BORDERS OF THE GLOBAL ANGLOPHONE: LOCALITY, LANGUAGE, AND FEMINIST FUTURES IN NAMIBIAN LITERATURE

by

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Borders of the Global Anglophone considers the radical possibilities of three post-independence Anglophone literary works by Black Namibian women—at the intersection of debates in global Anglophone literature, African Studies, and transnational feminisms. Across the three chapters, I show how these paradigmatic texts employ innovative storytelling practices to envision feminist community and decolonized futures. In their unconventional use of form, language, media, and publishing formats, these texts call attention to the politics of local and global literary production and the potentials of transnational feminist theory for conversations about literary form and postnational identity. I consider how print culture informs the reception of texts, and I emphasize how multilingual language-use both reframes encounters with empire and negotiates between global English and local vernaculars. In so doing, I gesture to the borders of the global Anglophone and demonstrate how these literatures at the edges of the literary world engage the gendered, linguistic, and local politics of writing and reading in Namibia.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Namibian Literatures at the Margins

Since its initial publication in 1988, the novel *Born of the Sun* by Joseph Diescho has mistakenly been heralded as Namibia's first Anglophone novel. The novel was published in New York and written by an author who was an exile during the Namibian War against South African Apartheid (1966-1989). In 1986, two years prior to *Born of the Sun*, another exile, Ndeutala Hishongwa, published her novel *Marrying Apartheid* in Australia, where she and her family were living as SWAPO employees.[1] Seeing as both authors produced their work under the auspices of SWAPO, it is especially odd that Diescho's novel rose to prominence in a way that Hishongwa's novel did not. And yet, this situation is itself symptomatic of SWAPO's well-known and deeply troubled gender politics. The fate of Hishongwa's novel might well be read alongside a familiar story in which Namibian women's movements were subordinated to larger nationalist concerns in pre-independence Namibia. Even wider implications emerge when we acknowledge that the figure of the African woman has featured in prominent ways throughout African literary history to both assert and contest dominant ideologies. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that this dynamic makes its way into post-independence Namibian literary production, which is known to privilege political autobiographies and a particular account

1. SWAPO is the South West Africa People's Organisation, the political party at the forefront of the war for independence. Hishongwa at the time, was a student at La Trobe University in Australia, following SWAPO's push to educate its exiles in preparation for independence, and her husband Hadino Hishongwa was the SWAPO Representative for Australasia and Pacific Islands.

of the liberation struggle.[2] Against this backdrop, imaginative literature by Black Namibians falls by the wayside. And there, at the margins of local and global literary spaces, this literature takes on new and innovative forms.

"Borders of the Global Anglophone" considers a marginal literary tradition that develops at the intersection of gender politics and the dynamics of literary production. This project considers how three post-independence Namibian Anglophone feminist literary works from the margins of national and world literary space employ communal literary practices to facilitate the radical envisioning of postnational community and decolonial futures. In their unconventional use of form, language, media, and publication formats, *Coming on Strong: Writings by Namibian Women*, *Kaxumba kaNdola Man and Myth: The Biography of a Barefoot Soldier,* and "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" complicate Namibia's dominant national narrative. In their own ways, each of these three texts calls attention to the potentials of transnational and women of color feminist theory for conversations about literary form and the politics of local, regional, and global literary production. These works—and the collective genres they promote—form a paradigmatic constellation that challenges the borders and constraints of medium, genre, and nationhood. They each blur the boundaries of form and genre as they envision decolonial futures and facilitate transnational affiliations with global Black identities.

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2. It is important to note that part of this focus is also determined by the need to address the paucity of educational texts, another afterlife of colonialism that nation-building must necessarily address.

Africa in the Landscape of World Literature

As a tradition, African literature is worldly in the sense that it engages the question of what it means to be African (and Black —of African descent) in the world. Formally, African literature has established itself as an institutionalized subject of study in roughly the last fifty years, emerging in concert with major historical developments on the continent during the early and mid-20th century (Losambe, "Introduction," pp. xii.; and Gikandi, "Introduction," xi). This tradition is typically discussed in terms of different generations as a means of offering a broader periodization to African writing, which is in turn useful for describing—not demarcating—trends in African literature. [3] Colonialism is the tradition's single most important, even if unstable, generational boundary line (14). Because African literature encompasses a wide array of countries, languages, genres, and forms, F. Abiola Irele defines the tradition capaciously as literatures by Black Africans and African descendent peoples that engage the histories and experiences of blackness in the world. These literatures are centered on African ways of knowing—what Irele calls the African Imagination. Irele describes "a particular tonality" that marks African literatures, and by extension, African-descent literatures in the West (4). This literature, he suggests, "has meaning primarily in the context of a recognizable corpus of texts and works by Africans, situated in relation to a global experience that embraces both the precolonial and the modern frames of reference" (7). Most importantly, he adds, it is a tradition in which African orature "*represents the basic intertext of the African imagination*" (11, italics belong to Irele). Thus, African literature, rooted in African

3. Generations are indicated by the age of the writers and the years in which they were writing, factors that undergird each generation of literature temporally, thematically and ideologically (Adesanmi and Dunton 13).

indigenous oral traditions and knowledges, is inherently conscious of how global identity weighs on African experience. In fact, critics of African literature have frequently noted the inherently extroverted, outward-looking nature of this literary tradition, an internationalist feature emblematic of world literature.[4]

In his address to the African Literature Association in 2017, Simon Gikandi, discusses the outward-looking tendency in African literature and notes the contradiction that African literature inhabits in the context of world literature. Gikandi states,

> African literature by its very nature comes into being aware of its literariness, its expansive cultural and linguistic geography, and of course its sense of the world. Often forced by circumstances to account for its identity and legitimacy in relation to the languages of empire, regional lingua francas or even transnational geographies, African literature has always deployed the literary as an instrument of making sense of its location at the interstices of globality.

If African literatures are inherently transnational and multilingual, then the tradition ought already to be understood as world literature, circulating readily across languages, territories, and reading communities. And yet, from Casanova to Damrosch to Deleuze, African literatures are only infrequently referenced in discussions of world literature. "World literary space," as Pascale Casanova describes it, is an unequal space (3). Far from ephemeral and abstract, world literary space is "an actual—albeit unseen—world made up by lands of literature; a world in which what is judged worthy of being considered literary is brought into existence; a world in which the ways and means of

4. See Julien 2006 and 2018 on extroversion in African literature. Discussing reading practices in African lit, Eileen Julien noted that certain literatures encourage a globalist reading. Noting that a crucial function of "contemporary African novels and texts" is "writing to the world" (379) Eileen Julien distinguishes this mode of writing from extroversion, which, rather than an inherent quality of a text, is a reading practice applied to certain African novels by "an international audience of scholars, teachers, students and general readers" (377). The "extroverted novel" is "marked by its themes and formal qualities [which] allow us to characterize [it] as 'turning outward'" (376).

literary art are argued over and decided" (3). Despite the transformative powers of this space, the judges who determine literary worth—the "international literary law"—take Western literary traditions as their prototype (12). It is for this reason that Gikandi, pointing out the difficulty of privileging African literature and literary aesthetics in this literary landscape, goes on to ask: "Can literature produced in the peripheries of the world systems meet the standards established by the high priests of world literature?" Gikandi notes, however, that this question is not as productive as asking, "What is it that African literature threatens…Because an African literature which does not transform the idea of world literature is perhaps not playing a central role."

For Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, postcolonial literatures are uniquely suited to a transformative vision of world literature. They are inherently world literature because of the networks between the local and the global that they forge. He champions a reading practice that takes these networks into account in a method he calls a globalectic reading. He clarifies that globalectics highlights networks and the simultaneous give-and-take they assume (61). This reading practice "should bring into mutual impact and comprehension the local and the global, the here and there, the national and the world" (60). Such a reading "embraces wholeness, interconnectedness, equality of potentiality of parts, tensions and motion" (8). Postcolonial literatures are suited to a reading of literary networks of equal parts because they contest the notion of "mainstream versus a colonial periphery" (51). They were produced out of "the struggle of the double consciousness inherent in the education of the colonial bondsman" (42). Accordingly,

> [They embody a] new synthesis [and while] having its own particularity, like all other tributaries to the human, the postcolonial is an integral part of the intellectual history of the modern world because its very coloniality is a history of

> interpenetration of different peoples, cultures and knowledge. Colonialism and its aftermath has been characterized by the movement of peoples (51).

Ngũgĩ continues on to explain that a globalectic reading privileges equality in that it views "the relationship between languages, cultures, and literatures in terms of a network…In a network there is no one center, all are points balanced and related to one another by the principle of giving and receiving." (83). Only then can we truly grasp the humanist project at the heart of world literature—a global human connectivity and communality that Ngũgĩ envisions as rivers and streams making their way across nationalist boundaries to the humanist sea (76). Globalectics envisions a "world of shared intellectual property" in which a reading of literature in terms of national boundaries or as nationally superior is outmoded (76). Irele, Gikandi, and Ngũgĩ all describe a tradition whose authors negotiate, contest, and innovate in the context of making sense of African (and colonized) people's encounters with global systems—and the possibilities for world connectivity this tradition makes visible.

The World, The Global Anglophone, and The Postcolonial

Accounting for Ngũgĩ's vision of a closely networked literary world entails attending to translation and to the dynamics of global languages such as English. Discussing global Anglophone's "range of English-language geographies, writers, and audiences," Rebecca Walkowitz notes that "anglophone writing operates in many languages, even when it appears to be operating only in English" (20, 24). As she explains, Anglophone novelists must manage,

> comparative beginnings from the start and must find ways to register internal multilingualism (within English)…In this sense, English-language writing is, like writing in other languages, an object of globalization; but it is also, unlike writing in other languages, crucial to globalization's machinery, both because of its role

> in digital media and commerce and because of its role as a mediator, within publishing, between other literary cultures. (20-21)

Furthermore, many authors, addressing a "heterogeneous group of readers," (20) write in English to mitigate the need for translation, a phenomenon that Walkowitz refers to as "preemptive translation" and describes as writing in a language that is different from the spoken language (12).[5] Such preemptive translation is the subject of Namwali Serpell's article on African writers' discussions concerning glossaries. These "additions to the main text," she states, "often vetted, if not entirely decided, by publishers… [are] crucial to how [the text] will be received by readers." Should a writer "gloss, or not…gloss," Serpell asks? ("Glossing Africa"). Commenting on Heinneman's inclusion of a bilingual glossary to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, Serpell notes that "[i]ts purpose was pedagogical but it could also be seen as a political statement." For Serpell, the politics resides in the uncomfortable implication that the glossary may signal the success or failure of the literary work to make the culture it writes about legible to the world. In this argument, however, English (and by implication other European language-writing) is a given.

In direct contrast to discussions of global Anglophone literature, Ngũgĩ proposes a different approach. In *Decolonising the Mind*, which is written as a "farewell to English as a vehicle for any of [his] writings," Ngũgĩ argues that writing in European languages only enriches them—and does so to the detriment of African languages. Such writings, he suggests, are a form of neocolonization (xiii). He proposes as a solution that African

5. Ngũgĩ says something similar when he states: "All writing in a language that is not the mother tongue, or the first language of one's upbringing, is largely an exercise in mental translation" ("Translated" 19).

literature be composed in African languages and then only after, translated into European languages ("Translated"). He highlights the politics of the production of a tradition of written African literature in African languages: "that is, the languages of the African peasantry and working class" (*Decolonising* 27). After all, he argues, "Written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries" (15).

Ngũgĩ 's contention follows in the footsteps of Obiajunwa Wali. Both Ngũgĩ and Wali attended the historic "Conference of *African Writers of English* Expression" held in 1962 at Makerere University College, Uganda. A year after the conference, Wali, concerned about the conference's sole focus on African literatures in European languages, described these writings as "a minor appendage in the mainstream of European literature" (332). Further on, in his remarks, he states: "Until these writers and their Western midwives accept the fact that any true African literature must be written in African languages, they are merely pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, uncreativity, and frustration" (333). Ngũgĩ, writing decades later, agreed. He was also responding to Achebe, who in 1964 disagreed with Wali. Achebe argued for the use of English and cited the proliferation of African literatures as a sign that Wali was wrong (81). Achebe makes a distinction between national and ethnic literatures. National literatures are written in English and thus "enjoy nationwide currency," and travel in the world. They can unify ethnic differences (78). Ethnic literatures are those produced in indigenous languages (78). Achebe goes on to state:

> The real question is not whether Africans could write in English but whether they ought to. Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice…I feel that the English language will be able to carry the

> weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings (83-84).

Importantly, central to Wali, Ngũgĩ, and Achebe's debates are the position of African lifeworlds and traditions within African literature.

All three writers are also concerned with the mother tongue as a carrier of culture, and the possibility of African cultural erasure that writing in European languages might perpetuate. Discussing these language debates in the writing of these and other early postcolonial writers, Gikandi diagnoses a general "linguistic anxiety" around the use of European languages ("Provincializing" 9). He notes that these early writers found themselves in a situation that "endowed the language with a singularity and power that it didn't have" (10). For them

> Trapped in colonial Englishness, young colonials seemed to have limited options: they could master English and use it to create a literature of their own, or they could make an epistemic break with the language and turn to the mother tongue as a place of reconciliation. However, both responses reflected the confusion between English as a language and Englishness as a way of life… The colonization of the mind did not arise because of a power inherent in the language; English was not a spell that could change behaviors in places where mother tongues thrived. It only appeared powerful because of its association with compulsory Englishness. How else could one confuse the fiction of the English primer and the lived experience of the colonized?" (11).

Writing years earlier, Ngũgĩ, even while advocating for African-language literary production, notes that the peasantry and working class's use of European languages is not characterized by the anxiety to elevate these languages displayed by the colonial educated elite:

> In fact when the peasantry and the working class were compelled by necessity or history to adopt the language of the master, they Africanised it without any of the respect for its ancestry shown by Senghor and Achebe, so totally as to have created new…languages …that owed their identities to the syntax and rhythms of African languages" (23).

Foundational to this debate around language politics—and African literary discourse more broadly—is what Irele refers to elsewhere as the "the oral–literate interface,"[6] which he takes as an "imaginative centering" of indigenous African societies, cultures, languages and orature (Irele 8, 16). [7] For Irele as for others, orality is "the distinctive character of African literary genres" as well as their "comparative interest" (xv). Modern African literature by indigenous Africans in European languages is best characterized by its dual formal relation to Western conventions of literary expression and to the traditions of African orality as a means of integrating "a discontinuity of experience in a new consciousness and imagination" (16). Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is famously emblematic of this double form. The novel's innovation,

> derives not only from Achebe's integration of the distinctive rhetoric of African speech into the conventional Western novel but also from the formal relation of the work to the two distinctive traditions, African and European, each representing an imaginative ethos corresponding to different structures of life and expression, which the novel holds together within its narrative movement and referential bounds" (Irele 18).

Achebe innovatively unifies the Western novel to African orature. Along with Africanizing the novel, in *Things Fall Apart*, he Africanizes the English language, albeit differently from the day-to-day language-use of the working class that Ngũgĩ points to. It is these Africanized uses of the English language that are both unconscious of the colonial effect of creating English subjects and that submit the English language to "many different kinds of use," that undergird this project (Achebe 82).

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6. See Irele Cambridge pp. 1.

7. For further discussion on the relationship between orality and African literature, see Losambe, "Introduction" in *An Introduction to the African Prose Narrative*, pp. xi.

The questions my project addresses are less concerned with matters of language choice than with how literary language is used and what it produces or enables. To consider the transformative aesthetic approaches of the inherently multilingual, local, and global Anglophone texts, I think alongside Akshya Saxena who argues that "the idea of a worldly Anglophony places a productive emphasis on the material and the mundane, and on the sounds and speakers of English" (317). And I draw from her claim that "[l]ocating English and its speakers in the world offers an opportunity to trace their relations with precisely the multilingual literary and media cultures that the hegemony of metropolitan literary English threatens to subsume" (318). In my reading of *Coming on Strong*, I consider the impetus to write despite the lack of mastery of the English language as an act of national consciousness. In the chapter on *Kaxumba KaNdola*, I consider how language veils or reveals subconscious and overt political agendas. And in my discussion of "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl," I explore how the hurried "texting" style of writing, the misspellings, grammatical errors, and the refusal to translate are aesthetic features of a genre of writing, and a political act in favor of a multilingual culture. In all cases, language use is political. In each of these three cases, I am interested in how language contends with the African imagination—that is to say, how these Anglophone texts forge connections to Black experience and history beyond the bounds of Namibia and its literatures.

This analysis leads me to consider how these marginal texts commune with third generation African Literature. Commenting on Wali's famous statement regarding the "dead end" of African literature, Gikandi points us to the thriving modern African literary tradition:

> the production of an African literature in English in the two decades following Wali's critique has, of course, proved his prediction wrong. By the end of the 1980s, an African canon of literature in English had emerged and become institutionalized, celebrated globally as a major contribution to literatures in English and to the English language (9).

Beyond merely contributing to the Anglophone literary landscape, and despite the hegemonic force of global Anglophone literary production on African literary aesthetics, this is a tradition with transformation at its center (Krishnan 2014, Irele 2001).

Third Generation African Literature and Postnationalism

Third generation African literature has played an integral role in such transformation as the authors of these literatures purposefully move beyond the frame of the nation. They forge postnationalism as a means of circumventing the problematic constraints of nationalist ideology, unsettling intellectual hierarchies that privilege the West, and ultimately contributing to a more wholistic global understanding of the human. This generation of writers is marked by their postcoloniality as the first generation "to be temporally severed from the colonial event." They are mostly born after 1960 in independent African states (except for Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia), and their writings gradually emerge in the mid -1980s, into the 90s and onward (Adesanmi and Dunton 14).[8] Due to the political and economic upheavals in post-independence Africa, much of this literature is produced by expatriate Africans of the new African diaspora and

8. Regarding the first and second generation: "while the first generation of African writers who emerged during the colonial period sought to deliver a counter-narrative to colonial writers' negative representation of Africa and its peoples, the second generation that emerged after the independence of many African countries from the 1960s to the 1980s focused mainly on Africa's post-independence malaise marked by political violence, civil wars, class division, gender disparity, corrupt military dictatorships, and neocolonialism" (Losambe "Post-Hybrid Conjunctive Consciousness" 367).

their descendants, who often live and write in the West. Part of their postnationalist aesthetic is a diasporic sensibility emerging out of the writers' own multilocal identity and experience, as well as their disillusionment with the nation. They tend to share an awareness of an "international audience and a local readership, balancing [local and global] aesthetic codes and literary practices of address" (Krishnan166). These writings demonstrate an investment in the question of a global African experience and a "transnationalist trend," which marks the intertextuality of the transnational Black world in particular, and the global south in general (Adesanmi and Dunton 16).

Writing about the most recent of this generation—so-called Afropolitan novels—Lokangaka Losambe describes the diasporic writing of this third generation of African writing as evincing a "*neohumanist"* poetics, a "transnational consciousness," "a conjunction of creative impulses refracting local and global issues of our time" ("The Local" 5). These new African diaspora writers "occupy a third space from which they cast a critical gaze upon three life-worlds, the African societies they originate from, the Western world they presently live in, and the humanistic or globalist consciousness they project" (6). They draw from the aesthetic practices of previous generations as they create,

> the neohumanist aesthetic (which enlists analepsis, textual collage, social media and cyberspace—especially the blogosphere—as important narrative techniques). This sophisticated, complex arsenal of narrative techniques makes the writings of the third generation transformative as they bring to the surface globally repressed anachronistic and melancholic attitudes about class, race, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, nationality, ethnicity, migrancy, transnational identities, and the environment (9).

Themes within this generation's Afropolitan writing draw from earlier work such as Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), which uses the intimate familial

relationships of the home environment to consider the gendered components of the colonial project, and helps to pave the way for novels like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and its engagement with violent gender dynamics within a family (Andrade 33).[9] The list of examples is extensive: Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and Chris Abani's *The Secret History of Las Vegas* (2014) deal with transnational, transcontinental perspectives regarding race and global blackness. *Americanah* also deals with the intersections of race, gender, and social media. NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) is complicatedly transnational and turns the Western gaze applied to Africa back on itself. Equally complicated is Zukiswa Wanner's novel *London, Cape Town, Joburg* (2014), which is both transnational and Transurban in its treatment of interracial relationships. Novels like Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's *Kintu* (2014) place the trajectory of Buganda history in the context of precolonial indigenous culture, circumventing colonialism altogether, a postnationalist aesthetic described by Bwesigye Bwa Mwesigire as challenging "at the outset…the hallmarks of postcolonial and nationalist writing" (105). And Ayesha Harruna Attah's novel *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* (2018) deals with African slavery and its relation to chattel slavery, but never leaves the continent. Akweki Emezi's novel *Freshwater* (2018) draws from Igbo life-

9. Andrade charts the generational relationship between authors like Dangarembga and later writers like Adichie, asking: "What is the relationship between literary history or periodization and characterization. I submit that what we call character depth is in some manner bound to social change: represented in literature or as the social condition of possibility that the author encounters and resolves. Psychological complexity is more fully represented (and representable) as characters enter a literary field with some sense of historical continuity—that is, when the author does not feel herself to be 'the first' speaker or writer. African women's writing has proliferated since 1988, the year Nervous Conditions was published, and authorial voices have become more assured and explicit in rendering female characters and national contexts" (32).

worlds and weaves a narrative that shows how human identity can be multiple in a way reminiscent of Amos Tutuola's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954) and Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991). Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2010) deals with the environment, and from Namibia, Remy Ngamije's migratory novel *The Eternal Audience of One* (2019) spans as many as six countries, mostly on the continent, and considers questions of home and belonging. These themes from this lengthy list demonstrate a turn away from the nation and coloniality and its afterlives as a framing for African literatures and realities, and a move toward a focus on global and humanizing themes, and transnational and transregional experiences and histories on and beyond the continent.

In terms of gender, many women authors from this third generation resurface the early debates in African feminism, but with a difference. 19th century African women writers of the third wave feminist movement were ambivalent about applying the term "feminism" to African women (Emechetta 2007, Ogundipe-Leslie 1994), concerned about the term's Western origins (Oyěwùmí 1997; 2016), and Western misrepresentation of African women's personhood (Amadiume 1987). By contrast, 21st century writers display a "bold embrace of feminist identity" (Eze 2016, 3). Chielezona Eza notes that these literary works highlight the woman's body, but not as a symbol of something else (the nation, tradition), but rather "as homes to their individual selves…as exclusively theirs, not as belonging to society or their culture" (Eze 3). In this female body-conscious context, they also highlight the relationship between African men and women, and they interrogate the devastating implications of the African patriarchal gaze in a way their foremothers frequently did not (3, 9). Eze reads this "renewed interest in feminism by women writers as a call for a moral reappraisal of society's relation to the personhood of

women who suffer gender discrimination" (6). Namibian Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), for example, deals with the deeply personal violation of the practice of widow dispossession and gender-based violence in rural Owambo Namibia.

Most recently, extending this third generation, the digital sphere has allowed African literature to expand further and take on experimental forms and underexplored themes. For instance, Adichie's website continues *Americanah* beyond the novel as it hosts the protagonist Ifemelu's blog "The Small Redemptions of Lagos" (Adichie). Online spaces have also allowed a flourishing of literary forms that explore female and queer sexuality and pleasure. Einehi Edorro points out that "sex for sex sake" in African literature is nothing new, noting the Onitsha Market chapbooks of the 1950s, as well as more traditional novels like Tayib Salih's *Seasons of Migration to the North* (1969), Nuruddin Farah's *Secrets*, and Teju Cole's *Open City* ("How Keen"). Edorro's online literary magazine *Brittle Paper* commissioned the serial fiction by Kiru Taye "Thighs Fell Apart" (2014, 2020), a fan-fiction extension of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) in the form of an online short story that deals with the protagonist Okonkwo's sexuality (2014). A serial of four episodes of erotica followed that focused on Okonkwo's daughter Enzinma (2020) (Edorro, "Achebe's"; Taye). James Yeku argues that this publication strategy is an example of the ways "digital culture enables a transgressive re-crafting of the canonical texts and ideas of African literature" (262). It is "the salient articulation of the productive reader of cultural texts who contributes to the meaning of text" (263).[10]

10. Brittle Paper and its "portrayal of Achebe's classic hero demonstrates how the structure and design of digital media democratizes authorial space and enables user-generated reproduction of traditional modes of cultural representations" (Yeku 261). Furthermore, "fan fiction is a digital practice that has the potential to extend critical debates around the contents of the canonical texts of African literature that they

This literary practice highlights not only transformative writing, but an involved, constructive readership. In a similar manner, recent Namibian Facebook serial fictions deal with themes of sexuality, gender, and gender-based violence. They highlight productive reader involvement and bring the added component of new media possibilities for collaborative authorship and innovate literatures. And yet, even this new media literature continues earlier traditions of orality. As we will see in chapter four, this collection of work is eclectic—something that is a marker of the Namibian feminist literary texts.

The Namibian Literary Tradition

Namibians have been writing long before the 1970s, but it is in this decade that a reflexive focus on a distinctly national tradition of writing begins to emerge.[11] This generation of Namibian writers was born into the colonial experience, and write alongside second and third generation writers of African literature more broadly. It is perhaps because of this literary community—but certainly because of coloniality—that early Namibian writing evinces a sense of global-consciousness. The autobiographies, poetry, and fictional biographies that constitute much of the writing of this period was mostly produced and published abroad by Namibian exiles abroad, who often wrote in response to South African colonial rule. Henning Melber, drawing from Fanon, refers to

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rework…an appropriation that underscores the original text, extending its critical articulations" (261).

11. There is a large body of lit written in Afrikaans and German. However, following Irele's African imagination, I am focusing on Black (and Coloured) writing, as well as writings by white Namibians with an affinity to the African Imagination.

this moment in Namibian literature as "literature of combat." He notes that this tradition emerged "almost exclusively under the umbrella" of SWAPO and,

> [this literature] deliberately entered the world of the written word not as an endeavour [sic] in the field of fine arts, nor as art for art's sake, but as a historical product of a long and bitter liberation struggle. A literature inspired by the clear aim of propagating emancipation from the yoke of colonialism, addressing the Namibian cause to both fellow-Namibians and the international community. A literature born out of the will and ambition to disrupt the hierarchy of colonialism" (145).

Most of these works were written or translated into English as the chosen official language, part of what Melber describes as "a new era of written Namibian culture" (147).[12] Dorian Haarhof, however, situates this shift in early 20th century African letters and diaries, which both document and write against both German and South African colonization. He suggests these documents form "the beginnings of an alternative historiography and the development of a national response" (99) and were a "prelude to the literary texts that express the politics of the liberation movement and the emergence of SWAPO by 1960 as the co-ordinator [sic] of the struggle" (90).[13] Both Haarhof and Melber note this literature's propagandistic overtones, which, as Melber suggests, underscore that "its motive is to emphasize information and political influence" (149). Haarhof, however, expresses concern over "the relationship between autobiography and

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12. "English's place in contemporary Namibia is much more contentious than a simple binary of language of oppression vs. language of liberation. Though during Namibia's liberation struggle students fought for English as a medium of education, it has not thoroughly penetrated the country" (Kornberg "Writing Windhoek").

13. Some of the autobiographies include Vinnia Ndadi's Breaking Contract (1974), John Ya-Otto's Battlefront Namibia (1981), and the fictional autobiography by Helmut Kangulohi Angula *The Two Thousand Days of Haimbodi ya Haufiku* (1990) (Winterfeldt 93).

political propaganda," pointing to SWAPO's influence in determining which life stories of the struggle were written, and the privileging in these narratives of the political rather than the personal so that the person becomes merely a symbol of the liberation movement and the political party is mythologized (92). Nevertheless, as both Haarhof and Melber note, these autobiographies and poems, resonate with Frantz Fanon's cultural intellectuals, who, when finding "themselves in exceptional circumstances…feel the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentence which expresses the heart of the people, and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action" (Fanon 223). This phenomenon was a function shared among decolonial autobiographies across the continent.

African autobiographies emerge during the era of decolonization in the 1950s and were a mode of self-writing that recognized "the role of different forms of social and cultural disruption that produced African selves" (Masemola 346, 344). They signify a shift from "powerlessness to 'selfing' [and] functioned as a mode of protest and a point of departure for liberatory practices" (Masemola 357). Writing in 1966 of east African autobiographies of the decolonial era, Ali A. Mazrui describes them as providing "an intermediate position between literature and political testament" (82). The same could be said of Namibian autobiographies, that dealt "with the realities in the lives of the majority of Namibians who labour[ed] [sic] under the yoke of a restrictive regime" (Haarhof 94). Frequently in Biblical cadence that weaved its own promised land mythology, "[t]hey anticipate[d] the future" (Haarhof 94). Post-independence, autobiography continues to be a vibrant, popular genre, "works of catharsis" used as a means of coming to terms with the colonial past and air grievances denied by the state's refusal of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Krishnamurthy and Vale 2; See Melber "The Shifting" 26).

Only two Anglophone novels were published by Namibians before independence: Diescho's *Born of the Sun* and Hishongwa's *Marrying Apartheid*. Both Melber and Haarhof situate *Born of the Sun*, published two years before Namibia's independence in 1990, as its supposed first novel. Melber observes that the novel "bears the traces of this documentary approach" (149). It is notable that Ndeutala Hishogwa's novel *Marrying Apartheid* (1986) does not feature in their analysis, and Netta Kornberg notes its erasure from Namibian literary history ("Power" 241).

Following independence, fewer novels appeared than have poetry collections, autobiographies, and drama (Brian Harlech-Jones 238; also see Frank 20; Krishnamurthy and Vale 12).[14] Imaginative writing in Namibia—and particularly the novel—is frequently discussed as struggling, due to a "lack of reading culture, shorthand for complex issues of adult and child literacy; high cost of books; access to libraries; Namibia's literacy curriculum; a history of deliberately under-educating the majority of Namibia's population; and the relationship between oral and written literature, among other things." (Kornberg "Writing Windhoek"). Nevertheless, Namibians continue to publish, pursuing conventional and nonconventional means of literary production such as self-publishing, collaborative workshops and magazines, or utilizing digital spaces. Conventional novels include Diescho's more popular *Troubled Waters* (1993), the first

14. Harlech-Jones writes: "There are a number of reasons for this: a limited market for literature because of a small population that is fragmented by language; a relatively low per capita income where books are luxuries; the lack of a general reading culture; and the difficulty of access to creative fiction in a country where there are insufficient public libraries and bookshops…Intersecting with all these factors is the question of whether it 'pays' Namibian authors to write novels in terms of time and effort. Based on my own experience, I suspect that most Namibian novelists have earned little from their writing" (238).

novel published after independence. Written from the perspective of a white South African soldier who falls in love with a Black Namibian woman during the final years of South Africa's occupation of the north, the novel attempts to bridge the racial divide that Apartheid set up.[15] *Meekulu's Children* (2000) by Kalen Hiyalwa deals with women's contributions to the war effort in-country during the Namibian war and follows up the nascent themes in her submissions to *Coming on Strong*—as we will see in chapter two. Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) shares the concerns regarding feminism, gender, and tradition in Namibia, and more explicitly than *Meekulu's* Children, takes on the aesthetic commitment of the African female writer to the "socially educative role" (Molara Ogundipe-Leslie 65). *The Purple Violet* not only "shows" "what is really happening in Namibia today," it simultaneously positions women as agents despite dispossession and violence—themes that are popular in Facebook serial fictions (discussed in chapter four). The socially educative role of feminist writing is also a key

15. Brian Harlech-Jones' novels *A Small Space* (1999) and *To Dream Again* (20002). *A Small Space* bends time and space, putting the time of Jan Jonker Afrikaner and the space and experiences of the Herero and Damara in the 1860s into contact with Windhoek in 1989 during the transition to independence (Winterfeldt 94). *To Dream Again* set in a fictional southern African country, deals with the problematic politics of liberation movements during the Apartheid years as it follows the protagonist from his childhood village and eventually into exile and finally his return. Another novel, Peter Orner's *The Second Coming of Mavala Shikongo (2006)* "revolves around a love affair between two of the teachers: the one a white male North American volunteer and…the other a female teacher from Ovamboland. … set as it mainly is in the first year after independence, deliberately mingle factual elements and soberly narrated episodes about the horrors of the recent independence struggle and the daily routines in a central Namibian desert school" (Arich-Gerz 15). Peter Orner is American, but I mention his novel here because of its affinity to the politics of blackness and postcoloniality that it engages. Other Namibian novels include: "John Makala Lilemba's *Power Is Sweet* (2003), Francis Sifiso Nyathi's *The Other Presence* (2008), Sharon Kasanda's thriller *Dante International* (2012), and Salom Shilongo's *The Hopeless Hopes* (2013) (Frank, footnote 2, 35).

feature of the entries in *Coming on Strong*, and forms the basis of the short story and poetry contributions to Sister Namibia Magazine, Namibia's longest-standing feminist magazine, established in 1989.

Along with Sister Namibia, another significant pre-independence text is *Goël: Kortverhale en Gedigte Uit Namibië,* published in 1989. Although written almost entirely in Afrikaans, *Goël* is groundbreaking because, as Melber explains, this collection of short stories and poetry signals "decisive shifts at the domestic literary front" in that in the political climate of the 1980s domestic voices of resistance became more vocal in defiance of political oppression ("The Shifting Grounds" footnote 9, 23). *Goël's* editor, Hendrick Rall, explained:

> [*Goël* …bewys daarvan dat ons mense wel talent het en dat 'n skrywer nie 'n 'aanwaarde intellectueel' hoef te wees nie…Ons glo dat *Goël* nog baie sal spook by die wat die huidige skrywersmonopolie beheer, en ook 'n belangrike bydrae sal lewer tot die ontwikkeling van Namibië] *Goël* demonstrates that our people are very talented and that a writer need not be a traditional intellectual…We believe that *Goël* will unsettle those who monopolize the writing industry as well as contribute to Namibia's development (ii).

While *Goël* aimed to disrupt the gatekeepers of the Afrikaans literary tradition in Namibia and allow Namibians to produce Afrikaans literature, *Coming on Strong* a post-independence collection of this lineage, is an explicit, feminist engagement with the question of national identity by Namibian women, and engages the question of Anglophone in Namibia. Two more collections follow in the feminist footsteps of *Coming on Strong* and are more explicitly connected to Namibia's women's movement: *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow (2005)* and *We Must Choose Life* (2008) were produced under the Women's Leadership Centre and edited by literary activist Elizabeth ǂKhaxas. The volumes deal with themes of gender-based violence, tradition, and in *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, the connection between HIV/AIDS, gender, and

tradition. In both volumes many of the writers "show that some traditional customs and cultures have deprived women and children of their basic human rights and dignity" (Pasi and Mlambo 262). Juliet S. Pasi and Nelson Mlambo note that as these stories by women "advocate for transformation at the grassroots level, in the family and the local community, they address not just Namibian but also "African womanhood from a female perspective. They challenge the unfair cultural systems which relegate women and children to marginal roles, providing more reasons for victimising them" (263). ǁKhaxas explains how the act of writing in the context of these volumes brings about radical feminism. As part of the Women Leadership Centre's "Women's Voices Project" the collections aim to "mobilise Namibian women around the concept of 'Writing as Resistance'" (*Between* xviii). The project "highlighted the significance of women's writing and linked it to the political situation of women since independence in 1990" (xix). The organization invited women to participate in the various Women Writers' Training Workshops held across the country and encouraged them to "take up your pen and 'speak, sister, speak' for your own and our society's pleasure and transformation!" (xix). ǁKhaxas' collections continue the lineage of feminist collective texts from the margins that *Coming on Strong* inaugurated. *Coming on Strong*, however, includes Namibian women from various racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds to "speak" and contribute various genres of literature and art to the collection.

Genres of Collectivity

Engaging this tradition of Namibian literature, each of the three core texts at the backbone of this project theorize anew—that is, they move away from and/or beyond the

larger overtly political ideologies of cultural nationalism through their engagement with the intimate features of society, the quotidian, and the everyday. These rethinkings of cultural nationalism in various ways are significant because, as Patricia McFadden argues, nationalism, a "masculinist ideology and identity, and its translation into Black ruling class power in and outside the state" has no room for feminism and only includes women symbolically (2018, 425, 424). McFadden argues for "a different kind of feminism…which puts the individual Black woman at the center of its epistemology and lived aesthetic [and] creates a deep rupture with the ideological and often intimate hold that nationalism has had over Black feminist politics and activism" (421).

I draw in my work from the long history of collaboration between African and U.S. Black feminists, and I employ a transnational feminist approach to consider how these works theorize Namibian women's liberation and in turn employ new aesthetic approaches to textual production. I attend to the "complex, hesitant, and often ambivalent mix of political and cultural expression" that mark the works I examine, even as they marked writings of the early female novelists of the African literary tradition (Andrade 10). None of the literatures I address fall within the framework of the novelistic writings such as Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions,* which circulates easily in the world literary spaces. *Coming on Strong*, *Kaxumba KaNdola*, and "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" each occupy literary space uneasily, even as they privilege the grassroots, encompass various forms and multiple genres, and theorize feminism from the perspective the Namibian locality. These three works show a trajectory of Namibian writing that emerges in the context of gender and literary politics, as well as racial and gender-based marginalization. What ties these works together is that, in engaging

national narratives of belonging, they all employ various approaches of formal fragmentation and incorporate other voices and generic forms. In this way, they trouble the notion of singular authority and subjectivity as well as that of a coherent, master narrative. And even more broadly, these literatures highlight a possible (and, as I argue, continued) trajectory of collective, communal writing, fragmented and formally innovative practices. They offer shifting and blurred relationships between readers and writers that point to continued transformations in African, Anglophone, and world literature.

African Feminisms and the Namibian Context

While I frame this project in the context of feminism, I am deeply aware of the term's controversial history in African, Black, and Global South Studies. Along with situating this project within the African Anglophone literary tradition, chapter two's discussion of *Coming on Strong* (the text that forms the basis of my first chapter), published in 1996, further positions this thesis in the context of African women's studies and the question of African feminisms. *Coming on Strong* was published as scholars worked throughout the 1980s and 90s to theorize African women's studies (or African feminisms), and southern African women rewrote histories of liberation movements in their various national contexts to include women's experiences.[16] Accordingly, in what follows I provide an overview of this era of debates. While Namibian scholars tend to use the term

16. The film *Flame* (1996) is worth mentioning here, for its treatment of women soldiers during Zimbabwe's second Chimurenga. Also, *Zimbabwe Women Writers Anthology,* a collection of one hundred works by Zimbabwean women was published in 1994 by Zimbabwe Women Writers, an organization established in 1990 to address gendered inequality through writing ("Zimbabwe").

"feminism" somewhat comfortably (as I do in this project), we are not unaware of its contentious history. I suggest that the seeming comfort with the term has to do with Namibian feminist scholars' historical focus on activism and theorizing from that standpoint, the political impetus the term has come to take in the twenty-first century, and Namibia's settler colonial history that demands women's solidarity across ethnic lines.

The debates regarding African feminisms arose in conversation with and objection to second wave Western feminism's assimilationist approach to African, Black, and global south women's concerns regarding patriarchal oppression. The term "feminism" was heavily contested as founded on Western conceptions of gender, family structures, and patriarchy. It was thus seen as unable to address adequately the experiences of global south and black women who were politically, socially, and culturally situated differently. In the African context, theorists rejected, accepted, or debated the terms legitimacy in the context of African women's lived experiences, or theorized alternative notions of women's activism and liberationist practices and perspectives. A foundational publication during this era was Deniz Kandiyote's "Bargaining with Patriarchy" in which she pays careful attention to the structures of patriarchal dominance which African women negotiated in very specific contexts. She examines how women negotiated these oppressions to create situations of agency, thus "maximizing their own life chances" (280).[17] One thing the various discussions regarding African women had in common was that each in various ways argued for careful

17. This is significant because we will see this kind of negotiation occurring in chapter four, set in 2014, almost thirty years after these debates occur, as young women do not contest patriarchy so much as negotiate it to create agency for themselves. Thus, chapter four presents us with a perspective that considers some of the afterlives of these global debates that occur in the 1980s and 90s in contemporary Namibia.

attention to the specific situations of women in their various sociocultural and political contexts.

Addressing these concerns regarding context, scholars set out in the 1980s and into the 1990s to define what today we might more comfortably refer to as African feminisms. Mary E. Modupe Kolawole summarizes the questions that galvanized this era of scholarship as it addressed African women's lived conditions and works of representation: "[h]ow" she asks, "do these women relate to the question of voicelessness, marginality, oppression and self-retrieval of African women" (4)? What were the multiple ways in which women writers were "not only speaking back [but also] fighting back as they deconstruct distorted images or misrepresentations of African women" (4)? In what follows, I provide an overview of the significant texts that emerged in the 1980s and 90s to address these questions and that continue to shape African feminisms. In 1996, when *Coming on Strong* was published, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi published *Africa Wo/man Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women*, and Patricia Hill Collins published her article "What's in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond" in that same year. A year later, Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí published *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* and Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi published *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference*. In 1995 Catherine Obianuju Acholonu published *Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism*, and in 1994, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie published *Re-creating Ourselves: African Women & Critical Transformations*, in which she articulated the theoretical approach of stiwanism that demands careful attention to the various structures

of oppression that women navigate.[18] Obioma Nnaemeka published *Marginality: Speech, Writing and the African Woman Writer* in 1999.

One of the significant discussions during this era were those regarding womanism, important because they were taken up by both African and U.S. Black scholars. Taken after Alice Walker's definition in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983), womanism is a wholistic attunement to oneself, women, and one's community. It is founded in women's various practices of care and black diversity, flexible and capacious enough to cross racial and class boundaries. As Walker explains in the context of writing: "It is, in the end, the saving of lives that we writers are about. Whether we are 'minority' writers or 'majority.' It is simply in our power to do this. We do it because we care" (20). Scholars have expanded on Walker's initial definition of the term, and in 1996, Kolawole published her seminal text *Womanism and African Consciousness*, defining the relevance of womanism to the African context. Even earlier, Clenora Hudson-Weems published *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* in 1993 (with a fifth edition published in 2020). Writing in 1996 and from the standpoint of Black U.S. women, Patricia Hill Collins points out that womanism is appealing to black female scholars as an alternative to feminism because "Walker depicts the potential for oppressed people to possess a moral vision and standpoint on society that grows from their situation of oppression. This standpoint also emerges as an incipient foundation for

18. While published a little later in 2003, Oyěwùmí's introduction to her edited volume *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood* is significant, as she posits African motherhood as an alternative to feminism when considering women's solidarity in African contexts. The volume's essays also address, contest, and elaborate on the use of sisterhood as a framework for theorizing global women's solidarity.

a more humanistic, just society" (Hill Collins 11). In the context of African scholars' debates for or against feminism, womanism acknowledges an emphasis "womanhood or womanity"—how women are re-asserting themselves, making themselves heard and visible in their own terms (Kolawole 20). This ongoing transnational discussion of womanism serves as the undercurrent of my discussion of Namibian womanity and feminism and its relationship to African and transnational Black feminisms. Thus, while my project begins with a discussion of *Coming on Strong* in the context of this seminal era in African women's studies, my project traces the trajectory of the question of feminism in Namibia, culminating in 2014 where "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" allows for a Namibian intervention in these early debates. This digital text's treatment of gender dynamics in Namibia approaches the question of feminism from the perspective of national cultural tradition and its afterlives for women in the context of mother and daughter relationships. These marginalize texts at the heart of this project bring to the fore the womanist argument that those in the margins—the dispossessed and underrepresented—theorize liberation not just for women, but for their communities, and beyond.

(Inter)national Literatures and Black Feminist Futurity

The chapters that follow read these various texts with attention to marginalization, blackness, and worldliness both as the context of their emergence and as gesture to their transformative possibilities. Significantly, these works engage in their alternative-narrativizing from a feminist perspective. I frame these works within the theories of Black feminist futurity and discussions of Fanon's internationalist new humanism. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon affirms a commitment to Third World anticolonial

nationalism as having liberatory possibilities. In what is now being discussed as this post-global era in the reemergence of nationalism, my project returns to Fanon and his notion of liberatory literatures.[19] He discusses literatures that, in the landscape of struggle, represent "minor convulsions"—seeming ineffective, dispersed moments of challenge to oppression, which seem to have no immediate effect, but upon closer examination, signal "hope for the liberation struggle" (171). Accordingly, this project takes up minor from the notion of "minor convulsions" as a means of considering these Namibian feminist literatures scattered temporally across Namibia's independence era. These works are largely written in, against, and beyond the context of the nation's articulation of women's positions, and while they seem to have little effect on the normative narratives of Namibian nationalism, they nevertheless seem to represent "bold attempts to revive cultural dynamism" in light of Frantz Fanon's notion of national culture (171). They are more than resistance, however. Their engagement with marginalization offers transformative possibilities. We might even cast these literary texts and actors in light of Tina Campt's articulation of Black feminist futurity—"a performance of a future that hasn't yet happened but must… It is the power to imagine beyond current fact and to envision that which is not, but must be. It's a politics of prefiguration that involves living the future now…as striving for the future you want to see, right now, in the present" (17)." Similar to Fanon's "minor convulsions" Campt points to "miniscule" or "futile" attempts at futurity (59). And like Fanon's "new humanism," Campt's futurity is not naïve about the state of Black lives in this world. Where Fanon considers the parameters

19. Adesanmi discusses the current "postglobal" era in "From Post-Global to Post-Truth: African Literature beyond Commonsense."

of the struggle as a site to envision the future, Campt provides a means of reading the seeming quotidian—small acts—not simply as resistance, but also as an insistence to live the envisioned future now, as rupturing the dominant order to allow for possibilities to emerge. Campt asks: "how do we live the future we want to see now…How do we create an alternative future by living both the future we want to see, while inhabiting its potential foreclosure at the same time" (107).

As I approach the three literary works at the core of my project, I consider this question alongside Campt. I analyze how Namibian Africans, and women more specifically, are "captured" in the context of the postcolonial nation, and as I feel the "urgency to see possibility in the tiny, often minuscule chinks and crevices of what appears to be the inescapable web of capture," my question becomes a matter of asking what Namibian women make visible as they write and as they struggle to write. How do these women writers envision the future (of the nation, of their communities, of literature), and how do they act today to make the future tangible, and a new humanism a possibility? In connecting Namibian literary works with Black feminist scholarship in the United States, I wish to perform a kind of Fanonian internationalist national culture. I consider he connectedness of the struggles of Black women across time and space, and I embrace living the future now. The untimeliness of this impulse undercuts questions of belonging and aesthetic constraints, and it unsettles the sociological and anthropological impulse so often applied to African literary works.

Chapter Overview

Each of my core chapters of this project explores a specific case through a signal work. The second chapter—"The Politics of Belonging in *Coming on Strong*"—considers how

the collection *Coming on Strong: Writings by Namibian Women* (1996), complicates dominant African literary and cultural tropes of nationalism with feminist and local notions of belonging and futurity. At a time when male-authored texts regarding the liberation struggle predominated, *Coming on Strong* makes visible women's narratives and histories during and after the Second Namibian War (1966-1989). Furthermore, the book complicates African literary tropes of nationalism, and frames a transnational, diasporic and inter-racial community of Namibian women with feminist notions of belonging and futurity that deviate from the dominant national narrative. While commenting on national identity, most women in this collection speak from the domestic sphere, a space of both labor and resistance, as well as identity construction. I draw connections between *Coming on Strong* and narratives regarding Black female domestic labor in South Africa, and those regarding blackness in the context of motherhood in the United States. I consider how this collection reframes African and Namibian ideologies and tropes of nationalism as a means of formulating a particularly female notion of female belonging and futurity.

In the third chapter—"Feminist Form in the Communal Biography of a Barefoot Soldier"— I argue that in its collective form, *Kaxumba kaNdola Man and Myth: The Biography of a Barefoot Soldier* (2005) enacts a feminist literary consciousness that exceeds the boundary forming, conclusive and patriarchal nationalist project, as it engages colonialism and its afterlives in Namibia. Rather than just write a singular narrative that outlines Kaxumba's life and political activism, Namhila creates a communal biography and national history wreathed in myth, oral tradition, testimony, footnoted verified facts, images, and other social and literary narrative forms. In its

communal form, the book collectively conceives of an extraordinary hero who embodies the Namibian struggle against Apartheid rule. This chapter considers the intersections of literariness and historiography in the creation of a Namibian national history. As a multilingual text with valences of Oshiwambo throughout, the book renders most visceral the politics of language in the fields of African and global Anglophone literature. *Kaxumba's* literariness highlights the "place of storytelling and narrative in the fashioning of national history and consciousness" (Whitfield 232). This biography, also begs the question: what does it mean to mythologize history, and to speak in "a collective voice?" By combining interviews alongside oral tradition and myth, the biography draws communal voices into Namibian history, and creates a literary eponymous subject that is both globally dispersed and yet still solidly rooted in Namibian linguistic and cultural traditions. I consider Kaxumba as a figure of futurity, who strove for the future he wished to see, even though such striving might have foreclosed that future for him. Black feminist futurity, however, is refusal—quiet, quotidian practices that undermine the dominant, hegemonic expectations of constraint. Kaxumba's life was one of obvious resistance. However, I consider that acts of resistance and practices of refusal are not unrelated. Much of his activism did, after all, happen in the context of the quotidian—in his home, and around the activities of his home village. In this context, the biography envisions a present and future that is possible, yet often foreclosed by the nationalist politics' tendency to return time and again to the valorized version of the national struggle.

The fourth chapter— "Collaborative Authorship in Namibian Facebook Fiction"— discusses Anglophone Facebook serial fiction in the Namibian context, its

consciousness-raising function, and the relationship between the authors and the reading publics that coalesce around these Facebook pages. It analyzes the relationship between these born-digital texts, conventional publishing, and local contemporary gender discourses through the production and dissemination of the digital narrative "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" (2014). Using Facebook, the narrative's author creates a literary space to facilitate discussion concerning the precarious situation of young women in Namibia in the context of modernity, tradition, and patriarchy. Facebook facilitates an interactive relationship between the author and reader, casting readers as key players in the narrative's production and signaling one of the ways in which African literature is reinventing itself in the digital age. While Namibian digital fictions are not published formally, their use of social media and cyberspace to create and circulate literature positions them in transregional and global circuits. "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" emerges locally and engages a local (and local-conscious) readership, but is also entangled within southern African literary production. "The Dream's" transregional and new media connections highlight the affinity this fiction has to the wider African literary tradition and to global Anglophone. Despite the narrative's ephemerality "The Dream" nevertheless allows for a consideration of futurity in terms of what constitutes "literature" and its directions, going forward.

Each of these three works draws attention to the local and its complex and frequently unequal engagement with the global. This tension, I will suggest, also allows for creative and transformative possibilities. Across the three chapters that follow, I will show how genres of collectivity emerge in the contexts of marginalization, and I

demonstrate that these literatures are not merely literatures of resistance, but literatures of transformation and possibility.

CHAPTER II

THE POLITICS OF BELONGING IN *COMING ON STRONG*

In Milly Jafta's short story "The Home-coming," an older woman returns to her home village in northern Namibia after working for 40 years as a live-in domestic worker in Windhoek, Namibia's capital city. Her return occurs in the context of a newly independent Namibia, and like the "sense of expectancy" that permeates the air, she is eager to be home after the long absences away that her work demanded. She looks forward finally to being with her daughter Maria, who she sees through the bus window, scrambling to gather her mother's luggage. But when the woman finally exits the bus, she realizes at their "unemotive" greeting that not only is her daughter a stranger to her, but that she herself is a stranger in this place she has longed for so many years to return to—her home. She struggles to engage her daughter in conversation, but is unable to "find the words…my mouth remained closed and empty" (3). Unnamed and unspeaking within the context of her own narrative, this disillusioned woman eventually follows her daughter home.

"The Home-coming" is the first of many short stories published in the collection *Coming on Strong: Writings by Namibian Women*, and its themes of home and belonging, colonialism and independence, women, labor, and the quotidian, set the tone for the art, poems, short stories, and personal accounts that constitute the book overall.[20] As a literary collaboration by women, written in the early years of Namibia's independence, the collection illuminates the politics of national identity, literary production, gender, and

20. *Coming on Strong* is a miscellany. I will refer to *Coming on Strong* as a collection, rather than an anthology.

language-use against the backdrop of Namibian nation-building. At a time when male-authored texts regarding the liberation struggle predominated, *Coming on Strong* is unique in making visible women's narratives and histories both during and after the struggle. As a multi-authored collection, the book complicates African literary tropes of nationalism and frames a transnational, diasporic and inter-racial community of Namibian women with feminist notions of belonging and futurity. It both deviates from the dominant national narrative and charts an alternative understanding of community.

This first chapter considers how *Coming on Strong* reframes Namibian national belonging at the intersection of literature and reflections on identity. I trace the constellations of art, poetry, and short stories that this collection weaves together, and I do so to reveal the transnational and global networks that undergird the feminist modes of Namibian community and belonging. As a compilation of various genres, the collection also includes short first-person narrative paragraphs akin to flash fiction, and it is less concerned with proper conventions of spelling and grammar than with the simple fact that it is written in the nation's official language, English. Above and beyond the hybrid form of the collection, the various contributions are from women spanning Namibia's various class, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, including white Namibian women. In this way, the form of the collection itself speaks to the marginalization it addresses. What follows here in this chapter is divided into distinct parts reflecting the genres of the collection: art, autobiographies, short stories, and a poem. In its eclectic combination of genres and personal backgrounds, the collection creates the kind of community it describes and ultimately allows for the envisioning of a collaborative society beyond nationalist constraints.

Communal Texts and Feminist Difference

Coming on Strong is a communal text that not only collects different genres and themes of creative and nonfiction work, but also draws from a wide spectrum of Namibian women, exemplifying a racially, ethnically, culturally diverse Namibia. The book was published by New Namibia Books in 1996, which is six years after Namibia's independence. During these early years of nation-building, literary anthologies flourished. Of *Coming on Strong* and another similar text, Ismael Mbise and Helen Vale write that these gave "an opportunity to the previously disempowered and marginalised [sic] group, the majority of whom are first time writers, to express their experiences as women during the liberation struggle whether within Namibia or in exile…the popularity of anthologies [of] women's writing, is an indication of communal and group ethos where voice is given to the formerly voiceless" (Mbise and Vale 29).[21] New Namibia books had, since its inception in 1990, "received various writings from women, some of which were unfinished, and many of which did not stand on their own" (Katjavivi 362). These manuscripts helped to found the initial framework for *Coming on Strong's* (Orford and Nicanor, viii). The editors, Margie Orford and Nepeti Nicanor then solicited more contributions by advertising on the radio and in newspapers (Orford and Nicanor viii), and "writing to Namibian women, women's groups and NGOs…It was a broad but

21. Mbise and Vale flag one other collection similar to *Coming on Strong*, *A New Initiation Song: Writings by Women in Namibia*. The difference between *A New Initiation Song* and *Coming on Strong* is that *A New Initiation Song* is an anthology in the traditional sense: the work collected was previously published in Sister Namibia Magazine during the 5 years up to 1994 (Mbise and Vale 29). Why am I interested in the miscellany—because in this case, there was no theme prescribed).

undefined search—no themes or topics were prescribed" (Katjavivi 362). Jane Katjavivi, the founder of New Namibia Books, described the collection as including work from,

> many different women, cutting across class, race, ethnic, urban and rural lines…A striking aspect of the book was that it contained some very short pieces of writing from women in literacy classes in the north of Namibia. These would not stand on their own but were held together in thematic sections, allowing the authors' voices to be heard. The range of styles was diverse and only minimal editing was done. The editors felt that the authenticity of expression was more important than conventions of grammar and punctuation. The women who had written these pieces were surprised to see their contributions published and said they thought no one would be interested in their stories (Katjavivi 362).

Indeed, as Mary Jay, then Director of the African Books Collective described it, *Coming on Strong* "weav[es] a tapestry of Namibia'" (quoted in Katjavivi 362). The impetus to give voice to women through literature, particularly in contexts of marginalization, is one that ǁKhaxas describes as "highlighting the significance of women's writing and linking it to the political situation of women" (xix).

Rather than analyzing this collection of writing only in the context of resistance, I consider the possibilities that the text enables for envisioning community and identity. I think alongside the editors of the groundbreaking anthology, *Women Writing Africa: The Southern Region,* in seeing in the term "'women' [as] something as yet undiscovered, always in the process of becoming, something promising transcendence over the social divisions that have hitherto kept women apart, both from one another and from men" (1). As it envisions Namibian women's histories, life-worlds and national belonging, *Coming on Strong* enacts what Audre Lorde calls "mutual (nondominant) difference" (111). Rather than tolerating differences that define women's identities at the intersections of race, gender, age, sex, ethnicity, and class, when acknowledged and explored these individual and deeply personal differences become revelatory, creative forces upon which

to build true community (111). Lorde states that "Within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) difference lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future" (111).[22] As a literary work, *Coming on Strong* participates in debates concerning the representation of women in African literature, global histories of Black women's labor, and notions of belonging in contexts of historical violence. The book collects the voices of Namibian women (and Namibian diversity through these women) and envisions a radically diverse nation with intersectional notions of difference that coalesce into visions of a globally connected feminist Namibian community.

The Struggle for Namibian National Identity

Coming on Strong's feminist vision of a diverse and globally connected Namibian community stands in contrast to the dominant articulation of Namibian national identity. Namibian national identity most commonly valorizes the national struggle, which is the war for Namibian liberation from 1966-1989, and it simultaneously upholds the ideal of progressive modernity. The identification with the national struggle coalesces around a dominant narrative of the war that privileges Black Namibian victory and heroism in the

22. Maria Lugones draws from Ella Shohat and Robert Stam to expand on Lorde's notion of difference as a creative force around which women can build coalition. For Lugones, radical multiculturalism is a **"**passionate desire to communicate across non-dominant differences 'that establishes a cross-cultural relationship, in an egalitarian and unprecedented way, between histories that we know are interrelated'…fostered by cognitive attitudes that valorize open ended understanding, complexity, and uncertainty" (Lugones 80). Lugones presents a praxis that affiliates "'with the underrepresented, the marginalized, and the oppressed.' It 'thinks and imagines from the margins,' seeing the resistant oppressed 'as active, generative participants at the very core of a shared, conflictual history.' It thus grants to them an epistemological advantage …' [It] sees identities as multiple, unstable, historically situated, the products of ongoing differentiation and polymorphous identifications and pluralization" (78-79).

contexts of exile, return, and progressive futures.[23] In other words, in this formulation of national identity, a Namibian is one who went into exile, suffered for the liberation of the nation, and returned victorious to lead the nation into modernity. Henning Melber states that this identity emerges because, after independence, SWAPO (the South West Africa People's Organisation, which served at the fore of Namibia's liberation movement against colonial oppression), became the governing body and dominant political party (23).[24] The result was that many of the SWAPO freedom-fighters who left to wage war in exile returned to build the nation, and in turn, "[t]he dominant heroic narrative of post-colonial Namibia is present in everyday life since then" (28). The returned-from-exile freedom-fighters are the fathers of the nation, the leaders understood to be imbued with agency toward state building. This heroic discourse is reflected in choices made by SWAPO in defining a nation that mirrored the political party's "commitment to remember the victims [of the liberation war] in times of peace as well as war" (28).[25] Thus, the dominant narrative glorifies resistance, victory, and martyrdom, shaping the colonial conflict in terms of a clear-cut binary between winners and losers (26).[26] The

23. To be clear, this is an idealized notion of exile. See Namhila's *The Price of Freedom,* 194-195).

24. SWAPO has remained in power since Namibia's independence, and the presidents were each key figures in the party during the war.

25. Choices such as Namibia's Independence Day of March 21 1990, chosen because it was the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. This commemoration of the struggle is also reflected in Namibia's national anthem, which glorifies the war and victory, stating in its first two sentences: "Namibia Land of the brave freedom-fight, we have won. Glory to their bravery whose blood waters our freedom."

26. A significant visual representation of the two sides of this nationalist narrative of martyrdom, victory, and bravery on the one hand, and notions of modernity and

message articulated in various ways is that Namibia has won the war and is moving forward. But an implication of this narrative is also that there is no room or patience for opposing narratives.[27] Instead, Namibian national identity is forward-looking, developmental, modern, and it is a modernity built on a struggle that the Namibian people will not forget. At the same time, it is a narrative that tends to exclude those who stayed in-country and did not suffer through exile. Structurally, then, it especially excludes women as agents in nation-building. Those who truly belong in the context of this nationalism are Namibia's indigenous Black and Coloured peoples.

Coming on Strong questions and complicates this vision of national belonging, and it presents us with various paintings of the landscapes of Namibia that serve to unsettle the ideals that often accompany the notion of home, belonging and nation. The complexities introduced in the various paintings include themes that winds their way through the various genres and texts of *Coming on Strong.*

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progress on the other, is the statue of Sam Nujoma—Namibia's first President—situated prominently in front of the recently erected Independence Museum in Windhoek. Nujoma is referred to as the Founding Father of the nation, and in this monumental bronze statue, the country's "father," in an immaculate suit looks over downtown Windhoek, his right hand raised high, and holding Namibia's constitution. Designed to emulate the "Founding Father"—who is the epitome of a patriarchal Namibian national identity and discourse, epitomizes a national identity that is as Black, male, victorious, and progressive. As the embodiment of Namibian struggle identity, Nujoma also appears prominently at other sites of war across the country, around which his resilience and heroism as a freedom-fighter during the war is highlighted (32).

27. one of the consequences of this choice is the decision to not conduct a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Because SWAPO also committed atrocities toward Namibians during the war, and also because of the problematic gender politics at the time (see Akawa). The impact of this decision is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Art: Home, Nation, and Global Black Affinities

There are six artworks included in *Coming on Strong* that each individually deal with feminist themes and collectively raise questions regarding national belonging. In this section, I will consider two of these works: Ellen Masule's painting, "The Homecoming," and a photograph of Dörte Berner's sculpture, *Black Pieta*. These works are representative of the way in which the art disrupts idealistic notions of the nation and allows us to envision alternative ways of engaging notions of belonging in the context of history and diversity.

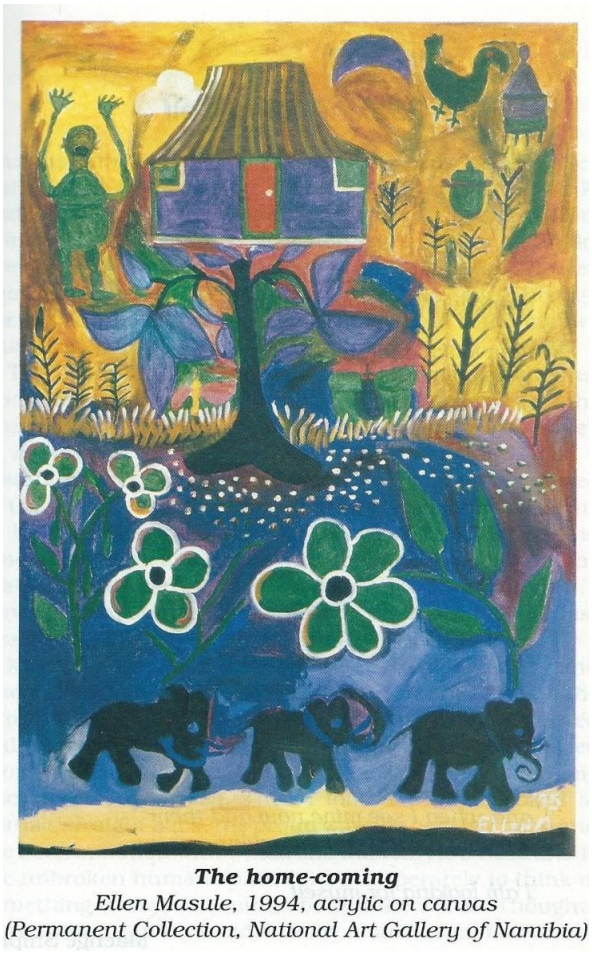

Figure 1.1. "The Homecoming" by Ellen Masule

Masule's "The Home-coming" (Figure 1.1) is the first text that we encounter in the collection's pages, and this oil-on-canvas painting troubles the themes of home and belonging inherent in cultural nationalism. In the painting's beautiful, sentimentally childlike vision, the nation is encapsulated in the lands and homescapes that facilitate Namibian cultural practices. "The Home-coming" contains bright blues, greens, reds, and yellows along with large forms

incongruously scattered across the canvas in a way that seems to mirror the guilelessness of a child's artistic depiction of home. And yet, the painting encompasses a range of settings, complicating what home could mean. Across the bottom is a stretch of deep-blue, and above it, a line of golden yellow. This portion of the painting is reminiscent of Namibia's coastal terrain, the Atlantic's dark waters, and the Namib, the coastal desert that wends its golden yellow dunes alongside the water. The yellow sands are traversed by three elephants, just like the rare desert elephants of Namibia's semi-arid drylands. One gets a sense of the various, distinct features of Namibia's landscapes. Above the elephants, large-blossomed green and white daisy-like flowers demarcate a border between the landscapes below and the homescape above it. Within the context of the Namibia as seen below, the domestic scene of a home in the village is elevated in the painting.

In the upper section of the painting is a simple dark tree, and at the tree's apex is a simple house: four walls, a red door, two windows and a thatched roof. Behind the tree are the yellows of harvest with dark stick figurations of crops overlaid. To the right of the house are the creatures and structures that mark many African village compounds: a thatch-roofed grainery precariously balanced on four legs, a clay pot-and-basket, and the form of a chicken—dark-green and red-eyed. It is a familiar grassroots image of African domesticity that carries pan African undertones. Brightly colored and childishly innocent, home is the village compound, ensconced within the broader landscapes of one's domestic country. But what belies this warm innocent depiction is the humanoid figure in the left corner. The figure's arms are elongated and raised above their head. Their hands are claw-like, and their mouth is a dark, wide, and disturbing blot. This figure is

unsettling, and in turn disturbs this seemingly innocent image of home, country, and return. The childlike quality of the painting lends not only a sense of innocent idealism, but in the context of the deformed figure, a disconcerting unreality.

The painting's title, "The Home-coming," implies return and in the context of a new Namibia, it most explicitly cites the return of the exiles. In this sense, the painting is a nostalgic visual record of the features of the nation and home remembered from a distance. It evokes the wistful poems of the Namibian exiles of the pre-independence writing. For example, Mvula ya Nangolo's beautiful and well-known poem "From Exile" published in 1976 (and not included in this collection) is nostalgic for home as a revitalizing place of healing, understanding, and belonging. The first stanza reads:

> From exile when I return
> I'm going to beg someone to touch me
> very, very tenderly
> and gradually put me at ease
> I wish to feel again how life feels

Similar to the painting, home in the poem is idealized. It continues: "I've not been home for many, many years …// and I've learnt to be homesick here in exile // where life is not so bright" (ya Nangolo). This home—a brighter place—is contrasted to the place of exile, "bullets," and "camouflage." "[C]ountry and nation" are an "atmosphere // of people in a peaceful sphere." The narrator's wistful tone is the result of their speaking from the distance of exile. In *Coming on Strong*, Maria Kaakunga's autobiographical account of return stands in contrast to the poem's narrator's yearning for the feeling of belonging home brings. In her account "Let This Not Be True" Kaakunga tells of a bitter-sweet return, similar in this way to ya Nangolo's poem. But home is not a peaceful sphere: "The place of my birth was no longer the same. I hardly could recognise [sic] it. The nature

was destroyed by war. However, it was lovely to see my village again. Many people had moved to live somewhere else" (94). As we will see in other autobiographies in the collection, the village home, as told by those who stayed, was itself is a site of war and struggle. And in the short stories, the village and the nation are imagined as places of alienation, and the landscapes of Namibian domesticity as marked by racial history. Just as from a distance home may evoke nostalgia, within the context of the up close and personal, the painting's vision of the landscapes of Namibia is not as idealistic as it first seems. It inhabits both the possibility of belonging and the complexities inherent to this cultural space.

While "The Home-coming" sets the trajectory for a postcolonial feminist reading that troubles the nation as encapsulating an ideal notion of home and belonging, Dörte Berner's sculpture *African Piéta* (Figure 1.2) weaves transnational, feminist, and global black affinities through the complicated vision of black motherhood. Dörte Berner's 1975 sculpture *African Piéta* is carved out of serpentinite rock sourced from Omieve Farm in central

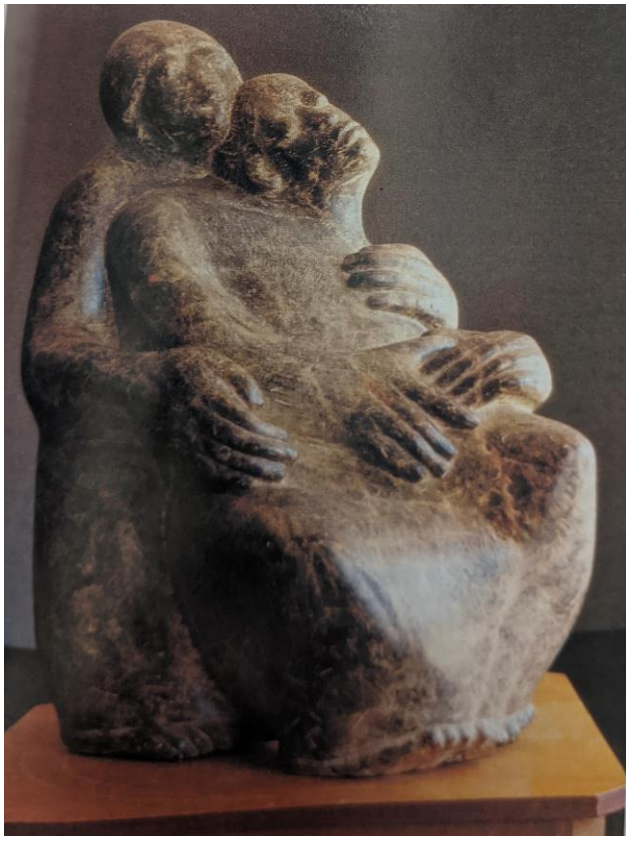

Figure 1.2. *African Piéta*, Dörte Berner, 1975, (omieve stone), Permanent Collection, National Art Gallery of Namibia.

Namibia. Like Masule's painting, this stone sculpture, in its material and emphasis on the source, features the locality and landscape of Namibia as key to the representation. It is an *African* Pietá in the shared sense of pan-African struggle for liberation, but in the citation of the farm, it is also specifically located in Namibia and alludes to the complex racial history of land dispossession and colonial violence.

It is important to note that Dörte Berner is a German-Namibian artist. In fact, many of the authors and creators in *Coming on Strong* are of European descent, citing the complicated global history that shapes the nation that is Namibia. However, it is one of the ways in which the collection weaves global connections both in the authors' transnational identities and the histories they bring to bear on Namibian identity. Thus, along with a solidarity or sympathy in this representation, there is also the tension of colonial history inscribed within this art. It invites conversations about collaboration for independence among black and white populations. It recalls Steve Biko's contention that white and black populations should work toward liberation from separate fronts. For Biko, collaboration between blacks and whites hinders radical action that unsettles the status quo, since experiences of oppression are felt by blacks only making the task more urgent for Africans (68). Nevertheless, in including works by influential figures like Gwen Lister, the founder of the influential newspaper The Namibian, and Jane Katjavivi, (both discussed further below) the text includes visions of effective white collaboration and considerations of a syncretic Namibian identity.

Along with the history Berner's identity brings to bear, the carving, in its name and form, interrogates the afterlives of colonial history. *African Piéta* cites Michelangelo's *Pietà*, the iconic representation of the virgin Mary mourning the loss of

her son whose dead body she cradles in her arms. Berner reworks this figuration of loss meant to evoke compassion. In the context of African colonial violence, *African Piéta* undercuts notions of universal motherhood, the assumed normativity of whiteness, and Christianity, each which served to erode African ethnic identities and cultural practices. Berner's Pietà cites the sacrifice of the mother at the loss of her son. It is a figure that elicits compassion for the loss that is inherent in black motherhood in the context of colonialism.

Centered on themes of loss and motherhood, *African Piéta* also creates an affinity between Namibia's encounter with colonialism to the afterlives of the global racial project as it manifests in other settler colonies. In the United States, artwork like Renee Cox's 1996 photograph *"Yo Mama's Pietà"* (Figure 1.3), Cox is figured as the mother—draped in fabric, bare-breasted, and cradling the naked body of her grown Black son, "a living black woman holding a black youth in her arms in stark contrast to Michelangelo's

Figure 1.3. Renee Cox, *"*Yo Mama's Pietà" (1996)

Pietà carved in cold, white marble" (McLarney 7).[28] It vividly contrasts white racial oppression (30). More recently, in 2018, Jon Henry's *Stranger Fruit* (Figure 1.4) series of photographs, in which Black women across the country pose holding their sons in the manner of the *Pietà,* personalizes and individualizes the history of police violence toward Black men in the United States and the politics of Black protest from the viewpoint of the mother's loss [see essay about emit till]. They "are photos of fear…images inspired by the worry black mothers have about police violence against their sons" (Simon).[29] Henry describes these as centered on "the plight of the mother. Who, regardless of the legal outcome, must carry on without her child…When the trials are over, the protesters have gone home and the news cameras gone, it is the mother left. Left to mourn, to survive." Loss is personalized. These untimely photographs are what Campt calls "Black futurity and the echo of premature death"; the "mis-memories of a present past" (101; 103). They are,

> [t]he seriality of the untimely forfeiture of black and brown lives to incarceration or premature mortality has become an urgent refrain that echoes backward and forward in time. …It is a generational issue of the first magnitude that threatens both the futurity of the next generation as well as our own. (Campt 106)

In conjunction with Berner's sculpture, they allow us to envision the connection between the afterlives of racism and the loss of Black lives that followed slavery and colonialism, but with an emphasis on the mother.

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28. *"*Access and mass appeal have historically made photography a powerful location for the construction of an oppositional black aesthetic… . . . There [i]s a constant struggle on the part of black folks to create a counterhegemonic world of images that would stand as visual resistance, challenging racist images."" (bell hooks, quoted in McLarney 3).

29. An earlier Black Pietà is the painting Behold Thy Son, created in 1956 by David Driskell following the murder of Emmett Till.

But it also invites consideration of what *African* motherhood is, in the context of colonial loss and decoloniality. *African Piéta* is distinct from the Mother Africa of patriarchal cultural nationalisms who must suffer bodily as a martyr and symbol of the rebirth of the nation following colonization. In *African Piéta,* the mother loses her son—the loss is personal and creates shifts in family perceptions. The mother must continue on in the face of her loss—a loss that defines her futurity. In *Coming on Strong*, Desirée Isaak's autobiographical short story "Christmas at Granny's" envisions the way this history makes its way into the everyday. The narrator nostalgically recounts the childhood memory of a happy family gathering in this women-run household: "my grandfather…died before I was born…My uncle (my grandmother's first born…is also dead now)" (10). The children are preparing to read a proverb in front of the church on Christmas day: "In front of Mother and Grandmother…I guess this was a special moment for the mothers—to be able to say: 'That is my daughter up there'" (11). Both the story and the art present mothers and women in the context of

Figure 1.4. Jon Henry, "Untitled 39, Santa Monica, CA" (Barnes).

colonial history and the nation's future as the possibilities rest on the relationship between a mother and her girl-child. It shifts future possibilities of nation-building and belonging to women. In the context of this collection, Berner's sculpture takes on deeper meaning. With the loss of the son due to colonial violence, the mother continues, and the collection presents alternative ways for considering national belonging, agency, and feminist collaboration centered on the often-overlooked daughter.

The various themes the artwork by Masule and Berner engage in the context of this collection present a nation that is complex, dynamic, and globally connected. The various short stories in the collection take up these themes, and reveal women within the nation's borders who are articulating themselves as agents within the nationalist context. Their efforts unsettle the dominant narrative of Namibian struggle identity and produce alternative perspectives of belonging.

Short Stories: African Feminisms, Motherhood, and Nationalism

The themes of cultural nationalism and feminist collaboration in the context of national belonging seen in various ways in the artwork also define the short stories. In this section I will discuss five of the collection's seven short stories: Milly Jafta's "The Home-Coming" and Kaleni Hiyalwa's "The Baby's Baby," Marialena van Tonder's "When the Rains Came," Mandi-Ellaine Samson's "Drought," and Jane Katjavivi's "Uerieta." Like the art above, the short stories I will discuss in this chapter also engage notions of cultural nationalism and home, suffering and national identity, and histories of race. A prominent feature of most of these narratives are mother-daughter, women-to-women relationships.

Milly Jafta's "The Home-Coming," described in the introductory paragraph of this chapter, is the first short story in the collection. This story is important because it is

the only story that I have come across in the Namibian literary tradition that directly engages the female domestic worker. Furthermore, it reworks the patriarchal nationalist Mother Africa tropes. Thus, it engages feminist debates in the African literary tradition broadly, and locally, also participates in Namibian women authors' reworking of the trope. This, along with its dealings with the afterlives of domestic labor put it in conversation with other South African texts regarding this emerging field of study makes this short story an important text in its own right.

The mother-daughter relationship features strongly in "The Home-coming." In the context of this relationship, it brings into focus the infrequently discussed female migrant laborers as an experience of intra-national exile and suffering. "The Home-Coming" repeats the nationalist narrative of exile, return, and progress, but from within the constraints of the nation—the protagonist never goes into exile. Yet she experiences an alienation similar to that of the exiles and nostalgia for home akin to that evoked in Masule's painting. Like Berner's sculpture *African Piéta*, Jafta's short story melds the themes of motherhood to the Namibian land, and to colonial violence.

Through suffering and the mother-daughter relationship, "The Home-Coming" reworks the nationalist trope of Mother Africa to figure women as agents of national possibility. Upon her return, the woman's first encounter with home is a sense of alienation. Her sense of alienation allows her to reflect on her difficult years as a domestic worker, which forms the foundation of her perspective of liberation. After their anti-climactic meeting, the unnamed woman follows her daughter, Maria, down the dirt path that leads to their village—their home. As she walks, the woman considers her past, the years of colonial servitude in which her life meant very little to those she interacted

with from day to day, and her alienation in this context, making her a foreigner in the cultural and physical landscapes of her homeland:

> I had to make myself understood in a foreign tongue…had to learn how an electric kettle works, how and when to put the stove off, that doors are not open to strangers and that you do not greet everyone you meet with a handshake…I longed to smell the fields after the rain. But I was in Swakopmund with my Miesies and her family…I was without my family…like most of my adult life (4).

Mother Africa is the way in which the woman makes sense of her colonial alienation and wasted past. Following her daughter home, the woman reflects on the compounding effect of the alienation that defined her years as a laborer: "A young girl has left and after forty years…an old women [sic] is on her way back home. An old woman who has her eyes fixed on the ground" (4). There was nothing in the "foreign land" to anchor her to a sense of self and purpose—no familial, located connections that recognize her subjectivity in the form of an affirming identity.[30] The woman must reconfigure what it means to be a mother in the context of this alienation. Her daughter's kindness to her helps her to realize that despite the years away, "I had come home…I was together with the fruit of my womb. I had grown fruit" (5). As a result, the years of separation and suffering are not a waste. Motherhood becomes synonymous with a feminized Africa: "I looked down at my wasted, abused body and thought of the earth from which such beautiful flowers burst forth. And I knew then I am Mother Africa" (5). As Mother Africa the woman is the foundation upon which the nation is built, and thus key to what it will become. The future is founded on her sacrifice and suffering. While the woman remains

30. Magona describes the woman domestic laborer as entering a "zombie-like" state: "transformed, the minute they opened the gates of the houses where they toiled. From the alert, vivacious, knowledgeable, interesting people they were on these buses, they would change to mute, zombie-like figures who did not dare have an idea, opinion, or independent thought about anything, anything at all (132).

voiceless and nameless within the narrative, she "walked ahead of Maria in the narrow path, my back straight and my eyes looking forward. I was in a hurry to get home" (5). With this ending her leadership role is implied as she walks ahead of Mariah—who stayed. This is a different vision of the Mother Africa trope that has featured in early African literature.

This use of the Mother Africa trope is controversial because of its problematic symbolic use of African women as an embodiment of Africa in the anticolonial poetry and novels of first and second generation male African writers. Florence Stratton discusses how the Mother Africa trope has become a defining feature of the male African literary tradition, beginning with Léopold Sédor Senghor ("The Mother Africa Trope," 39, 50). She points out that this trope,

> defines a situation that is conventionally patriarchal. The speaker is invariably male, a western-educated intellectual. The addressee is always a woman. She is pure physicality, always beautiful and often naked. He is constituted as a writing subject, a producer of art and of sociopolitical visions; her status is that of an aesthetic/sexual object. She takes the form either of a young girl, nubile and erotic, or of a fecund nurturing mother. The poetry celebrates his intellect at the same time as it pays tribute to her body which is frequently associated with the African landscape that is his to explore and discover. As embodying mother she gives the trope a name: the Mother Africa trope. (41)

Stratton goes on to argue that "The trope elaborates a gendered theory of nationhood and of writing…In all of the works, the national subject is designated as male. A feminized Africa thus becomes the object of the male gaze… The relationship is one of possession. He is the active subjectcitizen [sic], She is the passive object-nation" (51). Stratton's concern is succinctly summarized in a statement made by Mariama Bâ, when she stated, "[t]here is still so much injustice…We no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African Mother, who, in his anxiety, man confused with Mother Africa" (quoted in

Andrade, 12). Stratton and Bâ are concerned about the particular—the individual woman who works to live her life in the context of cultural and political expectations of "approved feminine behavior" (Andrade 12). Andrade observes that "Stratton's insight, broadly configured in metaphorical terms, has captured an important psychodynamic of male-identified cultural nationalism: its need for an idealized mother, as well as its fear of a self-commodifying female figure run amock in modernity" (14). However, she also points out that "Stratton's practice of thematic reading on behalf of feminism leaves little room for attention to form, nuance, or contradiction" (13). Where Stratton is interested in faithful representation, Andrade argues that literature does not have to be faithful, writing that "[u]nfortunately, Stratton also seems to assume that there is a single, correct way to represent women…Accuracy is an unspoken standard that she brings to bear against male writers, and, as one might expect, all of them fail in some way" (14). Instead, Andrade makes the point that to acknowledge a text's literariness is to acknowledge "that literature is a cultural product, an act of representation with mediation at its heart" (14). Andrade asserts "the value of literature's ability to lie on behalf of a greater truth" (20). Neither Andrade nor Stratton is wrong. For Stratton, the implications of these misrepresentations have to do with how African women are treated, both as people and as authors in the African literary tradition. For Andrade, her concern is regarding how women's writing is understood, and she invites attention to the contradictions as a means of grasping the work's "greater truth."

Lorensia ǂNanus' poem in Elizabeth ǂKhaxas' collection *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow* bears out Stratton's point and demonstrates the trope's afterlives in a post-independence Namibian context. Almost 10 years after this short story's publication,

ǁNanus, engages Mother Africa in her poem "Number Three," reading this trope in the context of "tradition" polygamous marriages and from a gendered perspective. The poem is about a woman whose husband decides to take on multiple wives. By the time the disillusioned narrator writes, her husband is marrying his third wife, who he calls "Number Three." She laments: "I thought I'd never // Ever // Share him // But he said its Africa // It's his right." The narrator asks herself "Is it my right? // Is it my right // to die of AIDS // Mother Africa?" (20). Mother Africa—at this point signifying beyond the macro-politics of cultural nationalism to the micro-implications of patriarchal tradition's day-to-day—is not for her, neither her social nor physical wellbeing. Rather, the trope elicits her violation and positions her husband as the winner: "But he won // What could I do?" The poem highlights on a personal level the effect of the nationalist vision in which women are symbols, and how this symbolism serves the patriarchy—leads to perpetuating violence toward women.

Similarly, in *Coming on Strong*, Ellen Namhila's autobiographical narrative "Living Abroad" tells of how, during her exile in the Gambia in 1978, young Namibian men policed Namibian women for appropriate behavior. She recounts an incident where the young men beat a young woman. When confronted,

> [o]ne of them told the police that the girl misbehaved and that her behaviour [sic] was an embarrassment to Namibian society…The policeman was satisfied with the response, adding that when he studied in Britain, he experienced similar problems with Gambian girls…These chauvinistic boys were bent on making the lives of the girls miserable. The Namibian girls who studied in West Africa lived in terror of them (78).

In the context of nationalism in which women are idealized as symbols of the nation, the result is often violence toward women.[31] "The Home-Coming," however, does not "reproduce in symbolic form the gender relations of patriarchal societies" in its use of Mother Africa (Stratton 51). Rather, the ways in which the trope is used in the short story is productive.

It is significant that the gaze we are presented with in "The Home-Coming" is that of a woman. It is also significant that the woman finds healing in the kind consideration she receives from her daughter, who offers her a moment of rest on the walk home (5). Maria's small gesture of kindness, so different from the treatment she experienced in her years of servitude, evokes within her the joy of returning home and the anticipation of her future. If we consider Andrade's reading of women's literature—as needing to be understood rather than being a faithful (or faithless) representation, we can see how within the scope of this trope, the woman in the short story also carves out alternative visions of Namibianness founded in women's-bondedness and feminist futurity—that is, how the dispossessed create agency for themselves and possibilities for a future within the contexts of restraining societal expectations. In "The Home-Coming" the nation's future depends on the mutual recognition that occurs between women—between mother and daughter.[32]

Stratton has made the point that women authors have rejected the Mother Africa trope, and yet Namibian women authors have made use of it (50). Namibian women

31. We see the contemporary afterlives of this idealization of women as bearers of national culture and tradition in chapter 3.

32. In chapter 3 we see how in the context of conservative nationalism, the mother/daughter relationship is an antagonistic one. Here it is collaborative, healing.

authors use the trope to highlight its problematic afterlives, but also to revise the masculinist impulse within the trope. In her consideration of how female Namibian authors use Mother Africa, Netta Kornberg writes that these novels present "a model of female power without males; [the novel] *Meekulu's Children's* model of female agency is one which asserts female authority over feminised land" (253).[33] Similarly, the narrator in the short story "co-opts a symbol of Namibia the Motherland and claims it as herself, adopting a model of female power which is both maternal and makes a claim over contested land" (254). In the short story there is not central male figure that serves to define the woman and her daughter. Symbolic nationhood is envisioned through a matrilineal model of female agency that depends on collaboration, care, and the acknowledgement of difference. "The Home-coming" carves out the possibility of alternative visions of Namibianness founded in women's-bondedness and feminist collaboration as the core to notions of liberation post-independence. Furthermore, it highlights Namibia's transregional political and historical affinities within Southern Africa, and Africa and its diaspora more broadly.

In "The Home-Coming," domesticity functions on multiple levels. Domesticity speaks to national identity and weaves transnational connections in the contexts of labor and colonialism. Like the exiled martyrs of Namibian national identity, the unnamed narrator of also leaves her home, but her struggle in the colonial context of the self-eroding work of the female domestic laborer. "The Home-coming" envisions a mode of national belonging and identification that is not only formed within the borders of the

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33. Kornberg was writing about Kaleni Hiyalwa's novel *Meekulu's Children's* and Ndeutala Hishongwa's *Marrying Apartheid*.

country, but is also emergent outside of politics writ large. Here you have labor concerns, but they do not arise in the context of the Odalate Naiteke strikes or other such large-scale labor movements. Nor do they bespeak of the sort of macropolitical liberationist acts led by SWAPO. Instead, in "The Home-coming" we have the quiet experiences of the female migrant domestic worker told by a silent woman. This story is one of few other as-yet infrequently told narratives of female domestic workers during the apartheid era. The narrative already situates the woman within the wider context of the colonial contract labor system in Namibia, a system frequently discussed in terms of the extraction of men from the village—not women. Women, in the context of this system remained in the village, not allowed to move with their husbands, and as a means of maintaining village life. They function to maintain the men's connection to their homeland within Apartheid's system of indirect rule (Mamdani 18).

However, women also left their homes in the village to work for white families in the city—living with them as domestic laborers with very little income, and few rights. Rebecca Ginsberg in her study of the domestic labor system in South Africa argues that the situation of the domestic worker was a microcosm of the macro-political situation of South Africa's Apartheid system, and although "each of course had her own story, no woman's tale could be disentangled from that of her country's midcentury experiment with apartheid" (29). Ginsberg highlights the interlocking nature of women's situatedness with the state of the nation. Within "The Home-Coming's" nationalist preoccupation, the domestic sphere is where she is situated as a domestic labor within a home as a function of the broader colonial labor system. It is also the source of her alienation from the normative notions of belonging associated with domesticity because of colonial labor

practices. She is alienated within the home where she is working, and from her own home village. As Sindiwe Magona described them "They are not slaves. They are frighteningly close, though" (128).

Authors and their Influences on Namibian Literary Culture

In this collection, "The Home-Coming" sets the tone for significant engagement with the afterlives of colonialism in the context of decolonial feminism. It casts women as agents and envisions possible collaboration between generations of women. It participates in the collection's communality and the possible futures *Coming on Strong* theorizes in its heterogeneity. The collection, however, also includes women authors who have impacted Namibian literature in significant ways. Here I consider how these authors and their texts in *Coming on Strong* presents us with an image of ethnically and racially diverse Namibian identities that are also globally connected. Their narrative are attentive to cultural and historical nuances that allow the collection to enact communality that engages the difficulties of difference and contradiction.

Novelist Kaleni Hiyalwa has two works included in *Coming on Strong*: a poem and a short story. Both in her short story, and in her novel published later in 2000, communality and collaboration among older and younger women feature strongly. Both narratives are personal imaginative accounts of the war. While removed in years from the war, these narratives are related to struggle literature in the way they make sense how Namibian women negotiated the additional burden of gender and marginality during the war. Hiyalwa's novel *Meekulu's Children* is significant because in a post-independence literary tradition focused heavily on political autobiographies, it is "the first [and currently only] piece of post-colonial Namibian writing—fictional or non-fictional—that

is entirely devoted to the experiences of 'ovakalimo', or the 'stayers" (Heike Becker, quoted in Katjavivi, 361).[34] As mentioned previously, this novel reworks Mother Africa in the context of female agency (Kornberg 253). Furthermore, collaboration among women is central to its narrative is the "personal and collective development of [the protagonist] Ketja and her community" (Becker 107). The novel's engagement of female agency is evident in her earlier work in *Coming on Strong.*

Hiyalwa's short story in the collection, "The Baby's Baby," center around the rape and coercion that women who joined the war effort in exile endured in resettlement camps, and obliquely references SWAPO's problematic gender politics (55).[35] The narrative tells of the pregnancy of the thirteen-year-old Shekupe. It reveals two instances of marginalization in the context of the exiled population: that of girls and women, and the impoverished soldiers, men like the character Bazooka who is tasked to assist Shekupe, and who she despises because of his broken English and poverty:

> 'Bazooka!...What is wrong?' the officer asked with an authoritative voice…Bazooka shook like a cloth under pressure of a strong wind. 'Nothing wrong, Comradi!' he answered… 'Remove your boots!' Comrade Kalubena ordered. 'Pilishi, Comradi Commanda…Yeshi, yeshi!' Bazooka replied. He stad down and started to remove his heavy military boots carefully as if there was an egg hidden under his feet which he was afraid to break. Bazooka twisted his face while removing them and then there he was, with his feet almost rotten…Shekupe looked at Bazooka with hatred (57).

34. Ovakalimo refers generally to those who stayed in the country, did not go into exile, and were not overtly politically active. Victor Kapache's novel *On The Run* (1994) is far more political and is set in Windhoek.

35. Also see Akawa, 2014.

Afraid that her pregnancy would lead to further punishment, Shekupe "hoped that the commander would follow up Bazooka's case and forget about hers" (57). Like her novel, Hiyalwa's short story is,

> testimonial literature…literature which takes imaginative licence [sic] as a strategy to overcome obstacles which limit voices speaking about or from traumatic experience. In other words, fictional testimonial literature exists at the intersection of imagination and power, where voices emerge from marginal spaces (Kornberg 244).

Ellen Namhila's work in *Coming on Strong* also offers testimony, but rather than fictional, it is autobiographical. Namhila is an influential historian and archivist, and her autobiographical accounts of her experience in exile allow a critical awareness of the transnational and global connections that allow Namibian particularities to resonate broadly in a global context. Namhila's contribution recounts her years in exile in The Gambia and Finland. During her stay in Finland from 1985-1989, Namhila had to adapt to Finnish cultural expectations while also working to maintain "links" to her culture (80). She finds however that in the face of Finnish racism her Namibian identity does not matter; she is simply "African", simply "black" and with the assessment came expectations of stereotyped Black behavior:

> most Finns responded with disbelief when I told them I cannot sing. They expected me to dance, laugh and be happy all the time. That was one of the misconceptions they had about black people from Africa. In some places, people ran away when they first saw me. I had no idea what they thought I would do to them, but they reminded me of someone who suddenly sees a lion in the African wilderness. Only it was I who was the lion (81).

From this description of the expectation that she mimic the behavior reminiscent of that caricatured in 19th century U.S. black minstrelsy, Namhila's encounter mirror's Fanon's own confrontations with the "historico-racial schema…woven…out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories," the "historicity" born out of global racism and that envelops Black

people ("The Fact" 84). In the context of these and other racial encounters, Namhila was glad "to come home" in 1989 (82). Home, however, does not escape the global racial legacies of blackness, and the collection engages these difficulties.

This is further evident in the collection's inclusion of influential women writers from Namibia's white population. Journalist Gwen Lister cofounded the independent newspaper *Windhoek Observer* (1978), and in 1985 founded *The Namibian*, currently the most widely circulated newspaper in Namibia. She was also the first female editor of a southern African newspaper, and as an investigative journalist, revealed many of the crimes of the apartheid government in Namibia (Fitzgibbon). In *Coming on Strong*, her autobiographical narrative "Time Ticks Slowly in Jail" recounts her arrest without trial in 1988 by Namibia's Apartheid government after she leaked top secret documents about sweeping new police powers, a revelation that meant that these plans were never implemented (40; Fitzgibbon). Four months pregnant at the time of this very traumatic experience, Lister's account is frank regarding the racial inequality evident in her experience of arrest: the officer "handed me over to a Black police sergeant, who, obviously somewhat taken aback at having to up the likes of me in a cell, asked me politely to come with him…It was obviously not a common sight to see a white woman being locked up in those days" (42).

Like the inclusion of Dörte Berner's art in the collection, contributions by white women like Gwen Lister and Jane Katjavivi— founder, publisher, and director of New Namibia Books— invites consideration of Namibia's racial heritage as a part of the nation's identity, and as influencing how liberation is theorized in this collection. Short stories in the collection contend with Namibia's racial history as it informs a

contemporary, diverse independent Namibia. In Isaak's previously mentioned "Christmas at Granny's" the narrator states that "My grandmother, unlike the girls she was raised with, possessed long, soft, wavy hair. My grandmother's father had been German (one of the settlers). Her large facial features and her light-coloured skin were evidence of this" (10). And Marialena van Tonder's hope-filled short story "When the Rains Came" is set on an Afrikaner cattle farm. It is a story that has in its unspoken background the migration of Afrikaners into Namibia. The story is about a white couple's struggle against drought. However, even here, the narrative involves the carefully deferential and yet impoverished farmhand, Old Jonas, whose "eyes…were blue, a striking reminder of the German blood that flowed in the veins of his people" (131). Race runs like a fissure through these narratives of identity—as does the impossibility of cultural purity.

So too, does racial inequality, an afterlife of colonial violence. In the collection, van Tonder's narrative of hope in the context of drought is juxtaposed with Mandi-Ellaine Samson's own hopeless story "Drought." Samson's narrative is set in the village, and in this story, the protagonist Selma, starved, hopeless, and unable to feed her son, desperately sinks "to the ground, clutching hands full of soil, soil that would never yield…Lying there on the dry soil she accepted the truth. It was the day hope died" (125). Samson's vision of the homescape is not peaceful or nostalgic. It is riven through with a history of impoverishment due to war and exacerbated by drought. When faced with this kind of envisioned Namibia, how then do we address the afterlives of systemic oppression that privileges the white population, and the governing elite? This question is not easily answered. However, Katjavivi's story "Uerieta" privileges the knitting together

of knowledges with an emphasis on the value of indigeneity and shared understanding as a means of envisioning a future.

The short story "Uerieta" by Jane Katjavivi suggests a syncretic approach to the Namibian and non-Namibian cultural knowledges that make up the nation's life worlds to articulate Namibian identity. It engages the question of belonging and indigeneity, but from the perspective of one who is not indigenous to Namibia. "Uerieta" tells the story of Sarah, a white Englishwoman recently moved to Namibia with her Herero husband, Obed, an exile who returns home to help rebuild the country. Sarah struggles with the language barrier that stands between her and Obed's family; she struggles to acclimate to Namibia's hot, arid landscapes. And she struggles to understand Herero customs, particularly their concept of child-rearing in which children belong to—and are cared for by—the whole family. Sarah refers to this custom as "this constant reshuffling of children" (Katjavivi 114). The practice offends Sarah's English sensibilities. After all, "[H]ow do you really accept a child not of your own blood…and how could a mother hand over her child to someone else?" (114). Amongst her husband's family, Sarah encounters a little girl who shares the name of Obed's deceased mother – the same name Sarah gave the child she miscarried years before: Uerieta, a name meaning "the one who has brought herself back" (120).

Sarah eventually adopts this child, an event which follows her adoption of the Herero conceptualization life and death as revealed in Herero naming practices. When Sarah named her unborn child Uerieta after her husband's mother, she was unknowingly calling his mother back, invoking her spirit. And when she encountered the second little Uerieta in Namibia, "[T]he name resonated deep inside Sarah…the child had returned"

(117). Suddenly, the tradition that had seemed strange to her made sense. This child that bore Obed's mother's name and spirit belonged to all of Obed's family because this child was also their mother. And as little Uerieta also carried the spirit of Sarah's lost child, she belonged to Sarah too. In embracing Herero culture, Sarah does not cease to be an Englishwoman, but rather, in making "space in the heart" for a culture different from her own, she shifts her perceptions of her new home (121). More so, as she finds solace in the hope indigenous tradition and culture offer her and adopts it (and Uerieta) as her own—she becomes Namibian. In Sarah and Uerieta's coming-together, Sarah's own epistemological privilege is unsettled, and the boundaries of Sarah's self and identity are renegotiated and remapped. While national identity is once again restricted to the land and to indigeneity, "Uerieta" nevertheless suggests that the notion of Namibian identity that, while perhaps not comfortably politically correct, is syncretic and full of possibilities.

Uerieta—a name which means "the one who has brought herself back"—is a story of recuperation and restoration—of Sarah, but also of a nation of people who for so long were not at home in their own country (Katjavivi 120). This sense of "being at home" which is recuperated in this story differs from that defined by a nationalism which is solely ethnically grounded in that it takes the trauma of the past into account, but furthermore, is aware of the tensions of Namibia's intermingled status resultant of being grafted into the West. This story speaks to the roughness of the terrain of "home" that belies the notion that with independence the struggle for liberation is over. In "Uerieta" the past is drawn into the present so that the "voices" of Namibia's ancestors are audible. It must be remarked that the name "Uerieta" brings to mind 19th century Urieta

Kazahendike, a folklorist who wrote in the 1860s and whose "fragmentary writing…provides an invaluable trace of how encroaching colonialism affected those who were drawn into the orbit of the missionaries, frequently the thin edge of the colonial wedge" (Orford 45). In the use of this name and its meaning, Katjavivi's story connects the collection to a history beyond the war of 1966-1989 and its afterlives to the earlier history of Christian missionary proselytization and German colonialism in central Namibia. It furthermore conjoins the efforts of contemporary women to those from the past. Communally, it traces the tenuous lines of historical legacy of women agents in the nation's formation.

Autobiographies: Feminism, Nationalism, and Namibian Histories in the Everyday

I began this chapter with art and fiction—partly because the collection begins in this way. However, I also want to emphasize the way art and fiction theorize, shape, and perform in this collection in which autobiographical writing is also included.[36] The autobiographical work is no less significant, however. It contributes to the communal ethos of the text. Above, I have read the more traditional short autobiographies in the collection such as Ellen Namhila's "Living Abroad" and Maria Kaakunga's "Let This Not Be True." Here I will focus on micro-autobiographies.

Perhaps more than any of the other works in the collections, the micro-autobiographies highlight the notion of theorizing from the margins. What I refer to as micro-autobiographies in this collection are autobiographical accounts by women from

36. *Coming on Strong* has been written about, but emphasis has always been on the autobiographical work (see Becker and Orford 1999, cited in Becker; Peter Vale also cites these narratives in his dissertation "Remembering 'Koevoet': How South Africa Has Come to Understand Its Covert Military Operations in Namibia").

the villages of Owamboland (northern Namibia). These brief accounts range in length from a paragraph (around 90 words) to a page. They typically are focused on a vignette, a particular encounter during the war, which they contextualize in terms of date or time of year. They are titled to bring attention to this encounter, with names such as "They Beat Her with a Rope" or "The Worst Day of My Life." They are short, stark, plainly written testimonials—perhaps an indication of the authors' own entry into the English language and writing. They bring alive the notion of the nation writ small—because they are themselves small texts (as opposed to a large full book), marginal, and must operate communally in order to speak. But also, they demonstrate how the larger concerns of the nation are visible in the domestic sphere. [37] They're small, minor convulsions within the context of the major dominant narrative (Fanon, *The Wretched*, 171).

Together, they also complicate cultural nationalism and its themes of exile, land, and home in the contexts of women's agency. They connect northern Namibian women's stories into the wider transnational histories of the Apartheid migrant labor system. They show women and girl children without the men and sons who are lost to the labor system and to exile. In this way they continue the themes of motherhood raised in Berner's

37. Like first and early second-generation novels by African women, the collection's explorations of notions of identity and home are deeply political. Susan Andrade argues that one must read the early novels by African women of the twentieth century and their treatment of the domestic sphere as interlocked with the macro-political. During this period of decolonization on the continent, male novelists tended to write political narratives that grappled with the implications of colonialism for their nations; women, on the other hand, frequently wrote of their experiences, or of intimate relationships between friends, lovers, and family-members. Theirs were narratives of the domestic sphere, and thus were not considered political. To the contrary, Andrade points out that: "[t]he domestic and national realms are inseparable from each other. As readers, we make it possible to read the realms of intimate domestic life as not merely micropolitical or insignificant but as interlocked with the macro-political, as that on which it depends" (35). In other words, "the family becomes the nation writ small" (21).

African Piéta and Jafta's short story "The Home-Coming." However, the perspective these autobiographical narratives provide is that of the daughter (who remained in the village, as "The Home-Coming's" Maria does) and the woman who loses her son or husband (to labor or exile) and must continue. They write from the context of the village—this cultural, grassroots location. However, this cultural home, is an unsettled place. These narratives furthermore complicate the symbolism of motherhood in cultural nationalism. On the one hand they show themselves as also suffering for the nation in the struggle, and yet they participate in the war effort in small ways. Their testimonies, however, are not resistance to the dominant narrative. Theirs is a shift of perception—a strategy of space and future-making—regarding how the history told.[38] These micro-autobiographies are quintessentially communal—within themselves as they deal with the afterlives of colonialism, and within the context of the volume that raises the question of gender and women as agents in the nation.

In describing women's suffering and experiences, the micro-autobiographies expand and complicate the frameworks of suffering and exile which are so key to the dominant Namibian nationalist discourse. In "Nine Months Pregnant" the author Angelina Kashweka puts it succinctly, stating: "The fight for Namibian independence has been a bitter and long struggle. I was also suffering for my Motherland" (31). The "also" here speaks to the dominant narratives of national identity that even in the early 1990s privileged the experience of exiles and that of men as those who had suffered for and

38. These micro-autobiographies evince a mind-set akin to what Tina Campt calls the quotidian, "a practice rather than an act/ion. It is a practice honed by the dispossessed in the struggle to create possibility within the constraints of everyday life." (Campt 4). It is "nimble and strategic practices that undermine the categories of the dominant" (32). It is not resistance, but recalcitrance.

brought about independence. In “The Hardest Time for Us,” Aina Angala flips the distinction “exile” makes between “inside” and “outside,” and inside becomes the place of suffering. For Angala, “inside” was not a peaceful place. Rather, it was enemy-occupied terrain. Angala writes that “the nation was afraid. There were two groups. One group was ‘inside’ and the other group was ‘outside’ of our country. It was a difficult time. Some people died of hunger and other people died in the homes of sickness” (97). It is this suffering that the “outside” soldiers—the SWAPO guerilla fighters—must work to alleviate. In her framing, the nation includes both the inside and the outside, thus including the experiences of those within the country.

Furthermore, the scope of the narratives from within the nation in these micro-autobiographical accounts, are in the contexts of the micropolitical everyday—women and children doing mundane housework or play when they encounter the soldiers. And from the domestic sphere, working to aid the liberation struggle. As Kornberg explains, during the Namibian border wars,

> the bodies of black women living in the northern combat areas were used against them and the broader liberation project. Rape and other forms of specialised torture were war tools of the South African forces, as was the destruction of homesteads…Many women did act to support SWAPO fighters by giving them shelter, food and information, as well as through organisations such as the SWAPO Women’s Council…Even if they were innocent of these official crimes, their bodies, lives, crops and homes were still threatened by and subjected to these horrors (Kornberg 249).

While the stark titles and brevity of these narratives may reflect the authors’ own level of comfort with the English language, they also suggest the difficulty of narrativizing and speaking of such traumatic encounters. They are reminiscent of the difficulties witnesses experienced testifying to the horror of the Herero/Nama genocide in the early twentieth century, of which Jan Kubas, an eyewitness of these events “struggled to articulate his

memories complaining that 'Words cannot be found to relate what happened; it was too terrible'" (Silvester and Gewalt xiii). Nevertheless, despite the struggle to narrativize the horrors of war, these micro-autobiographies are anxious about memory and memorializing these occasions of encounter. As Anna Ipinge explains at the end of "Where Are the Terrorists," "That was the time of war. We will forgive their trespasses, but we won't forget what they did" (39). Ipenge's statement reflects the state's choice against a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, opting instead for a policy of national reconciliation, that is, to leave the past behind and move forward in the project of nation-building. Despite this acquiescence to the state, there is a refusal to forget.

Other narratives highlight this preoccupation with remembering the events of the war and memorializing them in writing. For instance, in her narrative "The Outside Soldier," Pelagia Gottfried tells of the Koevoet battalions of South African soldiers that included Namibian men, who terrorized the villages of northern Namibia. Gottfried tells very specifically, for instance, about events that occur "on June 26 and 27, 1984" (24). On the 26th, a SWAPO soldier named Naftali came to her home between 4 and 5pm (24). When they hear the casper army tanks transporting the koevoet soldiers coming, Naftali narrowly escapes. The soldiers return the next day, at 8am when Gottfried is away, and beat her mother instead, injuring her so that she required hospitalization. Gottfried's story ends with a refrain the haunts almost all of these micro-autobiographies: "I cannot forget this time" (25).[39] In "The War Came to Our Village" Klaudia Osisia tells of precisely

39. Others state: "I won't forget it in my life" (21); "That was the worst day of my life I will not forget it" (22); "I cannot forget that year" (31); "I shall never forget that day" (32); "It was an unforgettable day for me" (38); "We will not forget the time in the war" (97).

when that war arrived— "on Sunday at 4:30pm"—when people were caught in the crossfires of conflict between the South African and SWAPO soldiers who encountered each other in this public space of cuca shops (21). In "The Worst Day of My Life" Valeria Nampila recounts a "Wednesday, early in the morning. The date was November 5, 1984" when, while plowing her fields, she was accosted by South African soldiers demanding that she disclose the locations of "SWAPO terrorists." When she refused to answer them, the beat her and broke her arm (22). "They Beat Her with a Rope" by an anonymous author recounts a beautiful, rainy summer, during "a good week to work in the field because it wasn't hot…It was nice" (26). The "Omakakunya" arrived early—"At eight o'clock," terrorizing the author and her children, vandalizing their home, and beating one of her daughters with a rope (27). It was two o'clock in the afternoon, when Ria Kakelo, home-alone, heard gunshots as the soldiers arrived at her village, and then, her home, demanding to see her parents, and robbing the family (28). Faustina Endjala remembers that it was "three o'clock in the afternoon" as she and her friends played a game under a tree when the soldiers accosted them, landing them all in the hospital ("Identification Cards," 32). In their anxiety about documenting exact times, days and places where injustices occurred, these micro-autobiographies fall within the scope of testimonial literature. Along with memorializing their own history they also write themselves into national identity.

And as they write their experiences into larger historical frameworks, they allude to connections to the migrant contract labor system, expanding the scope of the 1970s nationwide protests to this racialized capitalized project of Apartheid to include them. It was "The Sound of Breaking Wire" that alerted Severia Kakoma to the arrival of the

caspers, as she busily worked her field while listening to the radio (30). The warning came too late, and after the soldiers' beatings, they transported her in a large sack, far from her home and left her to find her way back. A kind stranger gave her a meal, money for food, and directions to get her home. While the narrative tells of her experience, the title alludes to one of the key reasons for the war: repressive and racist labor practices. Along with references to pass cards, such as Faustina Endjala's title "Identification Cards," the title of Kakoma's narrative "The Sound of Breaking Wire" implicitly draws the migrant contract labor system into these recountings. This "sound" alludes to the 1971-72 protests to the migrant contract labor system, derisively nicknamed by the laborers "odalate," which means "the wire fence." The protests to the contract system were called Odalate Naiteke, "The Wire Must Break." The contract labor system dated as far back as 1926, and channeled labor "into the country's primary extractive export industries, mining, fishing and canning, and ranching" (Green 2). "A 'contract' meant a labor contract of indenture, the breaking of which was a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment" (2). Thus, the sound of breaking wire alludes to this protest as well as the illegal, intractable act of breaking the contract in opposition to oppression.

The general strike of December 13, 1971, which spanned into 1972, quickly spread across the country, but was met with force from the government. The protests—Odalate Naiteke—swept across the country, bringing the mining and farming industry to a halt as workers went on strike (Green 3). The government's response to the strike was to use the occupying security forces as strike-breakers and intervened in the labor reserves—places like Owamboland from where the women in the collection were writing. This act of occupying the home-space of the workers effectively blurred the lines

between labor and colonialism and putting the liberation movement (and SWAPO) at the center-stage (4). Laborers' and labor unions' resistance to the contract system accumulated over the next two decades, and changes were incremental and cosmetic, but the labor movement served to make abundantly clear that the Namibian struggle, among other things, was a struggle against racialized, extractive, and deeply oppressive labor practices.

Kakoma's title, then, links her own experience of violence in the village to the racialized and extractive labor processes that led to the second Namibian war. This knitting together of the bush war and the contract labor system—which drew its laborers chiefly from the Namibian northern reserves of Owamboland and Okavango (Green 2)—also highlights the effect of this system as it haunts the micro-autobiographies of *Coming on Strong.* Gendered dynamics of the war and the contract labor system "created a social geography in which those living permanently in northern Namibia were almost entirely Black women and their young children…it meant both the systematic and haphazard creation of nearly single gender and single race communities" (Kornberg 243).
The narratives allow us to hear these marginalized voices, but more so to consider how together they reshape the dominant narrative, theorize a more inclusive nationalism, and write themselves into history. Kakoma's title "The Sound of Breaking wire," as it heralds liberation. Kakoma ends her narrative, stating that "[n]ow I am happy because the war is over and I am free" (30). The sound of breaking wire in the context of the bush war, then, portends independence, and the possibility of liberation.

Conclusion

The first poem in the collection, the second text after Masule's painting, recalls the afterlives of colonialism for women in Namibia at the time of this publication in 1996. However, this poem by Maenge Shipiki titled "Looking for Myself" continues to be relevant regarding how women continue to be circumscribed in nationalist debates—something that chapter 3 takes up. This poem nestled between the painting and the short story which share a name ("The Home-Coming"), considers looking and representation and how this looker does not see herself in the landscape of Namibian representations:

> I am looking for myself
> but I keep on seeing another face
> always another face
> not mine
> and when I see mine now and then
> it's only a copy of the popular one (2).

The collection, however, allows for possibilities for seeing, for alternative and diverse representations, identities and futures for the most marginalized in the nation, and thus theorizes possible liberation.

Coming on Strong reveals Namibia's complex history and the many transnational, transcultural, and racially, ethnically, and socially different Namibians who call the nation home. This image differs from the dominant narrative of Namibian national identity, but drawing these women and their contributions to Namibian society into the narratives gives a globalized, transnational view of Namibia. This text's multiple genres, histories, and identities pulls together different ways of knowing, and from this point, reveals alternative possible ways of perceiving global and national belonging with attention to the work that non-dominant differences demands (Lorde 111). *Coming on*

Strong creates the kind of community it portrays and in this way envisions difficult but constructive and communal society-building beyond nationalist constraints.

After returning to Namibia, having lived for years in exile during the Namibian War, Ellen Namhila, writes of the fraught nature of home and belonging:

> So I began the search for home. My heart tells me that I am home because Namibia was my place of birth, even though I do not have the feel of home. This is the conflict of identity my brain is going through now, now that I am at home and at the same time I am not because my picture of home is different. I am constantly negotiating and renegotiating the matter. My memories of home were those of a village life, quiet, peaceful, trustful, a community spirit. The life in town where I now live is not comparable to my village life. Town life is alien to me…This is my struggle, to search for those very basic things to make me feel human and belong somewhere. I am in Namibia but I feel culturally uprooted and displaced (*Price of Freedom*, 198).

Part of belonging and identity for Namhila is to take up the project of reclaiming lost histories of the Namibian struggle. In the following chapter, we see how she attempts to write the biography of a freedom fighter and produces a text that not only includes multiple histories, but mirrors *Coming on Strong* in its reliance on indigeneity, the use of multiple genres of storytelling, and its communal nature that draws in marginalized voices to tell Namibian stories of national, transnational, and global belonging. We will see themes of suffering taken up yet again, but in the context of a Christ-figure that is woven together in orature, testimony, history and careful documentation. And yet even this figure, because of the collective form, cannot merely perform the hopeful, progressive future the nationalist project demands, and the text attempts.

CHAPTER III

FEMINIST FORM IN THE COMMUNAL BIOGRAPHY OF A BAREFOOT SOLDIER

My mother loves history, and when I bought myself a copy of Ellen Namhila's *Kaxumba KaNdola: Man and Myth: The Biography of a Barefoot Soldier* at a bookstore in Windhoek, I decided to buy one for her as well. Arriving back at home, I finally gave it to her, and she exclaimed, "Oh Kaxumba! You know, during the war, the soldiers were afraid of him. They thought he could transform himself into a bird [epumhumhu], so every time they saw that bird, they killed it. Today you don't see it much in Owamboland." My mother's comment gave me an immediate sense of the kind of freedom-fighter Kaxumba was: wily and fearless enough to capture the imagination of both his enemies and friends.

Kaxumba kaNdola is a book that recounts the life of Namibian political figure Noah Eliaser Tuhadeleni, a man from Endola village in Owamboland, who turned into a famed anti-apartheid activist and guerilla fighter. He displayed such fearlessness during the nation's struggle for independence that the stories told about him are mingled with myth and legend. Tuhadeleni was famous for his beautiful singing voice for which he was affectionately nicknamed (5).[40] True to Kaxumba's grassroots activism, Namhila's biography draws from oral histories derived from interviews with community and family members, fellow migrant contract laborers, and political compatriots acquainted with him. However, rather than just write a single narrative that outlines Kaxumba's life and

40. Going forward, I will refer to Tuhadeleni by his nickname, Kaxumba. "Kaxumba" refers to a harmonium or piano. It is apt, then, given Kaxumba's activism and the power of freedom songs in African liberation movements, that his name means "the musical instrument of Endola."

political activism from these interviews, Namhila creates a communal biography—a sort of national history wreathed in myth, oral tradition, testimony, footnotes, images, and other social and literary narrative forms.[41]

In this second chapter, I extend my discussion of marginal literary forms to analyze the feminist sensibility in this biography that exceeds the boundary-forming, conclusive, and patriarchal nationalist project. While the biography uses these collected testimonies and forms to articulate a coherent national historical narrative centered on the character of Kaxumba, it also demonstrates the difficulty of such linear historicizing.[42] The book includes alternate and non-dominant modes of understanding (such as myth, songs, legends) as bearing on how to interpret the present and envision the future. Through translation and transcription, the biography strategically gathers Black and African voices marginalized due to coloniality and the privileging of writing and English—the language of governance and literature. Furthermore, it occurs in a literary environment that privileges autobiographies and biographies, but most often features single-authored books by popular political figures, predominantly men. However, in its communal narrative form, it disrupts notions of single authorship, and it takes this local political hero as a collective, social, and global event. From start to finish, the book

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41. I use form in the way Caroline Levine discusses it—broadly, and including both social and aesthetic forms that "form always indicates *an arrangement of elements—an ordering, patterning, or shaping*" (3). Levine highlights the political implications of form and how these forms play upon one another. What I like about her forms is that it is attentive to patterns, constructions, but is not about historicizing how a form emerges (this question for her blurs form with genre which develops within historical context and is about classifications— "grouping texts into certain kinds"), but what a forms do (13). She asks: "what does each form afford, and what happens when forms meet?" (16).

42. I take seriously the warning that Mino Moallen gives against the essentialism that discourses of opposites, of binaries creates (321).

unravels the notion of a consistent subject at the heart of the biography's project and creates, or at least allows for, diverging, contradictory, and revelatory insights into both Kaxumba's and Namibia's political history—and in turn, the nation's present. In this way, the book embodies a futurity, the (im)possibility of alternate futures, from the margins of the social and literary world.

Kaxumba kaNdola's form makes it difficult for the book to cohere as a linear narrative. Along with interviews, the biography includes other texts, piecing and weaving them together, and in this way intervenes in and shifts the direction of the dominant narrative. These texts include Namhila's own historical narrating, media and literary insertions—such as images of "wanted" flyers describing Kaxumba as a terrorist, photographs, newspaper clippings, footnotes, and poetry that Namhila recollects as she compiles. Alongside the testimonies, Namhila also includes excerpts of letters sent to the United Nations and published by the UN General Assembly and references to the National Archive of Namibia which substantiate many of the testimonies given (45,30). The book also includes references to court cases and quotes from Kaxumba's notebooks recovered from Robben Island, along with mentions of Kaxumba's involvement in other culturally specific concerns apart from the Struggle, such as widow-dispossession (102, 24). Some formal techniques are at the level of textual aesthetics. When Namhila interjects her voice and observations, for instance, she changes the font. This experimental history-telling makes linear narrativizing difficult, as Richard Dale notes this in his review of *Kaxumba kaNdola*. While Dale commends the volume as "carefully designed," he laments its lack of "chronology to help the novice reader follow the narrative" (150). Jan-Bart Gewald's review expresses a similar concern, pointing out that

the volume does not offer a comprehensive perspective in which to orient its history, but rather, "as it has been compiled [it makes] little attempt at situating the social, cultural, and historical setting being described" (481). These observations speak to the diverging and multiplying functions of the form. On the one hand, the interviews are arranged to provide a chronological account of Kaxumba's life. But because the interviewees must tell their own stories to share their encounters with Kaxumba, they also unearth hidden histories that provide an intimate perspective of Namibia's late colonial era not typically told in the country. [43]

The biography presented here can be seen to echo the Latin American tradition of testimonio.[44] Testimonio, and testimonial literatures more broadly, are genres from the

43. Steve Feierman outlines the changes in perceptions of world history with the emergence of African and other third world histories. These emergent histories undo the notion of universal (and thus usually Eurocentric) histories and "break the bounds of historical language [and undermine] general historical thought" (40). It thus becomes impossible to "tell history from a single story, from a single consistent point of view or from a unified perspective" (50). Feierman argues for precision, stating that "[T]he historian…must struggle to understand the place of the historical actor within the complex web of cultural understandings, and at the same time avoid seeing that action only in local terms" (52).

44. Laura Webb contends that while testimonio is popularly defined in the context of Spanish and Latin American testimonial literature, and while there is no Western counterpart, this and similar kinds of testimonial writings are not exclusive to these countries, which highlights the breadth of its scope (Webb 2). She acknowledges, however that **"**works which concern themselves with the 'other' in terms of those who exist outside of the cultural hegemony, are very much a part of Latin American literary history" (2). The testimonio "genre is a mixture of biography, oral history, allegory, and the chorus of collective voices. Literary critics argue that what is accounted for in the narrator's 'truth' is something real and true for that person, thus acknowledging its potential for poetic or symbolic truth" (Mueller 46). Usually a Latin American genre used "for the expression of gender and sexual dissidence…writing that seeks to speak for others who cannot speak for themselves, to confront official European book learning with the words and oral histories of the defeated or subaltern" (Cruz-Malavé 228).

margins.[45] I am, however, not so much interested in the "truth" that the volume tells, but rather how the form enacts futurity. *Kaxumba KaNdola* is akin to testimonio in that it bears witness to the marginalization and gradual impoverishment of a community (Cruz-Malavé 228). In this way, it brings the community's unacknowledged trauma and experiences at the borders of hegemonic discourses into "consciousness, collective memory, theory, and [possible] political action" (Cruz-Malavé 228). Testimonio is thus a genre of resistance. And yet, *Kaxumba KaNdola* is not so much resistance to the dominant narrative as it is speaking into and alongside it.[46] In my analysis of this book, I am attentive to the form that drives the narrative in divergent ways and to the figure that is always interrupted as a condition of his position in the world—this figure that the text creates in form. The book encourages a focus on the "truth-effect" of the narrative as the form conspires to inhabit the condition of futurity (Webb 7). Similar to testimonio, *Kaxumba KaNdola* captures "the unrepresentable" in generative ways (Cruz-Malavé 230). The biography provides an understanding of Kaxumba as an internationalist national figure in literary form, refracted through culturally specific social and (post)colonial consciousness, pan-Africanism, and global white supremacy. Thus, beyond

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45. Except in the case of Cuba where it is a dominant form and informs how literature develops (See Whitfield 240). Most typically, "the speakers of testimonio narrate under the threat of social invisibility and death their unspeakable tale to save themselves and their community by reconstituting their sense of self and their community's collective memory" (Cruz-Malavé 228).

46. Two of Namhila's works, *Mukwahepo: Woman, Soldier, Mother* (2013) and Tears of Courage: Five Mothers Five Stories One Victory (2009) are writings of revision that sit easily within testimonial literature. I say this because while it utilizes the form of a feminist genre, Kaxumba KaNdola is not a feminist text in the same way these are. I argue, however, that the form allows for a feminist sensibility.

the border-making of nationalist politics and texts, the collective, communal form of Namhila's biography introduces productive unpredictability and uncertainty into the nationalist narrative.

In what follows, I will analyze both the testimonies and the author's mediations in the form of images, footnotes, and historical contexts. I will also consider how language-use and orature within these testimonies affect the historical framing and social consciousness the author presents.[47] I connect the literary uses of language to the historical and biographical project to explore what this literariness allows us to envision (Irele, *The African Imagination* 31). While it is clear that Namhila is making a strong case for the facticity of both the testimonies and the nationalist narrative, equally important is how the forms complicate and disrupt a cohesive reading of the nation and this nationalist figure. These disruptions in turn shape how the present is understood and how the future is imagined. Both the biography and Kaxumba's activism blur the boundary between the Owambo spiritual and living traditions and the politics. With attention to the way various forms create divergences in the biography, I suggest that the book creates a pan-African national identity and consciousness rooted in Owambo culture and a literary figure of futurity that embodies and aligns Namibianness with global Black transnational affinities.

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47. Mustafa Kemal Mirzeler sees oral tradition as "ongoing negotiations and compromises between the storytellers and their audiences over the meanings of their traditions" (245). Tracing the oral tradition of the Jie and Turkana people of Northern Kenya and Uganda, Mirzeler's interest is not in "oral tradition as historical evidence, but rather the cultural and political context in which the images of the past are constructed through remembering" (8). He demonstrates how the Jie and Turkana oral tradition "associates memory with…current concerns…invoking the remembered story [to evoke] the present" (8). Thus, oral tradition puts the past in dialogue with the present.

Narrating the Nation Beyond History and Orality

As a text that participates in the nationalist project, *Kaxumba kaNdola* carries within it both the linear nationalist narrative of Kaxumba as a national hero, and excess affinities beyond the nation that the form enables. The nationalist figure of Kaxumba that the text tells exists in tension with the way myth and the text's fragmented form communally create multiple and alternate political affinities, presents, and possible futures.

Kaxumba the National Hero. In the book's nationalist account of his life, Kaxumba is presented as the embodiment of the nation's imagined community—a grassroots figure who matures into a national hero. Kaxumba was a political activist, an outgoing, influential man, dedicated to serving and developing his community along with raising political awareness and national consciousness for the Owambo (24). As a teenager in the late 1930s, Kaxumba signed up for the contract labor system (5). He ended up contracted as a farm laborer, and the experiences of violence and other injustices during this period—along with the stories other contract workers told him—were the seeds for his activism:

> Through the contract labour system, Tuhadeleni… met many Namibians from other language groups in Namibia; he would not have got this exposure if he had stayed in his village…it was this exposure that helped Kaxumba realise that it was not only the Ovawambo people of Namibia who were colonised and oppressed, but the whole of the Namibian population (Namhila 25).

Growing up during Namibia's Apartheid era and being subject to its dehumanizing labor system contributed to his political and national consciousness.

Kaxumba became involved in the struggle for independence, petitioning the colonial authorities on behalf of Owambo contract laborers. He would go from community to community in Owamboland to raise awareness of the implications of

colonial occupation, and he would both confront corrupt traditional authorities and instigate cross-cultural national awareness within the Owambo. Kaxumba,

> was highly respected by the contract workers for whom he acted as spokesperson. He was a politician, who knew how to talk to the people in order to get their support. His disadvantage lay in his lack of education. Kaxumba did not get proper schooling and he could not express himself well in languages other than his mother tongue ("Foreword," ya Toivo vii).

Kaxumba's community activism in Northern Namibia preceded the founding of the Owamboland People's Organisation (OPO) by Sam Nujoma in 1959 (See Wallace, pp. 258). In fact, he is credited by interviewee Eelu Kambabi as being one of the founders of the early 1950s northern Namibian underground resistance movement called Nghuwoyepongo, which aimed at awakening political consciousness by using biblical teachings (Namhila, 36). Nghuwoyepongo eventually merged with the OPO in 1959, which, a year later became SWAPO, which would lead the 30-year struggle for independence (See Namhila, pp. 37; Wallace, pp. 247-250). As Kaxumba's activities are so closely linked with this political party that what is described is a national hero who embodies SWAPO.

As he grew increasingly politically active, Kaxumba and his family were harassed by the South African police, and he was arrested numerous times. Because of his activism in the region, Kaxumba's homestead became SWAPO's political center in the North, and when Namibians decided to go to war, it became "the first home for the first SWAPO PLAN [People's Liberation Army of Namibia] fighters ever to arrive in Namibia after their military training from abroad. So, his home was indeed the first SWAPO camp inside Namibia" (*Kaxumba*, Tate Johannes Silas 66). After the first battle of the Namibian war on August 26th, 1966, Kaxumba was arrested in 1967 and imprisoned on

Robben Island. He was held there until his release in 1985 and only returned to Endola in 1989 after 22 years (21). He was an uncommon villager, and as "one of the earliest public figures and symbols of anti-colonial resistance of the Namibian people," he became a legend among the Owambo (Namhila, 13).

In the text, the legends surrounding Kaxumba sit in tension with this linear account of his life. On the one hand, the myth, legends, and songs enable the biography's "cultural-nationalist orientation" (George 16). But these myths and legends also undo nationalist particularity because they contextualize national formation within the wider scope of global resistance movements and pan-Africanism. Drawing from mythology, oral tradition, and praise/protest songs, Namhila's biography positions Kaxumba as one who embodies both SWAPO and the nation. And yet, the book also presents us with a literary figure who is trans-ethnic and transnational, all the result of the intrinsic condition of global race and Blackness.

Orature Beyond Cultural Nationalist Constraints

Amidst the various dynamics at play in this hybrid biography, myth is the connecting thread that runs throughout the testimonies in the book, and informs how other media forms are read.[48] Despite the fact that myth is what made Kaxumba such a compelling figure for Namhila, she admits that she found the prevalence of myth in the interviewee's tellings of Kaxumba's story problematic: "[d]uring the interviewing period, I became a bit worried that people were paying too much attention to the Kaxumba mythology of

48. Orature blur the lines between genres. As Ngũgĩ explains: "myth and legend are part of the story genre and stand somewhere between fiction, history, and religion" (*Globalectics*).

changing into objects" (ix).[49] Her comments are indicative of her desire for facts, but also symptomatic of a general privileging of Western modes of knowledge over cultural, non-dominant modes. And even still, the book is indicative of the power of myth to have tangible effects, and in Namhila's case, to compel the creation of the project she undertook. In an interview, Namhila elaborates her own encounters with Kaxumba mythology,

> The way people talk about him, it's like he's not a person. When I was a child looking into that I thought maybe [he was] some myth of a person because they say, when the police come for him he's sitting there, and he will tell them, 'Oh Kaxumba he just left, if you go that way you'll find him.' But he's the one talking, you know. And people tell all kinds of stories that some days the police are chasing him and he changed into a bird or he changed into a tree or he changed into rock. So I thought that Kaxumba was just a myth. And on our independence day when the President was sworn in and he was giving his speech he mentioned this person Kaxumba kaNdola and I was like '... so he's actually a person!' I thought it was just a myth created to give strength to the people you know. (Adolphus)

Her account points to how mythology creates a figure around the man. In this sense, mythology generates an account of the man and something separate, "not a person." Regarding the narrative distinction between the man and the myth, Irele states that oral forms such as epics, praise poems, and myth function,

> as the principal channels of historical awareness, as the imaginative commemoration of a common past serving to celebrate the collective compact in the present. The narrative forms in particular, woven as they often are around the figure of a cultural hero, partake necessarily of the nature of myth. The historical element in these narratives is thus endowed with a powerful symbolic charge. (Irele 103)

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49. Namhila states that everyone she interviewed mentioned the myth that Kaxumba turned into objects (88).

Tate Haimbangu Kapolo, commenting on Kaxumba mythology, makes this relationship between legend and ideology, symbolism and orature evident, when he states that "Kaxumba is a legend; his legendary stories were created based on the facts and realities of his lifestyle, his dreams, idealism, unselfishness, and his social consciousness to live up to his social role and his relationship with the people" (*Kaxumba* 30). While the book acknowledges the "powerful symbolic charge" in the mythology around Kaxumba, its central focus is to outline history, the life of the man, and this history does not at first glance rely on mythology.

The mythological language and legends, however, inform the book's historical narratives, blurring the distinctions between fact and fiction, and traditional cultural beliefs and modern politics. Irele points to "a certain principle of reciprocity between [history and fiction], a kind of reversibility in their nature and status" in that both fiction and history reformulate "experience in such a way as to endow it with a large significance" (102). Thus, noting the relationship between narrative, history, and African mythology, Irele furthermore states,

> history…manifests itself in the structural forms of collective existence, in the ruptures and strains that traverse almost on a continuous basis the fabric of social existence everywhere on the continent. Thus, in Africa today history takes on the character of a daily drama, of fiction, and fiction, in a quite natural reciprocity, takes on the character of history, so that in our modern literature we witness an immediate correlation of life and textuality. (Irele 111)

History, in other words, occurs in the interruptions that disrupt the status quo and demand a writing, or rewriting. On the one hand, Namibia's resistance movement is one such

rupture, which this book records. However, the myth, in its unreality is another rupture in the dominant framing of Apartheid history and the nationalist movement.[50]

Such folklore is compelling because it is both revelatory and obscuring. Speaking of the traditionist griots of Mali—those "speaking documents" who occupy "the chair of history of a village," D.T. Niane states that "the traditionist is a master in the art of circumlocution, he speaks in archaic formulas, or else he turns facts into amusing legends for the public, which legends have, however, a secret sense which the vulgar little suspect" (xxiv).[51] The power of legend is that it makes secret, and yet in its existence, also points to that which it obscures. It is an ideology that sustains social consciousness. The myths around Kaxumba highlight the syncretic nature of Owambo life worlds, but

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50. Irele's point is evident in the way Kaxumba mythology had real effects on the Black soldiers working for the South African Defense Force, undermining the Apartheid government's operations in the North. The Black police were not impervious to the mythology and this undermined their ability to capture Kaxumba and allowed his activism to continue. Tate Paavo writes that he overheard, "what one black policeman, a 'sell out,' was telling the people: 'Kaxumba has witchcraft in him, chasing him is like chasing a ghost, and I do not understand why our baases continue wasting our time sending us around to arrest a man who is invisible…What we are sent here to do is an impossible task…This man you see is not alone; he has some supernatural powers in him, that is why it is so difficult to arrest him'" (90). The legends have a tangible effect on history. They legitimized the underlying ideology of Kaxumba's cause and undermining Apartheid. This relationship between fiction (mythology and legendary figures) and the resultant real acts on the ground is reminiscent of the way in which the fictional character Matigari of Ngũgĩ's novel *Matigari ma Njirũũngi* drove the Kenyan state into action and shaped the way in which Kenyan history was told, and the future imagined (Gikandi, "The Epistemology" 163; also see Ngugi, "Translated" 19).

51. "Vulgar" here is a reference, I think, referring to Griot Mamadou Kouyaté's disdain for writing and colonialists (and Western) claim to know everything. Kouyaté states: "Other people use writing to record the past, but this invention has killed the faculty of memory among them. They do not feel the past any more, for writing lacks the warmth of the human voice. With them everybody thinks he knows, whereas learning should be a secret. The prophets did not write and their words have been all the more vivid as a result. What paltry learning is that which is congealed in dumb books!" (41). Some knowledges cannot be common knowledge.

also a globally connected Namibia and liberation struggle. The way in which myths and legends are deployed by the interviewers, in concert with other forms undercut the structures of Apartheid in the past, and in in the present, nationalist project as well.

Myth and Global Imaginaries

Messianic Language and Pan-African Liberation. From the first instance in the book, Kaxumba is mythologized using messianic language that positions him within the context of royalty and frames the Namibian liberation movement as a matter of justice. This same messianic imaginary, however, situates the Namibian cause as a continuation of a global black imaginary of anti-colonial messianic pan-African movements (Losambe, "The Local" 2). Kaxumba, in other words, is a type of Christ that is both particular to Namibia (the Owambo, more specifically) and a global figure. This is evident in the first interview, given by an unnamed retired schoolteacher in Ongwediva, who tells a story that establishes Kaxumba as royalty, as man of the people, and as a redemptive figure with Christ-like authority— "the son of the people's blood and the voice of the community" (3). In this story that occurs in 1960, the colonial authorities, wanting Kaxumba executed because of his political influence, but not wanting to seem responsible, coordinated with the headmen of the region who were under their influence, supplying them with a gun and bullets and ordering them to have Kaxumba killed in public (3). Accordingly, the corrupt traditional authority at Ohangwena organized a public meeting where—against both customary and government law—they condemned Kaxumba to death (1). When this headman pointed the gun to the audience, Kaxumba stood up, saying,

> Please wait for me to move out of the gathering to the empty space over there so that you can shoot me without hurting these innocent people whom we all love so much. One thing, if you shoot me while in the crowd my blood may spill all over on the bodies of these people and wherever my blood lands new seeds for the struggle will grow. I am sure you do not want to assist in the process of planting more seeds for the struggle, do you? (2)

In essence he compares his death to a martyrdom, highlighting the illegitimacy of these headman's—and the government's—actions in the context of both direct and indirect rule, and the power of this injustice to galvanize protest and dissent.[52] Moving a good distance away from the crowd, Kaxumba made the sign of the cross and calling to the headman, he said "please shoot me now" (2). However, the headman assigned to kill him is aware of Kaxumba's strong political heritage (and importantly, the teacher gives an outline of Kaxumba's historical connection to key figures of resistance).[53] Killing Kaxumba would risk his reputation and erode his authority in the community. His response to the pressure this knowledge creates is reminiscent of a biblical incident in

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52. Mahmood Mamdani argues that, rather than a South African anomaly, apartheid was a pervasive aspect of African colonial rule, performing an ancillary domination, an institutional segregation which he calls "decentralized despotism" (8). Indirect rule, he writes, "came to be the mode of domination over a 'free' peasantry. Here, land remained a communal—'customary'—possession…The tribal leadership was either selectively reconstituted as the hierarchy of the local state or freshly imposed where none had existed…indirect rule signified a mediated—decentralized—despotism" (17). Mamdani goes on to explain that "[I]ndirect rule…signified a rural tribal authority. It was about incorporating natives into a state-enforced customary order" (18). Thus the double-sided nature of colonial rule—and later on, the battle for independence—is articulated: Africans battled the foreign colonial power (white South African rule, in Namibia's case) on one hand, and "customary authorities in the local state," which wore African faces, on the other (19).

53. Kaxumba's father Lyaalala Noah Tuhadeleni was a famous and highly respected senior headman with his own legacy of resistance to colonial rule during the Oukwanyama conflicts with the South African colonial government in 1917 (5). He was a leader "who had diplomatic functions during the reign of King Mandume, and [was] the grandson of Inamutwika Mutale Inamufaya Mupwilikine, who too was a well-known *elenga* [senior headman] in the Oukwanyama Kingdom" (3).

which Jesus casts out demons who cry out "What do you want from us, Son of God," adding a Christ-like element to the account (Matthew 8:29). The headman "laid [the gun] on the ground and broke into tears. 'You child of Noah's clan, what do you want from me, what do you want from me,' he cried. People watched in amazement. The senior headman and his gun, trembling and weeping like a child" (3). Thus "stories of the trembling senior headman, fearing to shoot Kaxumba, spread like wildfire in the community, and this helped to spread the message of resistance among the people" (3). These events confirmed for the interviewee and those attending the meeting that "we were on the right side, the winning side" (3).

It seems that Kaxumba also used Christ-like imagery to ensure the continuation of the struggle in the eventuality of his capture, or that the interviewers, in hindsight, interpreted his actions in this way. Tate Paavo Kanime stated that when Kaxumba came to his village Onghuta to hold meetings,

> Many people expressed concerns about his survival, because the apartheid regime was out there hunting for him—dead or alive. What we learned from him during this meeting was that a true leader could be defeated, arrested, or even killed, but he would rise again if the mission has not been fulfilled. We should not be worried that he might be killed or arrested, because the defeat of a leader does not imply the defeat of the ideal he represents" (88).

The underlying metaphor situates Kaxumba and his cause in the context of a Christ and a martyr. His death will seed the liberation struggle. In Tate Kanime's framing we see a grassroots man of the people who is a sophisticated thinker and orator who understood the power of myth to galvanize people, and the righteousness of his mission of liberation against Apartheid.

This messianic language is accompanied by myths regarding Kaxumba's transformation into objects, which affirms his supernatural authority in the context of

Owambo mythology and contributes further to the legitimacy of his cause. The ability to turn into objects is given in the context of pan-African collaborations during the war, extending the symbolism of his of Kaxumba's power and the struggle's legitimacy to global connections. This is evident in Kaxumba's daughter Ndahambelela Tuhadeleni's testimony regarding Kaxumba's involvement with the SWAPO guerilla fighters who stayed in his home in 1966. After the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decision in 1966 which kept Namibia a South African colony, SWAPO members went into exile to gain military training in other African states to prepare for war. The first soldiers who returned from Tanzania stayed in Kaxumba's home, and the mythology surrounding these "ondume yomofitu" [men of the forest] extended to him. In her testimony, Tuhadeleni tells of the rumors that circulated in her community regarding her father because of these men: "The children from the neighbourhood and at school often asked us. 'We hear there are *fiifii* men, living at your home. We hear these men have been cooked in big pots in Tanganyika and that this cooking process gives them supernatural powers to fight anything'" (61). She continued to say that,

> My father was said to have learned the trade of changing into objects in Zambia and Tanganyika…The stories about Kaxumba changing into objects went around our community. Some said they saw him changing into a tree. Some said they watched him as he turned into a termite hill upon the arrival of the police. Others claimed he turned into a ground hornbill, while others further maintained that they watched him walking out of their houses and suddenly disappear into thin air, and there was nothing to be seen (71).

This description of supernatural ability gained in the context of African transnational support for Namibia's liberation movement creates cultural and political pan-African affinities. That Kaxumba's power is a result of his experiences in Tanzania and Zambia,

nestles Owambo recognition of Kaxumba as a figure spiritually empowered to fight the liberation struggle within the wider framework of the continental liberation movements.[54]

Images and Legends of Transfiguration in the World. This narration by Ndahambelela, is accompanied by an insertion by Namhila, which frames the narrative of his turning into objects to an even wider and global sense of righteous struggle. Namhila adds an image

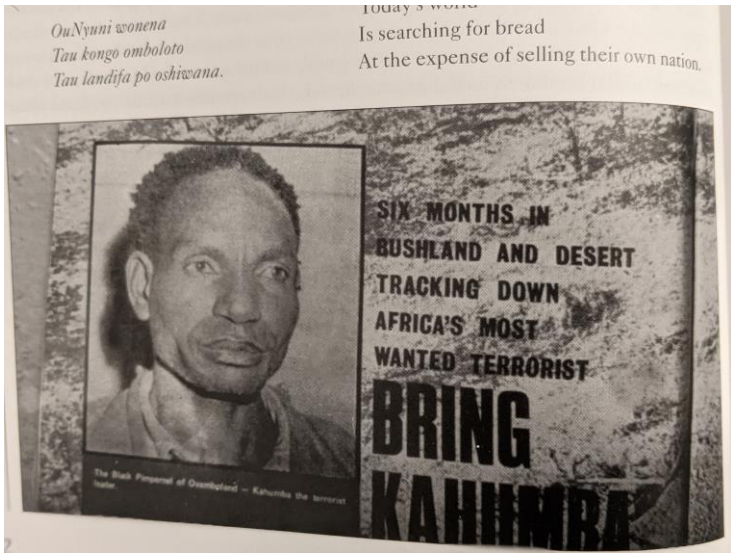

Figure 2.1. "Wanted" flyer, "The Black Pimpernel of Owamboland."

of a "Wanted" flyer (Figure 2.1) released by the South African authorities in 1966, which reads "Africa's Most Wanted Terrorist" and "The Black Pimpernel of Owamboland" (72). In the margins of the book, Namhila writes, "[a] copy of this poster supposedly appeared in 1966, in an addition of the popular South African magazine *Scope*…Neither the original poster nor the article in *Scope* could be traced" (72). The Apartheid government poster's reference to the "Black Pimpernel" to describe Kaxumba's elusiveness and highlight his subversive nature, alludes to Emma Orczy's *The Scarlet*

54. The termite hill is a figure of potency and danger in Owambo cosmology. In some tellings, it is the source of the first man and woman. That Kaxumba can transform himself into a termite hill is suggestive of his supernatural ability and spiritual authority. an individual close to the supernatural and able to this mythology makes him close to the spiritual forces of nature.

Pimpernel (1905). The name weaves literary connections to the global influence of Western revolutions against oppression and envisions Kaxumba as an agent for justice within this broader global framework. This global awareness is, furthermore, evident in that, as the New York Times explains in the 1964 article, "Black Pimpernel," this description was used to refer to Nelson Mandela, drawing a connection between the two liberationists, situating Kaxumba's efforts and the Namibian liberation struggle within the context of South Africa and the ANC, but also highlighting global consciousness regarding African liberation movements of the 20th century ("Black Pimpernel" 1964).

In a manner that acknowledges the connection that the image above draws to South Africa and broader anti-colonial struggles across the continent, Kaxumba credits the formation of his own anti-colonial national consciousness as fostered by the ANC, and the transnational nature of the Namibian struggle. In 1949, when Kaxumba moved to Cape Town, he writes in his autobiographical notes that he "made very good contacts with members of the African National Congress [ANC], who taught me a lot about politics. This experience helped me to consolidate my goals for a political career, and added to the basis already laid by the Mandume Movement, which was an underground, anti-colonial movement, that was fighting against colonialism and forced taxation" (25). Kaxumba's son Noah Tuhadeleni recounts that following Tanzania's independence, Kaxumba and his cohort of activist SWAPO-members turned their discussion to liberation: "'We are going to Tanganyika. Tanganyika is free. We must be free too.'…We just saw men coming to our home looking for my father and speaking endlessly about Tanganyika and Swapo" (52). And Helao Shityuwete, discussing the actions of SWAPO's military wing, PLAN (People' Liberation Army of Namibia), noted

that “We made enormous progress and received a lot of information regarding the liberation struggle from other countries such as Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Egypt” (Helao Shityuwete, *Kaxumba* 57). Combining oral history, myth, and image, provides a cultural struggle that is not so particular as to have connections beyond the bounds of Owambo and Namibia. It describes a syncretic mythology that binds together Christianity with Owambo mythology, but these also highlight the pan-African and global undertones that the communal nature of the text puts forward. They present a syncretic social consciousness that is founded on Owambo particularity, but is also globally positioned.

Poetry, Protest Songs, and Global Blackness. Protest songs point to Owambo particularity in the context of nationalism, but Namhila’s included poem positions the interviewer’s cited protest songs in the context of global black experience. The poems as told by the interviewers register a shift in social consciousness from a nascent to a far more concrete understanding of nationalism over time. The protest songs in themselves are a means by which “all major issues that are of critical concern to the community [are] taken up through a song” (4). The first of the two songs is from 1954, which worked to disrupt apartheid proceedings, register popular discontent, and reveal a very tangible form of political concern related to nascent nationalism. The occasion of this song occurs at the trial of Reverend Theophilus Hamutumbangela, who in 1954 collected evidence of the theft of contract workers’ goods at the checkpoint at Namutoni and sent a “letter of protest” to the UN (33). The police found out about this correspondence and in 1955, the government put him on trial. When, at the trial the apartheid authorities tried to charge the Reverend, the people “rushed to the priest, picked him up and caried him up in the air like a king and started singing at the top of their voices:

‘Nali aluke, [Let it come back,]
Nali aluke, [Let it come back,]
Nali aluke edu letu,’” [Let our country come back]

leading to a chaotic ending to the trial leaving the Reverend free for the moment (34, translation belongs to Namhila). The word “edu”—literally “the ground, dirt”—instead of “oshiwana,” “the nation” is indicative of the context of Namutoni (and the forging of the Angola/Namibia borders in 1917, which prevented the Oukwanyama access to subsistence and grazing lands in southern Angola and the gradual impoverishment of the Owambo and dependence on the contract labor system (5). The song registers an instance of cultural practice as interrupting the machinery of illegitimate law. It also indicates an instance of social consciousness that is more than just abstract nation or nationalism. This is not imagined communities but perhaps a grassroots, proto-decolonial national-consciousness. Imagined communities emerges later with political consciousness—an awareness of injustices that extend beyond the Owambo.

The second song, sung in 1966 registers the shift in social consciousness from locality and country to the more abstract nation. Following the first battle of the Namibian war, after which the government offered money for information leading to Kaxumba’s capture, people sang in protest to this collaboration with the Apartheid government:

“OuNyuni wonena [Today’s world]
Tau kongo omboloto [Is searching for bread]
Tau landifa po oshiwana [At the expense of selling their own nation]
(72, translation belongs to Namhila)

This song, sung eleven years after the first one uses the word “oshiwana” instead of “edu.” While “edu” means “country,” “oshiwana” means “kingdom” and “nation,” both words indicating abstract notions of belonging.

Early in the book, however, Namhila adds a protest poem that not only repositions Namibian nationalism withing the Apartheid need for labor, but inhabits a globalist sensibility regarding labor that includes both colonialism and is reminiscent of chattel slavery. And in an interview with Tate Wilhelm Haimbangu and Meme Ndeshihafela Hangula-Haimbangu regarding the contract labor system, Namhila interjects with a poem: "The interview with Tate and Meme Haimbangu reminded me of a poem published in 1989 by the late Simon Zhu Mbako" (17). The poem, "We Come and Die as Numbers" is about the enslavement and erasure of identity that the contract labor system enacts on Black workers. It ties this process by which, when going on contract, the workers are given their copper bracelets and referred to only by these numbers: "As numbers we die; //and we enter our coffins as numbers." It registers the making-invisible, the becoming precarious and ephemeral, the mind-numbing withering away of body and soul (with sickness, with lack of recreation and freedom) the becoming ghostly and unrecognizable in this way: "And we move around as numbers. //And we move around as numbers. // …When we are sick of poisonous gasses; //We are denied compensation//for it is worth numbers. //When the fine dust eats away our lungs; //We are sent to our graves as numbers; //So we come and die as numbers." (18). The poem's passive voice registers the erasure of agency and a system that constricts one's ability to act—and also violently curtails action. It is the enslavement of laborers and helps to envision transnational Black affinities that demonstrate the shape-shifting nature of a global capitalist system dependent on Black labor.

Competing Histories and Unresolved National Presents

The text frames the afterlives of this history founded on global extractive labor in the context of ethnic and cultural particularity. The beginnings Namibia's liberation movement from Apartheid is told within the context of an origin myth that functions on the one hand in conjunction with cultural nationalism and ethnic inclusion. On the other hand, the origin myth in this context SWAPO's project of Black (Namibian) inclusion.

History, Origin Myth, and Trans-Ethnicity. In the only discussion Namhila has with Kaxumba, he recounts an origin myth which frames the liberation movement, and SWAPO more specifically in the context of political legitimacy (Namhila 63). Through this myth Kaxumba sanctions the mission of SWAPO as blessed by the ancestors and positions the liberationist acts of SWAPO as a pan-ethnic *Namibian* movement. Kaxumba recounts the event of SWAPO's first armed encounter (which initiated the Namibian War on August 26, 1966), during which time, SWAPO soldiers, trained in Tanzania, eventually made their way back into Namibia and found refuge at his home in Endola village. They remained there covertly for 8 months before rumors of their presence alerted the South African Security Police, forcing them to move. Kaxumba went with them:

> [W]e were given a suitable place in the Omugulu gwombashe [Ongulumbashe] forest to construct our training camp. The story behind this forest is that a long time ago, Omugulu gwombashe was a host to a wise old Ombashe [giraffe] who managed to survive the severe drought that hit the area many years ago. Omugule gwombashe is also the place of birth for the Ovawambo and Ovaherero people of Namibia. It is a sacred place, where their cradle is found in the Oomboombo or Omumborormbonga tree, which marks the point of separation between the children of Kazu kaMangunda [mother of the ovaHerero] and Nangombe yaMangundu [mother of the OvaWambo]. Here we felt safe under the protection of our ancestors." (64, brackets belong to Namhila)

In this place of origin, the soldiers are safe. This implies is that the protection they find is for themselves as well as their cause. The name of Ongulumbashe remembers the tale of the "wise old…giraffe" who survived a "severe drought" many years before the arrival of the soldiers. This place of survival, also shelters the very first forces of SWAPO, forecasting their endurance of the 30-year-long war for independence—a drought of its own kind. This "sacred place, where their cradle is found" is the place where the first war of Namibia was fought—a war in which the technological superiority of the Apartheid forces over the Owambo solidified for many the conviction to go into exile and seek training and weapons from other African states (66-67). However, in the context of Ongulumbashe, this battle was not just the beginning of the Namibian War. The Namibian forces were attacked in their own "cradle", their "sacred place." This affront by the South African forces affirms SWAPO's nationalist claim.

Defining this place as the "sacred…cradle" that protects ("[h]ere we felt safe under the protection of our ancestors") is a cultural and ancestral claim to the land: "Omugule gwombashe is also the place of birth for the Ovawambo and Ovaherero people of Namibia." This is reminiscent of Katjavivi's observation of the historical importance of the date 26 August for both the Owambo and Herero in order to strengthen his articulation of a national history from the experiences of these two peoples. The Herero Chief Samuel Maharero, the instigator of the first Namibian war in 1904 against the Germans was buried on 26 August 1923. Katjavivi writes that "26 August was thereafter commemorated at the annual celebration in Okahandja of Herero tradition and resistance…By historical coincidence, 43 years later, on 26 August 1966, SWAPO embarked on its armed struggle against the South African regime" (Katjavivi, 26). This

origin story evokes a kinship between the Herero and Owambo, and thus also a shared responsibility for and claim to the land. It alludes to their different but related struggles against colonial oppression. It founds nationalism in the ground of Namibia, and in those whose ancestral heritage is rooted there. In its sheltering of SWAPO and "cradling" the Owambo and Herero, this legend articulates a territorial nationalism.

However, it is a problematic nationalism if considered as applicable and emblematic of all of Namibia. It demonstrates the impossibility of the bounded project of cultural and territorial nationalism, especially in the context of Namibian ethnic and historical diversity. It undermines SWAPO's project of Black inclusivity on ethnic lines.

Testimonies and Cultural Imaginaries. Ethnic traditions, however, continue to frame the testimonies given, drawing the focus away from the wider nationalist project to the particularity of Owambo experience. Cultural traditions are some of the central concerns in the testimonies and in contrast to a forward-looking nationalism, make visible competing histories and past injustices that are disruptions in the progressive narrative of nationalism and its desire to leave the unresolvable past behind. The biography offers stories about the war from Owambo communities that current Namibian socio-political constraints may not allow to be told. While the testimonies that the book gathers tell of encounters with Kaxumba, the variety and multiplicity of stories describe incidents with unresolvable (and perhaps unresolved) afterlives to the nation that resist a single, unifying historical account.[55] Unlike progressive narrative of Namibian identity, in these

55. Namhila's volume was published during a decade in Namibia when questions of progress were increasingly confronting tensions regarding which Namibian histories were privileged, manifesting in controversial debates and events. For example, in 2009, Namibia was embroiled in a controversy concerning the removal of the Reiterdenkmal,

interviews, “the problematic present is experienced as the unresolved sequel of a devastating history”—a history that must be told, acknowledged and contended with (Irele 105). History’s haunting of the present demonstrates itself in a rare physical description of an interviewee that Namhila gives. For Joseph Sheya, his “impaired vision with the use of only one eye” is a permanent reminder of that moment of loss, which occurred as Sheya ran for his life from his employee, a farmer who, rather than paying his wages, intended to kill him (14). Namhila describes him as a “tall, slim, weary man” who despite his loss, “kept the old ways of living and sharing” as he practiced Owambo customs of hospitality (13-14). It is as though the weight of this past bears on him, as though he is a symbol of colonial erasure and trauma.

Such traumas, remembered on human bodies, are not so visible on the body of Namibia’s land, but the traumatic past continues in the cultural imaginary. Namutoni in

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an equestrian statue erected in 1912 in honor of the German emperor Wilhelm II’s birthday. Until then, the monument had overshadowed Windhoek’s downtown and political center for almost a century. In 2004, five years previous to this, Namibia’s Herero population commemorated the Herero and Nama genocide of the Herero War of 1904, an event surrounded by national and international tensions and controversial debates concerning historical memory and restitution.

In memoriam of the centenary of the Herero War, Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald republished the Blue Book of 1918— an extensive documentation of the Herero War—in a new volume *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia, An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book*. The Blue Book of 1918 included letters written by German authorities, recorded testimony from the indigenous people, and even photographs of the forms of punishment meted out to Africans. In “Footsteps and Tears: An Introduction to the Construction and Context of the 1918 ‘Blue Book’” Silvester and Gewald write that “[I]n Namibia the post-colonial state has recently taken major initiatives to address the perceived visual and archival gaps in an attempt to weave a nationalist narrative that is inclusive of different voices,” to which their volume makes a contribution (xiv). Thus, Silvester and Gewald illuminate the tensions between violence and memory, and the complicated relationship between this country’s notion of forward-looking nation-building and its traumatic history. These same tensions enmesh Namhila’s volume, which, in its own way contributes to this debate.

northern Namibia is a tourist resort located in the Etosha Wildlife Reserve today. But it is also a place of trauma. Johannes Amwaalwa remembers it as "the place where we, the Ovawambo men, went for hunting and collecting various things such as salt, ostrich egg shells, and herbal perfumes for our women" (31). This changed as it was used by the South African regime as a checkpoint, and "for the black Namibians, Namutoni became a place of hell…[T]he police would enrich themselves by ripping us off" (31). Namutoni housed German forts as the colonial power sought to expand its influence from central to northern Namibia. Following the German defeat in Namibia in 1915, the South African Government that took its place turned the German forts into "an exotic tourist center" for the white settlers and their families—what is Etosha game reserve today (31). There is, therefore, dissonance between the history of Namutoni and its physical manifestation today, where the only traces of the historical trauma are in the turreted structure of the whitewashed fort, now a museum. Within the museum, this history goes unacknowledged, concealed under restored colonial architecture so that "Namibians currently walk through a colonial…reading of their own history" (Silvester and Gewald, xxxvi). Mohanty and Martin argue that true "[c]ommunity…is the product of work, of struggle; it is inherently unstable, contextual; it has to be constantly reevaluated in the relation to critical political priorities; and it is the product of…interpretations based on an attention to history" (104). They conceptualize a notion of home and the landscapes that this encompasses, that courts the "the invisible histories," and the "layers of exploitation and struggles" beneath the surface of independence. In the biography, collective remembering allows us to be "consciousness of [the] contradictions" that make up our nation today (Mohanty and Martin, 91). The specificities of these interviews illuminate

the ongoing tensions involved in contemporary matters of restitution and nation-building. In the biography, Ndemwoongela ya Hashingola, who raises the complexity of the land question in the context of cultural traditional practices that involved Namutoni asks "What do you tell the ancestors" (27)? This question, in the context of ritual and loss remains unanswered the Namibian present. It presents a rupture in the nationalist narrative, pointing to an ideological tension in the book where on the one hand, it wants to align with the national narrative, yet it cannot. This tension is further visible on the level of language.

The testimonies are translated from Oshiwambo to English, however, the use of naming practices –one of the ways to show protest, shows this tension. English language helps to obscure the protest, helps to conceal the possible disagreement with national policy that the text might not seem to question. But this also occurs on the level of textual aesthetics. Words like "meme" and "tate" ["missus" and "mister"] are italicized, but names are not, suggesting their naturalness as names, and not culturally specific terms or forms of protest in need of translation. It is a tactic of obscurity, and an important tension in the text. For instance, the biography carefully honors the state's decision for national reconciliation (in which war criminals in the community are forgiven in the project of nation-building), but we sense in the use of language the feeling betrayal—or at the least the refusal to forget—emerge in the naming practices. Meme Priskila Tuhadeleni, Kaxumba's wife, tells of an encounter with Chief Kaningwalenga Ohalandifapo Oshiwana following Kaxumba's arrest in 1960 (43). The chief's name in translation is "He who is made chief who sells his nation away." This is not this chief's real name, but a name given to protect his identity due to the nation's politics of national restitution.

Namhila repeats this naming-to-obscure when she tells of interviewing "*Tate* Kalyamupombo," next to which she footnotes "Real name withheld" (93). However, one of the ways naming practices function in Owambo are as form of protest—and this extends to nicknames. The chiefs' names in the narrative simultaneously protect and reveal their complicity. The names of the kalengas signal ambivalence towards restitution. Unitalicized and obscured in English, they reveal that the injustices of the past are not resolved, emerging in the present. They show an encounter between languages and cultural understanding, and practices at the level of textual aesthetics that are deeply political and unresolved in the present.[56]

Futurity and Form

Rather than considering the divergent and irresolvable issues at the heart of the biography as resistant to the national narrative, however, I consider them as disrupting linearity and creating other temporal lineages born of futurity.

Recordings, Divergent Futures, and Figures of Loss. Divergences in the forms that signal futurity are evident at the intersections of myth and testimony at play in Namhila's own

56. I mention Carli Coetzee's reading of translation in chapter 3, but also, Vicente L. Raphael explores the politics of language and translation as they emerge in the operations of imperialism and nationalism in various contexts globally and historically (8). He finds that despite a state's attempt to enforce monolingualism through repression and translation, the result is "linguistic pluralism" (5). In these sites of domination translation reveals language's entangled and aporetic nature. Aporia is an impasse— "a site that prevents passage, blocks progress, and arrests movement from one place to another" (12). But where it forecloses meaning, it also allows for endless possibilities, drawing "one into a sea of languages, entrapping one in their multitude of referents and their ever-changing currents of meaning" (13). This aporia is "the insurgency of language, its capacity to resist reductions and conversion into definitive meanings and authoritative intensions" (14).

recording practice. In a meeting with the leader of the Kaxumba KaNdola cultural group, the woman sings a praise poem to Kaxumba in order to welcome Namhila (100). The praise poem not only situates Kaxumba within the narrative of royalty and conquest, but also invokes the context of Namhila recording testimonies by those who witnessed Kaxumba's arrest. Not expecting this welcome, Namhila pulls out her tape recorder in time to record only two stanzas of a communion, a "deep personal conversation with Kaxumba himself" and Ndamono ya Shimwandi, who sang (100). The communion that recounts Kaxumba's victory, is incomplete, ensconced in testimonies of Kaxumba's foreclosed freedom, and it makes visible the figure of loss. This textual moment draws together Kaxumba's lineage of victory in the poem's lines, the foreclosure of that victory in the narratives of his capture, and the sense of loss that accompanies the recorded fragment of praise poetry, which remains untranslated in the book. This communion between forms that tracks alternative, multiple, and possible trajectories for Kaxumba's life is itself an embodiment of futurity.

The testimony before the song tells of a different transfiguration of Kaxumba, born out of his arrest, which gives him new form as a figure of hope. Kuku Helvi Namupala tells of Kaxubmba's capture and torture, and in turn of the celebration of the Apartheid government, who put Kaxumba on exhibition for the white community (99). After that, despite the government's contention that Kaxumba was dead, Kuku Namupula and a Kapugulu, a friend of Kaxumba's found a sign to the contrary. This was a Marula tree that grew out of the devastated field where Kaxumba was arrested. "Can you imagine," she asks,

> how devastating it would have been for us if that tree did not bear leaves or fruit or if it had hoarfrost? It was our secret that helped us cope firstly, with the fact that indeed a fellow Namibian reported Kaxumba to the colonising [sic] army and police, and secondly, the shock of the police, cars, dogs, helicopters that stormed our household that morning of the arrest. Anyway, as you can see for yourself, this tree is still going strong and it is called Kaxumba to this day (100).

Along with the tree, Kapugulu also digs a well that he names Kaxumba and tends as he would his friend. For Kuku Namupula, both the tree and the well are symbols to remember the events of the arrest (100). Furthermore, they are afterlives that hint at the fruitfulness of martyrdom, the living result of Kaxumba's sacrificed life. They are afterlives of martyrdom that do not lead to activism or resistance, but to secrecy and hope.

The praise poem by Ndamono ya Shimwandi, the leader of the Kaxumba kaNdola Cultural Group, follows Kuku Namupala's interview, and while it also recounts the past, it does so in the context of a present independence and victory. It is a celebration of Namibian identity with Kaxumba at its center. It blurs ethnic histories and performs an awareness of pan-ethnic resistance among the Owambo. The first verse reads:

> Oombale dhiihaka mapaya
> Ga thigwapo kuNehale
> Omiya dha thigwa po kuNangolo
> Dhi ninge dhaMartina
> Noomeme koshilongo shetu
> Noohamba dhevi lyetu
> Naa kwaniilwa
> OKaxumba kaNdola.
>
> [That unbreakable might
> That Nehale left behind
> And Nangolo's fighters, left
> To fight with Martin
> And the mothers of this country of ours
> And the kings of our land
> And our chiefs
> Welcome Kaxumba kaNdola.]

While Kaxumba was Kwanyama, the song is in Oshindonga and aligns Kaxumba with a Ndonga history of resistance to colonialism and to the Ndonga lineage of kings.[57] Nehale and Nangolo were both Ondonga kings, and were famous for their acts of resistance against the colonial government. In the context of anticolonial nationalism, the legend of Kaxumba kaNdola belongs to all Namibians. In the poem, the lineage of these warrior kings and chiefs culminates in Kaxumba kaNdola. He is a redeemer in a lineage of resistance in which he brings about liberation.

The second verse builds on the militaristic implications of the first verse and places Kaxumba in a lineage of warriors.

> Iilyatagula yomOkashandja nOnankulo
> Dhuuka kOkatale kuJohni yaKito
> Ondola ndjoo
> Oinangala yopombanda
> Iilala yomoombuli
> Ondola ndjoo
>
> [From Okashandja and Onankulo, the sound of stamping feet
> Going towards Okatale to join Johni yaKito
> Resistance is a oshana
> The restless sleep of exile
> Sleep uneasy,
> Resistance is a deep oshana]

The praise poem locates Kaxumba in the lineage of kings and warriors, and thus of legends and political power. Kaxumba is figured as a strong and determined leader, who will bring good things for the nation as one having gone through exile and fugitivity to

57. The Ondonga and Kwanyama are sub-ethnic groups of the Owambo. Their languages are thus, also considered dialects of Oshiwambo and are called Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama. This is problematic because “the Owambo” is a colonial construct, given to a group of indigenous people who shared similarities in culture. Actually, each “dialect” can easily be considered its own language.

bring liberation. The possibilities he brings to the nation are as endless as the waters of a deep oshana.[58] Kaxumba is legitimized through myth, and syncretically raised to Christlike greatness and Owambo royalty.

The testimony by Tate Johannes Nakanyala that accompanies this partial praise poem however, registers loss. It recounts Kaxumba's betrayal by a friend, following the attack at Ongulumbashe, and his arrest in 1967 (101). The meeting of these two testimonies with the partial praise poem gives a sense of the divergent nature of the text, and the loss of the recording, the irresolvable concerns and ruptures that occur with the impossibility of knowing.

Footnotes and the Figure of Futurity. The figure that Kaxumba becomes in communal textual form is perhaps envisioned most poignantly in Namhila's interjected footnotes that register the fractured nature of the text and the impossibility of a cohesive history and future. Namhila frequently interjects to add footnotes in the margins that verifies the facts of the interviewees. But often, verifications are impossible. For example, Helao Shityuwete makes reference to an article he translated into English for Kaxumba, and "sent…to the *Contact* newspaper linked to the Liberal Party of South Africa" (24). Namhila's attached footnote reads: "This article could not be traced" (24). Similarly in the instance of the "Black Pimpernel" wanted flyer, the image of this flyer exists in the book. This flyer, handed down from the original owner of the "flyer/magazine," Axel Johannes, was passed to his nephew Festus Iifo. And Namhila notes that neither the original flyer nor that edition of the magazine could be traced (72). On the one hand is a

58. An oshana is a body of water that can be as large as a small lake.

history that has happened and been recorded, but also evident in the text is the ephemerality of such recording, as the originals are missing or exist in partial references and must be remembered. This sense of loss is especially evident in the footnote that Namhila adds to Meme Ndaambe Nakale's testimony regarding the Apartheid government's anti-SWAPO propaganda fliers targeting educated Namibians, and dropped by helicopter over school and college campuses across northern Namibia in 1967 (79). In the footnote, Namhila notes people's expressed anxiety about keeping political materials, as these would elicit violence from the South African police if discovered during a search. She writes that,

> most documents with political contents were either buried under the ground or destroyed immediately after reading the contents. Most people I interviewed, showed me along their homestead boundaries where they had buried documents, but the earth had eaten them up. We would dig and find nothing. The original papers could no longer be found. The citation here is what the teacher [Meme Nakale] still remembered (80).

Her statement registers this loss of the original that is reconstructed from memory, the attempt to unearth something that is no longer there, except perhaps in fragments. It is a metaphor for this book that stands in for what is lost to time, and makes sense of that which is past, and that which perhaps cannot be recuperated except in fragments. The original must be re-membered, and what we are left with is a literary figure that perhaps is related to but is itself a distinct object from the original. And which carries within it the various people, forms, and histories that constitute its making.

Conclusion

Kaxumba kaNdola is a text replete with various formal, narrative, and political tensions. It is a Namibian struggle narrative told from multiple perspectives and the use of various

forms to create a political figure's literary embodiment. Kaxumba is a nationalist narrative, but the form of the biography undoes this. The unresolved issues persist, for instance like the testimonies about Etosha and Namutoni, related to the protest song about returning the land—Etosha remains a game park.[59] And Owamboland communities continue to be impoverished. While the book is a project about Namibia's becoming rooted in a man and in Owambo culture, it extends Namibian nationhood beyond the bounds of the country and beyond the bounds of SWAPO. Accordingly, this communal biography is perhaps less idealistic than the vision of nationalism. It is non-essentializing, a complex, unpredictable, at times unresolved and possibly unresolvable past, told from a national present, but that projects possibility. The collective form is hope. It is not progressive in the sense that nationalism is as it performs in modernity, but shows a figure and nation that is global, dispersed, and yet rooted at home. This sense of possibility, pan-African and global connectivity co-exists with the forms of nationalism the book also helps to imagine.

The book embodies futurity, but I also consider Kaxumba to be a figure of futurity, oriented toward the future he wished to see, all the while cognizant that such striving might be foreclosed on account of his blackness. Black feminist futurity is about refusal, a stance that is oriented toward other possible iterations of one's life different from that which the state and societal constraints dictate. Kaxumba's life, however, was one of obvious resistance. Yet, I consider that acts of resistance and practices of refusal are not unrelated. The possible future he strove for has more or less come to pass. The

59. Only as recently as 2017 have they made the entrance fee to Etosha cheap enough for the local community to afford to visit by offering them a discounted price. The cost of entry is targeted to tourists who can afford it.

nation is independent, there are more possibilities for Black Namibians, for the Owambo. Yet is it also the suggestion of this biography that the possibility of redemption does not happen without knowledge and acknowledging of the past and its legacies.

When my mother recalled the historical figure Kaxumba KaNdola, it was myth, not historical events that came to mine. The myth also illuminated historical events—the soldiers shot the birds because they thought they were Kaxumba—and the present (why the bird is no longer plentiful in Namibia). More so, it spoke to the man—the societal consciousness that surrounds the man. A man who has the power to affect the natural world around him to bring change and justice. This Kaxumba, however, is more than a man. And so perhaps it is fitting, then, that this book *Kaxumba KaNdola* is more than the man, more than a political symbol, and more than the community whose voices it collects. It embodies—enacts futurity. *Kaxumba's* communal form exceeds the projection of any one vision of this future. And in this way, introduces alternate possibilities.

Moving from anthology to the biography, the next chapter will consider a more contemporary instantiation of marginal literatures in Facebook serial fiction. Engaging with the coproduction of a modern story produced collaboratively between authors and readers, we see how collective forms engage gender and literary politics in the creation of a new popular narrative form.

CHAPTER IV

COLLABORATIVE AUTHORSHIP IN NAMIBIAN FACEBOOK FICTION

In a Facebook post concerning the end of "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl," the anonymous author offered an explanation that encapsulates the precarity of this work of Facebook literature, even with the growing success of online publishing in African literature. [60] The posting revealed to their public that the author had found a publisher eager to print this work, which had previously appeared piecemeal and serialized on a Facebook page, as a book. "If I die today" the author posted, "this page opuwo ngaho...Takutiwa ngo [this page will end…it will only be said] there was once a page called *The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl*.'"[61] Despite the popularity of this Facebook narrative online, the post suggests the author's feeling that the true means of forging a literary career relies on the publication of a physical, tangible book. Their desire to be read beyond Facebook reveals the transformative possibilities that traditional publishing continues to offer. Indeed, as Jane Katjavivi has described it in her informative discussion of publishing in Namibia, "[w]riters and publishers do not exist without each other and if the business side of publishing does not work, writers have no outlet" (363). Yet, in Namibia, formal, traditional publishing opportunities for literary works are difficult to come by (Krishnamurthy and Vale 5; Harlech-Jones 238). However, as is the case across

60. The author remains anonymous while posting the narrative on Facebook. While I am aware of the author's identity, I choose to respect their choice to remain anonymous and will refer to this person with the pronouns "they, their, theirs."

61. The narrative and the page share a name, so to distinguish between them, I italicize the name of the page—as I do other Facebook pages—and put the narrative's title quotations. This distinction is important because "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" is not the only narrative on this page.

the continent, publishing online has become a popular outlet for Namibian writers. As Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed points out, "an explosion of new technologies has meant a completely new way of reaching and interacting with an African audience, not only changing the traditional gatekeepers of literature on the continent, but enabling creators and consumers of African literature to reclaim – and then reframe – their own narratives" (387). Thus, despite the author's concern regarding the true success and value of their narrative as-is, this work and other works of Facebook literature are significant to the transformation of the Namibian and African literary landscape.

This chapter discusses Anglophone Facebook serial fiction in the Namibian context, its consciousness-raising function, and the relationship between the authors and the reading publics that coalesce around these Facebook pages.[62] I use "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" as my main point of reference because it exemplifies these literatures' dependence on the reader-writer relationship, and in their interest in social commentary and consciousness-raising. "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" engages the dominant discourse surrounding Kandeshis in Namibia, intimately imagining their precarious lives, and inviting reader-engagement with the narrative. In doing so, "The Dream" offers a nuanced perspective of Kandeshi lives that problematizes the simplistic definition of "gold-digger" commonly applied to the women.[63] The storyline makes visible the

62. While I discuss it to a degree here, elsewhere I have written in detail about the social commentary function of "The Dream" as it speaks to gender-based violence in Namibia and offers a critique of Namibia's own divided approach to women's issues (see "'All This Drama'" 2020). Another of my publications focuses closely on the reader-writer relationship and the use of language and grammar in this narrative as it contributes to our understanding of global Anglophone as a literary field and critical lens (see "Authors," forthcoming).

unequal expectations in Namibian gender relations that the easy explanations and definitions in popular discourse hide, and encourages readers to engage them. Furthermore, the author creates an aspirational, communal literary space that is defined by a joint effort between author and readers to help the protagonist achieve her dream, and simultaneously enable the author's success in the literary world. I consider the innovative tactics that the author of "The Dream" and other Facebook serial fictions employ to generate a readership and eventually publish, even as they simultaneously speak to Namibian society. I furthermore argue that digital literatures use language in ways that exemplify possible analytic strategies for the emerging field of global Anglophone literary studies. I show that Facebook serial fictions are an important part of Namibian literature, and African literature more broadly. These literatures represent a vibrant writing subculture and reveal an interactive reading Namibian public deeply invested in the online literatures they consume. While the focus is local, this turn to

63. In "'All This Drama'" I discuss this narrative in the context of performance theory and Victor Turner's notion of social drama (2020). Victor Turner (1987) defines social drama as "aharmonic or disharmonic social process[es] arising in conflict situations" (74). These processes are initiated and performed in the public sphere and disrupt the quotidian flow of life. Thus, they unveil the tensions in a social structure normally concealed by habitual day-to-day activities. They make visible the way a society thinks, what it values, and its inequalities in any given historical moment (90). Furthermore, the theory of social drama considers human societies as produced out of "human processes"—acts or performances—that transform the cultural landscape, rather than as harmonious constructs or groups aimed toward a pure ideal culture that must be attained. In this case, society is governed by rules and customs that dictate behavior, but that are often incompatible with each other in particular situations (Turner 1987, 74). Therefore, acts typically considered as discrepant or flaws are in fact clues to social process, and furthermore, can make visible the genuine novelty and creativeness that can emerge in the performance situation as individuals navigate the intersections of contradictory social expectations (77). This perception of culture not only refrains from applying value-judgements to particular acts or behaviors, but regards these as revelatory, and as holding transformative potential within their cultural context.

Facebook as a platform for literary production signals one of the ways in which African literature is reinventing itself in the digital age.

In this chapter I continue my discussion of marginal communal literary works and the possibilities their form and positions at the borders of the literary world allow for. In chapter 1, I discuss collectivity in the context of genre, and how communality in this text allows for alternative notions of belonging in the context of the nation. In chapter 2, I consider collectivity through the testimonial voices and the forms they employ, enabling the text's construction of a figure of futurity. In this chapter, I consider collectivity through participation and dialogue between the author and their readers in the context of social media.

Virtualscapes of Namibian Online Fiction

Despite the challenges literary authors in Namibia face in traditional publishing, the possibilities for publishing in online spaces is thriving. In these digital spaces, writers make their short stories, poetry, and creative non-fiction available to the public, and they generate an active, engaged following of readers. Here I will provide an overview of some of the sites in Namibia's virtualscape of literary publishing. Along with Facebook, blogs provide a favored format for Namibian writers, seen in the popularity of Stephanus Mutileni's creative non-fiction about the everyday on *Blue Short Pants*, as well as the essays, poetry and short stories on Filemon Iiyambo's blog *Chronicles of Fly*. Still another format is the online publication of the novel. Mutileni's self-publication of his first novel *1805: A Potter's Bay Thriller* in 2019, for example, echoes more traditional forms of publishing than many online authors have. *Book Buddy Namibia,* the blogsite of the bookstore Book Buddy located in Windhoek, publishes short stories and poetry by

Namibians along with book reviews and features of the books they carry in their store. The most recent addition to Namibia's literary virtualscape is Namibia's first online literary magazine *Doek!*. Founded by Mutaleni Nadimi and Rémy Ngamije, *Doek!* published its first issue in August 2019. It is because of this rise in online literary publication both in Namibia and across the continent that Shola Adenekan argues against the marginalization of online African literature, pointing out that with the "advent of social media and the surge in the number of young Africans with access to mobile phones…the future of African literature perhaps lies online." (134). It is evident that these new media literary works forge new opportunities and possibilities for both readers and writers, and for literary studies.

However, Facebook is the most popular platform for innovative narrativizing and reader-and-writer engagement. For instance, in her important and informative essay regarding Facebook and blog fiction in southern Africa, Stephanie Bosch Santana discusses the proliferation of a southern African genre of digital literature, "the fictional online diary," first emerging in South Africa with the publication of Mike Maphoto's *Diary of a Zulu Girl* in 2013 and proliferating to create complex transnational virtual and material networks throughout southern Africa (190). Certainly, Maphoto's Diary inspired the production of fictional online diaries on Namibia's Facebook platforms, and many authors started their pages in the form of such diaries. Pages like Joanna Amweero's *Confessions of a Vambo Girl* and *Monica Pinias'* page titled after her penname *Monica Morocky* follows the conventions of the fictional diary form. Amweero acknowledges her page's transnational affiliations, stating that *Diary of a Zulu Girl* and the page

Confessions of a Xhosa Girl are what inspired her to write.[64] And Morocky's first serialized story "My Best Friend's Boyfriend" is told in first-person diary form.

"The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl*"* is a fictional online diary, and affiliation between this and Maphoto's work is evident. But the narrative and page are also part of the broader genre of Facebook serial fiction—pages created for the purpose of telling multiple stories in serialized form, and covering a range of subjects and narrative perspectives. Facebook serial fiction writers also differ from coalitions of writers that publish on Facebook, such as the Tanzanian writers of the page *Kona Ya Riwaya Reloaded* that Lutz Diegner describes (Diegner 2018). While most of these Facebook pages use similar and popular strategies such as rigorous production of serialized chapters and cliffhanger endings, Namibian writers are mostly the sole authors on their pages. This kind of writing on Facebook by Namibians predates Maphoto's important and influential *Diary* and is prolific. Blogger Festus Abiatar, for example, writes on *Festus the Writer*, but his initial cite of publication was Facebook Notes, beginning in 2012. He published a two-part short story series named "The Boy" beginning February 8th 2013 on Notes. In 2015 he shifted to publishing his essays exclusively on his blogsite, and in 2017 Abiatar self-published his novel *Patience*. Another popular writer Planny Angala published on Facebook Notes from 2010 to 2014. His first story "Kandina Tate" posted on June 29, 2012, elicited 265 comments and 88 shares. For his 2013 story "Passion Killing," he collaborated with Monica Morocky, who wrote Part 2 of the narrative. Morocky also published serial fiction on her Facebook page, beginning with "My Best

64. Posted in the comments, 4 October 2019**.** Going forward, I will simply cite the date a comment was posted.

Friend's Boyfriend" on April 17th, 2013. However, Morocky wrote her first novel *Modern Relationships* in 2012, published by Wordweaver Publishing House. The novel, "a brew of side chicks, bad boys, baby mamas and the newest edition to city slang" was inspired by serialized Facebook fiction and follows the serialized form, using "Parts" instead of "chapters" (Nekomba 2014).[65] And an additional recent example of Facebook serial fiction is Rex Animation and Film Studio's recent post of a 9-part image-and-text short story on Facebook. Titled "A Love Story in Chaotic Namibia" this Africanfuturist graphic story is about an unnamed panga-wielding female protagonist and her cyborg partner James who go on a mission to rescue children smuggled from all over Namibia by a trafficking ring (Rex 2020). Another new page worth noting is *Stories by Hannah H. Tarindwa* a page named after its author, who posts serialized stories, poetry and flash fiction. This is by no means a comprehensive overview, but it serves to show how digital literatures in Namibia—and more specifically literatures on Facebook—are increasing, experimenting with different forms, and intersecting with print culture.

Facebook Fiction as Digital Popular Art Forms

Facebook serial fictions develop in the margins of both formal and online publishing, yet this positioning enables their innovative strategies. These literatures exemplify what Ainehi Edoro says of the digital space where "things can appear and delight us for a moment and then disappear so that something else can do the same thing" (2020). However, the ephemerality of Facebook fictions and their position at the margins

65. It is worth noting that the hurried form that marks serial fiction was not well-received when the book was published, leaving that style intact (Nekomba 2014). Morocky's second novel *Love Sex and Flight Tickets* was published in 2017 ("A Moment" 2019).

nevertheless allows for independence. As Netta Kornberg notes, "[t]hough it is defined by lack, the margins are also 'a rich space.' These contradictions are instructive. They tell us to be flexible" (245). While marginality is a current feature of Namibian Facebook fiction that brings about its own challenges, this is not a weakness. Rather, these "[B]orn-digital" works also do the work of conscientization resultant of their positions in society as popular art forms (Hockx ix).[66] Karin Barber describes popular art forms as a "fugitive category," and their "very flexibility and elusiveness is a potential strength" (5). They foreground a "new consciousness" that "must be read through the details of local social, political, and economic experience which is continually undergoing historical change" (53). Stephanie Newell and Onookome Okome furthermore point out that another of their determining characteristics is their use of the technological innovations that mark the age in which they emerge (Newell and Okome13). Unlike other genres of digital literature, which may require a certain amount of computational expertise or access to software to produce or even to read them, Facebook serial fictions rely on the popular, relatively easy mass-usage of social media platforms and access to smartphones or technology, thus drawing a wider, and perhaps unconventional readership and innovative, unexpected authors (O'Sullivan 13). The form that these literatures take is intertwined with the Facebook platform—as is their dissemination. The Facebook page not only allows the authors to circumvent the mediation of publishers and provide their materials directly to and interact with their readers, but the liking and commenting function of Facebook has the effect of creating literary "communities that enable a transmission of cultural

66. Hockx draws from N. Katherine Hayles' groundbreaking *Electronic Literature,* where she coins the term "digital born" to describe certain types of electronic literature (3).

knowledge and literary meanings." (Yeku 2019, 6). This is most evident in the context of "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl's" emergence. The narrative exemplifies the relationship between these digital literary forms and social critique—even as they serve to entertain.

Gender and Consciousness in "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl"

"The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" participates in public discourse about the lifestyle of young women in Windhoek, the capital city, initiated with the release of a music video in which the fictional life of one of these women is narrativized. On March 23, 2012, two years before "The Dream" was published, an all-male Namibian kwaito music group PDK released their single "Dirty Kandeshi" on YouTube. The song is about a young woman named Kandeshi who, in the chorus is described in the chorus:

> "Dirty Kandeshi
> Seduce someone 'cause she want his money
> Dirty Kandeshi
> Breaking my heart 'cause she want my money
> Wakaka, wakaka, wakaka, ye ["you are dirty, dirty, dirty"]
> Montwe woye kamunendunge we" ["in your brain there is no intelligence"]

Kandeshi is depicted and described as a beautiful unintelligent, single-minded seductress, preying on unsuspecting men for their money. With this song PDK provided a visual and narrative for the tensions within Windhoek society regarding the behavior of young city women. The song was a hit, eliciting social commentary from Namibia's many media sources. Two weeks after the release, *The Villager* newspaper described the music video in the following manner:

> The flick is simple: they are strangers who meet in a restaurant; drag each other home to bed; play and the guy leaves for the toilet while she ransacks his drawers and wallet. When he returns from the loo, she asks for money to do her nails and hair; he surrenders his bank card; she hugs the guy and fishes out his wallet from the back pocket. That's Dirty Kandeshi - the hottest and most played music video

> these days. In the video, PDK portrays the hustle of a wallet miner, who uses her pout and curves to dive into the pockets of most naive men to look in her direction. (Halwoodi)

The article continues with PDK-member Patrick Mwashindange outlining the band's motive for making the video: "We want to give a different perspective of a woman's hustle…The video is not explicit. We wanted something fun with a message and a story of survival" (2012). Yet the song's lyrics belie this benevolent motive, and while the music is upbeat and the video is colorful and well-filmed, "a woman's hustle" is portrayed in a derogatory manner that is nothing new. Perhaps the only difference is that this "hustle" is specific to Namibia.

Namibians confirmed this social specificity as the video continued to gain popularity and discursive traction. A month after its release, radio station Energy 100FM asked their audience on Facebook: "What is your definition of Dirty Kandeshi and do they exist in Namibia?" (2012). This question elicited a string of comments, many calling "Dirty Kandeshis" Namibia's version of "gold-diggers." Also of note is that within a month of the song's release, the name "Kandeshi" had become a descriptor for the type of woman portrayed in the video. And while many of the responses to the radio station's questions protested the term "gold-digger" and the descriptor "dirty" (one respondent asked: "who makes them dirty after all"), these were drowned out in preference for the "gold-digger" signifier. This preference became further evident in January 2013 when, almost a year after the video's release, *The Namibian* newspaper announced that comedian Lazarus Jacobs would return to the stage with a new show: "Keeping Up with the Kandeshis" (Kaulinge 2013). When interviewed by the National Theatre of Namibia to promote his show Jacobs was asked "What defines a Kandeshi to you and what is your

take on them?" He responded, "I don't define who a Kandeshi is, it has already been defined by society as a gold-digger." The interviewer went on to state that "[T]he show will clearly leave the audience with the expression: 'A Sista has got to get paid. By any means necessary!'" (NTN Namibia 2013). The term's entrenchment in Namibian society and its vocabulary was further demonstrated a month after Jacobs' show (a year after the song's release) when a front-page column in *The Namibian* read, "Perhaps your girlfriend is nothing more than a Kandeshi. Hope she's not a dirty Kandeshi. When kwaito group PDK produced the song 'Dirty Kandeshi' they would never have thought that it would become such an iconic song, about girls just chopping guys' money" ("Pulling a Woody" 2013). Clearly this song speaks to a situation in Namibia that resonates with popular unease concerning women's behavior which deviates from normative societal expectations. PDK's aim at making "something fun with a message and a story of survival" is really only beautifully aestheticized gold-digging. Also clear is that the narrative direction the song set has become the popular one in the Namibian imagination. Using the Facebook platform, "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" addresses the oversimplified assessment of Kandeshi lives that the music video promotes with a narrative of its own— "all just based on Windhoek experiences, plus a little creativity," as the author explains it—to tell the story of what is really going on in Windhoek (Chapter 14). The Facebook pages of serial fictions, however, are less visible than the dominant offline media forms such as newspapers, radio stations and their accompanying websites and social media platforms. Rather, "The Dream" and other Facebook fictions' dependence on Facebook as a platform for their serialized production and dissemination

supports complex interplay between the author and readers, and the narrative's function of social commentary.

On July 4, 2014, the anonymous author added a post to the end of the first chapter of "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl," which seemed to signal a call for reader engagement: "Comments are welcome." What then unfolded was a twenty-nine-chapter narrative posted over a period of fifty-seven days in which the author continually invited commentary and interacted with readers concerning elements of the story told. "The Dream" tells of the experiences of the protagonist Nangula, who, after graduating from high school, leaves her home village in northern Namibia and moves to Windhoek to live with her aunt Lahja while attending the University of Namibia (UNAM) to become a chartered accountant. There, Nangula, with the help of her cousin Blackberry, adopts the lifestyle of a Kandeshi and her life becomes a series of precarious performances in which she must navigate her Aunt Lahja's suspicions and expectations of conservative behavior, struggle to keep a clear head in the face of the glamorous life her cousin Blackberry introduces her to, and manage the frequently unwelcome attention of the men who prey on her. After each chapter, the author used the Facebook comment section to facilitate a dialogue concerning Kandeshi lifestyle and the direction of the narrative. The readers in turn responded to the narrative with critique for the author, advice for the protagonist, and suggestions for the storyline.

"The Dream" complicates the oversimplified assessment the music video gives of young women caught at the intersection of unequal gendered traditions and popular

progressive notions of modernity.[67] Like other online fictional diaries, the story is about young women who use sex to gain access to money and power; and similar to other works in the genre, "The Dream" is sympathetic to the plight of these young city women (Bosch Santana 2018, 94). It is worth noting that while the narrative's melodrama and hypersexuality highlight the easy victimization of these young women by men and at times their inadvertent mistreatment by older women in Namibian society, they also reveal the women's strong desire for independence. The Kandeshis in the narrative are, after all, intelligent, creative, ambitious education-seeking women. This focus on sexual dynamics and unequal relationships in society, however, resonates with a recent trend in contemporary African women's fiction, which highlights the intimacies of bodily violence in order to reframe patriarchal violence and women's agency. Chielozona Eze describes these contemporary novels as foregrounding the woman's body, but not as a symbol of something else (the nation, or tradition, for instance) but rather "as homes to their individual selves…as exclusively theirs, not as belonging to society or their culture" (3). In this female body-conscious context, they also foreground the relationship between African men and women, thus interrogating the devastating implications of the African patriarchal gaze for the female body (3, 9). Eze reads this body-consciousness and

67. As Suzanne LaFont points out, despite Namibia's very progressive constitution regarding gender equality, national identity is understood in very conservative terms, and "a reverence for 'traditions', including those that deny gender equality and sexual self-determination, is defended under the auspices of nationalism" (2007, 1). Also, Henning Melber discusses how the ruling political party after independence in 1990—the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO; now referred to as Swapo Party)—went about outlining a Namibian nationalism founded on patriarchy and the valorization of the liberation movement. This ideology was an extension of their politics during the liberation movement, as the foremost party agitating for Namibian liberation (2014).

insistence on self-possession as “a call for a moral reappraisal of society’s relation to the personhood of women who suffer gender discrimination” (6). In line with this contemporary direction in literature, “The Dream” shows how Kandeshi behavior emerges out of a complex melding of ideologies that constrain and obscure the women’s own desire for independence and frames their self-assertion and acts for agency as deviance. While the narrative imagines the possible lived conditions of negotiating patriarchy and the frequently resultant sexual violence, the narrative also contextualizes this behavior within generational relationships between women, exploring tensions regarding traditional expectations for women in the context of city life and highlighting the themes of motherhood and sisterhood.

Nangula’s introduction to Windhoek life is rough and immediately positions her relationship with her cousin Blackberry as a sisterhood. At the same time, her relationship to her Aunt Lahja, who she lives with, is an antagonistic mother-daughter relationship. In one especially revealing scene, the bus that transports her from her home village to Windhoek arrives at the station late at night, and Nangula has no means of contacting her aunt who was supposed to meet her. Borrowing the bus-driver’s cellphone, she calls Aunt Lahja, gets no response, and leaves a message. She then calls Blackberry and leaves another message. The impatient bus-driver eventually leaves her to wait at the dark bus-station alone. A well-dressed man, who Nangula refers to as Mr. Leather Jacket, appears and kindly offers to loan her his cellphone. When no-one answers, he leaves, reassuring her that if anyone calls back, he will let them know where she is. He returns two hours later in his expensive car— “a 320i BMW”—and tells her “['inavadenga natango shiveli’] ‘They haven’t called yet, dear, but just come with me I will get you

home'" (Chapter 2).[68] Feeling out of options, Nangula gets into the car. The man takes her to a bar and drugs her, but before he can carry her out to his car, Blackberry, who happens to be at the same bar, recognizes her cousin and, making a scene, wrests Nangula away from Mr. Leather Jacket. Thus immediately, the narrative positions the burden of care in the context of Blackberry and sisterhood. From the start, the relationship between Nangula and Aunt Lahja (who fails to meet her at the bus) is problematized.

This tension between the notions of sisterhood and motherhood is amplified the following day, when Blackberry takes Nangula to their aunt's house. Blackberry and Aunt Lahja do not get along. When Blackberry moved from the village to Windhoek three years ago, she lived with Aunt Lahja, but their relationship became strained as Blackberry became increasingly socially active. Eventually Aunt Lahja evicted Blackberry, accusing her of prostitution. For this reason, Lahja is suspicious when Nangula appears at her door a day late, and in Blackberry's company. When Nangula tells her of her encounter, her aunt does not believe her:

> I could see the disgrace directed to me on my aunt's face as she looked at me in disgust, 'Meumbo omu hamo totameke kukala hopopi iifundja nande, ngenge osho ngaho tokakala hokala nokakumbu oko takekulongo uumbudi, ['You won't start your life here by telling lies in this house, if this is the case you can go live with this prostitute here who will teach you her thieving ways,] your mother sent you here to go to school not to sleep around' (Chapter 3).

Nangula is then told to sleep on a mattress in the garage, as her aunt "would not allow liars and whores to sleep in her house" (Chapter 3). While the relationship between Nangula and her aunt improved the following day, it remained strained. Much of the

68. I am choosing to leave the quotes I draw from the narratives as-is, as the writing style is a feature of the work. I am also only lightly editing the quotes I draw from the authors comments.

tension between Aunt Lahja and Nangula arises from Lahja's own hostility to Blackberry and her influence on Nangula. This is an instance that begins Nangula's careful navigation of her aunt's demand for chaste behavior, such moments revealing the unequal gender ideologies that structure young women's social realities.

This situation of unequal gendered expectations between young and older women becomes evident one evening when Nangula has dinner with Aunt Lahja and her friend Aunt Helena. The two older women attempt to determine the implications of Nangula's glamorized appearance—what Helena refers to as "swagga."

> we ate with her friend Aunty Helena in the dining room […] 'So Nangula, you surely look like a city girl now, I could hardly recognise you the day I brought your aunt from the airport, [o swagga ne ndishi vati,] apparently you have swagga now, it's not a bad thing but be careful of the boys they like to take advantage of the pretty girls,' said Aunty Helena […] I told her that I was just interested in my school books, I also told her about my makeover just so I get her off my case, 'Well my cousin has been kind to me, she bought me Brazilian hair and gave me her old clothes and shoes, I just couldn't say no and she insisted, apart from that I really just keep myself busy with school,' I said, 'But surely the boys come up to you don't they, with a beautiful face and body like that, these boys are not blind,' said Aunty Helena […] 'Helena [otopopi iikwashike ano, ef' okaana kiilonge omambo ako,] what are you going on about, leave the child to her studies and books, Nangula […] finish school before you start dating,' said my aunt (Chapter 25).

Nangula's response to this not-so-subtle interrogation is: "I was suspecting they wanted me to tell them whether I'm seeing anyone…but I later realised they were just trying to get me talking, I pretended to be innocent" (Chapter 25). This pretense at innocence is crucial to understanding the tension surrounding the Kandeshi social drama. As the passage indicates, the "innocent" behavior that is prized is a focus on education (rather than appearance and "boys"), abstinence, and respect for one's elders demonstrated through obedience. Any indication of contrary behavior implies guilt. While the "swagga" of a city girl is not inherently bad, it attracts men who "take advantage of the

pretty girls." And where the pretty girls here, are victims, also implied is that these young women are complicit in their own victimization. Therefore, the Kandeshi aesthetic—the basis of Helena and Lahja's concern—signifies not only a lack of innocence, but also an admission of guilt on some level, and the burden remains on Nangula to prove her innocence.[69] She must explain that her makeover is not a result of Kandeshi behavior. Nevertheless, the possibility of her guilt is because of her associations—to Blackberry and to the Kandeshi aesthetic. As the narrative continues, the author reader-engagement and facilitates discourse regarding the narrative, shifting the Facebook page from that of a merely narrative space to a discursive space.

One of the ways this shift from narrative to discursive space occurs is in that, while this fictional narrative is told in first person, both the author and the readers comfortably conflate fiction with biography, storytelling with reality. Readers frequently assume this narrative is a biography, and the author does not dissuade them. For instance, after reading about Nangula's initial encounter with her aunt described above, a reader stated: "mem your aunt is cruel...wasn't it cold in the garage??" The author responded: "Eish, you can only imagine. A welcome in the city," to which someone else wrote: "the way city life is....it always has a way of welcoming people with a hard slap" (Chapter 3). Other readers do not call the narrative a biography, but nevertheless relate it to Windhoek's day-to-day. One reader writes: "haaha this is a true story" (Chapter 1). Another comments: "[…] I'm sure many Windhoek city girls can relate" (Chapter 7); and: "[…] a true experience of a lot of our girls" (Chapter 3). Another states: "[…] this is

69. This is very much associated to victim-blaming, a feature of rape culture where women are blamed for eliciting the sexual violence committed against them.

really what is happening in Namibia" (Chapter 18). It is evident, then, that this work is more than just a far-fetched fictional tale for the readers. It allows them to consider and discuss subject-matter in the narrative that corresponds to very real conditions in Windhoek society. When a reader commented "you are telling the story of many young girls in that city," the author responded with "Yep. It is indeed a very informative story" (Chapter 3). Another reader described the narrative as both an "educating and captivating storyline" (Chapter 13). Thus, through the narrative, the readers are able to contemplate the implications of the narrative's affinity to the everyday experiences of many members of this community as they participate in Nangula's precarious navigations of patriarchal and traditional societal expectations.

"All This Drama": The Reality of Passion Killings and Traditional Expectations

How, therefore, does the consciousness-raising in "The Dream" map onto real conditions in Namibian society? Along with being at risk for contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, the gender-based violence the young women in the narrative continually face reflects the situation many women encounter in Namibia and throughout southern Africa. This gender-based violence is, as Patricia McFadden explains, both bodily and discursive. It is "heteropatriarchal violence, domestic violence, and sexual violence" but also includes "the more powerful notions of patriarchal impunity and violation in discussions regarding women's bodies and their integrity" (McFadden 2018, 421).[70] In Namibia, gender-based violence has been frequently and problematically

70. McFadden warns that the term "gender-based violence" and its acronym "GBV" is disempowering for women because it does not allow us to name the particular violences and violations we experience and in turn formulate particular plans of actions as a means of address. In other words, it can be counter to radical feminism.

referred to as passion killings, or femicide, which stems from "sudden bursts of rage" and which occur between intimate partners (Sevenzo 2016). These murders are frequently committed between young couples but affect older couples as well, and women are usually the victims (Sevenzo 2016).[71] In "The Dream," this kind of murder haunts the Divas.

In the story, Maria, one of Blackberry's friends is murdered by her wealthy boyfriend. This murder is described as a "passion killing" (Chapter 12), positioning the violence directed to Kandeshis within the wider concerns related to these ongoing murders of women in Namibian society. As Farai Sevenzo suggests, at the heart of discussions around ways to address and prevent passion killings is the assumption that the underlying reason for these murders is male hostility to women's desire for their resources. For instance, a man may be enraged at the amount of money he has spent on a partner, and feeling robbed, murders her (Sevenzo 2016). However, Mary Hikumuah complicates this perspective and critiques the discourses perpetuated in the media regarding these murders. After discussing the media's problematic sensationalistic reporting of these murders, Hikumuah states:

> Another factor I believe has escalated these brutal murders is our music industry and media. Now we talk non-chalantly [*sic*] about dirty Kandeshi and 'chopping' my money. These very words are used to describe the brutally murdered women, mothers, daughters and sisters […] It appears we have a society that has cultivated a culture of the barter system where women give their bodies in exchange for material goods. This sort of environment breeds distrust, dishonesty, selfishness and unfaithfulness. I guess what runs through my mind now is 'how do we stop this epidemic?'…Perhaps we can start by making a conscious decision to see the brutal murders as deviations from normal behaviour [*sic*] rather than as the norm.

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71. These cases are also frequently characterized by the suicide of the perpetrators, although this is not always the case (Sevenzo 2016).

Beyond the simplistic perspective of Kandeshi behavior perpetuated in the media, Hikumuah both highlights and critiques the "barter system" at the heart of these relationships as a reason for such murders. However, while Hikumuah describes this system as "women [giving] their bodies in exchange for material goods," "The Dream" adds a layer of nuance to what is occurring in these barter-relationships, which shifts the weight of responsibility suggested in the assumption that women simply "give" their bodies. What also occurs in these barter-relationships is that men expect sex in exchange for material goods; men barter their material goods for the pleasure of a woman's body. Women are not the only ones getting something out of these relationships, but the derogatory simplification of Kandeshi behavior labels them as greedy and promiscuous, assumes male innocence—naïveté—and subsequently justifies violence towards these women. Also apparent in "The Dream" is that these exchanges are frequently coerced, widening the implications of these relationships even further. Sevenzo also suggests that along with easy access to lethal weapons, alcohol and drug abuse and crushing social inequalities, Namibia's violent colonial past continues to haunt the present, having left deep psychological scars that the nation has yet to reckon with (2016). What this discussion regarding resources and social inequality must reckon with is that underlying these relationships—this system—is a deeply unequal gendered system of interaction that on the one hand undergirds male privilege and easy access to women's bodies yet at the same time demands their chastity. Therefore, while redressive action is required in the perspectives regarding gendered behavior and gender-based violence, "The Dream" also makes visible concerns regarding perceptions of tradition and the way that traditional expectations exert pressure on young women.

There is a clear opposition in the narrative between older and younger women, in which the older women are in positions of power and expect traditional behavior from their subordinated juniors. While this is not the case in all such relationships in the narrative, frequently the older women hold younger women to strict standards of conservative behavior, reading any behavior that deviates from their expectations as implying sexual misconduct. This is evident in Nangula's arrival to Aunt Lahja's house recounted above. The tension between youthful performances of perceived modernity and conservative notions of traditional behavior can lead to many misjudgments.

One such misjudgment in "The Dream" poignantly reveals the consequences of hegemonic patriarchy on culturally valued traditional ideals. The night after rescuing Nangula from Mr. Leather Jacket, Blackberry dragged her to a party, which quickly got out of control. Nangula felt unsafe, and Blackberry was too drunk to protect either of them. The police arrive and Nangula states:

> I was rejuvenated and my spirit refreshed when I saw the cop lights outside […] I pleaded with the cops to take us home, I begged them, one lady cop told us to go home the same way we came here, ['Omuli née niiAngola tamukolwa mwadjala mwafa ee prostituta, oshili epipi lo paife tamulengifa aanu man'] 'Here you are hanging out with these Angolans getting drunk and dressed like prostitutes, honestly today's generation embarrasses us,' she said. I never hated a cop until today, surely she would take her own daughter home (Chapter 4).

The female police officer takes it for granted that Nangula arrived at the party willingly and refuses to help them. Her accusations and "embarrassment" at the behavior she infers mirror Aunt Lahja's attitude to Blackberry, and Maria's sister to Maria. But most telling is Nangula's own disillusionment at the policewoman's attitude when she states: "surely she would take her own daughter home." In many Namibian cultures, the proper relationship between older and younger women is conceptualized and enacted in the

manner of a mother / daughter relationship. Thus, "traditionally," it is right that the policewomen and Aunt Lahja should be concerned and even embarrassed when their "daughters" misbehave. But Nangula's mentioning of it at this moment suggests that the policewoman, in refusing her help, has failed—both as an officer of the law and traditionally as a mother to them. But perhaps this failure is connected to the corrosive environment of city-life that the novel suggests, and signals deep-seated tensions that emerge in the process of balancing Westernization and African "traditional" ways of life—a tension that the African city frequently represents. What is clear however, is that Nangula implicates "mothers" in Kandeshi behavior and suggests that perhaps commonly-held traditional values have failed to provide support and practical assistance for many of Namibia's young ambitious women.

The narrative thus highlights the difficulty of feminist practices of solidarity among its younger and older women in this context. The Divas form a sisterhood of collaborative solidarity that includes some older women, and that stands in contrast to motherhood. This framing is important because in the context of third-world feminist discourse it seems to deviate from African women's continued concerns regarding feminism. Historically the concept of feminism has been contested by many African women writers and theorists (and other women-of-color) because of its Western origins and patriarchal concerns rooted in the nuclear family structure that has been a source of oppression for women. [72] For African women, patriarchal oppressions have not

72. See Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí's (1997, 2016) careful exploration of the implications of feminism's Western origins. Also see Buchi Emecheta (2007) and Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1994).

manifested in the family in the same way. Furthermore, for many African societies, motherhood is an important institution around which women find solidarity and a great measure of agency—whether or not they are mothers.[73] While this is the case in Namibia as well, in many instances, the narrative reveals a motherhood tied to colonially-influenced tradition that manifests in "gendered nationalist conservatism" so that feminist practice toward younger women from the context of this motherhood is difficult, if not impossible (McFadden 2018, 423). Aniko Imre's definition of nationalism suggests why this is the case: "It has been well established that the we of nationalism implies a homosocial form of male bonding that includes women only symbolically, most prominently in the trope of the mother…Nationalist discourses are especially eager to reassert the 'natural' division of labour [*sic*] between the sexes and to relegate women to traditional reproductive roles" (quoted in McFadden 2018, 424). Such a definition reminds us of nationalism's "masculinist ideology and identity" underpinnings (425). In contrast, McFadden offers a framework that will allow women to "build a bridge of solidarity…based on a sense of integrity and self-exploration" (428). The radical feminism she describes means cultivating a way of life that is transformative in its day-to-day, for one's own life and those around you through seeming small changes that

73. See Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí (2003) for a description of the importance of motherhood in many African cultures and families. She states that "mother-derived ties are the most culturally significant, and that mothers have agency and power. Fundamentally, motherhood is not usually constructed in relation to or in opposition to fatherhood; it is conceived in its own right. Mothers are perceived as especially powerful-literally and mystically, in regard to the well being of the child. They are therefore the pivot around which family life is structured and the child's life rotates. In this family system, unlike in the nuclear family, motherhood is the most important source and model of solidarity, and being a mother is perceived as an attractive and desirable goal to achieve" (12).

make women's lives livable and gives them some measure of freedom.[74] These changes may in turn become the ground on which to eventually build larger reforms (2018, 425-428). McFadden's discussion of this kind of activism does not diminish the difficulty women encounter when having to form bonds across different racial and class categories, but it is necessary. It asks women to caringly collaborate across their differences and inequalities (428). In "The Dream," feminist solidarity is enacted beyond the confines of nationalism, ethnic differences, and the constraints of cultural tradition.

In contrast to the problematic motherhood in "The Dream," the "sisterhood" that defines the solidarity amongst Blackberry, Nangula and their Kandeshi friends, as well as other supportive older women, is practical; it is a means of survival. Therefore, I do not wish in any way to romanticize the alliance that forms between the Divas. These characters, in their subordinated and precarious positions take patriarchy as a given, and while they infrequently challenge it, they also define the parameters of their alliance to determine how to gain measures of agency and freedom. Their desire is not to change society, but rather their own circumstances, and this is what their sisterhood is directed toward. While in the novel older women hold the younger ones to a standard of behavior that does not help them navigate the complex hegemony of patriarchal society, these Kandeshis help each other, and sisterhood steps in where motherhood falters. For

74. Judith Butler's (2004) concept of livability also applies here. Livability considers how some lives are considered of more value than others. In the context of "socially vulnerable" peoples (18), these can easily be subject to dehumanization leads to physical violence toward them (25). McFadden describes an approach to life that may be considered as a model of, and in conjunction with Butler's challenging yet necessary call for "ethical and social transformation" (38) required to render all human lives as valuable and respectable.

instance, it is Blackberry who assists Nangula in her social adjustment to Windhoek. Blackberry's care for Nangula is practical, nuanced. She asks Nangula:

> 'Is our aunty giving you money […] a girl needs to be financially independent you know,' […] I just told her that as long as I had a roof on top of my head and I did not need to go to bed hungry that was all that mattered to me, then my cousin asked if I even had a bank account so I told her 'NO' […] 'Og Nangula ano how do you survive oshili?, this is the new millennium you should have your own digits in your own bank account, it shows independence […] Some of us are planning ahead my dear, you never know what tomorrow brings for you […] tomorrow first things first, I want to take you to the bank so that I open a bank account for you, I will deposit $5000 for you but after that it's up to you to keep the money flowing'(Chapter 23).

Despite the tensions and difficulties, the Divas face, they demonstrate a strong desire for independence and security that is founded on the ability to care for oneself, and these are achieved through the help of friends: "The Divas were so loyal to each other," states Nangula. "[T]hey did not take their sisterhood for granted." Patriarchal social structures typically deem men the providers and protectors of women, but this is not the case in "The Dream," and frequently neither is it the case in the lived conditions of Namibian society. In a reflective moment, Nangula summarizes this precarious social position that many young women find themselves in: "All this drama that has been going on has exposed me to a lot of secrets, it has exposed me to the life of dangers and social evils we always read about in the newspapers back at home, it has exposed me to the life of the party in Windhoek, it has exposed me to men who did not like me for me but for how I walked, talked and looked" (Chapter 13). These are secrets, dangers, and social evils that she now intimately exposes to the narrative's readers. The women in "The Dream" (and, as the readers infer, in Windhoek's day-to-day) must navigate hegemonic patriarchal structures that idealize the appearance of innocence and chaste behavior for young women, but perhaps do not consider the changed and changing social climate. The

narrative demonstrates the tension between these ideals and lived experience, and makes visible where and how these ideals falter and fail—for both women and men. But as patriarchal structure privileges men, women—and in the case of "The Dream," young women—bear the weight of these tensions.

Toward the end of the narrative, Nangula finds herself maneuvered into a position of vulnerability by a police officer who sexually assaulted her early in the narrative, a couple of days after her arrival into the city. He is unwittingly helped by Aunt Lahja who is friends with the officer. As the policeman lets himself into the house—where he is alone with Nangula—under the pretense of wanting a drink of water, Nangula despairs, and at the end of the chapter asks: "Are all the good spirits abandoning me, again? 'What happens now, what must I do'" (Chapter 28). A reader writes in response: "I feel for Nangula, what kind of bad luck is that? one can tell she's really trying to be a good girl but whatever comes up really just ruins everything." Another comments: "I could just feel how hopeless Nangula was feeling how ready she was for whatever outcome comes her way…she's just a innocent soul dat always find herself into trouble…I know it's just a story people but dis chapter just felt real." Another writes: "Nangula.....shame, learning city life the hard way." to which the author replied "Truly the hard way." Another reader prayed "oh aaaye please god have mercy on your child." Despite promises to continue, the following chapter was the last chapter of the narrative, and Nangula's situation is left unresolved. This final chapter reads like a teaser, with Nangula merely stating that "As the saying goes you cannot deny a person water, Mr Officer was a hyena and he wanted to prey on little me, 'Shimbungu naye eli pediva okweya kunwa omeva' [the hyena has come to the watering hole to drink]." This chapter concluded the narrative, the author

preserving the remaining stories for their book publication. Nevertheless, the situations Nangula and her friends encounter show complicated lives and precarious navigations of societal expectations, gendered inequality and gender-based violence. While melodramatic, the readers are still made aware that in the social entanglements of everyday life there are no easy solutions. While there are inequalities inherent to Namibia's social systems, and Kandeshis navigate them, but not merely as victims, because patriarchy leaves "in its wake untold destruction and dread, as well as the often-unintended possibilities of transformation and renewal" (McFadden 2008, 19). Perhaps a reader best sums up the precarious performances these women enact in a description of Blackberry: "Weiyuuuu....[nge kuna enghono, kala wuna endunge] if you don't have strength, you'd better have intelligence…that's Blackberry for you right there" (Chapter 14). Throughout the narrative Nangula asks: "what would you do if you were in my shoes?" Importantly, as a literary work, "The Dream" is constituted of the narrative as well as readers' archived interaction with the author that dictate some of the narrative's direction and function as social commentary.

Consciousness Raising in Facebook Fiction

Despite a publishing environment in which imaginative work by Namibians—and particularly Black Namibians—is marginalized (even though there are organizations working to rectify this outcome of Namibia's colonial history), online "The Dream" and other Facebook narratives thrive and develop large, engaged followings. For instance, while it is no longer active, *The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl* page has had wide circulation with over 8000 likes and followers (significant for Namibia's population of 2.5 million) and was read in the diaspora. Angelica Kawana's currently active page

Angie's Comfort Zone has over 5600 likes and followers. Another active page *Talohole* by Frans Talohole has over 24000 followers, and *Moshiwambo*, Frans Samuel's Oshiwambo-language currently active page has just over 26000 followers. Operating in the margins of the Namibian publishing world means that these authors are able to tell stories that their readers want to hear. These Facebook narratives are frequently erotic, and their subject matters range to cover the complexities and inequalities in various kinds of relationships, the challenges to getting an education, gender-dynamics and gender-based violence, poverty and life on the streets, baby-dumping, and more. And while many of these stories are melodramatic many of the pages are also committed to the purpose of consciousness-raising as a key feature of their storytelling. For example, "The Dream's" the author uses the hashtag #NamibiasNumberOneEduFuntainmentPage (14 September 2014). And on the page *Asia's Educational Stories,* author Asia Martinho stated that he writes "stories to educate the nation... Everything I write is what I've seen and heard from people and things that are still happening daily" (9 July 2017). Kawana, who writes prolifically, describes her page as "not just a storytelling platform, but a growth and educational platform too" (9 April 2017). These are, however, the stories that resonate with the readers. For instance, in 2017, when Martinho stopped writing chapters to his story "The Betrayal," he explained to his readers that the story "doesn't match with the Page's name…it's too erotic" (25 October 2017). However, the readers disagreed and after a string of comments asking for the narrative to continue, the surprised author assented, writing that "since you guys really want ["The Betrayal" to continue] let's do it" (31 October 2017). And when Morocky received a message criticizing the amount of sexual content in her Facebook stories, she put it to her readers, who disagreed (2 May

2013). The kinds of stories told on these pages reveal "how closely linked the personal and the political, the private and the public, are becoming in the twenty-first century" (Adenekan 148). While their focus is local, these literatures are postnational in a way that mirrors globalized African fiction in that rather than a preoccupation with the nation and nationalism, they humanize people in various contexts, and bring to the surface societies secrets while engaging the social and the intimacies of everyday life (Losambe 2019).

Consciousness-raising happens in the narrative, but it is developed further in discussions that involve the readers in literary analysis. Both Martinho and Kawana frequently posts leading questions between chapter releases, discussing various aspects of the narrative with their readers in the comments (see Martinho, 20 May 2017; See Kawana, 11 February 2018). In 2015, Kawana created a WhatsApp group to function as "a platform to interact after each episode" (July 13th 2015). Success thus is informed by the direct, participatory relationship between author and reader in ways that "gesture back to the representational strategies of oral literature in pre-colonial Africa" (Yeku 2017, 262). In "The Dream," this participatory relationship is evident in the readers' interventions in the narrative proper as the author incorporates readers' suggestions in subsequent chapters. This happens, for example, in Nangula's first encounter with the policeman—who she calls "Mr. Police Officer"—in Chapter 4, in which Mr. Police Officer blackmailed Nangula. After bringing her home from a party, he takes a picture of her in her party clothes, threatening to tell Aunt Lahja unless Nangula agrees to a sexual relationship with him. "What would you do in my shoes?" asks Nangula at the end of the chapter. One of the reader advises: say that "anty doesnt want her to leave the house or you on your periods,..or else let him tell anty [*sic*]." Another reader concurs: "i would be

on my periods everyday till the police officer gve up." And another advises: "I would rather let him tell my aunt cause even if you sleep with him you not guaranteed that he wouldn't tell her and maybe he could have a camera somewhere and take a video while having sex and later tell your aunt you a prostitute!!!dressing like a prostitute is not proof enough but sex video is!!!!" In Chapter 6, Nangula takes the advice of the readers: "So I told him I'm a virgin and that I wasn't ready to have sex with anyone… I also told him that I was on my periods and that if he gave me more time I would consider it when I get ready." This does not work and only angers the policeman, and Nangula is coerced into a sexual act. After this traumatic incident, Nangula goes out with her cousin, wanting to get drunk to forget what happened. In response to this chapter, a reader commented: "how on earth u go drink to forgot ur problems if u just started? i wont fuck dat evil officer i would rather accuse him dat he took d advantg of me being home alone n he wanted to rape me [*sic*]" to which the author replied: "But he threatened her, or maybe he was just bluffing, it's a tough call." In including the readers' suggestions (and their failure in the narrative) the author challenges the frequently uncomplicated and easy readings of these women' lives and solutions to their behavior and calling attention to the socially embedded nature of Kandeshi lives. Equally significant is that this narrative incident and the interactions between the author and readers highlights the text's communal narrative structure that shapes the story, showing that the reader/author/text relationship has direct bearing on other ways that Facebook fictions develop and proliferate and is therefore crucial to this text.[75]

75. This kind of complexity is not uncommon for digital literatures. Michel Hockx writes of the textual instability of digital literatures and states: "When working

The Facebook Platform and Author/Reader Relationships

While most authors express that they write out of enjoyment, it is also evident that publishing on Facebook is frequently tied to a desire to publish novels in the traditional sense, and readers are key to this aspiration. The names of the pages of these serial fictions do not always indicate their function as storytelling sites, and while the page's category descriptor and link on Facebook (such as "writer" or "book series") helps to locate a page of serial fiction, Facebook authors depend on reader-participation to gain visibility and remain relevant in the fast-moving spaces of social media. As the readers increase the page's popularity by liking, following, sharing and commenting, they help facilitate authors' aspirations to continue producing stories, and in some cases, to eventually monetize their talents and publish a novel. This dynamic is an instance where the readers become the "new decision-makers and influencers in the African publishing world" proliferating literatures that may otherwise not have been published, and writers who may ordinarily not have written before (Nesbitt-Ahmed 278). The platform, however, lends serial fictions an ephemeral quality as each chapter is buried by previous chapters and posts. Even though the narratives are accessible online, if a writer is prolific, one must scroll back a ways to get to previous chapters and the beginnings of earlier stories. If the page is not constantly engaged and shared by readers, the page is eventually forgotten with no tangible reminders of the narrative's existence in the "real" or virtual

with Internet literature, the first question one has to ask oneself again and again is: how do I define the text? Sometimes there is an obvious answer, sometimes there is not" (19).

worlds. Thus, most authors take a deeply interactive and collaborative approach to their pages and work. The more interactive, the more successful the page and author.

The author of "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" referred to readerly collaboration as "The Dream Team." Between chapter releases, the author frequently encouraged the readers to stay engaged, admonishing them to "read on" and "watch out" for the following chapters. In responses to readers' comments, the author frequently asked them to "like" and "share" the page, stating in one response: "[D]o invite friends to the page though. We have to keep it running" (Chapter 3). To a new reader's comments, the author responds, "[M]y dear we are at Chapter 8 now, please don't get left behind […] Read On…Welcome aboard." For the so-called Dream Team, success meant helping the protagonist Nangula navigate her precarious world, achieve her dream of becoming a chartered accountant, and assist the author to realize publication beyond Facebook. The Dream Team demonstrates not only the labor of circulation and its relevance to the work (the narrative does not circulate freely on its own, nor is it circulated by a publishing house), but also the inherent difficulty such self-published work encounters in order to move. While they are grateful that the narrative is available for free, the readers of "The Dream" still desired it in tangible "black and white" asking the author to "please write a book" or requesting "[a] novel please" (Chapters 24, 6, 8). Readers have also suggested that the author translate the narrative to a far easier-to-read, catalog and archive blogsite. After reading the first chapter, a reader writes: "great book, love the marketing concept…I will advice [sic] you to open a blog and get your content copyrighted." The author has in fact published part of the narrative on blogsites, although without the

success the narrative gained on Facebook.[76] A reader's response to one of the requests that the page be transferred to a blog site suggests why this is the case, hinting at readership socioeconomic status: "But does it mean if u post the whole story on blog, tse yokofacebook otwakana [we of Facebook are lost]? The problem not all of us have phone which can retrieve things on blog" (Chapter 10). Despite the narrative's popularity and free access, these comments highlight the recognition and protection mainstream print culture provides for an author and their work, as well as the hold conventional publishing practices have on the reading public. These comments also reveal that this form of publishing is considered by some as a marketing strategy to enter into the presumed easy circulation that mainstream publishing affords.

Narratives published on Facebook, however, are not merely a means of showcasing a writer's talent in the hopes of landing a publishing opportunity for more "serious" work. Authors treat their narratives very seriously, objecting to copyright infringement and plagiarism. For instance, *Confessions of a Vambo Girl's* author Joanna Amweero issued an "Announcement" to her readers complaining about plagiarism and discouraging fan fiction emailed to her, stating:

> Please be informed that I will not appreciate anyone writing an episode before it comes out or rewriting the ones that have already been written. There is only ONE version to this story, which is written by ONE author only…I'm already dealing with various people claiming to be the author of this book series…This is 100% my work, I don't need help with writing. Let us respect each other.

A reader replied: "I don't think the lady was trying to plagiarize your work. It was simply a kind gesture from a fan. She clearly said she would inbox you and did not share it. I

76. On thedreamofakwanyamagirl.blogspot.com, and on the now defunct Google+.

don’t understand the fuss? She was simply trying to help seeing that there is a huge gap between episodes it’s not how you started.” The woman accused of plagiarism in turn responded: “Thank you for seeing things from my opinion. I do not intend on copying or plagiarizing Joanna's work in any shape or form. I do however understand that I overstepped boundaries. Perhaps I should have asked before even running off to write episodes of a scenario that I played in my head and for that I do apologize once more. I am simply a fan and I respect her work and that's why I didn't share it with anyone else but her” (4 October 2019). Kawana also dealt with plagiarism of her work, posting: “by the way, I deleted ‘The Arrangement’ as I noticed someone else entertaining an audience using my work but now she stopped and is changing the story after I deleted” (8 May 2017). These concerns raise difficult questions regarding how to protect work that is produced in and for such public virtual spaces. Nevertheless, for some of the authors, a large following on Facebook leads to some monetary support, and a few have even self-published their work in book form.

Angelica Kawana uses her page to self-publish and to fund her writing. Her page, *Angie’s Comfort Zone*, is one of the more prolific and innovative Facebook pages in its use of the reader/writer “team” approach to pursue an income and publishing. Kawana is very clear with her readers about her and their role in the success of the page, stating at one point:

> guys we have come along way and yet *our page* is barely growing....that means you guys are not spreading the word...you don't share the posts, you don't invite friends and you don't just put my work out there...I do this because I love it and I am passionate about it...but I also do it to educate and entertain...so please spread the word...I want to reach as many people as possible...*but with your help*...invite your friends, share the posts. That will motivate me to even want to drop some things just to type an episode. You guys are not paying, neither are you being

> charged for reading this...so help promote...if you really enjoy my stories, then introduce your friends and others to *the family.* (March 7 2016, Italics mine)

This is not to say that she does not expect monetary support from her readers. She frequently asks them to send her data so she can post her stories, and her readers do so eagerly. Kawana also makes it clear that she wishes to make money from her stories, and that the readers can help: "I believe with time this talent will create wealth and prosperity to me...also if you do see an opportunity that you might think will benefit me, please do contact me" (7 May 2016). After four years of posting on her page, in 2018 Kawana began posting her stories on WhatsApp, using her Facebook page to advertise the upcoming stories that readers can access on WhatsApp for a fee. That year, after posting twenty-six chapters of her fifty-nine-chapter story "Shattered" on Facebook, she began releasing the rest of the chapters on WhatsApp (3 April 2018). She now publishes exclusively on WhatsApp, using the Facebook page only to invite readers to her WhatsApp group. In July 2019 she began offering a copy of *Shattered,* a self-published 10-chapter book version of the Facebook story when a reader pays to be added to the WhatsApp group. Like the coalition of Tanzanian writers behind the page *Kona Ya Riwaya Reloaded* who used strategies such as publishing "some ten to twenty parts or pieces of a given novel… and then offer[ing] the whole novel…as a printed book," Kawana's narrative straddles virtual and material forms and complicating how we think about books in the digital age (Diegner 35).[77] Despite garnering a growing readership for her self-published work, Kawana nevertheless faces the challenges of production and distributing books to readers in various places inside and outside the country (13 May

77. S*hattered* is not Kawana's first self-published book. She began advertising *The Life I almost Ruined* in 2017 (2 June 2017).

2018). The work Facebook authors and the reader/author teams they nurture must do to get published shows the complexity of online and self-publishing. Nevertheless, these narratives bring local stories to Namibian readers, provide writers with an audience and in some cases, a small income, and circumvent reading material paucity and cost of production that is one of the challenges that traditional publishing in Africa faces (Adejunmobi 2015; Diegner 2018). Rather than replacing conventional books these new forms only enrich the literary environment.

Englishes of Namibian Facebook Fiction

The Facebook pages I have discussed here are Anglophone, and for some of them, their language-use is productive in helping define the role of digital African literatures in the emerging field of global Anglophone literary studies. One of the concerns that Nasia Anam expresses regarding how we define the field of global Anglophone is that the term is becoming a "substitute for established disciplinary terms like postcolonial and World Literature" (Anam 2019). While these older disciplines are politically fraught, global Anglophone "evades the more politically thorny issues" that translation or area studies address (Anam 2019). Anam is concerned that recent literary works that are global in their scope tend to celebrate "cosmopolitan fluidity" at the expense of the "hallmark postcolonial concerns of decolonization and nation-formation" (Anam 2019). However, she also acknowledges that perhaps "twenty-first century literature, in form and content, is developing in a manner that stretches beyond what the term 'postcolonial' and even 'World Literature' may be able to encompass as *literary genres*" (Anam 2019, italics belong to Anam). I make the case that English-language digital literatures are uniquely suited to this field of the global Anglophone—firstly in their use of social media and

other digital technologies that allow them to travel beyond the intended local audience, and secondly, in the way they use English.

While targeted to a local audience, Namibian Facebook fictions' use of social media and cyberspace to create and circulate literature also positions them in transregional and global circuits. However, their use of everyday language—English mixed with indigenous languages and local slang—belies the idea of an easy, uncomplicated global connection that the term global Anglophone has be said to privilege. Rather, as Akshya Saxena points out, the proliferation of everyday English spoken and written across the globe— "the variety of (mis)recognitions, accents and inflections charting desire and (un)belonging across class, ethnic and caste differences"—that cyberspace makes available to us only heightens Anglophone heterogeneity (Saxena 320). While narrativized in relatively standard English, in its dialogues, "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" uses what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o described as "Africanised" English, "without any of the respect for [the language's] ancestry" (299). Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, famously advocating for African literature in African languages, nevertheless stated that, unlike the colonially educated elite, the peasantry and working class' use of European languages is not characterized by an anxiety to elevate these languages, but rather by a use that Africanizes them "so totally as to have created new…languages …that owed their identities to the syntax and rhythms of African languages" (299). "The Dream" and other Facebook serial fictions display none of the "linguistic anxiety" of early postcolonial African writers (Gikandi 9). While English is the primary linguistic medium, the multilingual interruptions and grammatical disregard—along with the incomprehension expressed by local or global readers unfamiliar with the other languages

used—signals a mode of Africanized English-language writing that draws attention to local linguistic, cultural and socio-economic heterogeneity. Along with its hurried style scattered with spelling and punctuation errors, "The Dream" incorporates multilingual slang, Afrikaans and Oshiwambo (a mix of language-use associated with "Namlish" or Namibian English). English here is transformed and carries in it the accents of its Namibian locality.[78]

This productive linguistic amalgamation is evident in the narrative. After Nangula's move from the village to Windhoek, for example, she is drawn into her cousin's circle of friends and perplexed by her cousin's performance of urban cosmopolitanism signaled through a particular use of language: "There was something about my cousin though, when she came for holidays she spoke Oshikwanyama but here in Windhoek when she speaks in Oshiwambo she speaks Oshindonga and mixed it a bit with Kwanyama ngo, you know that 'oshimbwiti' language. (Chapter Three).[79] In another instance Aunty Lahia, who Nangula lives with, scolds Nangula when she doesn't clean

78. I draw "accent" here from Carli Coetzee's use of the word (2013). Coetzee argues that a refusal to translate is an act of resistance against normalization of English (since translation makes the act of translation, and other languages invisible) (2-3). In the South African context she discusses, since most of the population who is monolingual and can afford to stay that way are those who have historically benefitted from Apartheid, refusal to translate is an act against this kind of privilege (5-6). Coetzee defines the term "accent" "to denote the acknowledgement of a specific, even a 'local', orientation or field or reference; it is a figurative use of the term…a way of thinking about 'home', and finding ways of reading and teaching that aim to understand and bring local meanings to bear on interpretation. My own use of the term also emphasises [sic] conflict and discord as features of accent…Accent is, in the first place, understood as resistance to absorption…Accentedness is thus not seen as a drive to reconciliation and homogeneity; instead it is an attitude that challenges and defies those in power and aims to bring to the surface conflictual histories" (7).

79. "Oshimbwiti" means "uncultured."

the kitchen right away: “She…yelled out ‘next time do what you are told [to] do before you sleep, ek hou nie van donors wat nie hoor nie (kandihole nande eedonolo ihaduuduko)’, she said” (Chapter 5). Translated, Aunty Lahia says “I don’t like donors who don’t listen.” In the text it is said in Afrikaans and Oshiwambo. and remains untranslated into English. And in a final example, when Nangula takes a cab to get away from her cheating boyfriend, in a mix of Oshiwambo, heavily accented English and slang, the cab driver says "Og kanaave otokwena shike ano, uumati vomo Unama ndishi ovo, you wali veli much I know the boysh jush want to chop and go koshtrate on shtudiesh [oh child, why are you crying? Those UNAM boys, you worry very much I know the boys just want to chop and go concentrate on studies]," (Chapter 26). Thus, the idea of a global English that highlights global flows and ease of access and subsumes histories of inequality is interrupted in the encounter with Namibian English in this text, as is evident when readers ask for translations (see, for example, comments in Chapter 10 and 11). Instead, this text’s Anglophone necessitates engagement with Namibian linguistic multiplicity. Language-use in “The Dream” recalls the nation’s transnational and historical engagement with empire even as it centers the social negotiations of the day-to-day and the rich linguistic amalgamations used to capture these circumstances of this interconnected twenty-first century world. Importantly, its writing-style returns us to the context of Namibian writers’ media-use in the unequal material and virtual spaces of local and global publishing.

Conclusion

Namibians’ practice of self-publishing popular fiction is gaining traction with publishing possibilities made available virtually on blogs and websites, Facebook and WhatsApp.

Namibians are experimenting with publishing formats, and in the process, they are forging new genres, new styles, and new publics. These developments beg the question: What does it mean that Facebook has become a repository of digital, accessible, inexpensive "books" for Namibia's reading public? As I have suggested here, the emerging form of Facebook serial fiction productively changes the literary land-and-virtualscapes, and it highlights the politics of literary production as an inherent feature in the form's narrative structure. Facebook serial fiction presents us with an image distinct from that of the lonely author who produces work in isolation and sends it to a publisher to be released into the world. Instead, Facebook offers possibilities of a serialized interactive form that relies on its active readership to circulate. Readers' comments on the emerging story as well as their act of liking, following, and sharing ensure the story's continuation and the author's success. Rather than paying careful attention to proper linguistic usage and spelling, these Facebook stories privilege speed, vernacular forms, linguistic fluidity, and melodrama, all designed to entertain local audiences as well as those readers in the world beyond. And instead of being a single work that circulates alone in the rugged and unequal world literary space, these stories actively archive interactions between authors and readers with posts embedded as part of the text that circulates. Thinking about transformations in literature, Facebook serial fiction is a branch of Namibian literature. Even if marginal, it contributes to our understanding of digital African literature, and it activates and delights a range of readers invested in and seemingly inseparable from the stories told.

CHAPTER V

EPILOGUE

In the comment section of chapter 11 of the Facebook fiction "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl," a reader and the author engage in a brief dialogue regarding language-use in the narrative. The reader writes: "Oops…there's a sentence in Oshiwambo. Some of us are now looking for the translation. Don't put too much Oshiwambo." The author replies: "Well noted...But [I] will be happy to translate it to you…Or when I'm not online you can ask anyone to help you." Replying to the reader, the author does not agree to use less Oshiwambo and is in fact unapologetic about the language's presence in this Anglophone text. The author offers instead to provide translations when possible or suggests the services of the online community that has formed around the narrative to help with translation. The exchange highlights the communal nature of this digital text. "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" is produced, read, interpreted, and circulated in community.

While the reader complains about "a sentence," there were in fact multiple sentences that combined Oshiwambo and English, each centered around an incident that highlights the uneven gender dynamics that the Namibian characters navigate. One of these sentences occurs as Blackberry, a young, black woman, complains to her cousin the narrator about her boss's inappropriate possessiveness:

> [My cousin] Blackberry called me and told me she did not show up at her boss's office…she told him she was very sick and she couldn't make it to work, 'Oshisamane okwali shaya ko flata yange anuwa nandipopye kutja ondaya peni ['That man went to my flat and now he's saying I must tell him where I was'], just because he didn't find me there otati anuwa [he says apparently] he's going to fire me,' said my cousin…So I asked her why the man wanted to see her so badly and she just said 'He likes to work late with me mkwetu,' I didn't know what she meant by that (Chapter 11).

The mixing of Oshiwambo with English in this narrative shows the inherent multilingualism as global English encounters local cultural and linguistic particularities. The text's engagement of gender, communality, and language is at the heart of my reading of Namibian genres of collectivity. In particular, I am interested in how Namibian gender politics in the context of blackness and nationalism affect communal literary production.

My thesis, "Borders of the Global Anglophone" examines the literary practices of three post-independence Namibian Anglophone feminist literary works: *Coming on Strong: Writing by Namibian Women, Kaxumba KaNdola: Man and Myth: The Biography of a Barefoot Soldier*, and "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" each envision postnational community and decolonized futures. The communal literary practices that these writers employ give rise to new and unconventional uses of form, language, media, and circulation. I focus on the various instances where these literatures do not fit conventional categories in order to reflect on Namibia's gendered nationalist politics and language-use. These various registers in turn affect literary production and the intricate way these literatures speak to global Anglophone African literature, as well as African and transnational Black feminisms.

Along with careful attention to Namibian cultural contexts and languages, and southern African colonial history, two core theoretical frameworks tie my project to Global Anglophone literature, African and transnational Black feminisms, and African Studies. The first framework has to do with the way in which I define African literature and its relationship to global Anglophone. I draw from F. Abiola Irele's notion of the African Imagination to politically circumscribe a field of African literatures within the

context of blackness. Irele defines the African imagination as "a conjunction of impulses that have been given a unified expression in a body of literary texts" (4). This "notion of an African *imagination* corresponds to [a] wider scope of expression of Africans and people of African descent, which arises out of [the] historical circumstances" of Africa's engagement with the world (italics belong to Irele, 7). In other words, literatures of the African imagination are those by Black Africans and African descendent peoples across time and space that grapple with what it means to be African and of African descent in the world. The authors' subject-position leads these literatures to communicate "a structure of feeling [and] also reflects a climate of though" (xviii). I couple this with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's argument that we consider "the postcolonial as the site of globality" (Globalectics 74). Ngũgĩ argues that postcolonial literatures carry within them a sense of "global consciousness" and accordingly are emblematic of world literature (68). "The postcolonial," he argues, "is inherently outward looking, inherently international in its very constitution in terms of themes, language, and the intellectual formation of the writers" (68). Indeed, in her discussion of global Anglophone literatures, Rebecca Walkowitz notes Anglophone's "internal multilingualism" and inherent link to globalization (20). This framing of African Anglophone literature allows me to broaden the particular, liberatory, and formal implications of these Namibian texts beyond national constraints.

My second framework considers these unconventional literatures in the context of liberation and decolonization. Key to this consideration is these literatures' positions at and use of the margins. I think alongside Netta Kornberg who argues that while the margins are spaces of lack and constraint, they are also rich, contradictory spaces that

require us to be flexible ("Power" 245). Kornberg rethinks the nature of marginality, not merely as oppressive, "asymmetrical binds" within society, but also as a space beneath the sightline of the center which allows for "a degree of independence" and creativity (245). I put marginalization in conversation with Tina Campt's notion of Black feminist futurity and refusal. Campt defines Black feminist futurity as the way in which Black peoples act to make possible the future that they desire, despite social constraints that may make this future impossible (17). In this context, practices of refusal are the ways in which the racialized dispossessed have honed a "response to sustained, everyday encounters with exigency and duress that rupture a predictable trajectory of flight" (10). Quotidian practices of refusal are not resistance or defined by opposition, but rather, they are undergirded by "a refusal of the very premises that have reduced the lived experience of blackness to pathology and irreconcilability in the logic of white supremacy. [They are] nimble and strategic practices that undermine the categories of the dominant" (32). My dissertation thinks alongside Campt to consider the state of blackness as it plays out in Namibian women's lives and literatures as their hope for the future manifests as and shapes their art. Each of the three texts I look at participates in the very institutions they also bring into question. Their authors write within the context of the conventions of the literary tradition, and within the ideological restraints of the nation and its gender politics. But their communal form undermines conformity and is creative. They are not resistance, but rather, possibility. However, these texts inhabit a tension between practices of refusal and acts of resistance. I argue that in various ways, *Coming on Strong*, *Kaxumba KaNdola*, and "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" take up the liberationist impulse that Frantz Fanon ascribes to national literatures, "a revolutionary literature," perhaps not in

the context of large acts of resistance, but in the context of the liberationist possibility that these literatures make visible in their quiet, quotidian practices of refusal (223).

Coming on Strong, *Kaxumba KaNdola*, and "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" are genres of collectivity that operate within the ideological constraints of the nation, its gender politics, and its global practices of literary production. However, their collective means of storytelling undermine any seeming conformity. Their communal nature complicates both nationalism and the field of African literature in the context of Black feminist futurity that allows us to see other directions that the nation and African literature may take. Across all three chapters I make a case for different feminist tactics and interventions enabled by the texts' collective forms.

In chapter two, I consider how *Coming on Strong*, a collection of genres, complicates African literary tropes of nationalism and weaves a community of Namibian women with feminist notions of belonging and futurity founded on Namibia's various histories and identities. Through the short stories, poetry, art, autobiographies, and prose fragments by Namibian women from various race, ethnic, and class social positions, the book stages an encounter with diversity and enacts Audre Lorde's notion of mutual nondominant difference (111). *Coming on Strong* is a text that arose out of the hopeful first decade of Namibia's independence. And yet it also emerges to address women's deliberate exclusion from literary production and to include women's voices regarding perceptions of the liberation movement and nationalist politics up to that moment. The collection creates the kind of community it describes and ultimately allows for the envisioning of a collaborative society beyond nationalist ideological constraints.

In chapter four I consider the way in which *Kaxumba KaNdola*, a communal biography, enacts a feminist sensibility in its communal form that allows it to exceed the progressive and patriarchal nationalist project. The book is a collection of testimonial voices intersected with myth and legend, photographs, newspaper clippings, and the author Ellen Namhila's own interjections. While the biography tells the life-story of the political figure Kaxumba KaNdola and seems to adhere to the nationalist project, in its collective form the biography enacts Kaxumba as a figure of futurity, striving for a narrative of a national progressive future that is at various turns interrupted, foreclosed, and diverted. Its communal form lends the text a productive unpredictability.

Chapter four considers how "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl," a collectivity through author-reader dialogue, uses the Facebook platform to rethink the derogatory dominant narrative regarding young ambitious Black women. On the one hand, this born-digital text shows women who are seemingly indifferent to this derogatory societal narrative and strive for their envisioned future despite its possible foreclosure due to the levels of gender-based violence and femicide in the country. And on the other hand, this text is an example of the way in which Facebook serial fictions persist and thrive despite the constraints of conventional publishing, and chart new directions for African literature and Global Anglophone.

Each of these three texts presents a particular vision of language politics. *Coming on Strong* strives to include women's narratives in Namibian national literature as it produces a body of women's writing in the national language—English. This is accomplished despite grammatical errors by second and third-language speakers of English who alternatively may not have had access. *Kaxumba KaNdola's* testimonies are

translated from Oshiwambo into English. However, untranslated Oshiwambo belies the text's otherwise smooth English and adherence to nationalist politics. And "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" throws languages together, mimicking the slang and spoken language on the streets of Namibia's capital city, Windhoek. In each case, the term "Anglophone" delimits an uneasy terrain. It allows these Namibian texts to traverse the global arenas of world literary space, but invites local specificity to unravel its politics.

In his forward to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Homi Bhabha asks a question that brings to the fore the tensions between the local and global as a framework for the liberationist politics of these literatures that is at the heart of this project. Bhabha asks, "what might be saved from Fanon's ethics and politics of decolonization to help us reflect on globalization in our sense of the term… In what way…can the once colonized woman or man become figures of instruction for our global century?" (13).[80] For Bhabha, Fanonian world decoloniality beckons from the future, "imaginable, or achievable, only in the process of resisting the peremptory and polarizing choices that the superpowers impose on their 'client' states" (14). Such decoloniality unsettles, in other words, globalization's demands for compartmentalized dualities of power that only perpetuate inequality. For Fanon, national decoloniality is inherently international, and literatures that emerge out of the impulse of decoloniality are signposts to this national

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80. Bhabha notes the disjuncture between Fanonian decoloniality and globalization. Decoloniality "had the dream of a 'Third World' of free, postcolonial nations firmly on its horizon" and the repossession of "land and territoriality in order to ensure the security of national polity and global equity" (13). Globalization, on the other hand dismantles national sovereignty and propagates a techno elitist "world made up of virtual transnational domains and wired communities that live vividly through webs and connectivities 'on line' [*sic*]" (13). Globalization only reinforces economic inequalities, and while "The landscape of opportunity and 'choice' has certainly widened in scope, …the colonial shadow falls across the successes of globalization" (14).

internationalism (Wretched 247). *Coming on Strong*, *Kaxumba KaNdola*, and "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" emerge at the borders of the global Anglophone, in the margins of local and world literary space, and heterogeneously, they creatively weave intersections between the historical literary, racial, and gendered particularities of Namibia's locality and the dynamics of global systems of ideology and power. Empire and its structures (such as the use of English, rules of publishing, and writing versus orature) become visible as these marginal Namibian texts enact alternative possibilities for local and global belonging, and chart new directions in African literature.

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