that is not part of the thesis under review.

Mangeya (2015) believes that graffiti is a social aspect of language. He supports his assertion by stating that it is social constructionism where participants create a reality which they only, can identify with Mangeya (ibid.). The crux of this article is that participants, especially female students, should be viewed as endeavouring to effect change in sexual behaviour as opposed to just writing sexual nonsense. Zimbabwean school female students are said to employ expressions like *hure* (bitch) to control sexual behaviour of fellow female students. While the article under review considers the above use of graffiti as a progressive method of controlling behaviour, this study seeks to argue that a Bakhtinian analysis of graffiti must view control as negative in the sense that it is oppressive.

Mangeya (2018) looks at graffiti as a form of imparting certain cultural practices where he talks about graffiti that school learners can only share as a particular age group without involving senior members of the community. The young learners are said to have their own perception of culture which they practice and share through graffiti that is inscribed on the walls of their school toilets. They are regarded as active participants in the practice of graffiti since they can dialogue by responding to an inscription on the wall by either erasing a part or commenting on an expression. Graffiti is said to also function as an indicator that culture is not homogenous but multifaceted hence the need for alternative practices with a single culture group. This study also holds the view that graffiti can be an alternative platform for sharing ideas and feelings about various subjects but goes further by trying to find the point of convergence between graffiti on walls of buildings and posts on Facebook walls.

Rwafa (2013) discusses film censorship and asserts that censorship is a powerless exercise that targets and controls or represses the sharing of information thereby crowning creators of literary texts as able and powerful transmitters of ideas that can transform society. It is further argued, in the text under review, that censorship is ideological hence the inclusion of morality by the state in its justification of restricting the flow of information. The interesting angle is that of presenting censorship as powerless yet the state enforces it with all of its powerful arms targeting creators of art. The foregoing argument is congruent with the thrust of this study which seeks to suggest an escape route from censorship for creators of carnivalised literary texts to share ideas and information via an alternative medium. Facebook as a platform for sharing ideas and information is different from film and even graffiti in that it can accommodate various forms of art, namely written texts, videos, pictorials and voice recordings.

Various types of censorship are discussed by Rwafa (ibid) who argues that there are many types of censorship practised in Zimbabwe. There is state censorship which is part of the legal system and an extension of social censorship since the community formulates rules on what can be said and what cannot be said. State censorship can be preventive (stopping a product from being published) or punitive (controlling the distribution of a product). Political censorship is part and parcel of state censorship in the sense that it also depends on the promulgation of laws to restrict and undermine creativity by banning certain issues that could be included in the production of media products. Administrative censorship is administered by institutions set up by the

government. Such institutions have the power to contest in court any information published by a media organisation. Editorial policies constitute institutional censorship where policies of production stipulate what can and what cannot be published. Certain issues are sometimes placed in the public domain through sponsorship by those with financial means and such control of information is known as economic censorship. Internalised or self-censorship is when a creator of art avoids a certain subject because they fear it may place their lives in danger under certain conditions which may include the law or condemnation by ‘self-appointed society’s police force’ who adjudicate whether or not the language or content of a product is moral. Except for self-censorship, all the other forms of censorship are externally exerted hence individuals can try to avoid the external forces by resorting to empowering media platforms that are internet-driven. This study suggests Facebook; a multimedia platform that provides citizens with the opportunity to engage in citizen journalism, where account holders can access ideas or instigate them with little interference from the conventional institutions charged with controlling or suppressing the creation and distribution of literary texts, as a suitable escape route from censorship in Zimbabwe. This ‘freedom’, which was traditionally enshrined in graffiti production where graffitiists hid behind anonymity, is now provided by Facebook.

A lot of organisations and their departments in the whole world have embraced the use of social media to enhance their operations. Libraries, as sources of information through collecting and distributing books to communities, inevitably have to embrace social media. Mabweazara (2014) states that the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Zimbabwe and the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in South Africa libraries have adopted the use of Facebook by opening pages of their own, but staff members do not seem to effectively use these Facebook pages as tools to make information readily available and accessible. This study advocates moving away from viewing Facebook as a tool to facilitate access to information in libraries to being a way of publishing and distributing information where, instead of people visiting libraries, be it online or physically, they become the creators and distributors of information that they can share with the world, particularly carnivalised literature which is hardly found in libraries due to censoring by responsible authorities. Account holders can do this simply by posting on their Facebook walls as opposed to the conventional distribution of information where information has to go via numerous institutions before getting to the library and consumers.

There is evidence that Zimbabweans, particularly those in urban areas, are active users of the internet-driven communication as indicated by government harassment of certain citizens who share information that is against individuals in senior positions in the government of Zimbabwe, particularly the president. Laws are used to silence dissenting voices to dissuade citizens from making use of social media for information creation and sharing. Kalemera, Nalwoga, Nanfuka, and Wakabi (2016) present several court cases of citizens who were accused of insulting the president via social media platforms including Facebook. In all the cases the government and its agents relied on the betrayal of creators and distributors of the information by fellow group members as opposed to using technological prowess to catch out ‘offenders’. All the cases were at variance with freedom of expression provided for in the constitution of Zimbabwe hence they were dismissed by courts. Researchers in Zimbabwe concern themselves with the restriction of sharing political material on social media whereas this study focuses on social issues, particularly carnivalised literature whose aim is to share social messages including tabooed subjects and presenting them in a humorous manner.

Chiyadzwa (2014) uses Habermas’s theory of the public sphere to appreciate uses of social media in rural Zimbabwe; a theory that avers that the media act as a platform for citizens where issues of common interest are discussed outside state control so that public opinion could be formed. The foregoing statement implies escaping state control by discussing social issues as opposed to being purely political since politics easily attracts state censure. The article under review also discusses matters that are handled by community members in the selected rural Zimbabwe communities as using social media platforms like Facebook mainly to share jokes. Chiyadzwa (ibid: 65) contends that most participants of the research “use social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp for receiving and sending jokes only” thereby betraying the attitude that jokes are not important enough for people to share. Chiyadzwa places jokes under the category of entertainment, giving the impression that jokes have no other value other than entertainment. This study, although not disputing the idea of entertainment value in jokes, posits that there is literary value in jokes that makes them worth subjecting to scholarly analysis.

Members of the world community attach different values to social media; hence have different expectations and uses for the phenomenon. Museka and Taringa (2014) view social media as opening a window of immorality to the youth by arguing that the internet gives the youth access

to uncontrolled content. Their stance represents views of censorship advocates who do not perceive social media as an alternative medium of communication but a retrogressive tool that leads to the reversal of morality gains made by traditional African parents. They argue that the liberal access to information that is made possible by social media platforms that include Facebook is not good for Zimbabwean youths. They, however, acknowledge the power of Facebook in influencing and revolutionising the communication landscape but do not view that as liberating and empowering the youth but an unfortunate development that leads to moral decadence. This study, while not dismissing the argument of Museka and Taring (ibid), advocates a non-judgmental attitude towards social media. It brings into focus the benefits of social media in as far as freedom of expression, sharing and access to information is concerned.

Media, books included, is the most reliable and modern way of expressing one's self and sharing of knowledge and information. Unfortunately, some forms of texts have been discriminated against by traditional publishers. The advent of social media saw a modern alternative platform being availed to creators and consumers of so-called unconventional methods of self-expression such as jokes and tabooed language and subjects. However, researchers have concentrated on stating how social media could be harnessed for electronic learning with very little research on how social media can help literature or any other artistic work to be accessed by those who are keen on consuming it without being hindered by those responsible for restricting the sharing of information expressed in 'unconventional' methods. This study argues that social media can be a blessing to genres of literature that have been sidelined by censorship thereby suppressing creativity that needed unconventional forms of expression for its manifestation.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Literature is generally recognised as prose, drama and poetry; because of the structure that literature has to have and that usually excludes carnivalised literature like jokes which are characterised as lacking seriousness for them to attract academic analysis. Africans also engage in the judgmental approach to literature, also subjecting literariness to some test of structural characteristics and dividing it into various genres. However, some analysts of literary texts like Mikhail Bakhtin reject the discrimination that is practised against certain genres such as carnival literature. It is this discrimination against some genres of literature when it comes to acceptance of literariness that this study argues has to be conquered by accepting that if certain literature

cannot be accessed under conventional media, then an alternative medium must be found and that medium is social media.

Carnival literature, under which selected posts on Facebook fall, is characterised by Mikhail Bakhtin as that literature which generates humour by defying traditional expectations on good literature through ridiculing those in positions of power thereby attracting censorship. Traditionally, that kind of literature found expression during special occasions and this study argues that social media, particularly Facebook, has taken over the role of those special occasions so as to be the platform for sharing carnivalised literature. Where carnival feasts could not serve the purpose of availing platforms for expression of ideas in an unconventional way, walls of public structures were used by the disadvantaged of society to create and share literary texts which are known as graffiti. This study contends that graffiti has the characteristics of posts that are found on Facebook walls of certain groups and individual accounts where account holders can conceal their identities through the use of pseudonyms. In a way, Facebook walls are taking over from traditional public walls on which carnivalised and tabooed literary texts were 'published' to escape censorship by 'responsible' authorities.

Censorship, as revealed by various sources that were reviewed in this chapter, is restriction (by those in positions of power) of the creation, distribution and consumption of information and is detrimental to creativeness in the production of literary texts. Governments, through the enactment of laws and religious organisations through their teachings, subject sharing of literary texts to some control which fetters those who have a knack for unconventionally expressing themselves. Such material has tended to remain oral, leading to pushing to the periphery and trivialisation of such literature, hence lack of academic research, analysis and exploration. Social media, particularly Facebook, is seen by this study as the alternative medium for carnivalised and tabooed literature to reach its audience. Social media can also function as a warehouse for stock of carnivalised literature for academic analysis.

This chapter has reviewed a wide range of literature to put into perspective the concepts that guide this study. The next chapter discusses the methodology employed in the conduction of this study. Key issues in this next chapter are the conceptual framework, data collection procedures, data presentation interpretation and analysis.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter critically explored literature on key concepts that combine to put the concerns of this study into perspective. The main focus of this study is the tabooing of, and its impact on the behaviour of creators of literary texts and expressions that relate to the subject of sex and sexuality and the lower body stratum. Tabooed literary texts and expressions generally bear characteristics of the carnival literature also referred to, in this study, as the Bakhtinian literature. It is these kinds of literary texts and expressions that are found on walls of buildings as graffiti. Graffiti is not tolerated in the public domain hence efforts are made to fight it. Graffitiists usually hide their identity as a result of societal levels of intolerance towards their product because it concerns itself with sex and sexuality and employs language that is regarded as vulgar, offensive and taboo. It has been noted by this researcher that there are posts on Facebook walls that have characteristics that resemble those of graffiti, traditionally found on walls of buildings. Interestingly, tabooed as well as carnival literature, despite their condemnation, elicit one form of humour or another. These tabooed texts, expressions and themes have remained part of society because they seem to have a way of going underground through graffiti and the carnivalesque. In the past, nonconformist members of society relied on the carnivalesque and graffiti because the two could hide participants' identities as they delved into issues that could not be dealt with in public without negative consequences. Facebook links with the rest of the foregoing concepts in that, as a platform for communicating and sharing feelings and views, also provides opportunities for identity concealment. Humour and life lessons are the main benefits of engaging in communication that hinges on tabooed or carnival literature and such literature seems to dominate shared material in certain group and individual accounts on Facebook. It is therefore crucial that a phenomenon such as Facebook, which provides a platform for alternative views and methods of sharing them, be explored and analysed.

This study compares the traditional graffiti on walls of buildings and 'cyber graffiti' on Facebook walls of the selected group or individual accounts. The other above-mentioned concepts come in to help the study proffer the argument that traditional graffiti is likely to, if not



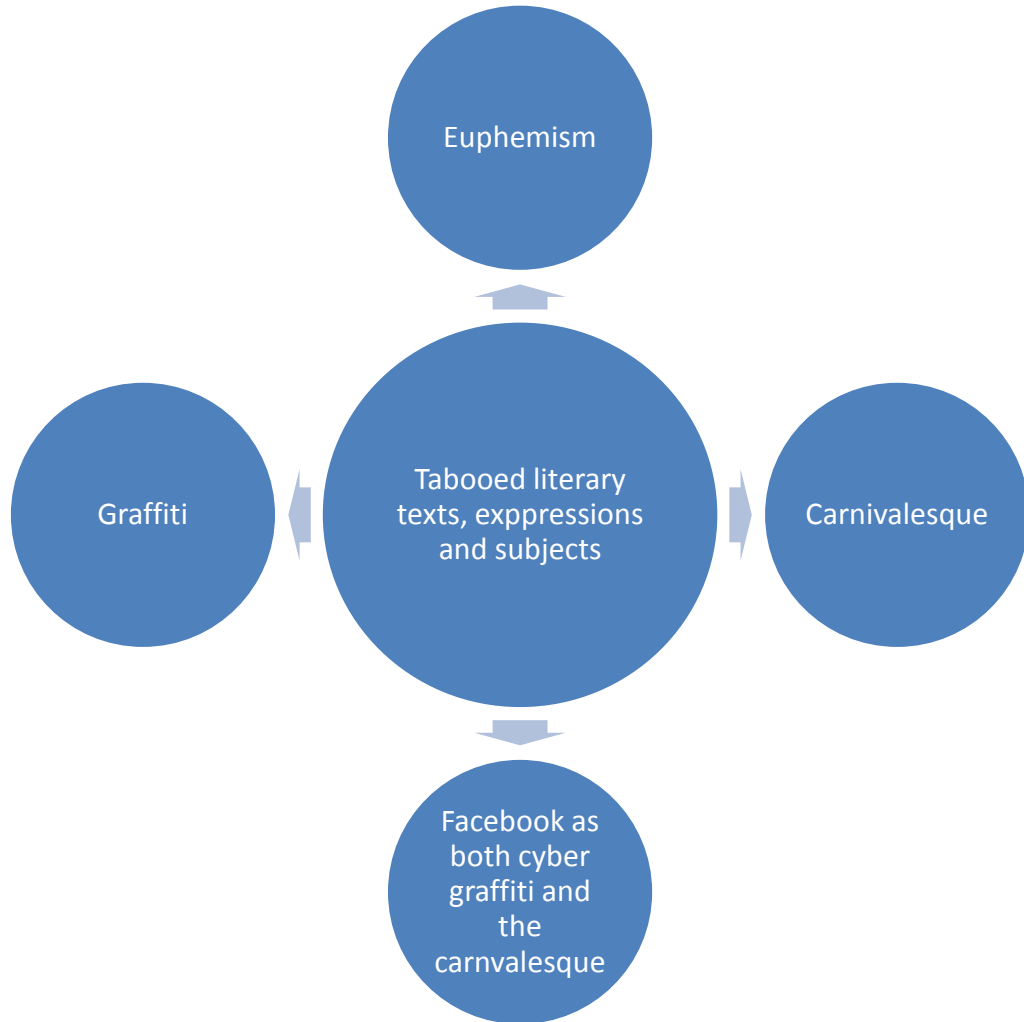
already, give way to ‘cyber graffiti’. Facebook maintains similar characteristics to graffiti in terms of content, language and societal benefits that can be derived from an alternative method for communicating views and feelings about tabooed themes using tabooed language. This study is therefore guided by a conceptual framework since it brings together concepts that may not seem closely related. Imenda (2014:189) notes that “the process of arriving at a conceptual framework is akin to an inductive process whereby small individual pieces (in this case, concepts) are joined together to tell a bigger map of possible relationships”. The key concepts in this study combine in the comparative analysis of traditional graffiti and ‘cyber graffiti’ to establish the relationship amongst censoring through tabooing, the carnivalisation of literary texts as a form of escaping censorship, traditionally, and posts on Facebook walls as a form of graffiti also, to escape censorship in the modern era. These key concepts give this study a structure and direction to follow so that the study is confined to the interface and intersection of the concerned concepts.

There is a tendency by researchers to use the terms theoretical framework and conceptual framework interchangeably (Green, 2014). Maxwell (2008:222) notes that a conceptual framework “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied—the key factors, concepts, or variables—and the presumed relationships among them” while Bergkvist (2008:52) argues that a conceptual framework “should emerge as a result of a gradually conducted analysis of the issue studied”. Clearly, a conceptual framework must explain how key concepts connect to a phenomenon under investigation. On the other hand, according to Green (2014:4), “the term theoretical framework should be used when research is underpinned by one single theory”. In this study, related concepts that could not be accommodated under one theory connected to guide the study, hence the employment of a conceptual framework as opposed to a theoretical framework. Maxwell (2008) contends that a research problem must be considered be part of the conceptual framework, a conceptual framework that must be generated instead of being inherited. “The conceptual framework for your research study is something that is constructed, not found. It incorporates pieces that are borrowed from elsewhere, but the structure, the overall coherence is something that *you* build, not something that exists ready-made”, (Maxwell, 2008:223). A conceptual framework is, therefore, different from a theoretical framework in that it does not follow a given template but the research is given direction by concepts that have to relate to one another and make sense.

A conceptual framework is more flexible than a theoretical framework. Akpabio (2015:88) argues that “While theories represent strict abstract generalizations involving formal and systematic explanations about how phenomena are inter-related, conceptual models or frameworks are less formal and are assembled by virtue of their relevance to a common theme”. The conceptual framework was preferred to theoretical framework in this study because the study links together tabooed literature, graffiti, carnival literature and Facebook. Akpabio (ibid: 89) further asserts that “the assumptions and beliefs reflected in the models should be identified and clearly stated and also used to guide the development of assumptions in the study”. This study assumed that tabooed literature is usually excluded from the official public domain but survives by ‘going underground’ to be used during the carnivalesque and on walls of buildings as graffiti or informal platforms. The carnivalesque is characterised by content that elicits crude humour or satisfaction of having broken the rules behind suspended identity. Graffiti production and the carnivalesque are traditional methods through which tabooed literary creations survived cultural censoring. This study assumed that the Facebook wall is the modern wall for graffiti and the carnivalesque. Tabooed literary texts are forms of creative works by members of society who are either forced to use alternative expressions, drop the subject, or seek informal ways of addressing issues they feel strongly about. Alternatives that are accepted by officialdom are usually in the form of euphemistic expressions which, according to Moyo (2007), do not carry the same weight as the tabooed ones that they would be replacing.

The problem of the study becomes part of the conceptual frame since it has to be explicitly articulated and linked with key elements of the study. “The “research problem” is a part of your conceptual framework, and formulating the research problem is often seen as a key task in designing your study”, (Maxwell, 2008:223). The problem in this study was that tabooed literary texts, expressions and themes are excluded from formal publications and scholarly criticism and exploration, giving the impression that they are not helpful to society. The exclusion of these forms of communication of feelings and ideas, either through tabooing or euphemism, seems to be aimed at their obliteration and the concepts they stand for. What is interesting is their survival of the onslaught. Tabooing certain literary texts, expressions and themes was viewed as an assault on rights of minority groups because, though not many, those who defy taboos have the right to that alternative method of sharing ideas. Also, those tabooed subjects usually suffer lack of exploration and understanding, resulting in tension amongst members of society. It was the

assumption of this study that tabooed literary texts, expressions and subjects resort to a systematic strategy that helps them escape censoring. Below is an illustration of the relationship of key concepts of the study.



**Figure 1:** An illustration of the relationship among key concepts of the study

### **3.2 Tabooed Literature and reasons for tabooing it**

Society is generally characterised by rules that restrict content and language usage in literary texts. At the heart of controlling expressive literary texts is the tabooing of certain expressions and themes. Taboo is defined by Moyo (2005) as acts and words that are forbidden, notably those that relate to sex, sex organs and natural bodily functions. “In Ndebele culture the public

use of such words is normally unacceptable”, (Moyo, 2005:4). Taboos have worked as a key strategy of censoring certain themes and language usage throughout the history of most African cultures. Despite censorship through tabooing, these forbidden words are, according to Moyo (2005), frequently used in everyday life. Mkhize (2016) also argues that vulgarity and ribald language that was frowned upon by missionaries was present in African languages everyday discourse indicating the need to find space for tabooed language and themes.

Moyo (2007) discusses the handling of tabooed expressions in the general-purpose Ndebele dictionary where the concern is that certain lexical items are not effectively explained because they are tabooed expressions. Such terms relate to issues of sex as indicated in the following statement: “it is also taboo to directly refer to terms with sexual connotations, as becomes evident from dictionaries. In these cultures, reference to such terms must be done euphemistically” (ibid: 355). Formally, tabooed expressions, in line with Ndebele culture, had to be evaded by engaging in euphemism as a strategy. Euphemism meant replacing or excluding the tabooed expressions in formal communication. Handling such terms euphemistically resulted in an ineffective definition of lexical items that refer to sexual organs like the vagina. Moyo (ibid: 356) argues that “An explicit definition which could have defined the word in terms of its function in childbearing or sexual intercourse is unacceptable in Ndebele culture”. The foregoing concept, as well as the subject of sex, is excluded in the Ndebele general purpose dictionary. The question that arises is; how did these expressions survive and maintain the concept they represented? The answer, most probably, lies with graffiti and the carnivalisation of literary texts to escape the censoring of language usage.

Taboos vary from one culture to another. What is taboo in one culture may not necessarily be taboo in another. The differences in impact between taboo and non-taboo expressions are effectively experienced when translating messages from one language to another. Gellérfi (2017:155) notes that:

Obscene expressions in Greek and Latin literature have caused many problems for translators and editors ... For instance, the renowned Hungarian translator, Gábor Devecseri left certain poems out from his translation of Catullus; while in other poems, he used euphemisms instead of expressions that seemed unacceptable.

The above statement demonstrates the difficulties that are encountered when translating concepts from one language to another. Some concepts that are not necessarily taboo in the Greek and

Latin languages are taboo in Hungarian language, resulting in translators employing tactics that include omission and the use of euphemism. The effect of such tactics, as Moyo (2005:4) observes, is that “the most essential elements of meaning are lost”. Euphemism, which Putranti, Nababan and Tarjana (2017:709) regard as “sweet talking”, is used as a strategy that is adopted to deal with taboo expressions and the usual result is to reduce the impact of the message. The strategies that are referred to in the foregoing argument satisfy the needs of censoring cultural agents at the expense of the clarity of the concepts, hence compromise the quality of messages carried by tabooed texts and expressions.

Texts and expressions that are eschewed from formal language have always had their own survival strategies. Most of them were and are still found on walls of buildings as graffiti. Gellérfi (2017:158), when analysing two literary texts that deal with sexuality-related topics, juxtaposes them with the “graffiti-corpus preserved on the walls of the buildings of Pompeii and Herculaneum, giving us some insight into the vulgar language of the time ... and the exact meaning of certain words”. Effectively, the above statement emphasises that graffiti is a strategy of communication that does not dilute meanings of expressions on the grounds of their vulgarity hence it is viewed, in this study, as a traditional method of escaping cultural censorship. Tabooing texts, expressions and subjects tend to compromise the effect of communication intended by creators of texts and users of those expressions. The impact is usually felt when tabooed expressions are encountered during translation and interpretation. Mouallem (2015) notes an incident where communication was compromised by trying to avoid a taboo expression which might have led to a miscarriage of justice in a court of law as follows:

An example of possible dire consequences of misinterpreting taboo is that of a Bengali rape victim, where the female Bengali interpreter was too embarrassed to interpret accurately the question in court, 'Did penetration take place?' she rendered it as 'did lovemaking take place?'. The response by the victim could have been 'No' as penetration through rape is not equal to penetration through lovemaking, and this may have led to the alleged rapist to be set free (Mouallem, 2015:49).

Intervention efforts like special training of interpreters can help to avoid situations like the one above. The question, however, would be on how such instances would be dealt with in general day-to-day communication if tabooed expressions were to be excluded at all costs. There would be a need for a

platform for such expressions in order for them to continue to be part of a language expressing the concerned concepts with the desired effect.

### **3.3 Graffiti as an escape from censorship**

It is the argument of this study that tabooed texts, expressions and subjects survive by going underground from formal texts and conversations and manifest themselves as graffiti on walls of buildings where there are neither rules nor control of expression but all that is on the mind of the graffitist goes. Graffiti is defined by Al-Khawaldeh (2017), Kariuki, Yieke and Ngoro (2016), Gushendra (2015) and Bowley (1991) as an alternative to formal communication or a subculture for those who either feel that their voices are choked up or are marginalised. Bowley (1991:251) contends that “the particular alternative chosen by graffiti writers requires, of course, that they willfully break the law ... as evidence for their inability or refusal to adopt the standards of behavior held by the rest of society”. Graffitists will need an alternative platform in order to express their thoughts and feelings without directly confronting the whole of society. Mangeya (2018:8) argues that “the construction of sex-specific cultural competences is a salient feature of bathroom graffiti in general”. The foregoing statement strongly insinuates that sex and sexuality are key subjects of graffiti production. Interestingly, sex and sexuality are subjects that constitute the bulk of tabooed subjects and expressions that are related to them. In a sense, what is excluded from the sphere of formal communication feeds into graffiti material production.

Mangeya (2018) further asserts that graffiti has the function of imparting cultural literacies to young people. Cultural issues that cannot be effectively dealt with in the adult dominated public domain are shared by young people as graffiti that is found on walls of school toilets. Tabooed notions and concepts like sexual pleasure “are not really explicitly taught in either the school or the ‘home’ curricula” (ibid: 7). Graffiti therefore, as an alternative platform for communication and sharing feelings and ideas, plays the role of exploring and dialoguing about issues that are avoided and excluded from the public domain. Curiously, graffiti, though given attention by researchers, is hardly a subject for study and academic critiquing as a literary genre. Gadsby (1995) demonstrates how controversial graffiti is by arguing that it is usually viewed as;

Part childish prank, part adult insult ... Abel and Buckley (1977) take an entirely different stance. They look at the writing of graffiti as a psychological phenomenon, "a form of communication that is both personal and free of

everyday social restraints that normally prevent people from giving uninhibited reign to their thought.

This study adopts the latter view of graffiti that places it at the centre of literary scrutiny in order to access its valuable literary benefits to humanity. The former view is regarded as depriving society of the helpful contributions of graffiti by condemning it as a negative exercise. It is viewing graffiti negatively that links it with tabooed literary texts, expressions and subjects and as a medium of tabooed literary texts, expressions and subjects; graffiti gets tabooed by extension.

Graffiti is generally dominated by vulgarities; hence many critics adopt a tone of despising this literary genre. Lundgren (2017) displays negative regard for graffiti by arguing that “the most common word in graffiti is “fuck.” ... It is also not uncommon to see the word “shit” spray painted ... vandals use a direct message to express their appreciation for rebellion, simply painting the words “smoke dope” or “get high” (ibid). Kariuki et al., (2016:161) reveal that, “many people regard graffiti as an unwanted nuisance or as expensive vandalism that must be repaired”. Referring to graffiti writers as vandals and graffiti as vandalism betrays an attitude of low regard for graffiti as an activity as well as its producers. The language that is used by graffitiists is also described using terms like obscene, profane, vulgar and explicit (Lee, 2016). The foregoing view expresses negative views that are generally adopted towards graffiti, resulting in it being tabooed and considered as anathema to society. Gushendra (2015:747) posits that “mass media is not the only alternative public sphere. Graffiti and mural could be another choice for citizens, especially street artists to express their feelings and thoughts”. This study considers condemnation of graffiti as repressive to an alternative medium of communicating ideas and feelings of individuals who lack direct access to formal platforms. It is the quality of availing an alternative to formal platforms that links graffiti with Bakhtin’s carnivalesque that also provided medieval Europe’s less privileged with the platform to share ideas and express their feelings about tabooed subjects.

Mangeya (2015) presents graffiti in positive light by pointing out that, despite using vulgarities, it can function as a tool for regulating behaviour of school girls. “Zimbabwe female high school students use graffiti as a way of checking the sexual behaviour of their peers ...issues emerging from graffiti by female students include... employment of the term *hure* (bitch) and very strong positions on courtship” (ibid:33). The foregoing assertion implies that there are benefits from the use of tabooed texts since they can be utilised to correct and control behaviour. Žuvela (2012) argues that throughout

the history of mankind, the purpose of graffiti has been to communicate and interrogate issues that are usually swept under the rug by, in most cases, declaring them taboo. Similarly, Yieke (2016) posits that students from Nigerian universities resort to graffiti to articulate their views when they feel they are not being listened to. Graffiti is not as bad as officialdom would want society to view it as. Graffiti is the voice of the voiceless of society. It is the platform of last resort for the expression of ideas and feelings using tabooed language and, like the carnivalesque, has helped tabooed language and subjects survive the onslaught of cultural conservatives.

Viewing graffiti as a criminal nuisance and vandalism lead to fighting it. In this case, in addition to being tabooed, graffiti faces a physical fight where the scratches and scribbles are removed by cleaning or repainting surfaces. Cresswell (1992:331) asserts that in America “ten million dollars were spent in 1972 on attempts to clear up graffiti”, indicating a strong fight against graffiti because officialdom regards it as vandalism and crime. Alonso (1998:4) also reveals that “In 1989 while New York City spent \$55 million in graffiti clean-up efforts ...Los Angeles County, was not far behind, spending \$50 million”. Authorities incur huge costs in fighting graffiti. One of the reasons for fighting graffiti off surfaces of buildings and other physical structures is given by Gómez (1993:653) as being “ugly, indicative of decay, invites crime and additional graffiti, and is done by criminals who should be punished”. Interestingly the above statement seems worried about the appearance of buildings without considering the message put across by composers of the graffiti. The foregoing statements indicate a huge fight against graffiti thereby necessitating an alternative platform with similar if not improved characteristics and qualities in order to escape the clampdown on it. It is the submission of this study that tabooed literary texts are likely to find a new haven on Facebook walls after being hounded from formal platforms like the mainstream creative literature, the media fraternity, to walls of buildings and other surfaces of physical structures or the carnivalesque. The carnivalesque links with tabooed expressions, texts and subjects in that during medieval Europe, it acted as a platform where they could be used and explored without condemnation.

### **3.4 The carnivalesque as free expression**

The carnivalesque that was practised in medieval Europe functioned as a platform that provided society with the opportunity to explore life experiences and issues without the hindrance of the law, politics and cultural constraints. Gesicka (2011:395) propounds that “it is a space of spontaneous messaliances, of contradictory events and images that free people from the fixed constraints of their



social roles and destabilize any coherent category, norm and rule that organize everyday political, social and cultural life”. The carnivalesque, therefore, encourages spontaneity, disregard for formalness and social roles of citizens so that they may not be held responsible for their actions while in this space. In a sense, identity is not an issue on this platform hence freedom of expression becomes central to the carnivalesque. A situation such as the one that prevails during and at the carnivalesque allows for the breaking of taboos. It is in this regard that this study argues that the carnivalesque in medieval Europe and graffiti on surfaces of physical structures functioned as an escape route from censorship for tabooed texts, language and subjects. It is important to observe that the carnivalesque, like graffiti, does not exclude what is acceptable to formal platforms. Those graffitiists who want to include messages that are regarded by officialdom as positive can also and do scratch them on walls of buildings as much as such messages could be found and could form part of the carnivalesque content. According to Holquist (1985), cited by Gesicka (2011:396), the carnivalesque has to be perceived as part of the “broader philosophical problem of the "mysterious workings of shared differences". In other words, the carnivalesque, though dominated by tabooed material, is a mixed bag of issues that affect society. What sets it apart from the formal platforms is that it is inclusive even of tabooed content.

Many considerations result in subjects being taboo or offensive. Such considerations act as rules that society must observe for it to function in an ‘orderly manner’. Breaking such rules is considered taboo. The carnivalesque disregarded those rules in order to afford members of society a platform to explore those issues without restriction. McKenzie (2005:85) notes that “in the medieval carnival, normal social order (social class hierarchies, gender relations and social values) was disrupted, inverted and parodied in an orgiastic time of liberating freedom”. The disregard of social order, under normal circumstances, is behaviour that society condemns hence it is taboo like most offensive behaviour and language that one could freely use during the carnival. Clasen (2011:2) avers that Bakhtin “explores how a medieval carnival allowed an escape from the rigidly established power structures”. The carnivalesque offered an escape route from society’s rigidity of cultural dictates. Disregard for the social class as part of tabooed behaviour could not and still is not tolerated in most societies just as it was not tolerated on formal platforms of medieval Europe. Some members, however, yearned for the freedom to express themselves using language the way they deemed fit without offending cultural rules and expectations hence they resorted to the carnivalesque just like they would resort to writing on walls of buildings.

The carnivalesque was not confined to medieval Europe but was also exercised by some parts of the world outside Europe as is asserted by Clasen (2011:1) when noting that “carnavalesque spaces in American culture are providing platforms for transgressing these power structures and culturally defined boundaries of identity”. Every society seems to have exercised the opportunity to escape control by engaging in what Bakhtin christened the carnivalesque. In Africa in general and in Zimbabwe, among the Ndebele to be specific, spaces for free speech practised away from officialdom are discussed by Ndlovu (2015) who asserts that the practice occurred in the form of ritual insults. Ritual insults constituted a contest among the youth to ridicule each other to come up with a winner. “The game is appreciated by the youth, especially male Ndebele youth, as a verbal duel. However, some people seem to see it as a dirty genre that spoils children” (ibid: 113). This game is taken off the main arena of society because of taboo language and themes that make up this contest offend Ndebele main society cultural dictates. Due to technological developments and dynamism, the practice of ritual duels has moved from conventional Ndebele society to virtual space as indicated by Ndlovu (ibid) who points out that some examples of the ritual insults were extracted from “Facebook friends who played the game on the internet exploring the obscene theme”, (ibid: 115). It is the position of this study that tabooed literary texts and subjects that are explored using tabooed expressions, in line with technological developments of the day, are slowly but surely relocating to social media platforms, particularly Facebook. Carnival literature is understood in this study as texts, expressions and subjects that would be considered obscene, vulgar, offensive and dirty on a formal platform and would consequently be declared taboo and censored. Such texts would therefore find other platforms where they can freely be explored. This study argues that the exclusion of certain themes from the formal platform and the insistence on ‘proper’ language to be used to discuss them leads to distortion of concepts leading to misconceptions.

### **3.5 Facebook and Facebook wall**

Creators of carnival literature have for a long time been forced to engage in satire to evade censoring of certain themes and language usage that have been declared taboo after being deemed profane, offensive or dirty. The tabooing of themes and certain language usage has curtailed freedom of expression and consequently retarded the creativity of certain members of society. Traditionally, as already pointed out, restrictions to communication were evaded through graffiti and the carnivalesque. The foregoing concepts of freedom of expression have evolved in terms of their

platform and sophistication. One development that has revolutionised the nature and quality of freedom of expression is technological advancement that has manifested itself in the form of the use of the internet to create and share texts and ideas without or with limited censoring of content and language. The internet has facilitated and ensured that imaginative literary creations reach huge audiences with little or no restrictions, unlike graffiti and the carnivalesque festivals. Commenting on the contribution and the effect of the internet on society, Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:37) assert that;

The Internet and its platforms are revolutionizing the communication process. New forms like phone media, social media and new media have come up and are being used in various ways to disseminate information to a large heterogeneous group of people in the same or different environment who are socially related or emotionally connected to us.

The above assertion implies the phenomenal changes in the creation and sharing of views and feelings by creative communicators on various subjects without little or no restriction on their themes and language usage. New information technology and the internet have resulted in cultural changes in the creation and distribution of literary texts. The advent of the internet has not reinvented the proverbial wheel but has added benefits to the ones provided by graffiti and the carnivalesque in trying to evade the tabooing of carnivalised literature and the inherently culturally condemned language usage and exploration of tabooed themes.

The definition of culture by Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:40) as “behavior, values, shared ideas, and attitudes of people who are bound together by environment, language and location”, gives the picture that people who belong to the same environment and use the same language behave the same way. Such an understanding of culture, though common, gives the impression that members of a given community hardly differ on the way they view issues. Tabooing of certain themes and language usage within one community, graffiti creation and the carnivalesque implies divergence in views and methods of sharing ideas and feelings. It is this difference in approach to issues that necessitates alternative platforms and ways of communicating views and feelings by different members of any given community resulting in others being considered as rebels who need to be controlled through cultural censoring. The availability of a multiplicity of platforms for sharing ideas and feelings about crucial issues, whether formal or informal, indicates the healthiness of a situation where ideas compete in an open and free market. Unfortunately, tabooing certain practices curtails freedom and

choices. Informal platforms are a result of restricted opportunities for sharing ideas and feelings in the formal arena. Social media provides various platforms that officialdom, including cultural enthusiasts and conservatives, is grappling with appreciating and controlling. Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (ibid) understand social media to be online means of interactions amongst human beings that involve computer-mediated tools, internet and computer-based applications that allow people to create and share ideas through pictures and videos.

Facebook is one of many online Networking Social Sites (NSSs) tools for interaction. “Facebook's primary purpose is to maintain existing relationships, though it can also be used to initiate new relationships ... Social media is most often used to communicate with friends and peers, share information and photos, and post comments” (Westrop et al, 2018:3). Social media is more sophisticated than traditional graffiti in that, in addition to scribbling and sketching crude drawings, pictures and videos can be used to communicate ideas and feelings about different subjects that affect members of any community that has access to the internet and compliant gadgets like computers and smartphones. Control on content and language choice on Facebook is quite limited compared to formal and traditional media like newspapers, books and television stations. Westrop et al (ibid) point out that swearing is a taboo linguistic category when used offline, but Facebook account holders often use swearing language with differing consequences on their social standing. The freedom to use swear words on Facebook emanates from the fact that identity can be managed or manipulated, like with graffiti and the carnivalesque, thereby affording users of Facebook the opportunity to tackle any subject using even profane language without risking societal rebuke.

Computer-mediated interaction affords participants space to engage even on issues that are considered taboo or controversial offline. Górká (2014:217) contends that “being anonymous is probably one of the most important aspects of the Internet. It allows the expression of views and opinions with no fear of bearing the consequences in the real world”. Concealed identity helps in ‘saving one’s face’ and avoiding societal ‘backlash’ for discussing taboo themes using taboo language. What the foregoing effectively means is that Facebook, as part of the internet-mediated form of interaction, can facilitate sharing and exploration of carnivalised literature with little or no restriction. Further, Bargh, McKenna and Fitzsimons (2002:35) note that “in traditional face-to-face interactions there are real costs to disclosing negative or taboo aspects of oneself”. It is quite apparent that Facebook, like most social media tools, can function as an outlet valve for all the social and

cultural restrictions imposed by the officialdom in the form of taboos. Anonymity, in addition to facilitating breaking taboos or evasion of control, also helps participants experience their true selves. Commenting on the strength of anonymity as functionality of social media, Bargh et al. (2002:34) propound that “we would expect a person to use it first and foremost to express those aspects of self that he or she has the strongest need to express, namely, the ‘true self’”. Precisely, an individual would be truly understood when allowed to tackle even tabooed themes using tabooed language behind the mask of managed identity provided by social media like Facebook.

Laughter is a distinct characteristic of the carnival. Laughter is usually achieved by caricaturing reality or officialdom. Internet-mediated tools for interaction like social media platforms rely heavily on a phenomenon known as ‘memes’ to invoke laughter in participants. “A "meme" is a picture with a short caption which is a caricature illustration of current political, sports, and cultural events” (Górka, 2014:226). New information technology can be viewed as an advancement of traditional platforms for sharing carnivalised literature such as graffiti and the carnivalesque where manipulated or concealed identity of participants played a crucial role in allowing engaging in the exploration of tabooed themes using tabooed language which generally invokes humour. It is the invocation of laughter that is condemned by officialdom or cultural moralists that connects the carnivalesque and graffiti which is also a characteristic of posts that are found on Facebook walls of the group and individual accounts that deal with tabooed themes or use tabooed language. Another characteristic of the carnival which is also a characteristic of the carnivalesque, graffiti and posts on Facebook walls is the association the practices have with giving an alternative platform to the disadvantaged of society and the humour it generally invokes.

### **3.6 Activity Theory**

This study, as has been stated before, is guided by a conceptual framework. Amongst sources of a conceptual framework, as propounded by Maxwell (2008:224), are four modules, one of them being “existing theory and research ... A useful theory helps you organize your data. Particular pieces of information that otherwise might seem unconnected or irrelevant to one another or your research questions can be related if you can fit them into the theory”. A theory can be part of the building blocks of a conceptual framework or help a researcher organise concepts into a meaningful explication of the problem and the process to solve it or provide possible answers to research questions. The Activity Theory is chosen as part of the conceptual framework because it presents and

explains human effort in trying to solve challenges as blocks of organised procedures. These procedures entail concepts that guide action in response to some tension that is a result of human interaction and tools that they employ in pursuance of the resolution of stumbling blocks. These stumbling blocks are usually encountered as communities share life as a multifaceted group that is however controlled by certain constraints that are imposed by cultural censoring.

The Activity Theory (AT) was developed by Lev Vygotsky, a Russian semiotician and psychologist who focused on a triad, namely; the *subject*, *tools* and the *object*. “Based on the conception of the triad, Vygotsky identified methods that would help study and explain human activities” (Mwalongo et al, 2016:20). The three elements of the Activity Theory constitute key concepts of its operations. Mwalongo et al (ibid: 21) further posit that the “Activity Theory as a framework helps the researcher make sense of complex real-world data sets in a manageable and meaningful manner”. The main real-world data sets to be processed in this study are the three key concepts, namely: graffiti, the carnivalesque and Facebook. These are part of a human activity system that aims to handle the tension that arises between official methods and channels of interaction and alternative methods of doing the same. Participants in the creation and sharing of tabooed material through the traditional use of graffiti production and the carnivalesque which combine into a modern development; Facebook, to evade censoring, provide the chain of activities that depict the triad of *subject*, *tools* and the *object*. Nunez (2014:42) explains that “AT uses the concept of activity system to refer to a structure of interconnected components (object, subject, tools, rules, community and division of labor)”. The activity system is collective, object-oriented and tool-mediated. It consists of two or more interrelated parts; it is intention and purpose-driven and it uses instruments or tools to achieve set objectives.

Human activity, usually, has a purpose, a purpose that is achieved through the use of certain tools, tools that mediate the activities in order to achieve a particular objective. In this study, human activity entails creating texts that are tabooed by society in terms of their content or language, using graffiti writing or the carnivalesque as tools to achieve the objective of sharing ideas and feelings about the tabooed themes using tabooed expressions. The whole system of engaging in graffiti writing and participating in the carnivalesque in order to share forbidden material using forbidden language was a traditional method of avoiding societal censure. It was a strategy of evading societal control of communication through taboos. Currently, a modern tool

for the activity of evading language and content censoring has become the use of the internet via its various elements such as social media tools like Facebook. Hashim and Jones (2007:3) assert that “Activity Theory is particularly relevant in situations that have a significant historical and cultural context and where the participants, their purposes and their tools are in a process of rapid and constant change”. This study traces the activities of members of society who use alternative methods of sharing ideas about tabooed themes through alternative methods in the form of, among others, graffiti writing and the carnivalesque, arguing that, as society changes, the tools that they use to mediate their interaction also change. This study therefore argues that it is possible for social media, particularly Facebook, to take over from traditional methods of sharing tabooed texts using tabooed expressions to evade cultural censoring.

Tabooing literary texts and their language imposes constraints on other members of the community who are given to approaches to interaction that are different from those recommended by those in positions of authority. Those who prefer the tabooed tools for interaction have to defy the authorities or seek alternative methods of interaction. Officialdom views those who defy their authority as rebels whereas those who prefer alternative methods regard such methods as their right and have to find alternative platforms where they can engage in activities of defiance in order to address tabooed themes in tabooed language. The Activity Theory helps in the explanation of engagement in graffiti and carnivalised literary texts production. Ahmad and Mumtaz (2011:3) assert that “the basic aim of activity theory is to understand the human activities”. In this study, the Activity Theory helped the researcher analyse graffiti and posts on Facebook walls of selected group and individual accounts/posts so as to appreciate their reasons for participating in the ‘carnavalesque’. Defying authority functions as culture for those who engage in graffiti and carnival literature production during the carnivalesque and on Facebook. The culture of defiance is directed by the minds of the ‘rebels’ who engage in acts of defiance hence, Clair (2008) contends that culture is more a psychological factor than it is a social one. “Human mind comes to exist, develops, and can only be understood within the context of meaningful, goal-oriented activity” (Clair, 2008:174). Engaging in the creation of carnivalised literary texts is in response to the goal of being direct when sharing views on issues that are condemned by the officialdom as taboo.

At the heart of the Activity Theory, according to Hardman (2005:260), is the activity system as a unit of analysis where the system is constituted by “a group of people, or a community, who share a common object (or problem space) and who use tools to act on that object, transforming it”. Effectively, the Activity Theory expects transformation that comes from a community or a group’s activity that is mediated by specific tools. It is in this vein that engagement on platforms like walls of buildings for graffiti and participating in the carnivalesque to share tabooed texts in tabooed language disguised by lack of identity of the graffitist and the carnival, must consequently transform into a modern platform in the form of a Facebook wall. Account holders, both as individuals and members of a group, are subjects. Tools can be anything that facilitates the activity; it can be language, it can be platforms or technology like computers, smartphones, or any gadget that facilitates the interaction of any collective. Heo and Lee (2013:137) propound that “the activity is mediated by artifacts, which are features the users can use in the web-based spaces ... typical features of blogs of an individual blog, combining texts, images, videos, and links to other resources”. The internet brings into the picture a broader baseline for the modern world interacting members of virtual communities. They may not necessarily have to know one another’s identities because identity is not an issue in the interaction but common interests are, especially when cultural rules are to be flouted like in breaking taboos.

The activity, according to Activity Theory, is usually directed by its objectives, what Yamagata-Lynch (2010:17) calls the ‘object’ and notes that what “scholars do agree about is that the “object” is the reason why individuals and groups of individuals choose to participate in an activity”. The object is the reason for engaging in an activity. Iqbal and Gregory (2009:436) note that “an *object* (in the sense of motive or motivation towards a future-oriented objective) is held by the subject and motivates the existence of activity, giving it a specific direction”. Those who are motivated by the desire to interact and use language without regarding taboos would use different tools or artifacts as opposed to those who want to abide by rules and regulations that are imposed by cultural enthusiasts. The importance of the object of the activity as part of the Activity Theory structure was further emphasised by Alexei Leont’ev between 1904 and 1979 (Mwalongo et al, 2016) who was Vygotsky’s student (Roth and Lee, 2007). In the 1980s and the 1990s, the Activity Theory was further developed by Engeström who incorporated the ideas of community, rules and outcomes arguing that the Activity theory comprises the subjects, object, tools, community, rules, division of labour and outcomes, bringing to six the constituents of the



Activity Theory (Mwalongo et al, 2016). Rambe (2012:1337) expounds that “the *community* negotiates and mediates the rules and customs that describe how it functions, what it believes and the ways it supports different activities”. Groups and individuals who use their Facebook accounts to discuss tabooed themes using tabooed language form the community of this study. The community is just an extension of Vygotsky’s subject in his triad. The division of labour, according to Rambe (ibid), includes roles and relationships amongst members of community. For the current study, the roles of group members on Facebook would be to share material that concerns the theme of a given group with the result being exploring, appreciating and laughing about certain subjects that one would not discuss in public.

In the process of interacting, different motivations for members of the same community can result in tension which may negatively affect the whole activity. Yamagata-Lynch (2010:23) reveals that “human activity can trigger tensions caused by systemic contradictions ... These tensions arise when the conditions of an activity put the subject in contradictory situations that can preclude achieving the object or the nature of the subject’s participation in the activity while trying to achieve the object”. Nunez (2014:43) states that “contradictions always exist in activity systems and the attempts to resolve them may lead to innovation”. As participants (Facebook account holders) engage, they are highly likely to quarrel over how far members could be explicit and graphic when discussing tabooed themes. In some cases, other members find some details to do with sex and sexuality too vulgar for them to handle and that may result in a verbal fight among group members.

It is important to note that the Activity Theory is not a theory in the truest sense. Barnard (2010:26) submits that “despite its name, Activity Theory (AT) is not actually a theory or a particular methodological approach, but rather a comprehensive model of the interrelated elements of an activity system”. The Activity Theory helps to explain the interrelatedness of parts of a collective. Hashim and Jones (2007:8) avers that “Activity Theory is a valuable tool for researchers to incorporate into their repertoire as it enables a means of discovering human activity without the express explication of tasks by participants, instead, through the mediated study of the participant’s tools an understanding of activity is revealed which includes tacit and explicit actions”. The current study analyses the human activity of trying to evade censoring of literary texts and language usage, traditionally and currently. Attention is given to the scribbling

of graffiti on walls of public structures and the medieval carnivalesque as expounded by Bakhtin as traditional efforts and Facebook that combine the two traditional methods due to its being a multimedia tool for interaction. The Activity Theory functions as a philosophical framework to facilitate an investigation and description of any community practice. Engaging in efforts to defy tabooing of literary texts and language usage is a communal practice with a long history that starts from scribbling ideas on walls of buildings, the carnivalesque of medieval Europe and related forms like *izichothozo* (Ndlovu, 2013) up to social media platforms like Facebook. Activity Theory therefore helps in unpacking the foregoing as blocks that come together to explicate the connectedness of tabooing literary texts and expressions and how communities may respond to it. Community members react differently to the censoring of literary texts and expressions; some would conform while others would defy or evade the censoring.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

Tabooing certain themes and language usage encompasses advocating and declaring not only unacceptable but also uncultured the discussion of certain themes and using a particular type of language. Usually, vulgarities and profanities are key taboo language features. Offensive language; from language that is sexually explicit to language that causes discomfort to people of a different ethnicity or any offensive language also form part of excluded themes and language usage. Interestingly, tabooing certain texts and language usage fails to render them unusable because those condemned themes and language usages still have a purpose to serve in society. Members of a community that practices a particular culture do not necessarily all submit to the same methods of practice hence the emergence of subcultures within society to fill up gaps that may be created by the demand for strict adherence to rules and regulations of a given community. The subculture is usually viewed as rebellious, but the current study regards subcultures as alternative cultures which, due to lack of acceptance, seek alternative platforms for sharing ideas on tabooed themes using tabooed expressions. Technically, tabooing an alternative way of expression is to taboo those who use it. Consequently, tabooing graffiti and carnival literature is to condemn the creators and consumers of such literature to exclusion. Such a practice can be considered not only undesirable but also unnecessary and unjust.

When members of a community resort to unorthodox means and platforms for interaction and exploring tabooed themes using tabooed language, that practice must be noted as an indicator of

the necessity and need to explore those themes. The current study views the alternative way as a loud call for a need to explore those themes using that language even though officialdom condemns it as undesirable. The alternative platforms for experiencing and exploring tabooed literary texts and tabooed language usage are broken into the traditional and the current. The traditional ones are graffiti writing and the carnivalesque as explained by Mikhail Bakhtin and related literary practices in Africa with *izichothozo* presented as an example of related Ndebele practice. The production of graffiti whose content and language usage correspond to that of the carnivalesque, is regarded to be the traditional form of evading language censoring (tabooing particular themes and expressions) that has been moved to another level by the discovery of the internet-driven phenomenon known as social media with Facebook chosen as a case study for this research.

Activity Theory helps give reasons and direction for approaching the above-mentioned concepts as interrelated blocks that explain human and community activities that are guided by the object of escaping censoring of particular themes and language usage by declaring them taboo. The desire and effort to evade language censoring has a history that the study argues starts from writing on a wall, participating in carnivals up to the current posting of texts and other forms of communication on Facebook walls, taking advantage of the fact that Facebook, as a multimedia platform, can accommodate any form of interaction as opposed to the traditional forms of escaping language censoring. Since the Activity Theory specifically separates and explains the role of each part of the activity system, it helps in presenting the argument that the graffitiists, participants of the carnivalesque and Facebook account holders, whether as groups or individuals, represent the *subject* of the Activity Theory. The desire to escape language censoring is the *object* of the activity system. The traditional (graffiti and the carnivalesque) and modern (Facebook) platforms for evading language censoring form *tools* for facilitating the escape from taboos put in place by officialdom in the form of cultural enthusiasts or enforcers of adherence to cultural restrictions to interaction. The Activity Theory as propounded by Vygotsky argues that an activity system is a triad that consists of *subject*, *object* and *tools*.

The interrelatedness of the key concepts to this study's conceptual framework, namely: tabooing of literary texts and expressions, graffiti, the carnivalesque, Facebook and the Activity Theory

are explained in this chapter. The next chapter deals with the methodology employed in conducting this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the conceptual framework that guided this study. The key concepts that guided this study comprised tabooed literary texts, themes and language usage, graffiti, carnivalesque and Facebook. The Activity Theory helped give this study the structure and direction to follow when exploring the relationship of the key concepts that facilitate the full understanding of the problem under investigation. This chapter explains the methodology of conducting this study. Mangeya (2014:74) asserts that “research methodology is mainly concerned with the specification of the two related aspects of research design and research methodology that underpin the study”. The chapter, since it is on methodology, describes how the research was exactly conducted, stating and explaining step by step how the data was obtained, interpreted and analysed under the Interpretivist or Constructivist paradigm or worldview and the qualitative research design. The instruments for collecting data and theories employed for the analysis of the data are spelt out in this chapter. Viriri (2013:80) argues that “tools of analysis when carrying out the research and tools that assist the researcher in analysing”, are also explained under the methodology chapter. Samples of graffiti and posts on Facebook are explained as well in this chapter. Also included in the fourth chapter are sampling techniques. Graffiti and Facebook were chosen as case studies of traditional and current social platforms for a potential escape from language and theme censoring that characterises tabooing of language usage as an African culture in general and an Ndebele practice in particular. Normally, a methodology chapter must explain “the various steps that are adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them” (Kothari, 2004:8). Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2013:5) understand research methodology to be “the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena. Its aim is to give the work plan of research. In other words, research methodology details and explains steps that are followed in a given research exercise.

## 4.2 Research paradigm

Cultural practices and their impacts need to be fully described when they are being analysed. The impact of tabooing literary texts and other expressive forms of sharing ideas and feelings on tabooed themes can produce varying results, some of which might not have been foreseen by the enforcers of taboos. Worldviews are paradigms or philosophies that underpin a specific understanding of reality. The common research paradigms are Positivism and Interpretivism. Positivism generally facilitates investigation into natural sciences while research in social sciences and humanities is usually conducted under the auspices of Interpretivism. It is for the above reasons that the current study is grounded in the Interpretivist or Constructivist worldviews. According to Tubey, Ritich and Bengat (2015:225), Interpretivist/Constructivist “researchers see the world as constructed, interpreted, and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and with the wider social systems”. The Interpretivist/Constructivist paradigms help this study analyse how producers of carnival literature view it and how they then respond to the enforcement of taboos against it by officialdom. The analysis is premised on the understanding that the phenomenon of tabooing certain themes and language usage does not receive a uniform response in any given society at any given time because “an objective social reality does not exist, but is produced and reproduced among humans through their interactions”, (Munkvold and Bygstad, 2016:3). Precisely, this study was guided by the view that there is a multiplicity of interpretations of a phenomenon in any society. There is, therefore, a need for ways of evading the censoring of alternative methods of expression to facilitate the sharing of a diversity of views and ideas and reconstruct societal views in line with the Interpretivist/Constructivist paradigm.

Under the Constructivist/Interpretivist paradigm, the researcher is the main collector of data; hence Cohen et al. (2007:168) contend that “researchers are the instruments of the research who generate rather than test hypotheses”. In the current study, the researcher collects all the data by photographing walls of selected toilets with graffiti material and logging into Facebook to collect posts from the selected group and individual accounts, targeting texts and expressions that are presented in tabooed language and deal with taboo themes such as sex and sexuality, vulgarities and offensive material that is presented in carnival fashion. The concept of a researcher who is an instrument instructs reflexivity. Reflexivity acknowledges the importance of self-awareness,

political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective" (Stewart, 2010:294). Reflexivity implies consciously working on the subjectivity of the researcher by being transparent when collecting data about a given phenomenon. Clearly, in qualitative research, the researcher is at the centre of the research process as the collector of data in its natural environment hence endeavours to minimise bias are made. This is achieved through the collection of primary data that is then analysed using clearly explained procedures.

### **4.3 Qualitative approach**

The researcher, guided by the research problem must always choose the approach they will use to conduct the research. The quantitative approach, generally, depends on numbers and huge sources of data to arrive at conclusions about the problem at hand while the qualitative approach relies on in-depth description of a problem without worrying about the amount of data sources. The qualitative approach aims are to "come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Rahman, 2017:103). Where the the quantitative approach is objective, the qualitative approach is subjective. The "qualitative approach to research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour" (Kothari, 2004:5). If an issue can be debated and feelings and views cannot be quantified in order for a resolution of a problem to be attained, then a study that can be employed to appreciate the phenomenon has to be qualitative. Kumar (2011:32) posits that:

A study is classified as qualitative if the purpose of the study is primarily to describe a situation, phenomenon, problem or event. An account of the different opinions people have about an issue, and a description of the living conditions of a community are examples of qualitative research.

An analysis of arguments about cultural practices, whether they are fair or unhelpful, can be addressed under a qualitative approach. An investigation into whether tabooing literary texts and other expressive presentations of views and feelings is fair or unfair falls under the qualitative approach as is described in the above citation. Kumar (2011) further points out that the qualitative type of research is sometimes referred to as the unstructured one due to its flexible and evolving approach, unlike the quantitative approach which has a design that is structured, rigid, predetermined and is worried about accuracy.

The nature of the phenomenon under investigation generally determines the approach. Creswell (2013:44) notes that qualitative research employs “theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. The issue of tabooing literary texts and the choice of language to be used in the process is a social phenomenon that divides society into those who comply and those who defy the cultural practice in question. Tabooing themes and language usage is controversial hence such themes and language are found on platforms that defy the censoring of themes and language usage such as traditional graffiti, the carnivalesque and ‘cyber graffiti’ in the form of posts on Facebook walls. A qualitative approach is therefore deemed appropriate to explore and analyse the phenomenon of tabooing as a censoring measure because such a situation has to be described and analysed. Research methods that are in congruence with qualitative enquiry are explained in this chapter to put into perspective the procedures that guide this study.

The main aim of the research is to generate knowledge that will be useful to society by changing the lives of members of a given community. Creswell (2013:48) remarks that “we conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices ....” Tabooing certain themes and language usage is a form of silencing a particular sector of society. Silenced members of communities end up without a platform to express their views and feelings and have to resort to attention-seeking by breaking taboos. Jameel, Shaheen, and Majid (2018:2) assert that qualitative research is usually employed when the “topic is sensitive in nature and requires emotional depth, the investigators seek to merge activism and empowerment in their research”. This study views the issue of tabooing certain themes and language usage as sensitive in that it is cultural and most cultural issues need to be thoroughly interrogated for them to be appreciated. The research also endeavours to expose and explore the side of members of communities who evade taboos. The exploration aims to bring out the voices of the ‘minority’ that are usually silenced by officialdom. The minority is usually those who can defy taboos but those who abide but hardly agree with them are usually in the majority. It is the sense of the foregoing that this study is considered to be a form of activism and an effort to empower those who prefer carnival literature for sharing ideas and feelings about tabooed themes using tabooed language.



It is important to note that although qualitative research hardly quantifies and stratifies its process, it is not a haphazard approach. Key among the goals of “qualitative research is to discover the patterns that emerge after close observation, careful documentation and thoughtful analysis”, (Omona, 2013:172). People’s words, behaviour and records are closely analysed to come up with a description of their systematic response to a phenomenon. Research is therefore regarded as aiming at deepening the understanding of human behaviour. Members of communities respond differently to the practice of tabooing particular themes and expressions. This study therefore, sought to establish how and why members of one society would respond to one declaration differently.

#### **4.4 Validity and reliability**

Validity and reliability are issues to do with the quality of any research. The two concepts are, however, as contested as the appropriateness of whether one has to be guided by the quantitative or qualitative approach for a chosen area of research. These two terms originated from the traditional approach to research; Positivism. According to Miller (2008:909), validity refers broadly to the “goodness” or “soundness” of a study”. Validity implies a concern about issues of the quality of the study. Validity arises as an aspect of measurement yardstick to determine features of a physical object (Kothari, 2004). Reliability is another aspect of measurement that worries about reproducibility and stability of results from a measurement. “Reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good-quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape”, (Creswell, 2013:253). The current study addressed the issue of reliability by visiting the field three times over three years to monitor changes that were occurring at the site.

The qualitative approach has sometimes been judged using the quantitative approach as the yardstick, resulting in questioning the processes of ensuring quality in qualitative research. Salvador (2016:113) argues that “some of the terminologies used to assess the quality of qualitative research borrowed from the quantitative were erroneous and not necessary for qualitative”. Qualitative research does not deal with physical objects but ideas, feelings, attitudes and many such concepts that cannot be effectively assessed numerically, hence a suggestion was made to use terms that were thought suitable for qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research. Instead of validity, ‘trustworthiness’ (auditability) (Salvador, 2016) was used. Creswell

(2013) notes that not only terminology was revisited but also conceptualisation of research processes and strategies needed realigning with qualitative research. “The application of triangulation (multiple sources of data) can enhance the reliability of the study results”, (Ness, 2018:20). The current study adopted triangulation to address issues of trustworthiness as is explained under the research design.

#### **4.5 Case study research design**

Research designs vary according to the nature of the problem under investigation. Walliman (2011:13) posits that “the research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data and subsequently indicates which research methods are appropriate”. Precisely, a research design describes how the research is to be conducted, connecting clearly with the philosophy that guides the whole investigation. The current study combines an analysis of the behaviour of society in respect of technological advancement from traditional graffiti found on walls of buildings to what the study terms ‘cyber graffiti’ that is represented by posts found on Facebook walls of the selected group and individual accounts. The presentation, interpretation and analysis of data are predominantly descriptive, in line with the qualitative nature of the enquiry.

New information technology has brought about web-based interaction and the phenomenon known as social media which has various platforms that include, among others; Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter. These platforms have tended to operate as parallels to traditional and conventional structures of sharing information and self-expression. They tend to have populations of their own. Facebook, like graffiti, is used as a case study in this research. Cohen et al. (2007:253) remark that “A case study is a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle ... it is the study of an instance in action”. Case studies concentrate on examples and fully explore given instances to gain a full appreciation of a phenomenon. “Case studies focus on one or a few instances, phenomena, or units of analysis, but they are not restricted to one observation”, (Blatter, 2008:68). Two instances of tabooed literary texts at work in this study are traditional graffiti from walls of selected toilets in the Bulawayo CBD and posts on a selected Facebook group and individual accounts. The approach to exploring these cases is comparative since the aim is to establish the feasibility of Facebook walls as a replacement of walls of public structures where graffiti has been found since time immemorial. The view of this study is that graffiti served as an escape way from language usage

censoring through tabooing but has always been targeted by authorities ‘charged with looking after’ public structures that viewed and still continue to view graffiti as vandalism and a nuisance.

A case which, according to Baxter and Jack (2008), is a phenomenon that occurs in a bounded context has to be determined. To establish the context within which a phenomenon is bounded is the same as establishing the boundaries of the case. The case in the current study is therefore to establish how certain themes and language usage in literary texts that are tabooed have survived for this long and why, because Starman (2013) argues that a case study must answer the questions ‘how’ and ‘why’. Baxter and Jack (2008) further note that the type of case study has to be established, based on the purpose of the investigation since there are various types of case studies. Of interest to this study is the multiple-case study which helps the researcher to explore similarities and differences between or within cases. “Because comparisons will be drawn, it is imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory”, (Baxter and Jack, 2008:548). In this case, graffiti on the walls of public buildings and posts on Facebook walls are compared and contrasted. Commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of the multiple-case study, Baxter and Jack (2008:550) say: “evidence created from this type of study is considered robust and reliable, but it can also be extremely time-consuming and expensive to conduct”. In the current research, graffiti sites had to be visited three times while the researcher had to go back in time sifting through Facebook pages to locate the material that deals with the relevant themes. Some material had been recorded over three years because this researcher’s interest in the phenomenon dates that far back.

A research design that seeks to be robust in its investigation of a phenomenon has to engage in in-depth enquiry. In the process of conducting an in-depth study, the researcher needs to guard against bias. The concept of triangulation becomes handy in combating bias. Triangulation is a key aspect of a qualitative investigation that employs a case study design. “It is important to remember that a participant’s, as well as the researcher’s, bias/worldview is present in all social research, both intentionally and unintentionally which is why it is important to triangulate in qualitative research” (Fusch et al, 2018:20). There are four types of triangulation that are discussed by Fusch et al., (2018), namely: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory

triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation is about collecting data of the same event over a long period and in this study pictures of walls with graffiti material were taken at intervals of not less than a month. Investigator triangulation is about involving different investigators to observe the same data and this type of triangulation was not part of this study. Theory triangulation is about letting “the raw data speak to the researcher to ascertain a new theory” (Fusch et al., 2018:22). It was the aim of this study to come up with a theory on how and why tabooed literary texts survive censorship. Triangulating data is about employing various methods of data collection which, in this study, are observation and document analysis.

#### **4.6 Data collection and sampling**

Sampling is a deliberate process. Mujere (2016:109) remarks that “sampling is the act, process, or technique of selecting ... a representative part of a population to determine parameters or characteristics of the whole population”. It can be asserted that sampling is about and is for management of the research exercise, coming up with a portion of a population with indicators that are of interest to the researcher. Sampling depends on the paradigm the researcher chooses to employ in conducting their study. Qualitative research sampling is quite different from quantitative research sampling. Qualitative sampling is not as rigid as quantitative sampling. Omona (2013:174) argues that “while quantitative researchers use complex mathematical formulae to make sample size considerations, and they promote the use of random sampling, the sample size considerations in qualitative studies are neither mathematical nor systematic”. The sample size is not considered a key component of qualitative research but the richness in terms of information that can be used in making inductions about the phenomenon at hand is. The criticism that qualitative research has received about the failure to give prominence to sample size is usually deflected by the argument that size is about breadth yet qualitative research is about depth and richness of information.

Purposive or purposeful sampling was employed in this study, in line with dictates of a qualitative investigation. Maxwell (2008:235) defines purposeful sampling as “a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices”. The selection of sources is based on the amount of information that can be attained from them. Toilet walls from the Bulawayo CBD were selected for samples of graffiti for the possibility of being

representative of all cross-sections of residents of the city while Facebook was chosen from other social media platforms for its quality of grouping users according to themes of interest. “Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding” (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbin, 2015:1778). It was the conviction of this study that the selected samples of forms of tabooed imaginative creations by members of the Bulawayo community and members of the selected group and individual Facebook accounts provided material that was rich enough for the establishment of how and why carnival literature survives tabooing as a form of sanctioning general self-expression.

This study argued that tabooing of certain expressions and literary texts results in the creation of parallel and unconventional platforms, traditionally manifesting in the writing or scratching of messages on walls of public buildings that the study compared with posts on walls of the selected group and individual accounts on Facebook. Messages scratched on the walls of selected toilets from the city of Bulawayo CBD were photographed with the purpose of subjecting them to critical analysis and comparing them with posts on Facebook walls of selected groups and individual accounts. Particular attention was paid to vulgarities and issues that relate to sex and sexuality and the lower body stratum when selecting scratchings and writings on toilet walls and Facebook walls. In addition to the above, offensive language was also scrutinised since it forms part of tabooed forms of language usage in Ndebele speaking communities. Moyo (2005:2) asserts that “offensive words include disparaging or simply insulting words which also make part of the sensitive language”. Offensive words are further elaborated on as including “those words that are impolite, derogatory, or simply insulting. In the Ndebele language, such terms include words that refer to migrant laborers, other ethnic groups and people viewed as misfits in the Ndebele society” (ibid: 13). It is worth noting that offensive words as part of tabooed language, form part of the language that dominates platforms where the identity of their users is concealed or manipulated, like graffiti and posts on Facebook walls.

The toilets around the *City Hall* area were considered crucial because they are close to a pick-up point for residents from the Eastern suburbs (generally wealthy and privileged) while the toilets close to *TM Hyper/Pick and Pay* are located close to the pick-up point for Western suburb dwellers (generally poor and less privileged). It is the conviction of this researcher that the

samples are representative of the cross-section of the urban Ndebele speaking population of Bulawayo. The selected areas are busy, especially in the evening when residents would be headed for their dwelling places. There is only one toilet around the *TM Hyper/Pick and Pay* area and it is a pay toilet while there are three toilets around the City Hall area, with two being pay toilets while one is a public toilet. Group and individual Facebook accounts that were selected were those that address issues of sex and sexuality, the lower body stratum using vulgar language and any use of language that this study classifies as offensive in line with the already given understanding of this type of language. The vulgarity and offensiveness of language and tabooed themes is the strongest link between graffiti and carnival literary texts and other forms of sharing ideas and feelings on the selected Facebook group and individual accounts. Concentrating on texts or captions or memes that are in Ndebele is used rather as a form of delimitation than any other form of discrimination and is considered not a strict rule. Both graffiti and Facebook are understood to be subcultures, sections of a web of methods or platforms that facilitate sharing ideas with or without necessarily revealing the identity of participants.

#### **4.7 Data analysis theories**

Unprocessed information, also known as raw data, may not be meaningful to research unless it is processed. Data processing is analysing data, giving meaning to information that has been collected by the researcher. According to Creswell (2013:179), data analysis “involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them”. The process of analysing data is challenging and rigorous. Placing in groups data that is related is one of the steps that a researcher has to engage in. In the current study, the data, in the form of pictures of graffiti that were captured by camera from walls of toilets from the city of Bulawayo CBD, are grouped according to three themes: vulgarities, lower body parts and their functions, sex and sexuality and offensive messages. The same approach is adopted for the coding of posts from Facebook walls.

Vulgarities are those messages that use ‘dirty language’, a language that refers to the lower body stratum. Messages that fall under the sex and sexuality category are those that address relations and interaction between male and female or male and male or female and female and are of an

erotic and carnal nature. Offensive language and themes are those that cause discomfort to those listening or reading them. Such language and themes cannot comfortably be handled in public. An example is racial or ethnocentric or simply discriminatory expressions. Collected data that addresses the mentioned themes is processed in line with the assertion by Lawrence and Tar (2013:29) that: “the process of data analysis in qualitative research involves working with data, organising it, breaking it down, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others”.

Data analysis is about making sense of the collected data which can be in the form of field notes for a researcher who goes into the field. Lucy and Luff (2007:5) point out that “qualitative data tends to take up many pages of typescript, or lots of megabytes on a disc! It is usually in the form of words and narratives, but may include visual images, videotape, or other media”. The current study is interested in analysing messages that are created by composers whose identities are, in most, cases unknown. The study therefore is not centred on what the creators can give as reasons for composing the texts or even images but the focus is on the message conveyed by graffiti and posts on Facebook walls of the selected group and individual accounts. It is in this regard that the current study focuses on photographs taken from toilet walls and texts and images from Facebook walls of selected groups and individual accounts in line with the themes that were mentioned previously.

The data from walls of toilets and Facebook walls were interpreted in line with Flick’s (2013:5) understanding that qualitative data analysis involves classifying and interpreting “linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it”. Statements from images of toilet wall graffiti and posts on Facebook walls were interpreted in respect of the fact that Graffiti and posts on Facebook walls are two cases of methods of escaping theme and language usage censoring by society through tabooing. Kalpokaite and Radivojevic (2019:45) assert that:

Perhaps the most notable similarity across the majority of qualitative analysis methods is the identification of themes, patterns, processes, and/or profiles ... This is achieved by searching for patterns or regularities across the data, which is most typically done by comparing and contrasting the data segments and thus delineating the overarching themes, patterns, and/or processes.

Graffiti images and texts or captioned images from Facebook walls were compared and even contrasted to establish similarities and differences and their resultant effect on, not only free speech, but also their contribution to communication enhancement in society. It was envisaged that this comparison could lead to the generation of a theory on how tabooed carnival creative work survives cultural censorship.

It is generally believed that when one needs to understand a phenomenon better they interview the concerned population. However, the phenomenon at hand is about flouting cultural 'rules', hence the few who participate in the act of defiance do that under cover and so it is difficult if not impossible to interview them. The scribbling and scratching of messages on walls and posting of messages on Facebook walls using pseudonyms allowed the researcher to interrogate the messages and, by extension, the views of composers concerning tabooed themes and language usage through critical discourse analysis. Flick (2013:5) propounds that "interviews, focus group transcripts and observation protocols are traditional types of data, which are now complemented with visual, virtual, textual, acoustic and other data". In the current study, visual, virtual and textual data is what is analysed due to reasons that have been given above. Flick (2013) further points out that internet formats like Facebook are adopted to deal with aspects of the twenty-first century. Escaping culture censoring through posting messages on Facebook walls under a pseudonym is viewed as twenty-first-century phenomenon that may not be accessed through interviewing the composers of messages but through interrogating their messages.

Since this study adopts a comparative case study approach, characteristics of graffiti on walls of toilets and 'cyber graffiti' posted on Facebook walls have to be identified, compared and contrasted. Two characteristics are supported by two theories, namely: humour and carnivality as expounded on by Mikhail Bakhtin. The general position of this study is that humour and carnivality are closely linked. Carnivality invokes humour of some kind; it can be crude or light humour but most of carnival literature inspires humour. It is in this regard that collected data is subjected to the test for the presence of humour and carnivality. It is therefore crucial that carnivality, referred to as the Bakhtinian Theory in this study, and Humour Theory be discussed under this methodology chapter since they function as data analysis tools in addition to the Critical Discourse Analysis theory.



#### **4.7.1 The Bakhtinian Theory of Dialogism**

The Bakhtinian Theory of Dialogism, as an analysis tool, helps in bringing to the fore the view that culture is a dialogue where there is an exchange of ideas amongst community members in order to make meaning from cultural practices. It challenges the view of culture as an objective concept where members of a given community converge on how to conduct their day-to-day activities. Boastad, Brandist, Evensen and Faber (2004:1) explain that “the philosophy of dialogism implies a qualitatively different approach to understanding culture, for example in its epistemological focus on intersubjectivity and its dynamic way of linking specific utterances to ‘living tradition’”. Dialogism is generally about a multiplicity of meanings that can be derived from a text due to differences in spaces that individuals occupy at any given point. “There are aspects of our situation each of us can see only on our own, i.e. only from the unique place each of us occupies in the situation”, (Holquist, 2002:35). It is in this regard that the Bakhtinian theory of Dialogism is regarded as well-positioned as an analysis tool for texts that cultural enthusiasts condemn as abominable yet there are some members of the same community who find it necessary to make use of them. The dichotomous positions, in terms of viewing the acceptability of carnivalised texts or lack thereof, is a result of the different spaces the members of the given community occupy. The enforcers of taboos will have a different appreciation from that of the defiant ones.

Tabooing literary expressions and particular themes condemns them to total exclusion from formal platforms and consequent extinction or erasure, if not challenged. Yet, according to the Bakhtinian theory of Dialogism, as expounded on by Boastad et al., (2004), cultural practices are not usually permanent. “According to Bakhtin, there is ‘...neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future)”. Since cultural practices lack stability, not only due to ever-changing views of members of any given community, but also as a result of differences of spaces they occupy, there cannot be permanent taboos. It is in this light that this study argues that tabooing of carnivalised literary expressions and themes, indeed, needs to be evaded through traditional and modern methods. Traditional and ‘cyber graffiti’ therefore deserve to be explored and analysed to access the alternative views expressed by graffitiists and some Facebook enthusiasts. The decision to analyse the content of graffiti and posts on Facebook walls is ensconced in the conviction that

there is neither first nor last word when it comes to cultural practices and therefore taboos of carnivalised literary texts, expressions and themes is a travesty of justice as it silences alternative views.

At the centre of analysing carnivalised literary texts, expressions and themes is the appreciation of the fact that meaning is relative and therefore not objective, implying that what could be declared taboo by one sector of a community due to what it believes to be its meaning, may not necessarily be what it means to another sector of the same community. Dialogism, therefore, instructs that meaning needs to be a negotiated outcome; hence taboos of concepts cannot be a fair approach to handling cultural practices. Bostad et al., (2004) contend that signs, as forms of expressing and sharing ideas have implications on meaning since social relations that they are part of, are not purely objective but subjective. Bostad et al., (2004:7) are convinced that signs or symbols, verbal or non-verbal, are “mediating entities, mediating both between actual people and between people and their surroundings. As symbolic tools, they both reflect the functional dynamics of the social matrix that created them and deeply affect their creators in return”. In line with the notion of multiplicity of meaning, Kuntz and Gildersleeve (2012:96) argue that “Bakhtin’s dialogism notes that all voice is multiple-voiced and dynamically situated within history and culture”. The foregoing view positions the Dialogism Theory as a useful tool for analysing data that was collected from walls of selected toilets from the city of Bulawayo CBD and that from Facebook walls of selected group and individual accounts as both traditional and ‘cyber graffiti’.

#### **4.7.2 Carnivality as an analysis approach**

The carnivality of literary texts, expressions and themes is understood in this study as characterised by the tendency to be controversial, disruptive and strange. Gesicka (203:396) asserts that “the carnival has to be perceived as a part of a broader philosophical problem of the “mysterious workings of shared differences that Bakhtin always conceived dialogically”. The Bakhtinian carnivality, like dialogism, does not only appreciate the multi-meaning nature of signs that is anchored on the Interpretivist perspective but also the presentation of messages in a strange manner. How carnivality presents a message is generally counter to the common method, it is a method that breaks taboos. Crichlow and Armstrong (2010:400) remark that, carnivality in medieval Europe, facilitated “bold expressions of dissidence and thus pointed to a ‘revolution in

the mind' in the form of a kind of alternative reality". The carnival provided a desirable environment for alternative and an aggressive presentation of social and cultural issues. It is the element of 'dissidence' and boldness of the carnival that this study regards as one of the crucial characteristics of the carnivalesque, graffiti and posts on Facebook walls of the selected group and individual accounts. The analysis of the collected samples of material from walls of the city of Bulawayo CBD toilets and Facebook walls of selected group and individual accounts is guided by the search for bold and aggressive expressions in violation of social taboos.

One of the key aspects of carninality is a violation of the decency of language and respect for etiquette. Tembo (2011:344) argues that "the essay's emphasis will be on what Fémi Abódúnrin calls "the humorous aspects of the world which the basic identity of [Bakhtin's] domains of folk expression present, apart from the linguistic code of etiquette which they transgress". Disregard for orderliness and formality marks carninality as a way of self-expression and commentary on events that are steered by the powerful towards those in the lower rungs of society. To mock and irritate those in authority, the carnivalesque had to present them as unnatural, bizarre and caricatural (Davidson, 2008). The approach to presentations during the carnival was to juxtapose the good with the bad for effect. "The humor of the carnival is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time, mocking and deriding", (Davidson, 2008: 2). The analysis of the collected data is premised on the understanding that a meaningful appreciation of any given subject demands that two different views be presented side by side. It is in this regard that carnival literature is perceived as an alternative that must exist side by side with formal literature.

Scatology is a dominant feature of carnival literary imagery. It is a taboo that is universally recognised. Carninality thrives on breaking the taboos that are associated with lower body parts and their functions. It is regarded by Persels and Ganim (2004:viii) as "the 'last veil' clouding our vision of the truth". Gross (2009:18) contends that "Scatological art – and in this case, film – operates ... to disrupt and break down patriarchal, bourgeois ideas of order, containment, boundary and the body". Scatology functions as a tool for turning activities upside down to get at those in power. It is arguably one of the most popular if not infamous taboos across the universe, in addition to sex and sexuality. Scatological and sexual issues dominate presentations on walls of toilets in the form of graffiti as well as on walls of the selected group and individual Facebook accounts. In this regard, Azad and Abbasi (2013:593) remark that, "Bakhtin alludes to

the anarchic, body-based and grotesque elements of popular culture as opposed to the serious, non-festive official culture and introduces the notion of ‘grotesque realism’, where ... images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life, plays a predominant role”. This research therefore concerns itself with the role of scatology as imagery in tackling tabooed themes and language. The appreciation of scatological issues helps in the analysis of graffiti messages found on toilets’ walls and on walls of the selected group and individual Facebook accounts.

#### **4.7.3 Humour Theory as a data analysis tool**

Humour can be used to communicate various messages and there are different ways of invoking it. It is irresistible (Shuqin, 2013), biological and instinctive (Martins, 2012). Neuendorf, Rudd, Palisin and Pask (2015) view it as a coping interpersonal communication strategy. Meyer (2000), Samson (2008) and Martins (2012) concur that there is no consensual definition of the concept of humour because it is ‘subjective’ (Marks, 2015) since “it is dependent on social variables”, (Lamidi, 2016:3). There are, however, definitions proffered by several authors such as Bardon (2005) Mora-Ripoll (2010) and Gordon (2012) who associate humour with laughter. Bardon (2005:1) posits that “humor and laughter is universal to human cultures”. The foregoing statement makes an argument for the close link between humour and laughter across all humanity. Mora-Ripoll (2010:56) asserts that “humor is defined as one of the stimuli that can help people laugh and feel happy”. The universality and close link between humour and laughter is attested to by Gordon (2012:62) who defines humour as “that quality of action, speech or writing, which excites amusement ... and often results in laughter”. Humour can be in various forms that must lead to laughter and these include behaviour and word, in spoken or written form. The subjectivity of humour and its tendency to be dependent on social variables instructs that what may be humorous to one group may not be humorous to another. Some tabooed texts, themes and language usage, therefore, may be useful to other members of the same community hence they are found on informal platforms like graffiti, the carnivalesque and Facebook walls of some accounts.

Humour, despite its dominant conceptualisation as a positive aspect, can harm those whom it is directed against. Generally, for humour to be generated and laughter elicited, one party must be ridiculed. Valitutti, Doucet, Toivonen and Toivanen (2013:243) argue that “Incongruity and

taboo meanings are typical ingredients of humor”. The generation of humour offends the other party because it is usually generated at the expense of one party. Meixner (2009:2) observes that “Humour can, as well, hurt somebody’s feelings and can be disrespectful towards others”. That taboo meanings are a key part of humour generation helps in the appreciation of the necessity of those themes and expressions that are tabooed and the platforms that accommodate them because there are sectors of society that have to break taboos in order to generate humour and laughter. It is helpful to observe that there must be two parties involved in humour production; the side that laughs and the side that is laughed at, hence humour is anchored on incongruence. Incongruence is one of the three common theories of humour that are mentioned by several authors.

The thrust of this study is not to rule whether humour derived from tabooed expressions and themes is acceptable or not but the focus is on layers of meaning that the ‘humorous’ presentation may carry. Gordon (2012:66) counsels that “such humor provides us with invaluable social and political commentary that gets people to think more critically about their practices and beliefs ... focusing on humor’s effect on the viewers can provide us with a more accurate way of determining its aesthetic value”. Humour, like any form of communication, can be interpreted differently, in line with a given context. Shuqin (2013) contends that communication is contextual and context is dynamic. “It is regarded as a dynamic one and a matter of choice, and the selection of a particular context is determined by the search for relevance” (Shuqin, 2013:12). Traditional graffitists and Facebook account holders use these platforms because they are fighting for space to accommodate them in their relevant communities. Context, as Shuqin further explains, is chosen, not given. It is in this vein that carnival literature obtained during the research process is analysed in the context of carnivality rather than moralism.

There are three common theories of humour, namely: Relief Theory, Incongruity Theory and Superiority Theory (Meyers, 2000; Martins, 2012 and Neuendorf et al, 2015). Martins (2012:88) states that;

According to the three major humour theories as developed by David Hector Monro (1988) people laugh either to release tension and accumulated energy (Relief Theory), to reveal the absurd (sic) of certain behaviours and situations (Incongruity Theory), or to show superiority over others (Superiority Theory).

The Relief Theory argues that humour is experienced when pent-up psychological strain is relieved through raising arousal to optimum levels or lowering it to pleasurable levels through a

humorous stimulus (Neuendorf et al., 2015). It can be argued, therefore, that people laugh in order to release stress and energy that they would have accumulated due to day to day desires and fears. The Incongruity Theory instructs that laughter is generated by the presentation of the absurdities of certain behaviours and situations. Amusement is attained when the resolution of the incongruous stimuli is reached “as well as the process of artistic creativity and scientific discovery” (Neuendorf et al., 2015:400). “People laugh outwardly or inwardly at others because they feel some sort of triumph over them or feel superior in some way to them”, (Meyers, 2000:314). Participants of the carnivalesque, graffitiists and selected group and individual Facebook account holders feel superior to officialdom when they are afforded the platform to poke fun at authority or merely break taboos in defiance of societal or community rules. In the analysis of data, particular attention is paid to the satisfaction of the characteristics of the above-mentioned humour theories.

Humour analysis is another strategy that helps this study sift through layers of meaning of collected data because it resonates well with the qualities of qualitative data analysis, the guiding approach to the analysis of data to do with this study. Sen (2012:2) posits that “Jokes consist of either written or spoken words; therefore, analyzing jokes entails the analysis of the words (in the form of phrases or sentences). This fact alone makes it easy to see why humour analysis can be regarded as a qualitative research tool”. The current study is not restricted to jokes but encompasses all carnival expressions that have characteristics of graffiti or defiance of taboos. Graffiti from walls of toilets and posts on Facebook walls can include other expressions which may not necessarily be pure texts, as Mason (2002:103) points out that “documents are usually considered to be text-based, but they are not necessarily so, and some commentators will include non-text-based documents – especially photographs”. The current study utilises photographs of walls shot from the selected city of Bulawayo CBD toilets as data. Texts and pictures are also extracted from selected Facebook accounts walls. Mayring (2014:43) considers extracts from the media to be material for qualitative data analysis by including examples such as “newspapers or other mass media products, files, protocols, documentations in institutions, web pages and so on”. This study relies on graffiti samples shot on site from selected toilet walls since they are real life day to day (naturalistic) activities of the city of Bulawayo community. The study also utilises extracts from Facebook as a social media platform that presents ‘real-life’ situation exchanges amongst members of the virtual community.

#### **4.7.4 Critical Discourse Analysis Theory**

Texts, whether verbal or no-verbal, are vehicles that transmit various messages that need to be processed for them to be accessed. Texts need to be analysed because they address a myriad of issues that can easily be misconstrued or taken for granted if not critically analysed. Martínez (2011) associates discourse analysis with language use in contexts that encourage a method of thinking about a problem in a manner that enables revealing hidden reasoning behind a text. There is no prescribed formula in undertaking discourse analysis because circumstances that beget a text differ; hence those tasked with conducting discourse analysis must rely on common sense. Through discourse analysis, dominant ideas are challenged in order to arrive at new and improved understanding of various taken-for-granted social phenomena. Taboos are generally taken to be good for every member of society and are hardly subjected to discourse analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) goes further by not concerning itself “only with texts themselves but also with the processes of producing and interpreting those texts, and with how these cognitive processes are socially shaped and historically changed”, (Erel, 2008:60). CDA deals with the whole environment that produces engagement between two sides.

There is a school of thought that considers CDA to be a method for analysing written material only. Such a view is generally guided by the thinking that texts are only verbal or written material as Wang (2014:265) emphasises that in more than 20 years’ development, CDA has mainly focused on verbal texts, and has ignored (or at least relegated) the visual as secondary to verbal texts. The current study interrogates both written and pictorial evidence to describe and make sense of graffiti and posts on Facebook walls since both verbal or written and visual samples are analysed. The crucially important aspect of CDA to this study is the assertion that “CDA examines the historical roots of beliefs and practices and the structures and powerful actors that influence the adoption and continuation of beliefs and practices”, (Wall, Stahl, and Salam, 2015:261). Tabooing of literary texts and other expressions, in this study, is considered to be a structural issue presided over by the powerful leadership of society at the expense of the masses. Graffitiists, participants in the carnivalesque and selected Facebook account holders are seen as challenging structures and practices of officialdom, hence are subversive to power. This is in line with the Foucauldian view of identifying power and then challenging it (Wall et al., 2015).

The Habermasian view is another part of CDA, in addition to the Foucauldian one, and it considers texts as discursive exchanges. Habermasian CDA assesses characteristics of discursive exchanges meant to “identify conscious and unconscious hegemonic participation in communication that distances actors from the transcendental condition of the ideal speech situation”, (Wall et al., 2015:261). Efforts to control speech tend to promote views of the dominant individuals or groups in society. CDA also, according to Huckin, Andrus and Clary-Lemon (2012:107), “aims to explicate abuses of power promoted by those texts, by analyzing linguistic/semiotic details in light of the larger social and political contexts in which those texts circulate”. Social freedom implies political freedom hence officialdom may not tolerate freedom of language and theme choice because it may pave the way for political freedom. Critical discourse analysis helps in the appreciation of the fact that censoring language as a freedom deprivation method helps officialdom in enforcing even political censorship. Tabooing of carnival literary texts must therefore not be considered in isolation but must be combined with the rest of deprivations of all kinds.

Critical Discourse Analysis was adopted in order to make up for interviewing participants since in sharing or communicating tabooed themes, they sometimes have to conceal or manipulate their identities. This study assumes that people do not express their true feelings and ideas about controversial issues like taboos in face-to-face situations. Critical Discourse Analysis allows this study to closely read, appreciate texts and examine deeply other relevant expressions, especially when dealing with a multimedia platform like Facebook. “CDA [is] fundamentally interested in analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control when these are manifested in language”, (Shanthi, Wah, and Lajium, 2015:163). The tabooing of certain themes and language usage by officialdom presents a relationship that calls for thorough analysis since the relationship implies power dynamics between those in authority and the ‘defiant’ group that insists on breaking taboos to achieve unfettered sharing of ideas using the language of their choice. It must be noted that particular attention, when conducting CDA, is paid to how social power abuse, dominance and inequality are operationalised by those in power over the disadvantaged. Semiotics is part of CDA because CDA pays attention even to visual or non-verbal discourse. A “multimodal version of CDA seems to be necessary in handling many modern and contemporary media texts”, Mazid



(2008:434). Both graffiti and Facebook combine text and other forms of expression in the sharing of information, making CDA an appropriate method of analysis for this study.

#### **4.8 Population identity challenge**

One crucial aspect of this study that can be considered a challenge is the fact that it is not very common for participants not to be interviewed when conducting qualitative research. The concealment or manipulation of the identity of producers of the data that was collected was at the centre of the decision for not conducting interviews in this study. This study regarded all forms of texts as forms of literature that need to be critiqued for them to be helpful to society. All literature is a form of discourse that aims at solving problems or challenging existing views. It can safely be argued though, that identification is critical for unfettered self-expression. When concealed, identity can facilitate honest and candid communication but when exposed, identity tends to hinder the expression of true feelings due to fear of condemnation for having broken one or two taboos. Identity concealment is central to effective communication of ideas in the cases examined in this study; traditional graffiti on surfaces of physical structures and ‘cyber graffiti’ on walls of the selected group and individual Facebook accounts. Quero and Waters (2002:3) comment on the anonymity of graffitiists by stating that “every contributor to the unfolding “text” is anonymous – private, with their identity secure –while at the same time, public. The result is a text that can be read as a novel script or a dialogue constructed by multiple voices disconnected from the author/s of that be/coming text”. Anonymity is the incentive for participation in activities that break taboos although it can be a challenge to researchers who may wish to interview composers of the messages.

Manipulated or concealed identity has several advantages that are associated with graffiti writing, the carnivalesque and posting on Facebook walls because, in all these three platforms, the participant can freely express themselves because of little or no chance of being identified. Rodriguez and Clair (2009:2) assert and cite Fraser (1980) arguing that when using graffiti,

All can say whatever, however, and whenever, to whomever. In fact, graffitiists acknowledge this benefit: it's a chance to vent frustrations— to say things you wouldn't dare speak up about . . . because sometimes you feel like letting the whole world know how you're feeling w/out [sic] giving yourself away.

The above assertion reiterates the importance of anonymity provided by informal platforms such as graffiti, the carnivalesque and Facebook when it comes to free self-expression; the benefits being that the participant cannot be held accountable; hence they can express themselves whichever way and to anyone so that they vent out emotions that would have been suppressed in formal communication due to exposed identity. Bargh, McKenna, and Fitzsimons (2002:34) contend that “the Internet enables people the opportunity to take on various personas, even a different gender, and to express facets of themselves without fear of disapproval and sanctions by those in their real-life social circle”. The above argument resonates with the claim that even in latrinalia; janitors can scribble messages on walls of toilets. Technically, it can, therefore, not be proven beyond doubt that those messages on walls of toilets that are designated for females or males indeed belong to those respective sexes. This study, therefore, acknowledges that it is unusual to conduct a qualitative research without interviewing participants but brings to the attention of the reader that participants in the platforms in question hardly reveal their identity when breaking taboos; hence many theories were used in analysing the data that was collected for this study. The anonymity of participants was not viewed as a weakness but some considerable strength in demonstrating the importance of alternative platforms of expression if censorship is to be evaded.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

This chapter aimed at detailing the methodological approach to this study. The paradigm that guided this study and was discussed in this chapter is Interpretivism, also known as Constructivism. The approach hinges on acknowledging that there is no single truth but truth is multilayered, just as meaning is. Such an approach favours negotiated relations as opposed to declarations and labelling issues as right or wrong like declaring certain themes and language usage as taboo. To appreciate relations in a society where there are pronouncers and enforcers of taboos existing side-by-side with breakers of taboos, this study employed the qualitative method because it studies phenomena (traditional graffiti and ‘cyber graffiti’) in their natural state. The chapter explained how and why two case studies; graffiti and posts on Facebook walls were selected as samples meant to help appreciate how society generally responds to declarations of taboos. The type of sampling and samples that the study employed were also explained in this chapter.

Data analysis is a critical part of all studies because it leads to the drawing of conclusions and answering research questions. Since this study brought together various concepts, triangulation of data analysis theories became necessary and the data analysis theories were fully explained in this chapter. The Bakhtinian theory of Dialogism, the Bakhtinian Carnivality theory, Humour Analysis Theory and the Critical Discourse Analysis theory are the analysis tools that were explained. The challenge of the concealed identity of participants was also explained in this chapter. Manipulated or concealed identity was viewed as a strategy that is associated with free self-expression that is meant to challenge or evade censoring of themes and language usage through tabooing carnival literary texts and other expressive communication. The next chapter presents and analyses the data that was accessed.

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The current study explores the messages that are created and expressed in alternative and generally informal platforms in response to the cultural practice of tabooing certain themes and language usage in the presentation and sharing of feelings and ideas about such themes. There are ‘self-appointed’ members of society who deny other members the right to use the language of their choice in exploring themes of their interest. The alternative platforms under consideration in this study are separated into the dramatic carnivalesque and the textual and pictorial graffiti. The characteristics of the two alternative traditional platforms to the official and formal ones are combined and modern ones are added to them in a phenomenon known as social media that is internet-driven and represented in this study by Facebook. Effectively, the study traces the technological transition of the presentation and sharing of ideas in response to the practice of condemning them as tabooed. The study argues that the presentation of ideas on alternative platforms evokes humour of one kind or another. The study brings together these related concepts, namely: tabooed literary texts, carnivality embodied in the carnivalesque, traditional graffiti, Facebook; representing modern and electronic carnivality and the humour that they all evoke. A qualitative study under an Interpretivist/Constructivist paradigm anchors the methodology adopted by the study as explained in the previous chapter. Omona (2013:171) notes that “qualitative research emphasises careful and detailed descriptions of social practices in an attempt to understand how participants experience and explain their own world”. This study describes the sharing of ideas and feelings through informal platforms such as traditional graffiti on surfaces of physical structures and ‘cyber graffiti’ in the form of posts on Facebook walls. The tendency to address issues that are ‘outlawed’ through graffiti and posts from the selected group and individual Facebook accounts is a behaviour of interest to this study since it reveals the tension between two competing sides of a single community, namely; those who author, insist on and claim to conform to taboos pitted against those who defy them.

Graffiti and the carnivalesque converge on the fact that their setup is informal in terms of language, themes and manipulated identity of participants. Their content is mainly on tabooed

themes and the language that is used is not only crude but also generally ‘vulgar’, ‘dirty’ or ‘offensive’. It is in the above regard that graffiti has been dismissed as mundane and serving the interests of people whose mental state is compromised. Landry (2019:690) observes that “the social science research community adopts the term graffiti (a homogenizing aggregate term for graffiti) to denote a symptom of delinquency, and as a justification for rehabilitation regimes”. Graffiti is therefore criminalised and graffiti artists are consequently regarded as needing psychological help. Similarly, the carnivalesque is considered by Maleki, Nejad and Navidi (2013:434) as “a second culture which was opposed to the official culture, and which was carried on by the common people throughout the middle ages (sic) and well into the early, modern period”. The above description presents the carnivalesque as the concern for commoners who are rebels since the practice is opposed to the ‘official culture’.

It is safe to argue that there are two schools of thought that view graffiti and the carnivalesque differently. These schools of thought can be separated into those in and with authority and those not in and without authority. Those in authority view graffiti and the carnivalesque as practices that go against official expectations and are therefore negative practices. Such views are usually held by government institutions and the elders of society while those without authority can be the voiceless poor and the youth. According to White (2000:253):

There appears to be a major tension between that literature which approaches the issue from a crime prevention perspective (and thus which views graffiti as socially threatening), and that literature which approaches the topic from a youth culture perspective (and thus which views graffiti as a youth phenomenon reflecting wider issues of power, subversion and containment).

Graffiti seems to divide society into two hostile sides, leading to a power duel between those whose voices are muffled and those who muffle the voices of other members of society. Authorities in Britain and the USA spend huge sums of money to combat and muzzle graffiti writing by restricting the sale of aerosol paint and imposing hefty fines on writers as well as making graffiti writing a criminal act through legislation (Kariuki, Yieke and Ngoro, 2016). On the other hand, Al-Khawaldeh, Khawaldeh, Bani-Khair and Al-Khawaldeh (2017:30) argue that graffiti has “been viewed by many others as an artistic technique”. Islam (2010) also considers graffiti as helpful in that it provides alternative spaces that open channels for the production of

alternative discourse. The foregoing assertions demonstrate that there is also a school of thought that considers graffiti to be a positive practice that functions as an alternative to official discourses. The current study leaned on the thesis that views graffiti and the carnivalesque as positive alternative platforms for alternative views and practices.

Social media is a phenomenon that has characteristics that are similar to those of graffiti and the carnivalesque in the sense that it is not taken seriously by certain conservative sectors of society. MacDowall and de Souza (2018) reveal how in 2015 Tony Abbott, a former Australian Prime Minister, lost his position by pointing out the attitude and statement that led to his downfall. They posit that he asserted that “social media is kinda like electronic graffiti ... you wouldn't report what's sprayed up on the walls of buildings” (MacDowall and de Souza, 2018:4). Social media is regarded by the most conservative of society as a culture for the less respectable just like graffiti because participants in these platforms usually express their unmitigated and unmediated feelings and ideas. Commenting on the impact of social media on users, Zeitel-Bank (2014) asserts that the exposure, particularly to Facebook, “leads them to display less self-control after browsing a social network compared to not browsing a social network”. Self-control can easily be interpreted to mean self-censoring, a practice that does not help the fight against tabooing of certain themes and language. The current study considered censoring of interaction as an infringement on the right to a culture of free expression. While this study did not completely dismiss the negative effects of social media on individuals and societies, it advocated the building of self-awareness capabilities to mitigate the negative impact so as to gain from the freedom of expression and sharing of ideas that is facilitated by alternative platforms such as Facebook.

Humour is one by-product of the availability of unfettered expression that is present in graffiti, the carnivalesque and Facebook. It is generally the breaking of taboos that evokes humour. Morva (2016:19) observes that “humour, in various forms, has always been an element of the social protest tradition”. Most forms of literary compositions that challenge authority are one type of protest or another. Challenging taboos is indeed a form of protest. These protests are usually conducted in a manner that evokes different types of humour. Humour is one of the driving forces of the carnivalesque also. Azad and Abbasi (2013:592), quoting Grindon (1996), contend that “the key to this abolition of boundaries of class and ideology is that joy, festivity,

laughter and desire are understood as the revolutionary impetus that brings such a world about”. The foregoing quotation emphasises that humour is key to the success of a carnival presentation and can make change in attitudes and practices in society possible. Graffiti and the carnivalesque, as literary compositions, flout taboos in terms of language and content to bring out humour from their targeted audiences. Humour is, therefore, one of the crucial aspects that this chapter pays attention to when presenting the findings of this research.

The identity of the composers of literary presentations that defy taboos is usually hidden due to fear of social punishment. Social punishment is the general enforcer of taboos. Fershtman, Gneezy and Hoffman (2011:141) declare that “taboos are enforced by social punishment. The most familiar social punishment involves the attitudes and reactions of other members of society”. Disapproval by fellow members of a community generally leads to condemnation and isolation. The fear of losing respect from fellow community members usually leads to the manipulation or concealment of identity by the composers of carnival literature such as the presentations during the carnivalesque, graffiti and posts on Facebook walls of the selected group and individual accounts. Carnival literature is counted among examples of controversial literary material that can be shared and such literature is hardly shared in face-to-face situations due to fear of violating taboos. Social media, like graffiti and the carnivalesque, allows its participants to share information with reasonable anonymity. Zhang and Kizilcec (2014:645) reveal that their “study investigated the influence of content controversiality and social endorsement on information-sharing behavior. The majority of shared content (59%) was shared anonymously as opposed to publicly”. The above statement concludes that controversial views are generally shared anonymously. Facebook, like most social media platforms, affords participants the privilege to manipulate their identity. Messages that are shared on social networks like Facebook, especially on group and individual accounts that are setup around particular themes, tend to be as controversial as those that are found on walls of buildings as graffiti. Controversial messages were also shared during the carnivalesque. The absence of the identity of composers of graffiti found on walls of buildings, the exchanging of roles and societal positions during the carnivalesque and the tendency to manipulate the identity of participants on social media platforms through the use of pseudonyms; helps in linking these three platforms that function as alternatives to official interaction.

The presentation of collected data was guided by carnivality, humour, identity concealment or manipulation and vulgarity found in selected samples since those aspects characterise tabooed literary compositions. The data that this chapter presents falls under selected specific themes, namely: sex and sexuality, vulgarity or dirty language, scatology (those messages that have something to do with the lower body stratum parts and their functions) and generally offensive language. It must be stated on the outset that these sometimes overlap into one another. Traditional graffiti and ‘cyber graffiti’ or simply, Facebook, are treated as two cases of alternative interactional platforms that address tabooed themes using tabooed language to generate humour by composers of messages whose identity is hidden or manipulated. Part of the argument is that the above platforms belong, technically, to different stages of development. ‘Cyber graffiti’ is seen as ready to take over from traditional graffiti or complement it. Traditional graffiti and Facebook (cyber graffiti) are viewed as serving the same purpose. The difference is that the latter is modern technology-driven while the former is based on traditional technology. In line with the foregoing reasoning, this chapter presents data under traditional graffiti and ‘cyber graffiti’ which is represented by Facebook.

## **5.2 Traditional graffiti**

Traditional graffiti is an interesting phenomenon that is generally found on surfaces of physical structures. Various views are held about graffiti. The common perception of graffiti is that it is a criminal act of vandalism. Hasley and Young (2002) consider it to be both art and crime. However, Alderman and Ward (2008:2) define graffiti as “a specific communicative act [of inscription] used by a variety of subcultures to provide personal voice in the public domain”. The above view deviates from the common and official view. Forssman and Louw (2003) argue that although graffiti is mostly considered unpalatable, they, however, have a different view of it. “We also prefer the term graffiti to ‘wall art’ ... because it refers to writings of text, symbols or figures often with counter social views”, (Forssman and Louw, 2003:4). The current study emphasises understanding graffiti as a presentation of social views that are at variance with common practices. The artistic part, in the sense of colourful presentations, is not the focus of the study but artistic in the sense of it being imaginative compositions that seek to express individual or subcultural views and feelings about issues that are said to be normal and acceptable. Graffiti normally challenges the status quo and that is the quality that this study pays attention to.



Rousa and Harahsheh (2019) concede that graffiti is a broad term that refers to a type of communication that is personal and free of everyday control that stops people from expressing their ideas and emotions in unfettered fashion. Within the broad conception of graffiti, there is 'latrinalia'. Young (2009:2) reveals that "many people deal with graffiti in a seemingly much more private space every day— graffiti found in the nearest restroom stall. Alan Dundes (1966) coined the term latrinalia to refer to this particular type of graffiti". Thomas (2016) calls this type of graffiti 'rest room' graffiti and contends that sometimes it can be difficult to locate it within the restroom. Young (2009:2) avers that "authors often view latrinalia as superior to other forms of graffiti because it can be done in privacy, with far less fear of recrimination; for this reason, Ferem (2007) declares the restroom 'the last great medium for pure self-expression'. The emphasis on privacy implies hidden identity which is crucial for a free and genuine expression of self, a key ingredient even for online interaction but is compromised or absent in offline interaction.

Latrinalia was chosen in the current study for the reason that, "despite their private and anonymous nature, toilets are regarded as the most widely accessible space in any public place ... public bathrooms are ideal hothouses and are associated with activities that make taboo ideas and images highlight salient" (Rousa and Harahsheh, 2019:432). Accessibility of toilets by the majority of society who are usually the marginalised and the tendency by latrinalia to bring about prominence to tabooed issues, made it selectable from other types of graffiti for this study.

The current study is not about gender balancing but it could not ignore that toilets are generally accessed based on gender. During a casual discussion with a female friend, she claimed that males can sneak into female toilets to write or scratch what they want. Such suspicions are given credence by statements like the one by Fisher and Radtke (2014:78) who contend that "sex messages in ladies' room have been found, in some cases, to have been done by janitors or custodians". It can, therefore, not be proven beyond doubt that all the graffiti in female or male toilets are written by the respective genders. The privacy of a latrine makes it possible for a man to sneak into a female toilet and scribble some expression or a woman to do vice-versa. The foregoing, however, can only be confirmed or rejected by research into its feasibility or prevalence. Otta et al. (1996:871) propound that "restroom graffiti are also a rich source of data for researchers interested in gender differences. The above observation may be true and more

helpful in other studies than in the current study because the current study's concern was not gender differences. The study was interested in graffiti as carnival literature and how it survives censoring of its themes and language usage. Rousa and Harahsheh (2019:431) observe that "previous research indicated that traditional gender differences still exist in the use of toilet graffiti despite the fact that anonymity and privacy are guaranteed". This research took into account gender differences and indicates gender in the presentation of latrinalia data in the form of photo shots of graffiti scribbled on both male and female toilets.

### **5.3 Sex and sexuality**

Sex and sexuality feature among the most common taboos of most societies but, curiously, dominate graffiti. According to Mudavanhu (2010:9), sex "is complex in that it is surrounded by a vast array of taboos, fears, prejudices, assumptions and at times hypocrisy. It is a subject that most people are not comfortable to talk about because they are socialised not to talk about aspects of sexuality" Interestingly, such a complex aspect of humanity needs to be understood without being openly discussed. Adenekan (2012) contends that even writers of fiction have not captured changing practices and attitudes towards sex among Africans. "The authors argue that the cinema and the printed book have not accurately captured changing sexual norms and gender practices in many contemporary societies, because of the perception that Africans do not openly talk about sex" (Adenekan, 2012:7). According to Shoko (2010:637), African traditional religion in Zimbabwe subscribed to a view of sex which silences any discourse relating to it". The above assertion indicates the gravity of the 'crime' of discussing sex in public among Africans. Since many people may be sensitive to sex and sexuality, explicit sex and details were avoided in the presentation of accessed data.

Bathroom graffiti has always been the medium for handling issues of sex and sexuality. Such graffiti has since time immemorial dealt with sexual and scatological themes and imagery. However, while acknowledging that graffiti represents the barometer of political, psychological and social temperature like other legitimate artists, Bates (2014) points out that graffiti is a product of a subpopulation. This study advocates respect for minority voices but also acknowledges the difficulties minorities always face in trying to assert themselves and claim their rights.

Sex is such a sensitive subject the world over but it remains topical. The importance of sex and sexuality as well as other tabooed themes is evidenced by their dominance of informal but crucial platforms like traditional graffiti and social media (electronic graffiti) as this chapter demonstrates. It rarely misses in the list of the top three tabooed subjects of any given society hence it features prominently in graffiti in any given situation. The severity of the taboo gets even graver with homosexuality. Zabuz (2009:251) observes that “homosexuality is still thought to be not only ‘un-African’ but also a highly suspicious import from the deviant West”. Concerning the foregoing, in addition to the social taboo, there is a political element that links homosexuality with imperialism, making it a ‘double taboo’. According to Lopang (2014:79), “African writers take a very extreme Afrocentric view of homosexuality seeing it not as an individual choice with which to explore one’s sexuality but a western aberration that is part of the psychological baggage of colonialism”. Dlamini (2006), Adenekan (2012), Rao (2014) and Matolino (2017) argue that research shows that homosexuality was part of African societies even before colonisation. Hoad (2007:xi) proclaims that “in 1886, the last indigenous ruler of Buganda, the *kabaka* (king) Mwanga, executes over thirty pages at his royal court, apparently for refusing to have sex with him following their conversion to Christianity”. The above incident can be used to buttress the argument that homosexuality had been a feature of pre-colonial Africa.

According to Mudavanhu (2010:12), “in Zimbabwe by being gay one is already in trouble. The price of being openly gay is very high”. One risks condemnation and exclusion by the family and community if one is known to be gay in Zimbabwe. It is for this reason that one would not dare go public about being homosexual. Finding graffiti that ‘advertises’ gay fun on a toilet wall at *TM Hyper/Pick and Pay* attests to the fear around issues of homosexuality. A gay person can only use anonymity of graffiti as a platform to ‘announce’ his sexuality. The anonymity of the advertiser is, however, compromised by the fact that for him to get a partner, he has to reveal his phone number. He can therefore be easily traced using the phone number. Mathios (2013) adds an interesting dimension to complications brought about by anonymity; that sometimes graffitiists can insert the phone number of an enemy just to get that enemy into trouble since the themes and language that are dealt with in graffiti are usually taboo. In this regard, the phone number on the graffiti might not be answered by the writer of the graffiti. Oganda and Mogambi (2015:52) give credence to the above suspicion of impersonation by asserting that “the authors do not want to identify themselves, especially when the text is highly inflammatory and by inflammatory we

mean sensitive and against state laws”. Homosexuality, particularly same-sex marriage, is outlawed in Zimbabwe. Section 73 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act which became effective from July 2006 criminalises same-sex sexual behaviour between men. The reasoning that the phone number that is in the graffiti in question may not belong to the graffitist who put up the ‘advertisement’ on the wall of the toilet, may not be misplaced, because the phone number would give ‘his’ identity away. It is, however, possible that the graffitist might have inadvertently or unwittingly included his phone number deluded by the view that his name is not included in the graffiti text. The above presentation of the different possible interpretations of the act of ‘advertising’ homosexuality resonates with the Interpretivist paradigm that a single message can have multiple meanings or interpretations.

The graffitist who ‘advertises’ his ‘services’ breaks all the taboo rules and discusses a subject that is highly tabooed and uses tabooed language where he says “call 0783\*\*\*\*\* for gay fun (repeats mobile phone number), no questions ask (sic)”, goes on to graphically describe how that fun can be attained, (repeats mobile phone number), and instructs the reader to ‘call now’ (Call 0783\*\*\*\*\* for gay enjoyment, no questions asked (see Appendix A). Words such as ‘sex’ or ‘sexual intercourse’ are not a day-to-day vocabulary in most languages. People have to be certain that no one sees them while writing such a message because of the fear instilled in them by the culture of tabooing certain themes and language. Homosexuality among black Zimbabweans, aided by the adopted Christian faith, is believed to be an abhorrent practice (Shoko, 2010). Gays cannot easily get partners because it is even dangerous to go public about being gay because same sex is considered taboo in Zimbabwe. Those who need partners have to go underground and conceal their identity and graffiti is their preferred, if not, the only platform. While heterosexuals can place such advertisement in selected media under provided sections, homosexuals are denied that ‘privilege’ and right because homosexuality is tabooed in most African societies. Gellérfi (2006:159) points out that “the graffiti-corpus includes expressions denoting sexuality-related and digestive body functions, homosexual intercourse ...” Graffiti becomes the channel that helps the homosexual to achieve the objective of expressing their feelings and needs in Zimbabwe. Tabooing graffiti becomes an exclusion of minority interests such as the right to choose sexual partners for homosexuals.

Graffiti usually invites reactions from fellow graffitiists, resulting in it being a dialogue. The reaction usually employs tabooed or dirty language; language that mentions parts that are located in the nether part of the human body or their function. Because the graffiti illustrating this may be irritating to sensitive readers, it is omitted here but referenced as Appendix B. The graffiti, despite the absence of arrows linking it to the graffiti that advertises gay services, can only be inferred to be a response to the only homosexuality message that was found on the walls of the *TM Hyper/Pick and Pay* pay-toilets. Rodriguez and Clair (2009:4) assert that sometimes “the discourse patterns among the wall inscriptions suggest a relatively high degree of interaction among graffitiists”. They further contend that graffitiists regularly use winding arrows to connect their responses to the provocative graffiti. The language used in Appendix B, interestingly, gives the impression of someone who is disgusted by the concept of homosexuality and those who practice it; hence the use of the strong language (demonstrated in Appendix B) that also violates taboos. The language that is used in the graffiti in question is not in IsiNdebele but ChiShona. What is noted is that Ndebele and Shona share a lot in terms of culturally influenced attitudes such as attitudes towards sex and sexuality. Quero and Waters (2006) argue that in some cases, they found out that there was new graffiti categorising the former as disgusting for the intimate details of a tabooed act.

The response to the gay sex ‘advertisement’ expresses disgust using equally disgusting language. Mentioning scatological human elements usually evokes Bakhtinian humour in audiences since the imagery used makes fun of the victim. Equally, some words of the gay ‘advertisement’ such as the graphic description of gay sex can be as disgusting as they can be humorous. Humour is brought about by the carnival atmosphere that both graffitiists in the ‘advertisement’ and its supposed response exploit. The ‘freedom of expression’ is provided by graffiti as a platform by suspending order as expounded by Azad and Abbasi (2013:592) who aver that “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the ... established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions”. Latrinalia provides the reprieve for the ‘advertiser’ and the ‘attacker’ to break taboos in order to express their views and feelings using language that would not be acceptable in a formal setup.

There is an underlying tug of war between established order (the homophobic) and those who advocate freedom of expression (those who advertise homosexual activities) in terms of who

wields the power over the best mode of interaction. Appreciating underlying power relations in a piece of interaction is key to CDA as attested to by Hewitt-Bradshaw (2014:163) who propounds that “critical discourse analysis (CDA) is useful to execute careful, systematic analysis of public texts and unearth the underlying power relations and ideologies embedded in such texts”. The exchange between graffitists in Appendix A provides evidence of existing tension that pits the conservative and homophobic against the liberal who ‘advertise’ their sexuality.

Sex has proved to be popular with graffitists. According to Harahsheh (2019:435), “the second most prominently inscribed graffiti of the males was sex. Many graffiti inscriptions that express sexual desires, describe sexual body parts, and general statements about sex were found in the males’ toilets”. It must not come as a surprise that sex is popular with graffitists. It is popular because it is a tabooed theme and the language for discussing it is tabooed as well. Sexual organs are generally not talked about on public platforms, yet sex is central to human reproduction. Okechi (2018:1) states that “sex and sexual relationship remain the bedrock on which the multiplication of human beings and lower infra sentient beings rest”. Sex is as biologically essential in life as it is socially crucial. However, there are some sectors of society, the conservative (senior citizens), the ones who enforce taboos, who believe that sex and sexual organs must not be discussed in public. Adenekan (2012) emphasises that the youth are inclined to breaking these taboos because they are not as sensitive to them as the old guard of society and they have the internet to help them evade censorship. Avila-Cabrera (2015:31) gives “Press regulatory bodies, the Church or the government” as bodies that are responsible for being sensitive on behalf of the majority of citizens. Moyo (2005) and Burrige and Allan (2007) mention culture as the main sensitising agent in as far as taboos are concerned. Culture is usually respected at the expense of other aspects and this study is no exception, though appreciating that there is always a minority that views issues differently and whose freedom is usually unfairly curtailed by the majority.

Since graffiti generally allows individuals to express their personal views and feelings, the tendency for toilet graffiti is to express those deep-seated thoughts and views that society tries to suppress because they are deemed embarrassing and taboo. There were terms for the female sexual organ that are used interchangeably in Ndebele that featured on a visual that was photographed. Tajolosa (2012:79) concludes that “for the use of taboo words and euphemisms,

Montenegro (1982) found that men and women's taboo words centered on the excretory processes, sexual organs and sexual acts". It is embarrassing and therefore taboo to mention or draw sexual reproductive organs outside a Biology lesson. Al Rousa and Al Harahsheh (2019:429) contend that graffiti "contains obscene and taboo writings and drawings that are intolerable in this society". Mentioning human anatomy of the lower body stratum, particularly the sexual reproductive organs, is intolerable in society, resulting in them and their functions being poorly understood.

The tabooing of the concepts would be such that they must not cross the minds of individuals. The scrawling of their names on latrine walls, however, is enough evidence that it occurs to individuals that there are such human organs and there is a need for them to be explored and their function appreciated. Drawing them on walls of toilets, therefore, affords graffitiists and those who access those walls, the opportunity to reflect on them and their functions. The walls of latrines become the only place (outside a Biology lesson) where such organs can freely be mentioned and explored. The unease of mentioning these organs, generally, evokes humour since it is a naughty violation of a taboo. Thorogood (2016:19) avers that humour "can simultaneously cause offense and laughter, empowering certain identities at the expense of others". The foregoing statement subsumes the underlying dialectics that resonate with CDA; that human relations are generally about power dynamics. In the case of the argument that is being made by this study; those who conform to and enforce taboos, do so at the expense of those who fight for alternative ways of expression.

The mentioning of human body parts of the nether area is generally regarded as disgusting, vulgar or insulting. In this regard, Smith (2015:33) asserts that "literary topics related to disgust involve the female body and genitalia, sexuality, race, and lower class society". Disgust is explained by Smith (ibid.) as revulsion due to being part to an offensive object and "it is culture, not nature that draws the lines between defilement and purity, clean and filthy, those crucial boundaries disgust is called on to police" (ibid: 31). Disgust is generally informed by taboos. The public mentioning of these parts is common taboo across most cultures, especially in African languages and cultures where people insult one another using parts of the body. Anyone who reads some scrawling of names or drawings of human private parts may feel the insult is directed to them and the tendency is to wish to know the face behind the vulgarities. Interestingly, such

messages are found on toilet walls accompanied by anonymity, hence getting angry because of such messages is self-defeating. Messages that are written both in Shona and Ndebele were observed on the walls of the *TM Hyper/Pick and Pay* toilets. The reference term for the male sexual organ was scrawled on the wall both in ChiShona and IsiNdebele. Ethnic slurs directed to both the Ndebele and the Shona were part of the graffiti in question. The male organ is found in the lower body stratum and is taboo; hence its name cannot be uttered in public without attracting condemnation to the utterer. Tajolosa (2012:88) argues that “*defecating* is the most tabooed word among males followed by *penis*, then *sex*”. In African culture in general and in Ndebele in particular, all sexual reproductive organs are taboo hence they are found on walls of toilets as graffiti because they are deemed too vulgar to be discussed in public.

Both terms that refer to the male organ in the graffiti under discussion were tempered with or cancelled, by drawing two lines across each of them. In the above-mentioned scenario, the graffiti allows the composers to freely break two taboos, namely: using dirty language (mentioning male private parts) and using offensive language (ridiculing others on ethnic lines). It can also be argued that the graffiti can help readers learn about ethnic compositions and relations in Bulawayo. Rodriguez and Clair (2009) contend that graffiti allows for candid discourses such as sexist, racist and homophobic speech. They further point out that “graffiti allow all conflicts and concerns to be equally visible and known to all who pass by”, (ibid: 3). With graffiti, there is no face-saving, even offensive language is used as in the case that is referred to above. Graffiti, therefore allows society to address issues that common literary works would not. Tabooing graffiti can then be said to be a disservice to any given society.

Discrimination along ethnic lines is condemned by society at large but graffiti artists take advantage of anonymity to break that taboo. There seems to be some interaction between two languages: IsiNdebele and ChiShona in the graffiti that refers to the male organ as indicated by the cancelling of messages that were observed on the toilet wall. Interestingly, the message that was in IsiNdebele was cancelled using black ink which is different from the colour that was used to write the message. On the other hand, the message that was in ChiShona was cancelled using red ink, the same colour that was used to inscribe the message. The ChiShona term seemed to be a mixture of red and black. There may be no clear answer as to whether two people were in conversation or it is one graffiti artist who presented ‘his’ thinking in the form of a dialogue. The



most interesting part about ‘author-free’ messages is that they take away attention from the author and place it on the message. Messages, in line with the thrust of this study, have multiple interpretations. Following the Bakhtinian Dialogism, two cultures are in exchange (Holquist, 2002), throwing insults at one another. At the centre of the exchange is the issue of conflict that always exists between two sides that have different ideas about each other. This tug of war between two cultures of different languages can occur between adherents of taboos of a given culture and the ‘rebels’ of the same culture who may have a different view about the same taboo.

The seemingly exchange between the Ndebele and the Shona represents the ‘transgression of the linguistic etiquette code’ that is propounded by Tembo (2011) and is associated with freedom of expression that is facilitated by the anonymity that is characteristic of graffiti. Mangeya (2018) propounds that ethnicity tension between the Ndebele and the Shona is excluded from public platforms which are generally dominated by the symbolic elite who argue that discussing ethnicity is not only tribalistic but is also divisive. “The ethnicity question is, for all intents and purposes, an unfinished business and, therefore, a controversial and contentious issue”. According to Mangeya (2018:6), the exclusion of the issue from public discourse leaves graffiti the main alternative platform where it manifests itself on toilet walls at Midlands State University in Gweru, a city that is found in Zimbabwe. The Ndebele and Shona ethnic rivalry also manifests in sport, particularly, soccer. Ncube (2014:205) observes that “matches between Dynamos and Highlanders ... provide a platform for this historical ethnic rivalry to manifest”. The soccer rivalry is an addition to the existing political rivalry. According to Dube (2018:52), “the division has always been along ethnic lines, with ZAPU being associated with the IsiNdebele speakers while ZANU is associated with those who speak ChiShona”. It is, however, important to note that political leaders of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) prefer to give the impression that Zimbabweans are one community without diversity along ethnic lines. Ethnic differences account for differences in culture; hence the occasional clashes among graffitists along the respective aspects.

#### **5.4 Vulgarities**

The previous subsection on sex and sexuality tended to encroach into the vulgarities section because sexual reproductive organs belong to the lower body stratum. This section may also overlap backwards to encroach into the sex and sexuality section. Vulgarities are generally

constituted by the mentioning of the lower body stratum parts. Ávila-Cabrera (2016) argues that there are low register terms which can cause emotional impact leading to rejection or negative reception in the audience. Language purists refer to such terms as dirty language. Vulgarities are sometimes referred to as strong language due to their impact on their recipients. Cachola, Holgate, Preotiuc-Pietro and Li (2018) advance the argument that vulgarity is often employed to express emotion and can be used either to express negative sentiment or emotions or to intensify the sentiment present in a speech. Vulgarity is a result-focused effort that ignores the means to that result. It is in pursuit of the foregoing that vulgarity violates social and cultural taboos. Vulgar language can also be used to offend or express hatred towards the target. Politics is one of the social subjects that people feel strongly about, including graffitiists. As pointed out in the above assertion by Cachola et al. (2018), vulgarity is usually meant to express strong emotion, it therefore transgresses linguistic etiquette.

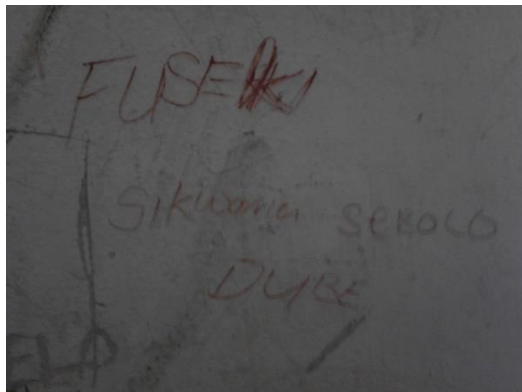
Graffiti was observed on the inner side of a toilet door on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January, 2020, a period when there were upheavals caused by the hiking of fuel prices in Zimbabwe. According to Heanue (2019), “people burned tyres and barricaded roads as the protests swelled, and most shops and schools in the main cities of Harare and Bulawayo were shut down”. The above quotation reveals the anger that overwhelmed the citizens of Zimbabwe. The language that was used in the graffiti is in line with the assertion by Thorogood (2016) that “the use of vulgar descriptions of bodily excretions, carnal acts, defecation ... are all associated with the literal and figurative lower order functions of a body, as compared with the higher faculties of thought, reasoning and emotion, located in the brain”. The graffitiist in the inscription in question named the police, the president and his wife, literally showing disgust for the behaviour of the president who had announced the hiking of the prices of petrol and diesel. The police were presumably attacked for supposedly stopping citizens from expressing their feelings about the price hike. The wife of the president was incorporated into the condemnation because she was viewed as an extension of her husband. Strong and aggressive language such as mentioning the president’s parts of the lower body stratum was used, most probably to present the president’s behaviour as disgusting. The disgust is demonstrated by the employment of foul language in the message. The foul language could not be quoted for ethical reasons.

Cachola et al. (2016:2928) mention five purposes of using vulgar language as being to be “abusive (intention to offend or cause psychological harm), cathartic (used in response to pain), dysphemistic (intention to convey negative sentiment), emphatic (intention to draw attention) and idiomatic (used for no purpose or to signal informality)”. The cathartic purpose (response to pain) suits the inscription of graffiti on a toilet door where the likelihood of the president reading it is highly minimal, if not impossible. Directing vulgarities at the president and his wife satisfies the superiority humour theory as expounded on by Little (2012:101) who argues that “a person finds amusement only if the communication makes them feel personally successful or superior to another”. The graffitist feels superior to the president after subjecting him and his wife to the vulgarities that were scribbled on the door of the toilet. The message, in addition to satisfying the superiority feeling, is also meant to share a strong feeling towards the action that was taken by the president to achieve relief. In the process, the police, the president and his wife are metaphorically undressed to expose their disgusting nakedness and reduce them to nothingness. The graffitist is hoping for catharsis after venting out the anger and pain on the toilet door.

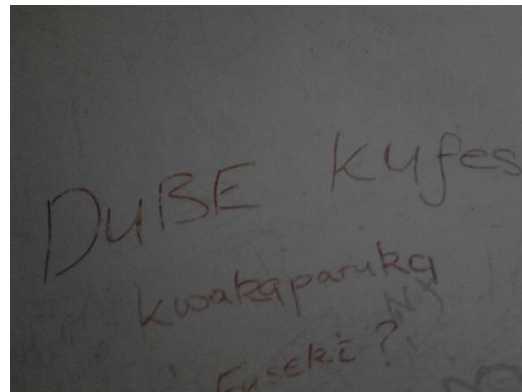
The other aim of the use of obscene language is to evoke in anyone who reads the graffiti disgust towards the target as pointed out by Finn (2017), who states that bodily effluvia and organs are included in swearing to evoke disgust. Most of the African blacks’ insults or vulgar language revolves around the body parts. Umezurike (2018:1) avers that “grotesque mode in art and literature tends to be prevalent in societies and eras marked by strife, radical change or disorientation”. The graffiti that was observed on the inner side of *City Hall* public toilet door can be attributed to the chaotic situation in the two of Zimbabwe’s main cities and attests to the assertion that ‘dirty’ language functions as an indicator of a strife-torn society.

Crude drawings of both male and female sexual organs were observed on the wall of the *TM Hyper/Pickand Pay* toilets. The male organ was labelled in IsiNdebele with indications of how both organs should be positioned during intercourse. The swearword (*p*)*fuseki* was added to the drawing in a colour that was different from that of the drawing and the rest of the labels. *Fuseki* is derived from the Afrikaans *voetsek*. It is used to express disdain for whomever or whatever might be targeted by its utterer. Hughes (2015:444) explains the word *voetsek* by saying: “A common personal expletive is *voetsak!* also spelt as *voetsek!* A highly contemptuous equivalent of ‘get lost’, traditionally used only of inferiors or dogs”. It is a tabooed expression among

Zimbabweans in general and the Ndebele in particular. The expletive in question also features in one picture where it does not seem to be a response to any previous graffiti text. The expletive (*p*)*fuseki* is most probably a response to the original ‘drawing’ of the male sexual organ next to a human body or a female sexual organ. It also could have been a shout out to whoever reads it to express the freedom to break a taboo with impunity due to the anonymity that is provided by latrinalia.



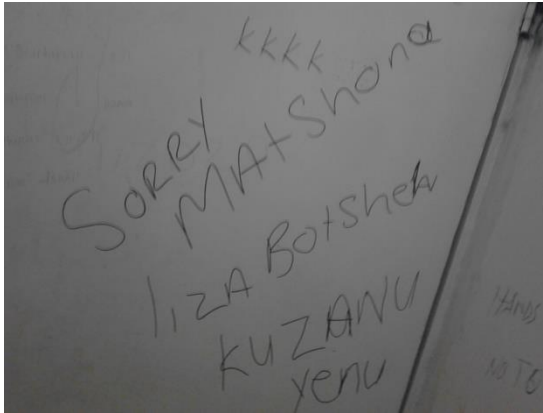
**Figure 2.1:** *Fuseki* Dube



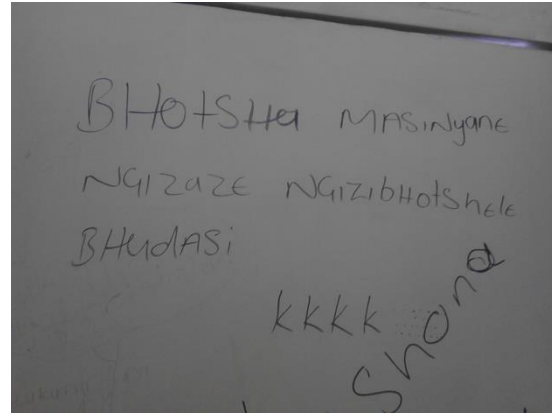
**Figure 2.2:** *Kufesi kwakaparuka* (cracked face)

Figure 2.2 bears the common expression of disgust and dismissal of its target as unworthy of attention: *fuseki* (get lost/go away) which was fully dealt with in the preceding paragraph. The ‘insult’ or the curse *fuseki* (get lost/go away) appears at the top of the Figure 2.1 graffiti and at the bottom of the Figure 2.2 graffiti. Its function seems to be that of dismissing this Dube character as a good-for-nothing person whose face is cracked, probably because he cannot look after it because he is busy minding the business of the graffitist as revealed by the main body of the Figure 2.2 graffiti: *kufesi kwakaparuka* (your cracked face). Again, ethnic tension is exposed by the poor IsiNdebele spellings in Figure 2.1 text and the text in Figure 2.2 that is in ChiShona. Figure 2.1 and 2.2 tell a story of a conflict between the graffitist and a character called Dube. The graffitist seems to have been offended by this Dube character as is indicated by the vulgar expression that likens Dube to a female sexual organ. The expression implies anger and disgust and is meant to embarrass Dube by reducing him to a female sexual organ. As the graffitist rants about this Dube character, the expressions that ‘he’ uses can serve as ‘light moments’ to those who read the graffiti texts in question.

## 5.5 Scatological imagery



**Figure 3.1:** *Lizabhotshela kuZANU yenu*



**Figure 3.2:** *Bhotsha masinyane*

Figure 3.1 and 3.2 depict graffiti that is centred on lightheartedness other than on anything else. The humour is based on the scatological references to the act of defecating that is contained in *bhotsha masinyane, ngizaze ngizibhotshela bhudasi* (Relieve yourself fast big brother or else I will soil myself while waiting for you to finish) and *sorry Mashona lizabhotshela kuZANU yenu* (I am sorry Shona people, you will relieve yourselves at your ZANU). Crichlow and Armstrong (2010:400) refer to the carnivalesque and its carnivality as “a time of liberation from the usual social and moral constraints ... a harmless escape valve for oppressed people”. The expression in Figure 3.1, when juxtaposed with the one in Figure 3.2, becomes very interesting in that the message from Figure 3.1 is that of relaxation where someone who is equally pressed for relief is oxymoronicly advised to wait for their ZANU PF (Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front) if they are to get that relief. ZANU PF is Zimbabwe’s ruling political party that is generally unpopular with urbanites.

Bulawayo has never been a stronghold of ZANU but ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People’s Union). According to Tendi (2020), Bulawayo was a ZAPU fortress during Zimbabwe’s fight for independence and was traditionally the home of the Ndebele ethnic group. On the other hand, ZANU was formed in Harare, the traditional home of the Shona ethnic group. If one were to apply the principle of equivalences, ZAPU would be equivalent to Bulawayo and ZANU to Harare. Precisely, someone who is ordered to go and defecate at ‘their ZANU’ is being ordered to go and defecate in Harare! The outrageousness of the ‘order’ for one to undertake a trip to

Harare, combined with the purpose of the trip, evokes humour. Humour is one of the characteristics of graffiti and most social taboos. The ‘order’ for the trip to Harare may metaphorically send the message that it is always proper for people to conduct their business at the appropriate place.

The oppression that is generally appreciated tends to be the political one but in this study, reference is made to social oppression that is a result of language censoring through tabooing themes and language that members of a given community can use. The toilet becomes a place of freedom from the shackles of language and theme censoring through tabooing. The expression *Bhotsha masinya bhudasi*, sets the toilet seat as a metaphorical performance stage where performers must give each other chance. The metaphor of the toilet seat as a performance stage where there are ‘rules’ to be observed and adhered to, elevates scatological humour to the same level as any other respectable literary device. There is power in transgressing boundaries through carnivality that is provided by the latrine atmosphere because, through the use of this lighthearted language, the other side of the community is exposed. The fast-paced life of the less privileged of society is brought to the fore via the urgency of the participant in the latrine exchange who seems to be in a hurry to relieve himself and move on with his life. While enforcers of taboos may see disrespect, the alternative to their view may be urgency that is expressed in the expression *bhotsha masinya, ngizaze ngizibhotshela bhudasi*.

Graffiti generally handles themes that are taboo but, interestingly, the message in Figure 4 below was found scribbled on the wall of the *TM Hyper/Pick and Pay* toilets.



**Figure 4:** Jesus is Lord

The message in Figure 4 (selected though not in Ndebele) provides a ‘silver lining’ to graffiti in the sense that, even ‘good’ messages, messages about Jesus can be found in toilets. It proves that graffitists can also preach. The text ‘Jesus is Lord’ seems to serve the purpose of sanitising latrinalia as a condemned genre of literary texts. The message further buttresses the point that is made by Mangeya (2018) that graffiti can make a positive contribution and gives the example where it is used to promote cultural literacies amongst school girls as explained in Chapter 3 of this study. Graffiti might not be a preserve of rebels after all; even those with positive campaigns to make can employ graffiti as a literary genre because it can be a reach-out even to those who may not be keen on attending church but would be forced to ‘answer to the call of nature’ in a toilet and get to coincidentally read the message of salvation from a Christian point of view. The above example attests to the Interpretivist position that messages may not have a single interpretation; hence even graffiti must be understood as a multipurpose genre that must not always be viewed negatively. Tabooing graffiti production as a practice can, therefore, be said to be an unfair approach to treating human interaction.

The Figure 4 picture is similar to the one in Figure 5 below (captured from a public female toilet wall at *City Hall* pickup point for eastern suburbs commuters) in terms of the message and tone.



**Figure 5:** *Lisigcinele bonke* (Preserve them for us)

The message in Figure 5 has religious connotations, especially the Christian faith that preaches about a beautiful future in heaven. It says: *lisigcinele bonke, siyahamba ezulwini* (Preserve/look after them for us, we are heaven-bound). This is the kind of a message that can be described as ‘clean’, the opposite of what is expected on the walls of a toilet as graffiti. Figure 5 can lead to the conclusion that female latrinalia has decent messages that do not violate taboos. However, Figure 6 below may change that thinking completely.





**Figure 6:** Fuck you

The message in Figure 6 contains one of, if not the most popular or notorious of all tabooed swear words, ‘fuck’; depending on one’s attitude towards swearing. Finn (2017:20) observes that from an investigation that was carried out about swear words, “fuck and shit account for half of all episodes in counts and appear on the list of 75 most frequently used words”. The term in question may amount to part of a daily language that comes almost naturally and is used for cathartic reasons. In this regard, the expression ‘fuck you’ may not be as hardcore swearing. It may, however, imply that females are not that innocent when it comes to swearing. What was also noted was that there was not much in terms of the quantity of graffiti in female toilets, thereby conforming to what was discovered even by Fisher and Radtke’s (2014:73) study that established that in female restrooms “the writings were minimal and consequently, we did not include them in the analysis”. The current study also established that female restrooms had less writings when compared to male ones. It can be inferred that either women are more polite than men or they are not bold enough to use strong language or tackle tabooed themes.

The data samples that were collected from the *TM Hyper/Pick and Pay* and *City Hall* areas toilets is presented and analysed above to demonstrate the characteristics of graffiti in terms of themes, language and the possible interpretations. The aim was to bring out the possibility of viewing and using graffiti as an alternative platform for presenting alternative views using alternative language instead of criminalising and tabooing the practice of scribbling messages on surfaces of buildings, particularly toilets. Graffiti is usually condemned as vandalism to physical structures in addition to it being vandalism on societal and social rules of using language and handling certain themes. This study argues that graffiti, though still practised, can be replaced or enhanced by social media due to the similarity of their qualities. Social media, represented by Facebook in this study is, however, considered to have additional qualities that give it an edge over traditional graffiti; hence it is referred to, alternatively, as cyber or electronic graffiti in this study. The most outstanding quality that connects the two practices, traditional graffiti and ‘cyber graffiti’, is their ability to function as alternative platforms for sharing alternative views.

### **5.6 Cyber/electronic graffiti (Facebook)**

Internet-driven interaction provides the world with a parallel world community where physical boundaries are eliminated. Dogruer, Menevis and Eyyam (2011) credit the online social networking sites, especially Facebook, with being widely used all over the world. The social networking sites generally provide users with the opportunity to create profiles that enable them to “upload and share photos, music and various types of messages they would like to share with other people” (Dogruer et al., 2011:2642). By providing the nations of the world with the opportunity to connect and discuss subjects of common interest and hang out online, social networking websites create virtual communities. In a sense, these virtual communities become alternative societies that can have subcultures within them and these subcultures, in this study, are represented by the selected group and individual accounts on Facebook. These ‘cyber subcultures’ or ‘virtual subcultures’ are equivalents of graffiti in a given common society. Graffiti as an interactional platform is as much a voice of subcultures of the common society as groups on Facebook are to the virtual community.

Gushendra (2015:747) is of the idea that “paintings on the street walls are real proof that artists will always express themselves even though they lost their mediums because of modernization”. The current study is opposed to the foregoing view that graffiti has lost out to mediums that are a

result of modernisation. This study proffers a view that considers modern technology such as the internet-driven social media as facilitating and modernising graffiti by adding facilities such as the ability to upload videos, music and other types of messages and share them in real-time and rid the world of geographical boundaries. This study, like MacDowall and de Souza's (2018:4), "takes up Abbott's broader contention, implicit in the notion of 'electronic graffiti', that there are strong continuities between graffiti and social media forms". It was the main thrust of this study to establish how and why tabooed literary texts can escape tabooing as a form of censorship. The contention of the study, in tandem with MacDowall and de Souza's (2018) line of thinking is that social media, represented by Facebook as a case study, can enhance, if not take over, from graffiti as a platform for voices that are sidelined by social censorship which is tabooing of literary texts by excluding them from formal and official platforms.

One key characteristic that is common to both graffiti and social media represented by Facebook is the anonymity of the composer and writer of the message. Anonymity is not only crucial to graffiti and Facebook but also to the carnivalesque where participants either assumed certain identities or hid their real identities. Anonymity helps in freedom of expression, especially when one deals with tabooed literary texts and language. The ability to be relatively anonymous enables one to express oneself in ways that are not available in one's usual social sphere, both because one is free of the expectations and constraints placed on them in traditional face-to-face interactions and that there are real costs to disclosing negative or taboo aspects of oneself, (Bargh, McKenna and Fitzsimons, 2002). Feldman Lian, Kosinski and Stillwell (2016:9) aver that "online social networking sites such as Facebook now serve as an extension of real-life social context, allowing individuals to express their actual selves". For human beings to express themselves without the fear of reprisals for violating taboos, they need the anonymity or 'social mask' that is provided by social media platforms such as Facebook.

Having linked traditional graffiti with 'electronic' or 'cyber graffiti' (Facebook), this section of the study then proceeds to present accessed data from selected Facebook group and individual accounts under the following subheadings: sex and sexuality, vulgarities and scatological imagery.

### 5.6.1 Sex and sexuality

Sex is a very difficult concept to handle among Africans in general and the Ndebele in particular, especially for those who have ‘come of age’ like the man in the picture that was observed from Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1716015948439636&set=gm.1244697642303623&type=3&theater>). Such men are usually treated with respect. The difficulty of handling issues to do with sex is alluded to by Ndhlovu (2012:141) who points out that “the term *emacansini* refers to the place where the act of sex takes place and not to the act itself. The use of a figurative language by Ndebele translators has more to do with the euphemism norm of not stating some things explicitly”. The use of what Ndhlovu (ibid.) terms ‘veiled language’, generally, leads to the vagueness of concepts, which may result in a breakdown in communication during social exchanges or negotiations. Continuing to refer to copulation as *ukuya emacansini* (going to the mats) clouds the conceptualisation of the act of sex, especially when the act can be engaged in, not necessarily on a mat. The submission of this study is that; discussing crucial issues using idioms is as good or bad as excluding them and may complicate the lives of those who must benefit from fully conceptualising such matters. The youth are usually the victims of such language usage due to lack of linguistic dexterity. It is only on informal platforms like traditional graffiti and ‘cyber graffiti’ with examples such as Facebook’s selected group and individual accounts where explicit language can be employed with little or no possibility of retribution that the youth can benefit.

Sex, however, remains sensitive to conservative societies hence a picture like the one that was found in the link below elicited responses of disgust even from members of *Enhlanyeni Mental University:: Faculty of Advanced Madness* (For the mad ones: Faculty of advanced madness).

(<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1716015948439636&set=gm.1244697642303623&type=3&theater>)

#### Comments

[Khumbulani Dlodlo](#) wat da fuck is this

[Sgubudu Gertrude](#) kkkkkk ngani ibolile unje (you look like some rotten thing)

The picture shows a man displaying the ‘sex’ sign. The sign in the concerned picture is not normally displayed publicly because issues of sex and sexuality are universally tabooed. It is for the foregoing reason that even members of the group on the wall where the picture was posted responded even in tabooed language, *wat da fuck is this* (What the fuck is this?), to express their disgust at the picture and even the age of the man who is displaying the ‘sex sign’. The age of the man in the picture is ridiculed by the respondent who says the old man looks like some rotten item, *ngani ibolile unje* (you look like some rotten thing). Age is usually disregarded during the carnival performance of the carnivalesque. The man is holding a bottle of some intoxicating drink which might be giving him the courage to display the concerned sign. The internet-driven platforms such as Facebook have the advantage over traditional graffiti in that the real picture can be uploaded onto an account holder’s wall and be shared widely for chosen audiences’ access. Wide sharing of ideas is achieved through photo-tagging; “photo-tagging—when a Facebook user adds a friend’s name to a picture shared on the platform—is an extremely popular feature on Facebook ... how Facebook allows users to present, show, form, and maintain online identities and relationships” (Dhir, Chen and Chen, 2015:1). Those who are not tagged may not view the material that is posted to closed groups. The privacy facility of closing up a group is a strategy for escaping the prying eyes of enforcers of taboos and official societal order.

It is important to note that, despite this being a group for the ‘mad’, there is still a limit to how far mad they can be as is indicated by the condemnation of the displaying of the ‘sex sign’ by a man of an advanced age who is expected to be conservative and maintain some semblance of decency. The condemnation of the displaying of ‘sex sign’ is implied in the comment that likens the old man in the picture to some rotten item. What may be rotten might not be the appearance but the unexpected behaviour from a person of his age. Any response that condemns the picture in question would not be expected from members of a ‘university faculty of advanced madness’. However, such a reaction is within the dictates of the Activity Theory thesis. Heo and Lee (2013:135) argue that there are “explicit and implicit regulations, norms, and conventions that constrain the actions and interactions within the activity system”. The Activity Theory notes the implicit regulations that may lead to the condemnation of behaviour among members of a group of ‘mad’ people. Such condemnation is a result of tension within any given system that is necessitated by the dynamism of freedom that is always inherent within any system.

Górka (2014:220) observes that “social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, as well as “memes” and demotivators have become tools that put pressure on both non-governmental organisations and individuals”. Social networking sites such as Facebook, in this study, are considered to be facilitating the use of tabooed language to tackle tabooed themes such as sex so that they can be appreciated and understood better than previously. The picture in appendix C attests to the foregoing argument. Sex in traditional societies is viewed as mysterious and elders speak in idioms and imagery to communicate sex and sexuality matters (Shoko, 2010). Orgasm, therefore, becomes too much detail about the act of sexual intercourse to people who have such a conservative attitude towards it; hence they taboo it. Most Africans consider pleasure a bonus to sex with the main aim of the act being procreation. Shoko (ibid: 638) emphatically declares that “any pleasure outside the premise of procreation is a sin. Sex without the intention to reproduce is simply not advisable”. As long as the ‘seed is sown’, other issues like pleasure cease to be of importance to African societies. However, the picture in Appendix C tells a different story. The woman is seen attempting to squeeze all the air out of the man because he ejaculated prematurely. The man’s misdeed is emphatically expressed by the woman’s question: *uchameleni early??* (Why did you orgasm prematurely?). Premature ejaculation dominates many a newspaper or magazine counseling column and social media platforms because the aspect of pleasure in sex is tabooed in traditional African societies, this study contends. A partially obscured human figure is seen approaching the troubled couple with the woman clutching the throat of the man. The picture emphasises the negative impact of taking for granted women’s orgasm in marital unions. The whole picture aptly captures problems that are a possible result of tabooing sex since tabooing discussing sexual matters leads to failure to understand and appreciate the gravity of downplaying the importance of pleasure in marriage when, in fact, it constitutes a crucial part of conjugal rights.

The reversal of the common ‘missionary’ sex position or ‘man on top’ in the ‘fight’ in the picture evokes humour, at the same time tying up well with the reversal of roles associated with the carnivalesque. The carnivalesque thrives on turning upside-down common societal set ups to empower the disempowered. Web (2005:122) notes that: “during carnival the ‘norms and prohibitions of usual life’ are suspended so that an ‘atmosphere of freedom, frankness and familiarity’ reigns”. The challenge mounted by the woman in the image in Appendix C indicates the suspension of the norm that men are always in charge of the sexual act as demonstrated by

their being on top of women. The woman takes over the role of being on top to address that which is troubling her. Such an arrangement, exchange of positions, can hardly escape the observation by anyone who accesses it due to the humour it evokes. Boundaries are also transgressed in the sense that the sexual act is usually performed in the privacy of the bedroom but the concerned drama occurs in the full glare of other members of the family, thereby making the whole scene hilarious. Undoubtedly, the disruption of the normal order of not demanding sexual pleasure by a woman may result in the addressing of the anomaly of viewing sex as a procreation act only.

The tabooing of sex forces members of a 'normal' society to shun everything to do with sex. Animals, interestingly, are not affected by these taboos, hence would engage in sexual acts in public; to the embarrassment of those who conform to taboos. In Appendix D, a woman is seen watching donkeys mating and the question posted together with the image is: *ubukeleni lumama?* (What is this woman watching?). This image, also, was found on the wall of the group *Enhlangeni Mental University:: Faculty of Advanced Madness* (For the made ones: Faculty of advanced madness). The name of the group indulges in a tabooed practice; feigning madness. The namers of the group seem to have chosen the name deliberately to clearly and emphatically declare that the group is exclusive to the 'mad'. Anyone who joins this group does so knowing that they may come across material that is usually excluded from normal society, even in the virtual community. It is therefore not surprising to find posts for discussion including a picture of a woman watching donkeys mating because this is a group of mad people. Feigning madness is a strategy the group members employ to explore tabooed themes such as whether watching animals that are mating can stimulate a human being.

[Raz Phuthaliyenzeka to Enhlangeni Mental University :: Faculty of Advanced Madness](#)

[August 26, 2016](#) ·

Fifteen comments were recorded from members of the group. The majority of responses indicated that members were of the idea that the woman was savouring the sexual engagement of the donkeys, especially the size of the penis of the male donkey, insinuating that she wished that her husband had one as big as that of the donkey, for instance the following comment: *she jst wish ukuthi ngabe umngake uphetho olulingana nedonki.ube ezokholisa sibili* (She wishes her

husband had one as big as that of the donkey, she would thoroughly enjoy herself). Such a comment reminds one of the ever debatable topics on sex – the importance of the size of the male sex organ for the enjoyment of the sex by the woman. All it means is that not every woman is of the idea that size does not matter; or that men do not believe that either.

The posted image in Appendix D provoked members of the group to engage each other further on the ‘size’ issue. Some comments were that the woman was admiring the skills of the male donkey and there was a possibility that she had reached orgasm from just watching what one member referred to as a ‘live blue movie’. One of the most humorous comments was: *Ufuna ukuyabophu rali manje urali usasekuservice kikikikil* (The woman wants to include the female one in her span of donkeys to work on her fields but the female donkey is being serviced/made ready for use). The female donkey is likened to a vehicle that has to be serviced before the driver embarks on a long journey. The above comments, generally, focus on the importance of sexual satisfaction of females whether one focuses on the woman or the female donkey. Matters of deriving pleasure from sexual intercourse are a tabooed theme that can only be addressed in the ‘privacy’ of thematic and closed group accounts even on Facebook. It is not a topic that can be posted on a wall of an ordinary account without a backlash, even though one would be dealing with a virtual community.

The internet-driven platforms such as Facebook have an advantage over traditional graffiti in that the real picture can be uploaded onto an account holder’s wall and be shared widely for access and effective exploration by a chosen audience. Unlike with latrinalia, audiences have a choice to view or not to view material by either joining or not joining a group. Members of the group who post can either use their real names or pseudonyms so as to freely express themselves without fear of reprisals from taboo enforcers or even other members of the group. The post under discussion constitutes an excellent example of the use of pseudonyms as a form of identity management that is at the disposal of social media participants. The account holder who posted the picture of the ‘donkey watching woman’ goes by the pseudonym *Rabz Phuthaliyenzeka* (Rabz mistakes are common). The employment of pseudonyms even under ‘closed group’ accounts demonstrate the deep-seated fear of flouting taboos which sometimes results even in self-censorship. The account holder sounds like someone who is shooing away possible condemnation by preemptively declaring that ‘his’ posts be considered to be common mistakes



that can be made by anyone. The pseudonym in question can be interpreted as a strategy of mitigating possible reprisals. The pseudonym, however, remains a form of identity of the participant that can be recognised by fellow members of the group. With regards to the foregoing, Blommaert (2016) avers that artists abandon anonymity and operate under clearly identifiable (even if pseudonymous) names, individually as well as collectively. Rather than being anonymous as in traditional graffiti, in ‘cyber graffiti’ there is a consistent identity of participants that is attributable to an individual member of a group. The ‘pseudonymous’ identity is deliberately and creatively chosen so that it sways the interpretation of the messages that are posted by its user as shown in the ‘mistakes-are-common’ example.

Social media have an advantage over traditional graffiti in that participants or artists can be elaborative due to space that platforms such as Facebook provide. Instead of short lines, stories can be told in brief but are more elaborative than in graffiti. Below is an example of a brief narration that contains tabooed language and is addressing a tabooed theme.

*Indoda yavakatshela ismallhouse sayo. Isismall house sayipha ukudla kutshetshwa ngepork.*

*\*\_Indoda:\_\* "sithandwa angidli ipork. Ichurch yami ayivumi"*

*\*\_Smallhouse:\_\* "fuseki dlan' uthule.Ukufeba yikho elikuvunyelwayo ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), 29/04/17).*

The above extract is a conversation between a man and his extra-marital partner. The partner prepares and serves the man pork which the man refuses to eat because his church’s rules and regulations forbid eating pork. The woman responds by quizzing the man if adultery that he had participated in was allowed in the man’s church. Like in most jokes, the response of the man is not given because it is not important, what is important is the exposure of the absurdity in the man’s reasoning which brings out the humour in the exchanges between the two. According to Martins (2012:89), “the surprise element, that suddenly transforms a normal situation or behaviour into something absurd, usually makes us laugh”. The conversation between the man and the woman flows until the woman unexpectedly challenges the man’s reasoning thereby bringing up a surprise element that makes the story comic. Humorous literary texts have a history of being victims of censorship; hence have had to find means of evading censorship by finding alternative mediums. Derbel (2019:49) notes that “censorship takes multiple forms of

suppression dating back to the Comic Code authority established by the comic book industry itself in 1954 ... Once suppressed a counter-movement flourishes to challenge and to escape suppression”. It is therefore not surprising that comic and tabooed texts that characterise traditional graffiti also find a place on Facebook walls of secretive or ‘closed group’ accounts because suppressed ideas usually find an alternative underground platform for their survival.

Adultery is a practice that entails sexual activities between a married woman and a married man. This is a tabooed subject that cannot be handled in public freely without flouting social taboos. Even the language that the woman uses is tabooed. She uses the common expletive *fuseki* (get away/lost) that seems to dominate general casual exchanges amongst members of social media groups just as much as it dominates exchanges in traditional graffiti. Notably, the expletive is employed to express disgust. The word *ukufeba* (adultery), a word that has sexual connotations, cannot be used in formal and public interaction without reprisals.

### **5.6.2 Vulgarities**

The internet or social media has its jargon for offensive or tabooed language or even behaviour. Maisto, Pelosi, Vietri, Vitale and Paolo II (2017) cite flaming, trolling, harassment, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, cyberthreats as practices of offensive behaviour and language that focuses on various topics such as physical appearance, ethnicity, sexuality and social acceptance. Ethnicity is a common social aspect that is favoured by trolls and cyber-stalkers that, interestingly, can generate humour from the ‘audience’ but can embarrass its targets. The practice of making disparaging remarks based on other people’s ethnicities, according to Ndlovu (2017), is called ethnophaulism, meaning insulting language or action aimed at an ethnic or racial group. Ethnophaulism is condemned and tabooed but it remains common practice on informal interaction platforms like traditional graffiti and digital graffiti. Swear words or tabooed language continue to be part of society because, in Bednarek’s (2019) view, functions of such language vary, thereby demonstrating their high multi-functionality. “Swear/taboo words can function to create realism, humour, and consistency ... the fact that supercuts (montages) of such language use exist online ... means that the use of these words is both noticeable and entertaining – at least for some viewers” *ibid*: 1). The ubiquity of offensive language online is, according to the above assertion, its entertainment value that is anchored on humour generation.

Facebook walls, especially those of group accounts that are set aside for specific themes, themes that are not for everyone's consumption, feature these instances of ethnophaulism that may offend those who conform to taboos. Figure 8 below attests to the above position.



**Figure 7:** A toy for Kalanga children

One of the reasons for the dismissal of comic pieces as a real genre of literature is their lack of seriousness characterised by the humour they generate due to some exaggerations they make. Figure 7 shows a toy scotch cart that features a pair of caterpillars as its draught power. The body of the scotch cart is in the form of a discarded match-box while the wheels are bottle lids of a container for a local opaque beer type! The accompanying message to the 'toy' reads: *Usathi ukubone konke thutshu I toy yomntwana we Kalanga* (when you thought you had seen it all; boom! You see this type of a toy for a child of a Kalanga). Presenting caterpillars as draught power serves to ridicule the Kalanga as poor people whose economy hinges on caterpillars since the area where the Kalanga are found in Zimbabwe is famous for the abundance of mopane trees that host these edible 'worms' called *mahonja* (caterpillars/mopane worms) in the Kalanga language.

In a game of trading insults among Ndebele young men, folk humour generally exploits the exaggeration of poverty of the targeted victims. “Images of poverty are very common in *izichothozo*, with players exaggerating the poverty levels of their opponents” (Ndlovu, 2015:118). In the joke in question, the eating of caterpillars by the Kalanga is presented as if they are the only ethnic group that consumes these caterpillars and as if they consume them due to poverty, yet these caterpillars are not only delicious but also nutritious. This kind of a joke satisfies the function of the humour theory that is explained by Bardon (2005:2) as the Superiority Theory that instructs that “the humor we find in comedy and life is based on ridicule, wherein we regard the object of amusement as inferior and/or ourselves as superior”. The creator of the joke hopes to find a majority of non-Kalanga’s in the readers or viewers of the ‘status’ so that they would share in the feeling and regard of superiority so as to find the joke amusing, otherwise, the Kalanga would not find the joke amusing at all because it places them in a position of inferiority. It should be noted that presenting such jokes outside an atmosphere of carnality of the Facebook group account would ignite a fight between the jest maker and the targeted ethnic group members. Boxman-Shabtai and Shifman (2015:2) observe that “one of the most salient arenas for the contemporary diffusion of ethnic humor is the internet. This medium bears a unique role with regard to ethnic humor”. The internet, as the driver of platforms such as Facebook, functions as the mediating tool between creators of tabooed literary material and the purpose of generating humour, as expounded by the Activity Theory, by ridiculing those they feel superior to as an ethnic group.

Witticism is one of the aspects that help in the generation of humour that is found in jokes (Bardon, 2005). Ndlovu (2015:114) notes that for a joke to evoke humour, “the terms are used creatively to derive wit and win the hearts of listeners who otherwise would be disgusted by the terms”. The language that is used for the narration of jokes in Figures 9.1 and 9.2 below are handy in exemplifying how creativity in the use of terms would generate humour instead of disgust to those who are pro the breaking of taboos in order to share ideas and feelings about particular subjects.



**Figure 8.1:** Joys of a short male sexual organ      **Figure 8.2:** The lows of the doggy style

Figures 8.1 and 8.2 are posts from the wall of *Enhlanyeni: The University of Insane Creativity* group account. Figure 8.1 bears the message whose simple translation is: ‘it is a joy to have a small penis because one does not go too deep to reach the point where AIDS can be contracted’. Figure 8.2’s text’s simple translation reads: ‘the doggy style is only meant for the light-skinned. Imagine somebody bending in front of you to expose their navy blue bums!’ The above texts reverse certain aspects of life by making statements that are not necessarily true but make sense and are humorous. It is not true that those with small penises cannot contract HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), but it is a witty joke which is also dangerous because it can mislead those who can take it at face value. It is not true, also, that the ‘doggy style’ as a sexual position is a preserve for the light-skinned but the statement can easily cause a strain on sexual relations of those whose partners are dark-skinned because the statement suggests that they cannot engage in that position because the colour of their bums may be an unpleasant sight and a turnoff. The humour in the concerned texts is anchored on the irony of their messages. According to Rillo and Bulson (2019), a study that was carried out in Philippine established that jokes exchanged between college students were “greatly embedded with irony and as modeled after the jokes of one of the leading comedians on Philippine TV, Vice Ganda”. Irony is the mainstay of the jokes under discussion, if one considers that “stating the opposite of what is expected is what irony is all about”, (Rillo and Bulson, 2019:495) and that irony revolves around witticism. The act of making sense of an irony generates humour as well as soothes the mind.

Disgusting language is sometimes made tolerable by the atmosphere and mood of an occasion while the mood can also be determined by the language that participants in an event use. The mood at a funeral service is normally sombre, quiet and orderly but in the video below, the funeral service is lightened up by the use of unexpected language that turns the funeral service into a carnival activity.



VID-20190216-WA0033.mp4

**Figure 9:** Jesus was friends with thugs and peddlers of the flesh

*Transcription of the video*

*...ufele wena; akafelanga labo abacabang' ukuthi bango-clever, bangcono. UJesu bekadlala lezinja, edlala laboguluva, ephila labo...ngob' uzele bona. That's why lami ngiphila laboguluva, ngifana loJesu. Isonto lethu kugcwel' aboguluva (Some affirmative response from the audience). Mara ayisiboguluv' abagcwel' uNkulunkulu Lalabo abathengis' umdidi bakhona, everyone is welcome! (Ululation and screaming in approval can be heard from the audience with some shouting hallelujah).*

*(...he died for you; he did not die for those who think they are clever and smarter than others. Jesus was friends with dogs, playing with thugs and shared life with them...because he came (on earth) for them. That is why I also associate with thugs, I take after Jesus. Our church is full of thugs. But the thugs are not the type that is full of God. Even those who sell sex are there, everyone is welcome!)*

The message and atmosphere in Figure 9 video can be a cause for a cultural shock to those who are used to church funeral services where a formally dressed minister of religion leads mourners. In the video in question, a shabbily dressed man leads mourners and uses crude and vulgar language, thereby creating a carnival instead of the expected sombre and mournful atmosphere. The leader of the service makes reference to biblical events but has his interpretations that are normally tabooed and uses equally tabooed language. It is hardly expected that someone would encourage the presence of thugs and prostitutes in church on the pretext that Jesus was on earth for such people. The expected church message would be to encourage church members to be

‘pure’ and shun thuggish lives and prostitution instead of boasting and bragging about being associated with thugs and prostitutes.

The ‘preacher’s’ view in the Figure 9 video funeral service, gives credence to the argument by Interpretivists that a message usually has more than one meaning because meaning is negotiated and interpreted from different angles. There is also an underlying message of a power struggle between those who preach righteousness in church and those who say that the church needs sinners more than it needs the righteous because sinners must come to church to confess their sins so that they can be forgiven. Boasting about the presence of those who sell sex in the church brings wild excitement from the congregation, thereby creating an unexpected carnival atmosphere in the church. The message of tolerance is conveyed in the process.

The Ndebele word *umdididi* can be used to refer both to the anus and the vagina. Interestingly, it is the same even in Shona. Mangeya (2014:242) observes that there are “two possible meanings of the Shona term ‘*mhata*’, as either referring to the vagina or the anus”. The Shona term ‘*mhata*’ is the equivalent of the Ndebele term *umdididi*. The sense in which the term is used in the video of the previous sample is the same sense it carries in Figure 10 below.



<https://www.facebook.com/100002523715153/posts/2834228270004602/?app=fbl>

**Figure 10:** *Niyeka abafana abanithandayo* (You leave those boys who love you)

Figure 10 shows a post by an individual Facebook account holder expressing feelings about an ever debatable issue about reasons for preferring one lover over another when it comes to choices made by women. There are two schools of thought on the issue of choosing the type of male partner that a woman must go with. One school of thought says good sex must guide the choice while the other school of thought says good-heartedness and the ability to take care of a woman materially must lead the choice. The post in Figure 10 tries to settle the contest by commenting rhetorically using tabooed language. The translation of the comment is: ‘you leave those boys who love you and run after those who give you good sex; one wonders for how long you will continue to worry about satisfying your flesh at the expense of your troubled hearts’. The message of the post is that women seem to let good sex guide their choices of male lovers yet they do not find peace of mind from their choices.

Effectively, the post declares that women must consider peace of mind as opposed to issues of the flesh when it comes to making the final choice about a lover. The post in question addresses the perennial contest between the soul and flesh where the soul is believed to always offer good counsel but humans usually go with what flesh, in its weakness, instructs. Interestingly, one of the responses to the post says ‘*isingamane itsheke*’ (we will rather the vaginas shift position). The above is a declaration that some women are more worried about the good-heartedness of lovers than the good sex; their vaginas are more important than hearts. They do not care about what happens to their vaginas, all they want is sexual satisfaction. The appreciation of matters of the flesh and the soul has no straightforward solution though, mainly because such matters have no one solution that fits all. The controversy surrounding the matter is further compounded by another response which implies that the post is candid about the issue under discussion. Society may not always converge on one practice; hence the need for democratisation of interaction processes. For the foregoing reason, tabooing such matters further complicates them and reduces the chances of their exploration and appreciation. It is the language that is used, the theme of sex and the humour it evokes that qualify this post as carnival and defiant to societal taboos.

The need for a platform to tackle tabooed themes using tabooed language is also evidenced by the presence of Facebook group accounts that specialise in controversial issues that trouble communities daily. Tabooed themes in question are usually characterised by the request for identity to be hidden. One such group account is called *Makhox Women’s League*. This group is



supposed to be a women-only counselling group but, with the character of internet-driven communication, there is no ascertaining if all members are women.



**Figure 11:** *Ngithandana lendoda yomuntu* (I am in love with a married man)

<https://www.facebook.com/165177196877301/posts/403971192997899/?app=fbl>

Figure 11 shows the message that was posted on the wall of the *Makhox Women's League* group account and part of the one hundred and one responses. The language that is used in this group portrays women as having the potential to, sometimes, use the same or similar vulgar language to that which was found on male toilets walls as graffiti. It can therefore be argued that women are freer to express themselves on Facebook walls than on latrine walls. Figure 11 above is a screenshot of a presentation problem by a member of the *Makhox Women's League* who wanted guidance on a matter where she had fallen in love with a married person but then wanted out yet the man could not have any of that. Mixed feelings were expressed by respondents with some giving genuine advice while some were name-calling her. The most dominant insulting reference to the lady who was expecting counselling was *wule* (whore) followed by *sifebe* (adulteress). It is this language that is uncharacteristic of women in formal communication that compares with graffiti that is of interest to this study. The language demonstrates that in online interaction, there

is freedom of expression that is absent in offline situations. Online interaction, therefore, affords a culture of candidness that tabooing of literary texts deprives other community members of.

### 5.6.3 Scatological imagery

As was pointed out under the presentation of data on traditional graffiti, scatological imagery is one of the commonest tabooed themes in the world. It happens to be a dominant feature of ‘cyber’ graffiti as well. Persels and Ganim (2004: xiii) contend that “scatology [...] arguably an even more universal function than sexuality, still retains the power to make us blush, to provoke shame and embarrassment”. One of the key aspects of Bakhtin’s theory of the carnival is the celebration of the lower strata bodily functions which, according to Mansour (2007), can easily remind one of a joke about a conflict among several body parts, namely: “Brain, Heart, Lungs, Stomach, and Rectum, each disputing its right to the leadership of the body”, (Mansour, 2007:146). On the wall of the group account *Enhlanyeni Mental University:: Faculty of Advanced Madness*, a similar joke about body parts was found presented as follows:

*Izitho zomzimba ziyadelelana (Body parts looked down on one another)*

*Izitho zomzimba zaziphikisana ngokuthi oqakathekileyo ngubani.*

*Amehlo: Kubona mina la yonke into!*

*Isandla: Kubamba mina la yonke into!*

*Unyawo: Kuhamba mina la yonke indawo!*

*Umlmo: Kudla mina la yonke into!*

*UMdidi wathi uyakhuluma , umlomo wahle wamthulisa wathi “njengawe Mdidi thula, uyanuka!*

*UMakhala: Kuphefumula mina la!*

*UNdlebe: Kuzwa mina la!*

*Zakhuluma zonke zaze zaqeda uMdidi elokhu ezithulele...kwathi seziqedile kwahlala okuyisikhatshana, uMdidi wabopha wathi mfii, mfii, mfii...kwaqala manje ukuyilahla, isisu sesigcwele amehlo esesze eqhululekile, ubophile umdidi mfii. Zaqala ukuncenga; eeh Bro Mdzola, vula phela! Bra Mdidington, siyacela bhudas. Vula phela bro Mdilooo, mdilitious! Awu bandla, mdiii!*

<https://www.facebook.com/100003404532029/posts/2009726052484193/?app=fbl>

In the above joke, the body parts may be different from the ones in the joke presented by Mansour (2007) but the idea is the same in both jokes in that the body parts were quarrelling about who the most crucial part was for the wellness of a human being and the winner was the scatological one, the anus; just as the competition was won by Rectum in the Mansour (2007) example. The other body parts had bragged about their indispensable roles until Anus tried to

address other body parts when Mouth mocked Anus as useless and smelly. Anus then shut down and the whole alimentary canal could not function! The other parts had to plead with the anus to release all the waste material that had accumulated in the stomach forcing all the other parts to fail to function.

The ‘tug of war’ between the enforcers of taboos and their breakers is always about power relations within society more than anything. “In breaking former taboos in literature, are the authors in a position of power, or are they expressing powerlessness?” (Hunt, 2010:3). The foregoing is a crucial question on the message of composers of tabooed literary texts (carnival literature). In line with the Bakhtinian spirit of the carnival, scatological imagery subverts the hierarchy of power, replacing those at the top with those taken from the bottom. Socially and even politically, those at the bottom wield the power that they usually surrender to those at the top as was witnessed, though the hard way, by former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott who disrespected opinions of citizens of his country that were expressed through social media. It did not take the then Prime Minister long to find out who wielded more power between him and ‘weak’ masses. “Within a year, he was replaced as Prime Minister by Malcolm Turnbull, an avid social media user who had made large profits from investments in Australian Internet companies” (MacDowall and de Souza, 2018:4). The subversion of hierarchies implies the empowering of the weak by revolutionising the status quo so that that which is tabooed becomes the most powerful and the most effective form of expressing ideas and feelings.

Rebellious behaviour generally excites and temporarily empowers those who engage in it because it releases them from the uptight control of officialdom and formality of society as we know it. There is a need for an outlet valve for some members of society, especially the weak, and that is usually achieved by breaking taboos. Defining humour as anything amusing, funny or laughable, Gbadegesin (2019:1) also notes that “it has escapist tendencies and often lightens the mood of individuals by providing relief from pain”. Reference to the lower strata bodily functions is a common taboo-breaking practice that generates scatological humour that anchored the Bakhtinian carnival. “It allowed a release of latent tensions and stresses that could constitute a real threat to order if not emancipated within a controlled environment”. The virtual community, like the Facebook one, provides an ideal platform to let out steam with little or no chances of physical contact that may result in violence. Below is an example of indulging in

scatological humour. On the surface, one can view the text below as some pass time joke just to escape the drudgery of orderliness that is demanded by the formality of officialdom that insists on upholding taboos.

*Ubukwazi yini ukuthi---- 1)umsuzo yi missed call yokubhotsha. 2)isihlama yi recived call yothuvi. 3)ukudla yi dialled call yothuvi. 3)ukulamba yi not reachable yokuyabhotsha. 4)ukumanilwa yi hold for conection yokubhotsha. 5)ukuqunjelwa yi number bizy yothuvi. 6)ukuhuda yi delert number kokudla okudlileyo. 7)inqumbi yothuvi yi call duration yendlela odlangayo. 8)ukungadli yi insuficient fund to make this call yokungayi bhotsha. Ungahleki wedwa hleka labanye kkkkkkkkkkk.... (<https://www.facebook.com/>, 12/05/15)*

*(Did you know that...1) puffing is a 'missed call' of excreting. 2) residual faeces are a 'received call' of having emptied one's bowels. 3) Eating is a 'dialed call' to excreta. 3(4) being hungry is equivalent to 'not reachable' of bowel movement. 4(5) failing to pass out feces is equivalent to saying 'hold on for your connection' for excreting. 5(6) constipation is equivalent to 'number busy' from excreta. 6(7) diarrhea is equivalent a 'delete number' of what one would have eaten. 7(8) a heap of feces is equivalent to a 'call duration' of the amount of food one eats. 8(9) not eating is equivalent to 'insufficient funds to make this call' of passing out feces. Don't laugh alone, laugh with others...)*

The above joke is quite engaging in that it relates new technological dynamics to some scatological activities. Puffing is said to be a missed call for defecating, implying that puffing means that one nearly soiled themselves! Residual faeces, in reality, are evidence that someone did empty their bowels. So, the residual faeces are considered to be undeniable evidence that someone emptied their bowels just as a recorded received call can be used as evidence that someone did receive a call. This argument can be used to demonstrate the futility of denying having received a call from someone when it is recorded under their call register because that would be tantamount to denying having emptied one's bowels when there would be remnant faeces on the concerned individual's anal area. One other interesting part of the above joke is when failure to freely move bowels is likened to the frustrating instruction to hold on for one's connection. The concerned instruction can cause untold anxiety to a caller. Abstract concepts such as the anxiety caused by waiting for one's connection are concretised through the employment of scatological humour. The above joke also demonstrates creativity that could not be tolerated in a conventional platform. Persels and Ganim (2004: xiii) point out that tabooing

scatological imagery can have a reverse effect by arguing that “cultural suppression becomes subcultural revelation as what was once rejected as waste is now valued as inspiration”. Only alternative platforms such as traditional graffiti, carnivalesque and ‘cyber’ graffiti afford these unconventional artists and their audiences the opportunity to express and share ideas in this controversial fashion.

The likening of the processes and procedures of making and receiving telephonic calls with the scatological system demonstrates unbelievable witticism from the creator of the joke. Witticism is one of the key characteristics of humorous pieces of literary presentations that hinges on the theory of incongruity. Bardon (2005:7) propounds that “the intellect’s attempt to reconcile absurd conjunction of ideas causes a physical response that we find pleasant”. Linking scatological processes and the smart technological advancements of making calls on a mobile phone exercises the mental faculties in a manner that brings about humour which results in mental relaxation. According to Hunt (2010), sometimes the weak of society are symbolically empowered when shining modernity and the elevated role of literature are happily ridiculed by authors who associate them with bodily functions. Literary appreciation is generally associated with elitism and sophistication that is not associated with the toilet; the same can be said about modernity that is associated with technological advancement. Juxtaposing literary appreciation and technological advancement with scatology brings the elite to the same level with those found at the lower levels of society who are generally associated with slums and ‘dirty life’ to remind society that there is always an alternative to everything that might be assumed to be the best. Alternatives link perfectly with the notion of multiplicity of interpretations and meanings to human experiences that is advocated by Interpretivism and the dialectical coexistence of the socially powerful and the weak, the conformist and the rebellious within the same society. The foregoing therefore brings to question the tabooing of what the other part of society considers their best form of sharing ideas and feelings.

From the presented data, it can be argued that there are similarities and differences between traditional graffiti and internet-powered platforms for expressing and sharing views and feelings about day-to-day life events. The current research is convinced that social media, represented by Facebook in this research, is just an advanced version of traditional graffiti in terms of its operations, language usage and content. Both practices are subcultures that offer an alternative

platform for breaking free of cultural censoring, although temporarily, just like the carnivalesque. It is therefore deemed prudent to point out the similarities and differences of two platforms in pursuance of the conclusion that social media, represented by Facebook in the current study, offers an escape route from censoring in general and in particular, cultural themes that are pointed out in this study. The current study argues that censoring of themes and language usage needs to be evaded if these tabooed themes are to be fully explored and appreciated. It is important to state again at this point that the approach to this study has always been a comparative one; juxtaposing traditional graffiti with ‘cyber graffiti’.

## **5.7 A comparative look at traditional and cyber graffiti**

There are a reasonable number of similarities between traditional graffiti and social media that make it not a far-fetched idea to consider them to be different versions of the same thing.

### **5.7.1 Similarities**

Both graffiti and social media are alternative platforms for tackling tabooed issues using tabooed language because they provide reasonable anonymity to those who use them. Exploration and appreciation of tabooed language and themes remain important to society because “once the taboo rituals are in place, the motives (sound or otherwise) usually become obscured. Original meaning gives way to symbolic idiom, although different stories may later suggest themselves” (Allan and Burridge, 2006:9). In other words, replacing tabooed words with euphemistic ones alters their actual meaning; hence the need to sometimes conceal or manipulate identity in order to break taboos. The anonymity ensures that even though those at whose expense jokes are made can be offended; chances of a physical confrontation are either slim or non-existent. The two platforms exploit humour of one kind or another and the humour is usually hinged on irony and witticism. Traditional graffiti is found on ‘walls’ and posts on Facebook are found ‘walls’. The messages on the ‘walls’ can be consumed in relative privacy, thereby protecting consumers from enforcers of taboos, save for self-censoring.

### **5.7.2 Differences**

Internet-driven platforms like Facebook have the advantage of being multimodal whereby videos can be uploaded instead of trying to re-tell jokes in order to share them. Messages can be shared

at the speed of the click of a button on the computer, tablet, or smartphone. Boxman-Shabtai and Shifman (2015:7) note that “within no time at all a story can migrate from a TV set to a computer and then to a mobile phone, assuming new forms in the process”. New technology has the advantage over traditional graffiti in that it can reach huge audiences in no time and with no geographical boundaries, hence the expression ‘the message went viral’ meaning that it moved at an amazing speed and reached far and wide. Table 1 below shows the differences between traditional graffiti and ‘cyber’ graffiti.

**Table 1:** Contrasting graffiti with Facebook

Graffiti (latrinalia)	Facebook
Static and confined to geographical boundaries.	Mobile and crosses geographical boundaries.
It is limited to writings and scrawls on walls.	It is versatile: scrawls can be converted to pictures to be uploaded onto walls of accounts as well as videos, pictures and sound recordings.
The writings are brief.	Writings can be elaborate.
Scrawls on walls can damage those walls.	The posts on walls are smart and do not cause any physical harm because the walls are virtual.
Messages take time to spread.	Messages can go viral in no time.
Dialoguers can erase ideas they disagree with.	Dialoguers can only add their ideas as comments to a given statement.
Participants are only intrinsically motivated.	Participants are encouraged to interact by the question ‘what’s on your mind?’ to contribute/initiate a conversation.
Identity is usually excluded.	Identity can be creatively manipulated to provoke comments or deliberately mislead.
Creativity is limited.	There is room to experiment with various modes of interaction because there is computer-aided creativity.
Participants usually operate individually.	Participants can form communities of shared interests across the whole world.
Scrawls on walls are generally dull.	Technology rates higher than traditional graffiti and can be more attractive, especially to the youth.
Graffiti on walls of buildings belongs, more, to	The world is gravitating towards technology,

those without access to gadgets and technological knowhow than to the tecnosavy.	particularly in the era of the deadly COVID-19.
One has to keep checking if the door of the toilet opens or not.	One can type or upload in the privacy of their homes.
Graffiti is only visual.	Electronic graffiti also appeals to aural sense.
One has to get into a public toilet to access latrinalia.	One has to be connected and other people by their side may not even be aware that they are ‘consuming’ tabooed material.
Privacy is less guaranteed than in electronic graffiti.	Privacy is more guaranteed than in traditional graffiti.
Public toilets can only be accessed at given points.	Electronic platforms like the Facebook wall are ubiquitous.
Walls of buildings like public toilets are static.	Electronic platforms like Facebook walls are mobile and portable in the form of smartphones and tablets.
There are no skills for scrawling on walls of buildings.	Special electronic skills and dexterity may be needed by participants to exploit certain privacy settings.

Table 1 demonstrates that electronic graffiti has differences that place it at an advantage over traditional graffiti. Chief among the advantageous differences that electronic graffiti has over traditional graffiti is the fact that electronic graffiti is multimodal. Electronic graffiti can accommodate and even improve on the characteristics of traditional graffiti. A comparison of traditional graffiti and electronic graffiti is tantamount to a comparison of tradition and modernity. “In my era, there was the ubiquitous comic book hidden in a boring text. A comic book cannot compare with a computer, of course”, (Bugeja, 2006:2). The presentation that is internet-driven is most likely more attractive and captivating than scratchings on a wall. It is in the foregoing vein that a comic book is said to be less appealing when compared with computer presentations. Over and above the colourful presentations that characterise internet-driven social media platforms, their inclination towards presenting “opportunities for collaboration, for sharing and as spaces open for everyday social talk in which humour and irony are also part of this parcel” (Vigmo and Lantz-Andersson, 2014:873) gives them an edge over traditional graffiti.



## 5.8 Conclusion

There is a lot in common between traditional graffiti and social media that compels this study to view the two as similar. The two are basically about providing an opportunity for an alternative platform for sharing what is excluded from formal platforms and by so doing, democratise the art of expressing and sharing views using censored language. The democratisation of the sharing of views and feelings about tabooed themes using tabooed language can only be achieved through the use of these platforms that are condemned by officialdom. Alternative platforms like traditional graffiti and social media platforms such as Facebook help some members of society explore themes that are excluded from formal platforms for the benefit of society at large. The two alternative platforms seem to inspire a lot of creativity away from the control of officialdom. The two platforms afford participants relative privacy and anonymity that is needed for a fair and unrestrained exploration of key aspects of human social life that are usually avoided by the formal side of society that claims to be ensuring decency and order in society.

The interconnectedness of activities that participants engage in, with the internet being the mediating tool, resonates well with the concept of the Activity Theory which talks of the subjects (graffitists and Facebook account holders), tools (the internet) and the object (defying taboos). Taboos limit the use of ironic interaction that evokes laughter because officialdom considers laughter as disorderly and conducive for the violation of taboos.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the issues that were important to this study. To achieve the purpose of bringing to prominence the findings of the study, the chapter revisits research objectives and highlights some key issues that came to light in this study.

#### 6.2 Summary

The study took the position that tabooing certain themes and language usage is a stumbling block to a free sharing and exploration of those tabooed themes and language and as such; it needs to be evaded. The study therefore adopted a historical approach to the practice of theme and language usage censoring comparing traditional graffiti to ‘cyber graffiti’ (represented by Facebook). The aim was to investigate how censoring of themes and language has been escaped through graffiti production and if social media offers better opportunities for evading censorship. Characteristics that are common between graffiti and social media were identified with the Bakhtinian carnivality being the common denominator.

##### 6.2.1 Main aim

The main concern of the study was to establish the role of social media in ensuring that themes and language usage that are censored through cultural tabooing can escape that censoring. Facebook was selected as the case study based on the researcher’s familiarity with the platform and the number of users it attracts.

##### 6.2.2 Objectives

To achieve the above-mentioned aim, the study’s objectives were to:

- ❖ Explain carnival literature in relation to traditional graffiti and posts on Facebook walls.
- ❖ Explore the issues addressed by traditional graffiti and posts on Facebook walls.
- ❖ Compare and contrast traditional graffiti and posts on Facebook walls.

- ❖ Explore the role identity concealment plays in the production, development and recording of carnival IsiNdebele literature.
- ❖ Examine the extent to which posts on Facebook walls can be viewed as graffiti and carnival literature that is used to escape censorship.

#### **6.2.2.1 Carnival literature in relation to traditional graffiti and posts on Facebook walls**

Carnival literature is a genre that is usually neglected if not avoided by researchers due to its inclination towards addressing general issues that unusually affect society. The term carnival literature owes its popularity to Bakhtin's carnivalesque. The Bakhtin theory of the carnival espouses that the carnivalesque allowed an escape from the rigidly established societal power structures and celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order. To escape the formalities of day-to-day life, hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions had to be suspended. The suspension of normalcy, particularly prohibitions (taboos), meant that the carnivalesque allowed society to deal with 'difficult' issues by delving into themes and language usage that are evaded by other genres and formal society. Similarly, graffiti, particularly latrinalia, and posts on Facebook walls of some group and individual accounts, disregard normalcy by handling themes like unconventional sexualities such as homosexuality as was demonstrated by an inscription that was observed from a *Hyper/Pick and Pay* toilet. The inscription advertised 'gay fun' and graphically described how such could be attained.

The temporariness of the escape from control by the general society that taboos such presentations is in the sense that traditional graffitist experience the privilege of the suspended normalcy while in the latrine but forfeit it as soon as they get out of the restrooms and into the bigger sector of society. The account holders who post carnival material on the walls of their Facebook accounts eventually log off and have to face society in their sober state.

The presentation of events in literature generally follows a particular order but carnival literature disrupts that order. The common order respects cultural taboos whereas carnival literature deliberately rebels against the taboos to give an alternative view and attract attention in the process. Readers who concentrate on taboos associated with carnival literature usually lose out on the messages that carnival literature conveys. Humanity stands to benefit more from carnival literature if attention is placed on extracting the message rather than worrying about scatological

and sexual imagery. Society loses out to social censoring methods such as the tabooing of themes and language usage that concentrate on the surface messages that carnival literature seems to address.

An inscription of an erect male sexual organ next to a female one, which then erupts in release, may be understood to present the argument that not all tension has disastrous consequences. Release after an erection can lead to fertilisation and a new product in the same way that confrontation may lead to a cross-pollination of ideas, resulting in the betterment of society. In most cases, sex and scatological imageries in a literary presentation have little or nothing to do with what one sees on the surface; they are mostly intent on sharing deeper messages than what 'meets the eye'. The presentation of a mopane caterpillar-drawn match-box scotch cart as a toy for a Kalanga child (Chapter 5, Figure 5.6.2.1) may have an interpretation that goes beyond just the slandering of the Kalanga and present consequences of stereotyping some members of a nation along ethnic lines. It may function as a starting point for dealing with ethnic tension that may disintegrate a nation if left unattended to. The humour that is generated by carninality in the presentation may help to ease the tension as ethnic differences get ironed out as they are joked about.

Tension is a crucial ingredient for the success of carnival literature. Tension is brought about by the alternative and competing discourse to the dominant one. Literature must, as a matter of necessity, present the real struggles of life. This study observed that human experience is generally characterised by alternatives to every given formal aspect: order has chaos; seriousness has playfulness; clean has unclean as its alternative. One may even refer to these alternatives as opposites. For the carnival, the joyfulness and playfulness that produces laughter thrives on inversion and disruption of 'normal' order. Carnival literature is about challenging dominant and common discourses. On the wall of a Facebook account named *Enhlanyeni: The University of Insane Creativity*, a post that celebrated a short male sexual organ, against common thinking that it is a disadvantage, was observed. Such a post challenges the common thinking about the size of the male sexual organ and gives an alternative view in a manner that can generate laughter in line with carninality. A deeper analysis may bring out the message that not all things are as bad as a casual glance at them may decipher.

This study is convinced that inscriptions on walls of public structures as traditional graffiti and posts on walls of some Facebook account as ‘cyber’ graffiti constitute carnival literature. One of the findings of this study, through the review of carnival literature, was that conservatives are dismissive of it as ‘bad literature’. The notoriety of carnival literature emanates from the fact that it challenges the existing hierarchy: the religious, political and moral values, norms, and taboos. There is a need to challenge existing discourses so as to explore alternatives because there are alternatives to life situations that may lead to new methods of sharing views and feelings. Banning and shutting doors to alternatives deprives society of alternative solutions to day-to-day challenges, thereby stunting creativity.

#### **6.2.2.2 The issues addressed by traditional graffiti and posts on Facebook walls**

Traditional graffiti and social media (represented by Facebook in this study) proved to address common issues with common characteristics. What emerged from the data that was accessed is that the platforms in question tend to handle controversial issues that bring about disgust to the generality of society, particularly the conservative elders who enforce taboos. Disgust is mainly acquired through socialisation; hence it is culture-specific. Reaction to offensive language differs from one culture to another; from one community to another; from one age group to another; hence the division of society into two opposed parts of any given community in terms of their response to graffiti and some posts on Facebook walls. An example is that of comments in response to a post that chided young ladies for following their feelings at the expense of reason when choosing lovers. One respondent commended the post for telling the truth as it was while the other argued that she would rather her organ shifted position while she pursued sensual satisfaction in disregard of reason. These matters are hardly addressed or explored in public and formal platforms because they are tabooed; alternative platforms such as graffiti and social media address them.

The other content that tended to cut across traditional graffiti and ‘cyber’ graffiti was the use of or the elaborate description of scatological matters such as the lower body stratum parts and their functions. An inscription where a seeming dialogue between someone who was pressed to relieve themselves implored the one who was using the toilet to be quick so that they could have their turn, could be juxtaposed with an elaborate drawing of parallels between the processes of making a phone call on one’s mobile phone and different stages of the bowel movement process.

Yet, these are tabooed themes and language usage where the conservatives, who, interestingly, seem to dictate terms on themes and language to be used in formal interaction, would rather euphemism is resorted to. Unfortunately, euphemism tends to distort meaning since it worries about toning down the language, resulting in concepts being vague. In a sense, tabooing distorts meanings of those tabooed terms.

It was established that graffiti, even though carnival, also addresses issues that are generally considered to promote the good of society such as an inscription that was observed on the wall of the *TM Hyper/ Pick and Pay* toilet that read: 'God is great'. History has it that graffiti on church walls was a condoned practice throughout medieval Europe. While graffiti is generally condemned as a rebellious practice, there are instances where it can be utilised to counter rebellious statements since citizens can dialogue through traditional graffiti.

Electronic graffiti (social media) demonstrated even more instances of dialogue than traditional graffiti in that it has space for participants to make comments on a post that would have been introduced by a participant at any given time. It is, therefore, the conclusion of this study that condemning graffiti as a literary genre robs society of the opportunity to participate in dialogue because not all community members may access the formal platforms. The formal platforms are usually a preserve for those in positions of power, such as community leaders, church leaders, the affluent and politicians. Traditional graffiti and 'cyber graffiti' can therefore be considered to be crucial alternatives for evading the rigidity that is associated with general societal formalities.

### **6.2.2.3 Similarities and differences between traditional graffiti and 'cyber' graffiti**

The two platforms were quite interesting to analyse. They proved to be similar in quite many aspects. They both address issues that are not generally addressed. Such matters are controversial; hence they hardly escape the attention of the selectors and enforcers of taboos. Those in authority, right from elders of a family, community leadership to government and its arms of operation that incorporate the judiciary and even religious organisations or any grouping that has do's and don'ts as part of their culture, constitute selectors and enforcers of taboos. The tabooed themes proved to be sex and sexuality, vulgarities and scatology. These themes do generate laughter but, in most cases, they are found to be disgusting to the majority of members of society who conform to taboos. Both traditional graffiti and 'cyber' graffiti ensure relative

anonymity which facilitates some semblance of freedom of expression and exploration of tabooed themes using participants' language of their choice.

The internet-driven 'cyber graffiti' has, however, many advantages over traditional graffiti. It is generally 'smarter' in terms of privacy in that participants do not have to visit the smelly latrines to express their views. It is not as messy as traditional graffiti where one needs paint and brushes to produce their art. The modern version of graffiti derives most of its advantages from being multimedia in nature, making it more attractive to the youth who are usually crowded out of formal platforms by the conservative adult population which dominates the corridors of power; be it at family, community or national level. Messages can spread as quickly as one can click a send button on their electronic gadget. Unlike in traditional graffiti where sharing of feelings and views is mainly intrinsically motivated, with 'cyber graffiti', one is invited to comment on anything by statements such as 'what is on your mind?' 'Cyber graffiti' provokes people into participating more than traditional graffiti. Exchanges are more elaborate and deliberate on electronic platforms than on walls of physical structures.

The internet has reduced the world into a single village, thereby eradicating the concept of culture as practised by a group of people who are kept together by geographical boundaries. The internet has extended the boundaries to include the whole world. Communities are no longer perceived in terms of the geographical spaces they occupy but in terms of levels of social interaction and tolerance of particular themes and language they understand. This study established that cultural boundaries have been blurred if not obliterated by new information technology that drives social media. In this age of super-diversity, cultures are no longer regarded as enumerable entities but as performed by individuals and groups as dictated by their diverse contexts. Cultural enthusiasts and indeed scholars, therefore, have to be alive to these changes just as politicians have been made aware by events such as the Arab Spring where social media played a crucial role in facilitating revolutions across the Arab world in the year 2011.

#### **6.2.2.4 The role identity concealment plays in the production, development and recording of carnival Ndebele literature**

Anonymity plays a crucial role in the breaking of taboos and creation of carnival literature. The strength of the carnivalesque was in the manipulation of identity through the elimination of

‘normal’ society’s hierarchies and role-playing. The reversal of roles during the performance of the carnival festivities ensured the production of sincere literature that was a result of an honest engagement on issues that affected the weak of society who had no access to formal platforms. This was achieved by disregarding the true identity of the participants. The disregarding of true identity entails manipulation of identity through exchanging or assuming roles during the carnivalesque or the use of pseudonyms on social media or tags on inscriptions on walls by traditional graffitists. The role-plays, the reversed positions and authority during the carnivalesque and pseudonyms on social media platforms, emphasise the fact that all imaginative work has to be credited to an author. However, due to the tabooing of carnival literature and the reprisals that creators of such works are likely to face, ‘authors’ have to resort to identity manipulation.

Identity manipulation tends to give creators of carnival literature bravery to handle tabooed themes and language. Offline identity forces participants in interactions to self-censor because the generality of society abides by taboos due to the fear of punishments that are associated with breaking taboos. Such punishments may include action taken by the elders of society or the spirits of the departed who, generally, are regarded as omnipotent and omnipresent. It appears as if graffitists and Facebook account-holders fear reprisals from society more than they fear those from the spirits because they would rather break taboos so long as their identities are hidden. The use of tags in traditional graffiti and pseudonyms in ‘cyber’ graffiti indicates the importance of characters in these literary texts and that they are indeed literary texts despite not being taken seriously by those who claim to study ‘legitimate’ literature as opposed to these alternative literary texts. There is always an attempt to conceal identity if genuine exploration and sharing ideas is to be achieved.

The study did not encounter tags in traditional graffiti at the selected spaces. All the messages that were observed from the walls of the selected toilets bore no signatures. When it came to ‘cyber graffiti’, the research observed that pseudonyms, in line with the style of tags and signatures, were used in place of the real names of the creators of messages that were posted on walls of selected Facebook accounts. One of such names or signatures was *Rabz Phuthaliyenzeka* (Rabz Mistakes-are-common), proving that there is indeed some point of convergence between traditional graffiti and Facebook. Participants start the journey of manipulating their identity by



forming a group where participation is accessed by joining the group. They then further use pseudonyms to ensure security from enforcers of taboos at the societal level and even at the individual level within the group. One would liken the process to a two-step privacy insurance exercise that is meant to escape the condemnation which is, technically, censorship. The two-step privacy insurance in traditional graffiti can be observed when one considers that creators of latrinalia have to get into the toilet and then close door or even lock themselves inside for them to be sure that their identity is concealed. If the two private insurance processes, from traditional graffiti and ‘cyber graffiti’, are juxtaposed, one is compelled to conclude that social media is indeed modernised graffiti with the advantage of smart technologies being the difference between the two. The foregoing was one of the most important findings of this study. Social media can indeed cater for all the functions of traditional graffiti and even more.

It can safely be argued that identity manipulation can play a crucial role in the production and recording of carnival literature. Carnival literature tends to address issues that would not be tackled on formal platforms since doing so is said to be a violation of taboos. A candid approach to issues using language that is not compromised and watered down is only possible if the identity of creators of literary texts is manipulated. The role played by humour in the sharing of ideas and feelings is possible if the identity of participants is concealed.

#### **6.2.2.5 The extent to which posts on Facebook walls can be viewed as graffiti and carnival literature that is used to escape censorship**

This study adopted a historical and comparative approach where characteristics of traditional graffiti and ‘cyber graffiti’ were identified. These encompassed language usage, content, the general tone, the nature of participation on the two platforms. It can safely be concluded that the two are the same platform but belong to different eras of technological advancement. That graffiti will finally make way for social media may need more time and close monitoring. What cannot be ignored is the fact that the two phenomena operate similarly.

As those in positions of power and control escalate efforts to maintain control over general discourse, alternative platforms need to adopt smarter methods of sharing views and feelings about tabooed themes and language usage. Social media presents opportunities for discrete methods of exploring alternative discourses in a rather ‘private-public’ way. Social media is a

public platform but with pockets of privacy within it. These pockets of privacy are quite smarter than latrines in the sense that one does not have to endure the ‘stink’ to share alternative views. Social media, as a platform that knows no physical and social boundaries, emerges as a far better way of sharing alternative ideas than traditional graffiti, though using a similar approach. The study established that the characteristics that are explained above present social media as a modern and smarter platform than traditional graffiti for alternative discourse that all societies must exploit. Social media was found to be even more helpful to communities (within societies) that are a minority and pursue alternative methods of interaction.

The major challenge with ‘cyber graffiti’ is access to modern technology that facilitates participation in the sharing of carnival literature via the internet. Smart gadgets such as computers, tablets and smartphones may be too expensive for those who need alternative platforms for them to share ideas because they are usually those with no access to power and authority; the poor. Access to modern technology also entails technological know-how to appreciate the operations of internet-driven interaction. The general citizenry needs to be schooled in the operations of gadgets that use modern technology. Unfortunately, the poor tend to suffer from techno-phobia. If the above challenges can be alleviated, social media stands ready to be the escape route from cultural censorship in the form of the tabooing of carnival literature.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

This study makes recommendations that are based on the observations that were made during the course of the study. The observations were a result of an analysis of human interaction, especially imaginative creations meant to express views and feelings about life’s general experiences of the Ndebele represented by the city of Bulawayo Dwellers. The use of tabooed language and the tackling of tabooed themes was at the centre of the analysis. These observations are important to all those who grapple with human interaction, particularly determining what is right and what is not, before putting it out for public consumption. The observations are equally important to those who wish to address the so-called controversial themes and the language they are to use.

### **6.3.1 Recommendations on approaching carnival literature**

1. The Bakhtinian dialogism theory instructs that culture is inter-subjective and that culture has no permanent practices. Human nature, interestingly, tends to view culture from one point yet there is always more than one interpretation to any practice. Those who come up with and enforce taboos need to consider the fact that there are alternative views to theirs. Failure to consider the alternative views creates tension within society.
2. Society is divided by taboos into two hostile parts, leading to tension within it. One can be compelled, therefore, to argue that tabooing certain themes within society creates tension and there is need for management of points of disagreement within society. There is need to create space for divergent views about interaction so that society operates in harmony despite different approaches to issues. Social media allows for pockets of diversity within society, the same way graffiti used to and continues to but graffiti faces more challenges than social media.
3. Graffiti and social media offer society the opportunity to explore the diversities that life has to offer. The diversities can hardly be explored and experienced fully if some aspects and a part of society are excluded.
4. Tabooed themes and language usage are usually forced to go underground where they can easily get out of control or be misunderstood. Management of interactions as opposed to excluding them may help defuse tension because it accommodates the fact that life is dialogic and both sides have audiences that need to be addressed.
5. The humour that is generated by the carnivality that characterises both traditional graffiti and 'cyber graffiti' can be taken advantage of to tackle sensitive and controversial issues such as sex and sexuality and ethnicity, respectively. There are various types of humour. Humour, generally, has the cathartic effect as one of its benefits to those who experience it as its non-victims.
6. Interestingly, graffiti that deals with generally non-controversial issues such as religious matters that glorify God and present heaven as a place to be yearned for were also encountered. In a sense, graffiti, both traditional and electronic, need not be dismissed just as a nuisance but be analysed with an open mind.
7. Activity Theory can play an important role in the analysis of reasons, conduct and implementation of human action. It can also help to give direction to researchers who are

intent on engaging in interdisciplinary research to spell out their processes. More needs to be done to explore and understand the operations of the Activity Theory as a lens of investigating problems to come out with solutions to complex challenges within the field of Humanities.

8. Communities are no longer defined by geographical boundaries but by areas of common interests and practices. Technological advancements have reduced the globe to a village where its members can interact and share ideas at the click of a button. For societies to continue to regard membership of their communities as those who are within their geographical boundaries would be to misunderstand the dynamics of how contemporary societies operate due to the impact of technology.
9. The gathered data demonstrated a relationship between social media and graffiti in the sense that both platforms allow participants to express their feelings and views without displaying their identities. Concealing identities allows participants to handle even tabooed themes with minimum risk of condemnation from those who conform and enforce conformation to taboos. Due to the advantages that ‘cyber graffiti’ (social media) has over traditional graffiti, it is highly likely that society may soon drift away from traditional graffiti in the direction of ‘cyber graffiti’.

### **6.3.2 Recommendations for further research**

1. There seems to be too much sensitivity towards certain themes that are part of society. There is, however, a minority group within society that prefers to share and explore these themes on walls of both the physical structures and social media. Humour seems to be the common thread across the presentation of those themes. There is a need for establishing the role that carnivality plays in the discussion of the rights of minority groups to ease the tension that comes up when they are discussed on formal platforms.
2. Standup comedy is one genre that seems to have grown at the same time with the popularity of social media. Standup comedy is one literary genre that seems to thrive on handling controversial issues regardless of whether they are political or social. The question to be asked is: what is the nexus between carnivality, stand-up comedy and social media in Ndebele society?
3. There is a need for understanding the psychology of taboo breakers within the Ndebele society. What could be the psychology of both Ndebele society graffitists and Facebook

participants, particularly those who go out of their way to call themselves ‘mad ones’ who attend a university of madness? What could be the link between madness and university studies to these members of the ‘faculty of madness?’

4. There seems to be a level at which informal platforms such as traditional graffiti and ‘cyber graffiti’ can function as rich information sites for organisations that can create a favorable environment for these ‘informal’ platforms to flourish. Researchers need to find out how graffiti can be harnessed by institutions to reflect on their performances to establish client and even personnel satisfaction.

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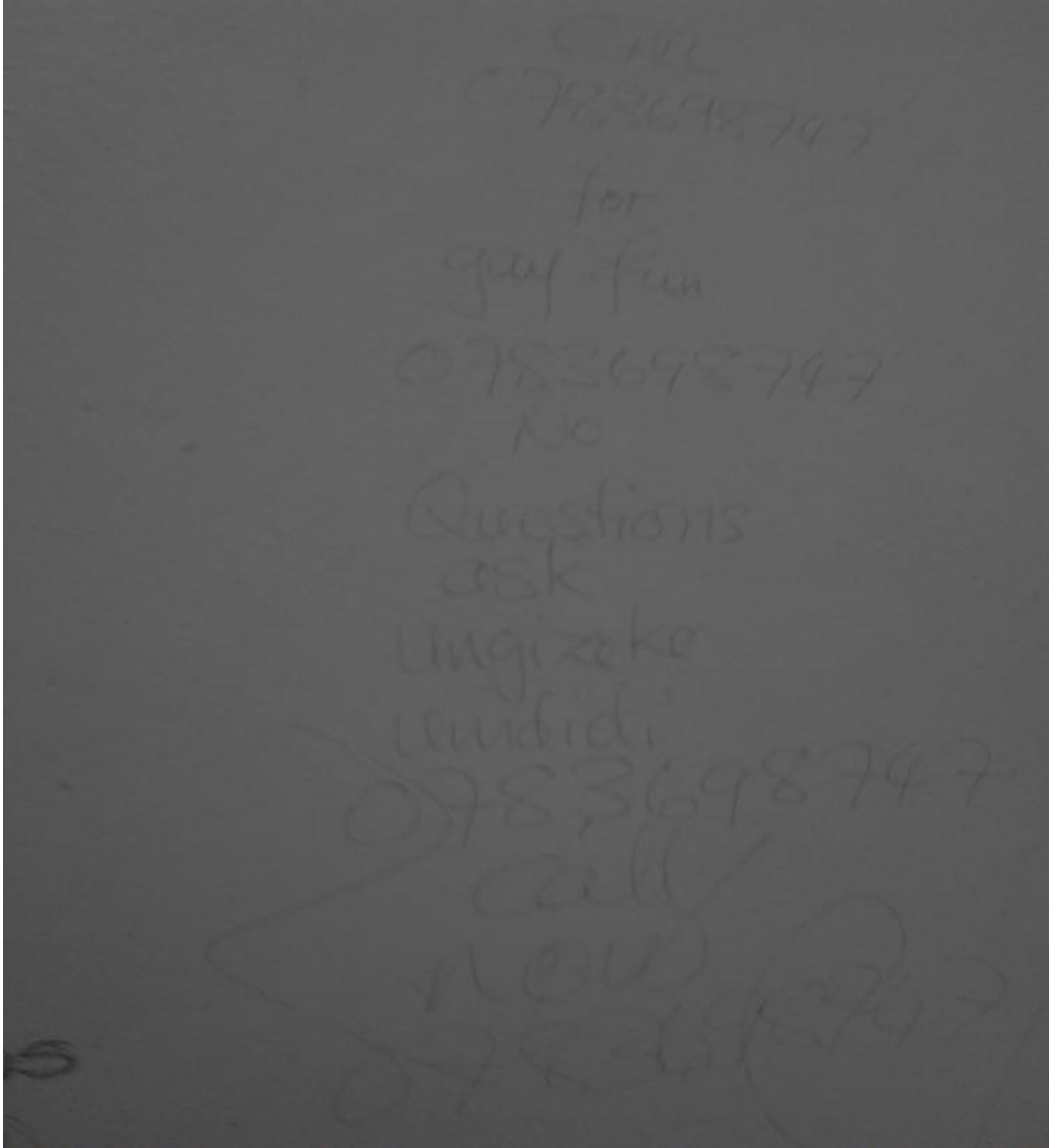
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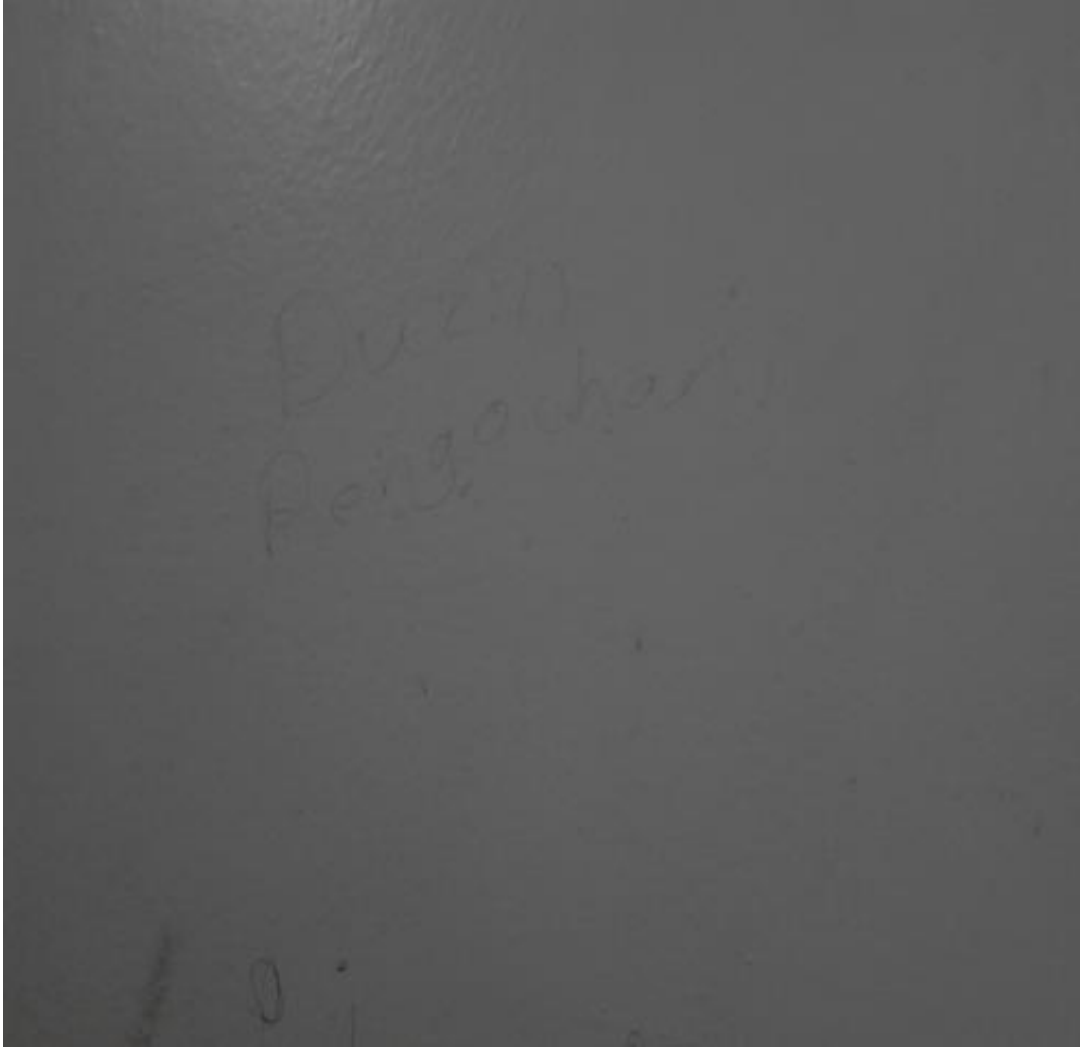
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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A- Gay fun



Appendix B– *Duzvi regochani* (Bloody homosexual)



**Appendix C**–*Uchameleni* early?? (Why did you orgasm prematurely?)



**Appendix D**–*Ubukeleni umama lo?* (What is this woman watching?)

