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Haunting and Queerness in Selected Post-2000s African Short Fiction

by

Kegan Gaspar

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Queer: a word with a history.

Queer: a word that has been flung like a stone,

picked up and hurled at us; a word we can claim for us.

Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use?*

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Full name :	Kegan Gaspar
Student Number :	14244315
Degree:	MA (English)
Title of dissertation:	Haunting and Queerness in Selected Post-2000s African Short Fiction

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Introduction

That night I decided that if I ever wrote about us our time and gender would be a blur.
Could such constructs ever capture us?

Emma Paulet, "Warm"

In recent years, there have been several anthologies published of short works of fiction that narrate queer African experiences. Anthologies like *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013), *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (2017), *Happiness, Like Water* (2014), *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013) and the three editions of *The Gerald Kraak Anthology*, for example, each contain stories that explore the possibilities that are available for Africans in matters of gender and sexuality. This dissertation attempts to engage with a selection of post-2000s African short stories that explore what shape a queer African life might take, or what happens when the word 'queer' comes into contact with the word 'African'.

The post-2000s stories discussed in this dissertation engage with four themes that emerged during the reading process: silence (chapter 1); simulacra and simulation (chapter 2); the body (chapter 3); and then, finally, grief and haunting (chapter 4). Each of these themes guided the story selection of each chapter; and each story was chosen since its narrative provided space for a unique reflection of the respective themes. The focus on post-2000s queer African fiction is motivated by the need to limit the scope of this study, but also to engage with contemporary queer African short fiction.

Not all of the anthologies from which the short stories were selected identify each story as a queer one even as they narrate experiences of African gender and sexuality that do not fall within the confines of cisgendered heterosexuality. *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013) and *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (2017), for example, both demarcate the stories published in each anthology as queer; thus, the stories collected in each anthology are marked as being queer in a way that stories in an anthology like Chinelo Okparanta's *Happiness, Like Water* (2014) are not. The marketing of a short story anthology as explicitly queer or not will have implications for how each story is read. In *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013), for example, the editors make clear their decision to

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include stories previously published elsewhere in their anthology in order to "renew overrepresented aspects of African life by looking at them through a queer lens" which "allows them [the stories] to be re-read in a context that foregrounds their queerness" (Martin & Xaba: viii). Martin and Xaba's editorial decisions reflect the impact that the marketing of a story has when presented to potential readership; it allows the story to be read in a particular way that results in the story being read in what can be called a 'queer way' that foregrounds the issues of queerness and the hauntings that come when queerness is elicited. The chapters of this dissertation examine stories from anthologies that explicitly market the stories as queer and also anthologies that do not do this in order to explore how this marketing might affect the ways in which each story can be read.

Since no dissertation can sufficiently cover the wide range of stories available, this dissertation's scope is further limited to a discussion of English short stories which come from several specific contexts. These specific contexts are: Uganda, the setting of Dilman Dila's "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017) and Juliet Kushaba's "This Tomorrow Was Christmas" (2017); Somalia, the setting of Diriye Osman's "Watering The imagination" (2013); Nigeria, the setting of Chukwuebuka Ibeh's "A sickness called longing" (2019) and Chinelo Okparanta's "Wahala!" (2014); Kenya, the setting of Wilfred Jean-Louis's "Maimuna Doesn't Know" (2017) and South Africa, the setting of Barbara Adair's "Phillip" (2017), Lindiwe Nkutha's "Rock" (2013), Emma Paulet's "Warm" (2017) and Wamuwi Mbao's "The Bath" (2013). This dissertation also includes stories that are set in the African diaspora, namely The United Kingdom, the setting for Diriye Osman's "The Other (Wo)man" and "Ndambi" (2013), and the United States, the setting for Alistair Mackay's "Going Home" (2017).

The choice of such a wide variety of contexts was made in order to represent a wider range of African perspectives and what can emerge when these perspectives are drawn together. In the introduction to *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (2017), Karen Martin and Makhosazana explain that since the publication of their first volume of *Queer Africa*, "a wave of repressive anti-homosexuality legislation has swept the African continent" which has "enabled a climate of persecution and harassment against LGBTIQ+ communities" (2). Homosexuality in Nigeria and Uganda, for example, is criminalised and leaves little legal protections for people facing homophobic discrimination. In Kenya, homosexuality is criminalised for men, leaving other queer Kenyans unmentioned and unrecognised (and

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unprotected) within their country's legislation. Martin and Xaba point out also that violence against queer people takes place even in South Africa, a country often "lauded for its progressive constitution" (2017: 2). The violence that queer Africans face in their lives are felt at both a legislative and a personal level; queer Africans are haunted by "African nation-states [which] discipline and punish all indocile individuals who refuse to curb their desire" (Zabus, 2013:17). This violence, naturally, emerges in several of the collected short stories in many different ways. Thus, part of this dissertation's preoccupation with ghostliness and haunting is to illustrate how these stories might explore how the characters of each story face the ghosts that haunt their gender and sexuality.

The focus on the short story, specifically, is due to the fact that the very form of short fiction lends itself to queerness. Sally-Ann Murray makes a link between queerness and the South African short story where she argues that the short story format has had to legitimise its existence and authenticity in the literary world (2020: 3). Similarly, queerness and queer identities have had to legitimise their existence and authenticity, over and over again, in a world that has posited cisgender heterosexual identity as default sexual and gendered norms. Additionally, Murray argues that recent short fiction writers have begun to revisit the short story because "the short story as a genre seems itself to constitute an attractive, consanguine figuration of diversely queer forms that queerness may take" (2018: 3).

Similarly, Axel Nissen's work makes evident that a binary opposition between the novel/the short story has existed in literary criticism and that this binary has placed much pressure on short fiction writers and critics because "categorizing it [the short story], […] dissecting it, and […] comparing it to the dominant form of fictional narrative" (2004: 181) indicates an ongoing need to legitimise the form in the literary sphere. Nissen also argues that "[t]he novel and the short story have been locked in a lethal, loveless embrace for more than a hundred years now" (2004: 181). The literary marginality – as pointed out by Murray and Nissen – of the short story makes it a space in which a writer can deliver narratives about queer experience on account of how varied queer experiences are, which mimics the variations and experimentations of form and content that can be found in short fiction.

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Nissen indicates that "sexuality is inseparable from narrative, and that the narrative of sexuality also imbues fictional narrative, including stories that appear not to be about sexuality at all" (2004: 182). Because of the profound link between sexuality and narrative, narrative then becomes an important medium for African writers who wish to imagine narratives that go beyond the limitations of the heteronormative while also expanding the ways in which queer African life can be narrated and imagined. Nissen also indicates that "the short story was often the genre used to introduce new and stigmatized subject matters into the literary arena" (2004: 186). Short stories that focus on queer African characters and issues, then, can be viewed as a step towards the validation of these contested identities since the form enables writers more freedom for exploration and play within the construction of narrative.

Because short stories "transform mere objects and events into significance" (May 2011: 18) as a result of their brevity, they reveal the intricacies of their chosen subject matter and allow for detailed reflections on the concepts that the short story's narration delivers. Charles E. May indicates that "[t]he short story's most basic assumption is that everyday experience reveals the self as a mask of habits, expectations, duties, and conventions. But the short story insists that the self be challenged by crisis and confrontation" (May 2011: 22). May's work indicates that short stories themselves do not allow for the stagnation of everyday life and, instead, posit that the analysis of small moments reveals crucial details and larger implications of human identity than we might realise. When considered in the context of this dissertation, these author's reflections reveal that queerness and the short story are linked in more than just their marginalisation. May's view of short fiction indicates that short stories suggest the confrontation of the self; that in the small moments collected within short fiction, there is space to remain critical and aware of the self which allows one to imagine new possibilities of selfhood that were previously unimaginable prior to the confrontation of the self's ghosts. The continent's and diaspora's short fiction writers push the boundaries of what is currently imaginable, providing and acknowledging 'alternatives' of being and identity formation for all Africans, diasporic or otherwise.

The realm of short fiction provides a space where African writers can disassemble and reimagine, through fiction, their realities because the work of "short story writers […

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involves] the encompassing of time and motion in a present moment while simultaneously suggesting past and future" (Rohberger 2004: 10). If short fiction writers depict and discuss the present while simultaneously encompassing the past and future, suggests that queer African short fiction represents the issues of the present while also providing the framework to reimagine and renegotiate both the past and the future outside of established understandings of temporality. It can be argued that these renegotiations are intended to broaden the demarcation of what is African, in order to include wider understandings and experiences of being. The widening of understanding with regards to African sexuality and gender more closely aligns with the realities of the lived experiences on the continent and its diasporas by accounting for queer Africans who are often systemically and socially excluded from their own societies and cultures as a result of the hauntings of gender and sexuality.

Short fiction writing provides an important space where Africans can negotiate and renegotiate the parameters of African sexual and gendered identity, while also rethinking the parameters of what is understood as African. The act of narrating one's experience is the act of articulating and exploring one's identity in a way that allows for progression without the danger that comes from narrating these experiences in a direct way. Xaba and Martin explain that their intention with the *Queer Africa* anthologies, is to "productively disrupt, through the art of literature, the potent discourses currently circulating on what it means to be African, to be queer and to be an African creative writer" (2017: 312). It is also important to note that the act of narrating queer experiences through fiction writing is often a way for queer Africans to challenge social policing from a safe vantage point, since the act of writing does not necessarily mean that one has to expose oneself to danger in a physical, embodied sense. Each piece of short fiction which explores queerness from an African lens contributes to the important project of "imagin[ing] new possibilities and fight[ing] inequality" (Bakare-Yusuf 2004: 72), and in this process, queer Africans might also locate an erotic power within themselves that does not find itself restricted by the ghosts of the past.

Audre Lorde's essay "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" (2007), introduces the concept of the erotic as "a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of unexpressed or unrecognized feeling" (2007:

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53). To acknowledge one's erotic power, within Lorde's thinking, is to maintain a critical commitment to reassess "all the aspects of our lives and of our work, and of how we move toward and through them" (Lorde 2007: 55). To pursue one's erotic power in the domains of gender and sexuality would mean to acknowledge and embody one's gender and sexuality in a way that is not policed by the normative. Because in doing so, it becomes impossible for one to "to settle for convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, [… or] the merely safe" (Lorde 2007: 57). By utilising the marginalised genre of the short story, African writers create an ocean of voices of narratives and experiences surrounding queer Africans which seek out the ghosts that haunt them in order to reconceptualise gender and sexuality that are not burdened by the past and are empowered by the erotic.

Lorde argues that writers and their voices are an important part in interrogating essentialist thought in identity discourses because writers grapple with the complexities of language and thought in their art, and so their art should be cognisant and aware of what it means to voice a previously stifled experience (Lorde 2007: 43). Similarly, Grada Kilomba points out that the act of writing is imperative because writing involves "reinventing oneself by naming a reality that was either misnamed or not named at all" (2019: 11). Further, Kilomba explains that "as I write, I *become* the narrator, and the writer of my own reality" (2019: 10, emphasis in original). Kilomba's discussion on writing points out that writing is a process which allows the author to depart from the confines of the described and into the position of the describer. Kilomba's view illustrates how the writers of the selected stories use their narratives to narrate queer African experiences by illustrating the shapes that queer African lives can take and how queer Africans might confront the ghosts that haunt them.

Avery Gordon's work on haunting is an essential thread that links the chapters of this dissertation together since it can be argued that we are all haunted by the narratives of normativity that descend upon our experiences and understandings of our gender(s) and sexuality(ies). Gordon argues that "haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities" (2008: 8). According to Gordon's framework, the confrontation of one's ghosts can lead one to a sensuous knowledge that provides. Similarly, Keguro Macharia's work makes clear that "the shared grounds of violence and mourning that comprise the black experience of colonial modernity" (2019: 103) has led to issues of sexuality becoming

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"untranslatable, illegible, lost" (2019: 105). Together, Gordon and Macharia's work provide a lens that links each chapter; this dissertation argues that issues of African gender and sexuality are haunted by colonial modernity and that the representation of queer African life in literature can illustrate how Africans can navigate "colonial modernity and [change] the meanings and practices of sex and gender" (Macharia, 2019: 95). While each chapter of this dissertation might not explicitly deal with ghosts and haunting, it is inevitable that each story might uncover ghosts and ghostliness through issues of gender and sexuality in an African context.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation concerns itself with silence in selected queer African short fiction. Since queerness has been marginalised and systemically silenced in order to uphold the power of the cisgender heterosexual in the heterosexual/queer binary, it seems fitting that silence appears to be a concern across many of the selected short stories chosen for literary analysis: Dilman Dila's "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017), and Diriye Osman's "Ndambi" (2013), and "Watering the Imagination" (2013). These stories were selected for analysis in this chapter because they each provide opportunities to think about and discuss issues of silence within short fiction. Due to the frameworks of capitalist patriarchy that underpins society, queers are relegated to a silent existence. Lorde's essay "The Transformation of Silence into Action" (2007) stresses the need for the marginalised to voice their experiences in direct confrontation of societal policing. Yet should queers make themselves known by articulating their experiences, they often encounter violence. Thus, it is not always healthy or possible to be publicly queer. This chapter seeks to illustrate how the selected stories renegotiate the possibilities that silence can offer queer Africans.

Technology has dramatically altered the global landscape. It has also affected the way in which authors write short fiction since it has reshaped the parameters of daily living. Chapter 2 concerns itself with the ways in which queer African short fiction interacts with the technological simulation of a disembodied or virtual self. This chapter discusses Chukwuebuka Ibeh's "A sickness called longing" (2019), Alistair Mackay's "Going Home" (2017) and Diriye Osman's "The Other (Wo)man" (2013). The use of social media, especially, is reconfiguring the ways in which human beings interact with one another, both in the online space and also beyond. Many of the anthologies that have published queer African short fiction in recent years, such as *Queer Africa: New and*

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Collected Fiction (2013) and *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013), feature African characters making use of what Chapter 2 refers to as the 'queer simulacrum'. The queer simulacrum is a means by which both technological and imagined worlds permeate the modern day queer African experience. Given that "[c]yberspace represent[s] a response to a number of problems" because "[t]he online world has offered opportunities for de-localised storytelling that never could have happened without the Web" (Usher & Morrison 2010: 279), the internet is a space of queer simulation that allows queer Africans to explore their identities in a disembodied online space.

Cyber worlds offer emerging and emerged queer Africans opportunities for the articulation of their identities, while also providing access to other queers who live across the globe. The importance of this online interaction cannot be emphasised enough in a world where hostility towards African queers fosters a necessity for queers to create their own communities online, away from the dangers that might befall them should they voice their experiences. The disembodied aspect of simulation provides African queers with a safety net when they construct their online personas that more accurately align with Jean Baudrillard refers to as the hyperreal (1994: 1), or the self that is generated by simulation which, within Baudrillard's framework, signals the death of the 'true' or the 'original'. In today's context, Baudrillard's work is needlessly fatalistic since the 'death' of the 'true' results in a platform for the postmodern play with the construction of identity. By entering the disembodied, simulated space, the queer African can create a space where their identities can be renegotiated on their own terms.

Chapter 3 of this dissertation argues that queer African short fiction forms part of a renegotiation of what constitutes an African body from an African perspective. The stories chosen for analysis in this chapter contain depictions of the physical body. Through these descriptions, the argument is made that queer African short fiction writers focus on the body in order create a discussion surrounding the existence of queer African bodies, solidifying these bodies within the narration and articulation of the African experience. This chapter focuses on Barbara Adair's "Phillip" (2017), Chinelo Okparanta's "Wahala!" (2014), Lindiwe Nkutha's "Rock" (2013) and Emma Paulet's "Warm" (2017). If one questions what it is, exactly, that genders the body, one must then also question why certain words, such as the pronouns 'he' and 'she', are gendered and gendering. In questioning these concepts, one also begins the process of unearthing the ways in which

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colonial capitalist history haunts and distorts knowledge production surrounding human gender and sexuality. The need to categorise bodies according to the male/female binary is interrogated in this chapter by discussing Emma Paulet's "Warm" (2017) in tandem with transgender theory – which questions the assumption that biological sex is a social construction – to argue that ambiguous gender identities provide space for the deconstruction of harmful myths regarding African embodiment. Finally, this chapter argues that these stories are helpful in the dispelling of harmful colonial stereotypes and perspectives concerning African embodiment.

Lastly, Chapter 4 of this dissertation concerns itself with ghostliness and haunting through analyses of Wilfred Jean-Louis's "Maimuna Doesn't Know" (2017), Wamuwi Mbao's "The Bath" (2013) and Juliet Kushaba's "This Tomorrow Was Christmas" (2017). Gordon's work states that "[b]eing haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as a cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition" (2008: 11) that significantly alters the ways in which one affects and is able to be affected. Gordon argues that being haunted by ghosts leads one to a sensuous knowledge that cannot be ignored and, once recognised, leads to the necessity of action. Grief and mourning interact with ghosts in order to affect the lives of people who are trying to navigate the contradictions of colonial modernity. Since queerness haunts issues of gender and sexuality and is, in turn, haunted by societies which seek to ignore it, each of the selected stories is argued to detail the ways in which queer Africans can be haunted. Additionally, the idea of friction is also central to this chapter. Using Macharia's work on frottage, which refers to the act (sometimes sexual) of rubbing against another body or object, this chapter argues that the selected stories reveal how the processes of frottage lead queer Africans to the ghosts and hauntings which will ultimately assist them in gaining the sensuous knowledge that will allow them to affect and be affected differently within "[c]olonial modernity [which] enables new psychic and material possibilities, but [... which] exacts a heavy toll" (Macharia, 2019: 78).

By tapping into the rapidly growing pool of contemporary short story anthologies that articulate queerness in Africa, this dissertation explores the queer experiences of sexuality and gender performances in Africa, from an African perspective. By focusing specifically on the short story, this dissertation draws together a plethora of queer voices in Africa that

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intersect along lines of sexuality, gender performance, race and class. This dissertation argues that queerness always finds a way to surface despite the distortions perpetuated in the name of imperialist discourses. Queerness itself, if it is careful and thoughtful of the various experiences that stem from the African continent, can be read as an act of decoupling gender and sexuality from repressive and regressive colonial and heteronormative ideals, and that queer affect can be useful in various post-colonial contexts.

Nevertheless, the fleshing out of the everyday of the queer African experience through short fiction is essential because it helps one to avoid the sensationalised depictions that exist through heterocentric, patriarchal narratives deployed to keep queer African life either othered or silenced. Lorde's work articulates the possibilities that the erotic makes possible for queers because the erotic can provide one with the tools they need to identify and face the ghosts that haunt issues of gender and sexuality. The erotic can help one relocate an embodiment of gender and sexuality that is not tied to the deployments of rigid colonial and patriarchal frameworks. By linking Lorde's work to the writings of Njabulo Ndebele, Jenny du Preez suggests that it is possible "to rediscover the erotic as ordinary, particularly for Black, lesbian women, [by …] focus[ing] on the interior lives and desires of the characters and on details that refuse reduction to stereotype" (2020: 693). Thus, the focus on the quotidian refocuses the narration of queer African life away from sensationalism that keep discussions of gender and sexuality in the bind of constant discursive legitimisation.

To shift discussions of queer Africans away from the discourses of legitimisation and to focus on the interiority of queer African life is to explore and reshape the potentialities that are available to people in their embodiment of gender and sexuality. In this regard, Du Preez suggests that "[t]hese potentialities are entangled, presenting the erotic as a fundamental part of the ordinary internal explorations of life" (2020: 696). Within the stories chosen for analysis in this dissertation, "the erotic is ordinary in that it is deeply linked to the characters' inner lives" (Du Preez 2020: 701). The glimpses into these characters inner lives works towards the articulation of experiences and narratives that have been either muted or constricted within colonial and patriarchal frameworks. Thus, anthologies of short fiction that foreground the inner lives of queer African characters makes them "the authority of [their] own history" (Kilomba 2019: 10).

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Literature Review

Queer literature has existed for much longer than the vocabulary of queerness as it is recognised today. Queer characters have been written for as long as stories have been told. As Scott Herring points out, the "1970s were pivotal, but we should also keep in mind the labors of the years prior" (2015: 2). Whether it be Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Mário de Sá-Carneiro's *A Confissão de Lúcio* or Becky Albertalli's *Simon vs. the Homosexual Agenda*, one can find an endless range of possibilities for queer lives to be described in the realm of literature. These efforts have led us to the present moment where there exists a large amount of literature that describes queer characters and queerness in a range of infinite possibilities.

Thus, the term queer (and all its variations[1]) is used throughout the dissertation when discussing any performances of gender and sexuality that are not heteronormative. It is important to be cognisant of the fact that the term queer can refer to specific understandings of sexuality and gender, 'gay' and 'lesbian' are important distinctions for those who feel comfortable with these categorisations, and yet both terms can be considered to be queer. It is also important to keep these specific terms in circulation despite the umbrella term, as some characters found in the selected short fiction are identified by these terms in the same way that queer Africans identify themselves using either a specific term or the word queer when referring to sexual and gendered identity. The term queer is used as an umbrella term that is inclusive of all forms of gender or sexuality that are at odds with the heteronormative as queerness is a "critique of anything oppressively *normal*" (Mann, 2012: 235, emphasis in original), meaning that even specific terms like 'gay', 'lesbian', 'bisexual', 'pansexual', or even 'heterosexual', can all be considered to be queer as the term does not match heteronormative conceptions of sexuality and can still be fluid and unfixed according to some individual understandings of sexuality. It is possible to name queerness, in other words, where there is deviation from heteronormativity. It is important to consider that "queer theorists challenge the notion of a static, essential, or natural identity" (Slagle 2003: 133), which indicates that queer thoughts

[1] These variations include queer identity markers found in the LGBTQIA+ acronym, which includes identities such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, transgender, etc.

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and theories are suspicious of essentialism and of any identity category that is assumed to be universal to human experience.

In Africa, the articulation of queer experience through narrative has been curtailed by harsh state mechanisms of punishment. Zabus points out that "most African nation-states discipline and punish all indocile individuals who refuse to curb their desire" (2013: 17) despite the fact that African cultures and societies have, historically, been more open than typically conceived. Thus, short African queer fiction "act[s] as a trigger of narrative visibility for African intimacies" (Zabus 2013: 37).

Writing gives the author and their critics the power to focus, discuss and analyse culture as it emerges. Queer short fiction writers, then, are voicing and representing queer experiences of sexuality and gender through fiction. This destabilisation of narration aligns with one of the central concerns of queer thought, which seeks to denaturalise the notion of a homogenous cisgender heteronormativity that is, supposedly, and according to heteronormative societal master scripts, inherently the norm for every individual. The genre of short fiction, in a sense, also destabilises the expectations of how narratives are written and delivered in that short fiction itself has been sometimes dismissed as "exercises or preliminary studies for works on a larger scale" in order to underlie "their [supposed] provisional nature" (Mose 2004: 82).

Short fiction's marginality in the literary world provides structural freedoms in writing. The means allows authors to explore and unpack concepts related to gender and sexuality without the pressure of form that comes with writing in a longer form genre, such as the novel. These structural freedoms provide space for writers to experiment. Authors who choose to write in this genre free themselves from the constraints that come with the writing of larger narratives; their characters and stories are with the reader only for small moments. This marginality, however, does mean that these narratives might go unnoticed by mainstream audiences, meaning that the scope of their impact might be reduced. However, for those who read these narratives, the scope of possibility for the shape of African life can be expanded.

Through these short narrative explorations of African queerness, African short fiction writers contribute to what Taiwo Osinubi refers to as an "African sexual commons defined

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as the presumed normativities and exclusions that underpin accounts of what constitutes proper sexuality in civic and private life and that have been posited as foundational in various acts of African self-writing" (Osinubi 2016: viii). Osinubi's work indicates the need for a sexual commons that is both expansive and explorative in terms of African sexual identity. In establishing a sexual commons that is inclusive and explorative of all possible sexual and gendered identities, Africans might begin to undo the consequences of avoiding the ghosts that haunt gender and sexuality through mechanisms of control and silence. This dissertation suggests that short fiction anthologies that discuss issues of African gender and sexuality can work towards the establishment of a sexual commons that moves beyond the limitations of the cisgender heterosexual experience.

As has been noted, the queer experience in Africa is denounced as an un-African by-product of colonialism because "colonial modernity reshaped the meanings of labor, life and death" (Macharia 2019: 89). Keguro Macharia explains that politicians like Jomo Kenyatta, a former Kenyan president, was distanced African sexuality from queerness so that Africans could distance themselves from what they considered to be the indulgences of bourgeois Europeans. While discussing emergent ideas of African nationalism, Macharia states that "[r]esistance needs heteroreproduction [and that f]reedom needs heteroreproduction" (2019: 102). These nationalist narratives were disseminated as part of African nation building. Since these narratives are tied to the act of African nation building, it is not a stance that many would be willing to part with because it metonymically slides over concepts and words like 'freedom' and 'resistance'. While Macharia's critique does not corrode the value of this work, his analysis does provide a reflection for how queerness might make new possibilities, allowing Africans to depart from older strategies of subject making in order to avoid the stagnation of what is considered to be a liveable life while still retaining the anti-imperialist ideals developed by African thinkers who resisted colonial authority.

Macharia explains that African people were excluded from the image of the homosexual because "[h]omosexuality was […] understood as a sign that a civilization was degenerating" (2019: 95). Thus, Africans were not considered potential queer people, because colonialist narratives placed African cultural and societal practices into the binary of civilised/uncivilised in order to justify the theft of people and land. In addition to this, this perspective generates the idea that queer people and issues are upper class struggles,

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further narrowing the possibilities for who can be publicly read as queer. Colonialism weaponised queerness because it barred African people from falling within its category. By limiting people's options, colonialist regimes necessitated a resistance that resulted in "placing heteronormative vitality at the heart of imagining resistance to colonialism and nation building" (Macharia 2019: 102). A consequence of labelling African sexuality as deviant and hypersexual, as Macharia explains, resulted in the heteronormative being seen as a way to avoid further discourse that viewed African sexuality as deviant. Thus, short queer African stories come to challenge these viewpoints by making clear how they are still located within the framework of coloniality since the heteronormative vitality that marked African nation building remains part of an effort to establish the civilisation of African nations without questioning the validity of such a framework.

Marc Epprecht indicates that the colonial othering of African sexuality and gender performances allowed regressive, conservative and colonial conceptions to permeate into the African sexual and gendered experience. Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí points out: "A hallmark of the modern era is the expansion of Europe and the establishment of Euro/American cultural hegemony throughout the world" and that "Europe is represented as the source of knowledge and Europeans as the knowers" (2004: 1). This leaves discussions on gender and sexuality in African contexts in a difficult discursive position, since it is impossible to grapple with these concepts detached from colonisation; discussions of African gender and sexuality are almost always located within a post-modern pastiche of remnants from a pre-colonial past glued together with the remains of a colonial ethos that is in the process of being interrogated and qu[e]eried.

Hence, as Bibi Bakare-Yusuf points out: "To commit oneself to the assumption of [universalised sexuality and] gender is to remain unquestioningly embedded within a specific western intellectual tradition of critique" (2004: 66). Bakare-Yusuf's commentary indicates that any discourse on and of African gender and sexuality that is not critical can only reproduce the trappings of colonialist logic as it prevents the emergence of truth. While some would dismiss queer lexicons as un-African, queerness and Africa need not be separate so long as the discourses surrounding this queerness is thoroughly wary of colonial ghosts that might reproduce sexual and gendered oppressions in neocolonial ways.

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In a review of *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013), Oluwafemi Adeagbo indicates that the stories featured in the anthology establish "same-sex intimacy [as] *African*" (2015: 133, emphasis in original). Adeagbo also states that the stories in the anthology highlight that "what is un-African is *homophobia*" (2015: 136, emphasis in original). Sylvia Tamale reminds us that "African societies historically involved the organisation of gender, sexuality and reproduction – the diverse shapes, fluidities, the visible, the invisible, the spiritual and the political and economic dynamics of those societies […] resulted in certain constraints" (2011: 4). It would be detrimental to dismiss queerness as a concept that cannot encompass, or be encompassed by, African realities. However, Tamale points out that queer lexicons must be applied to African contexts with care because these lexicons "all carry specific social meanings steeped in Western ideology and traditions" (2011: 3), and that African gender and sexuality scholarship must "take great care not to fall into the homogenising trap" (2011: 4). Thus, when approaching African narratives from a queer perspective, it is necessary to remain vigilant and aware of the origin of queer lexicons in order to establish African perspectives within the global queer lexicon. This dissertation seeks to illustrate how queer theory can be used as a tool for African scholars and writers to distance African sexuality and gender conception from Eurocentric ideals which do not earnestly account for the realities of human diversity.

Paulin Hountondji's work similarly suggests that "[o]ne [must] free the horizon, reject any definition of an African that would [and does], by implication, restrict or confine him or her [or them] in a conceptual, ideological, religious, or political stranglehold and reinforce the illusory belief that some inexorable fate weighs him or her [or them] down forever" (1996: x). Following Hountondji's argument, it is evident that African being must be considered fluid and malleable. Hountondji's warning against restrictions of African identity is also applicable to both queerness and the short story in the sense that Africanness, queerness and the short story have had to be discursively defended and intellectualised. Systemically, this preoccupation with legitimisation and authenticity in discursive realms acts as a distraction since the subject caught in this endless legitimisation can never truly reach their humanity. In this way, queer Africans are kept from the demarcation of African in an endless process of legitimisation where, instead, queer Africans can rather use short fiction narratives to properly explore their being without the baggage of legitimisation and authenticity discourse.

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The idea of an 'authentic African' can be seen as a metanarrative that is aimed only at discriminating against lived African experiences to uphold and maintain systemic power within the dichotomy of the heterosexual/queer. Yet, through the stories analysed in this dissertation, we witness that "[s]omething that is African is something made by Africans" (Hountondji 1996: xii). Hountondji does not seek to demarcate Africanness to a set of certain parameters but, rather, he wishes to imply that there is no real "inexorable fate [which] weighs [… Africans or Africanness] down forever" (1996: x). Rather to keep the category and demarcation of 'African' fluid and open to negotiation since this is one possible way to ensure that African experiences of being are able to progress and develop beyond what is currently imagined. Hence, the policing of queer African identity is the most un-African gesture of all.

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Chapter 1

Silently Seething:

Silence in Selected Queer African Short Fiction

They met in secret, in the toilets, in dark places, for only a few seconds,
to relish in the desire they had for each other.

Dilman Dila, "Two Weddings for Amoit"

Queer African short stories work towards demystifying experiences of gender and sexuality so that they are no longer unarticulable. This chapter explores Dilman Dila's "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017), taken from *Pride and Prejudice: The Gerald Kraak Anthology* (2017), and Diriye Osman's "Ndambi" (2013) and "Watering the Imagination" (2013), both taken from his short story anthology *Fairytales for Lost Children (2013)*, to explore how queer modes of being have been mystified by the idea that queer gender and sexuality must remain silent and confined only to the private space. These short stories examine the ways in which queer Africans navigate both the private and public spheres while also renegotiating the idea of silence through an articulation of queer experience. This chapter argues that silence is intimately tied to queer experience; through silence, queerness haunts issues of gender and sexuality.

Avery Gordon discusses the idea of haunting and explains that "haunting described how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities" (2008: 8). Because queerness and queer writing unsettle the notion that cisgender heterosexuality is the status quo, these stories articulate how queerness makes itself present as a seething silence. Gordon says "[t]he ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life" (2008: 8). The stories analysed in this chapter, then, are investigations into how queer Africans become ghosts in their society, forcing those they encounter to grapple with the fact that they cannot be silenced since their silence remains a spectral, seething presence.

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Queer narratives interrogate damaging legacies of colonial and patriarchal mechanisms and systems that persist across the continent and its diasporas. Sylvia Tamale explains that "[t]he notion of a homogeneous, unchanging sexuality for all Africans is out of touch not only with the realities of lives, experiences, identities and relationships but also with current activism and scholarship" (Tamale 2011: 2). Tamale's reflections on the relationship between gender scholarship and African sexual realities indicate that a universal African sexuality is impossible, which indicates that patriarchal structures on the continent must be interrogated thoroughly.

Lorde indicates that the separation of sexuality and gender identity from patriarchal logics of repression that leave women and queers to inhabit the role of the other can distance them from these systemic trappings by tapping into the power of the erotic "as a considered source of power and information within our lives" (2007: 53). Lorde mentions that the accessing of this power is only possible through the "personal [posited] as the political [the public]" (2007: 113), indicating that it is necessary to problematise the idea that gender and sexuality are private endeavours. The idea that gender and sexuality solely belong in the private sphere obscures the fact that private spaces are still informed and haunted by political and religious narratives. In other words, the private is still a space in which social narratives surrounding queerness prevail, meaning that queerness can still be rendered silent within the private space. Through a recognition of one's erotic power, one can begin to find the vocabulary which can articulate one's experience in both the private and public spheres.

Lorde states that "[r]ecognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue change within the world" (2007: 59). Lorde stresses the need to share erotic power in order to properly embody oneself and to stave off the impact that patriarchal heteronormativity has on one's life. The articulation of queerness in certain African states can be complicated and dangerous as a result of social attitudes reinforced by legal policies and systems that are the legacy of colonial administration and patriarchy. Lorde reflects on the importance of voicing one's experiences and the danger of remaining silent in this regard when she states that marginalised individuals "fear the visibility without which [they] cannot truly live" (Lorde 2007: 43). A society that systematically

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requires the queer or the female to remain silent tends to characterise silence as the only way the queer and the female is able to survive this system since they exist only as silenced. The masculine requires the feminine/other to exist silently in order to maintain their power in the same way that the heterosexual requires the silenced queer to exist implicitly. If the other were to speak and declare their existence, this would afford them power and, thereby, unsettle the structures that allow the privileged to maintain their illusions of power since it would be more difficult to control individual behaviour and self-perception through a master script. In other words, according to Lorde, it is an easy thing for an individual to accept the essentialism of identity, and it is also easy to remain silent with regards to one's deviation from what is positioned as natural. For Lorde, writing and voicing one's experiences is also an act of survival. Lorde asserts that "[f]or those of us who write, it is necessary to scrutinize not only the truth of what we speak, but the truth of that language by which we speak it" (Lorde 2007: 43). Lorde's work indicates that it is necessary to do more than simply recount one's experiences through narrative and discussion.

If silence is to be lifted in a way that does not further perpetuate the system that necessitated this silence, those who voice their experiences must do so with an in-depth consideration for the language that is used to un-silence their identity. As Gordon points out, "[w]e need to imagine living elsewhere before we can live there" (2008: 5). Since writing is an act of exerting the imagination, it can aid in the conceptualisation of the elsewhere that carries people away from the constricting ideas deployed to mystify and haunt issues of sexuality. One must take note that words can metonymically slide and signify different meanings across peoples and cultures; homogeneity is never possible in meaning making. Since language is a powerful means through which human beings are able to make sense of themselves and their world. Language must never stagnate and an effective way of preventing this stagnation is, according to Lorde's ideas, through language and action. The action of voicing experience and identity, such as in writing, must then contribute towards the constant revision of categorisations that human beings use to signify the meaning in their identities. Identity is not static, and language should reflect this. In Dilman Dila's narrative "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017), silence and discretion become a way for the story's characters to take whatever action their ghost and haunting necessitates.

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"Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017) engages with a traditional form of same-sex marriage, traditionally practiced in various societies across East Africa and usually called Nyumba Nthobu, as the main driving force in the story's narrative, although this practice is not intended to be sexually motivated. "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017) is something of an anomaly amongst the selected short fiction in that it is a piece of science fiction set in a dystopian Uganda, where an event referred to as "The Big Burn" has "reduced the population by half" and has "left disease and famine in its wake" (Dila 2017: 56). Another consequence of "The Big Burn" is an incurable barrenness in women that is possibly a result of "geoengineering that had been necessary to fight The Big Burn" or a "reliance on chemical food to fight famine" (Dila 2017: 56). However, in the story, no one is able to agree on what has caused this barrenness.

Amoit, the story's protagonist, is barren and cannot produce offspring. Amoit marries Aceng in Nyumba Nthobu, a marital arrangement "in which a barren woman c[an] marry another woman to bear children on her behalf" (Dila 2017: 56-57). According to this custom, Aceng becomes Amoit's wife in every aspect but the physically intimate. However, Amoit and Aceng are later revealed to be secret lovers, using Amoit's marriage to her husband, Omongo, and the revival of Nyumba Nthobu, so that they might live under the same roof where they will be able to secretly consummate their same-sex desires and to "savour their love" (Dila 2017: 55). As Amoit and Aceng engage in the consummation of their desire, they risk their lives. Even the life of Omongo is at risk, as any evidence of homosexual activity between the wives within this marital arrangement results in the perpetrators "fac[ing] the firing squad" as "the Council was at pains to emphasise that the arrangement [is] purely entered into for procreation" and not for "lustful purposes" (Dila 2017: 57).

Dila's dystopian vision of Uganda is dominated by the Christian Council that has taken control of the state and, consequently, shapes the lives of Ugandans according to a religious politic. They dominate and regulate society through a totalising and dogmatic reading of the Christian bible, and attribute "The Big Burn" and its consequences to "God [being] angry with humanity" and "sinners in [society's] midst" (Dila 2017: 56). As a

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result, The Christian Council "cited the case of Abraham and Sarah as a sign of biblical approval" in order to "reviv[e] an ancient custom, *Nyumba Nthobu*" (Dila 2017: 56), so that reproduction does not stagnate.

Yet, towards the end of the story, the protagonist discovers that the Christian Council has been lying to this speculative Ugandan populace. The story reflects on the ways in which religion can be distorted so that it becomes a tool of oppression aimed at a self-regulation of individual identities to benefit the state. Through the state-sponsored practice of Nyumba Nthobu, women's lives are shaped by the state and queer women are not considered to silence them. Gordon indicates that "[t]he exercise of state power through disappearance involves creating new identities haunting the population into submission to its will", which affects the public and private spheres of living even "[o]n the ground of the very shape and skin of everyday life itself" (2008: 124). Since intimacy between wives is expressly forbidden in the narrative practice of Nyumba Nthobu, queer women in Dila's Uganda are made to understand that they may not exist or they and their loved ones will literally disappear. This means that any public expression of queerness is punishable through disappearance, turning an individual into a ghost. It is in this way that state policy shapes the life of the story's protagonist and, indeed, the life of every woman in the story.

In the beginning of the narrative, Amoit explains how it is possible for queers living in the story's dystopian nightmare to subvert the strict policing of the regime that seeks to control and silence 'unacceptable' identities by pointing out that "[t]here [are] many tricks" that queers living in this dystopia can employ in order to live as queerly as possible, but Amoit indicates that "[t]he favourite [method is] *Nyumba Nthobu*" (Dila 2017: 57). Amoit's indication that the methods of subversion in her society are varied highlights the multitudinous possibilities of resistance to state policing. It is important to consider that Amoit and Aceng's resistance is silent in that it does not explicitly make itself known in the narrative's unfolding. Instead, Dila's narrative offers a silent protest that, in a deeply ironic move, uses the mechanisms of state silencing to bypass it. In other words, through silence, the characters in Dila's story 'speak' and give a 'voice' to their resistance.

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In the context of Dila's narrative, to voice queerness (or anything that threatens to unravel the ideas propagated by the state) would incur the wrath of the Christian Council, putting one's personal safety at risk. Ironically, the narrative ends with Omongo admitting that he has been involved with the rebellion against the Christian Council's regime. In a letter, Omongo explains that he has kept his involvement in the rebellion a secret from Amoit because he believed that she was fanatically devoted to Christ and also to the Christian Council (Dila 2017: 73), as a result of the façades they maintained in their household. Amoit kept her love for Aceng from Omongo because she had thought the same of him. In light of these revelations, she admits that:

> [t]he only thing she felt was a disappointment that they had not been honest with each other. If only [Omongo] had known she was in love with Aceng, then he would have known she was not a devout Christian, and if only she had known he was involved with rebels, she would not have feared him to be a fanatic follower of the Christian Council. (Dila 2017: 74)

In other words, had Amoit voiced her queerness to her husband, and had her husband voiced his political deviancy, their mutual distaste for the Council's dominion might have allowed for Amoit and Aceng to live and voice their queerness in their home. The women might have lived at their most erotically powerful within the confines of their private home space.

To put this in Lorde's terms, had Amoit and Omongo voiced their experiences, collaborative action against the system that silences and stifles their expressions of self would have been possible. Initially, because Lorde's work posits silence as a passive inaction, this private erotic power might ring hollow, as a private accessing of the erotic cannot contribute to public discourse. However, if one thinks of the act of story writing that Dila has engaged in "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017), the story itself, on a metatextual level, is a public exposition of silent voicing that is just as effective and powerful as public voicing of systemic deviation. Metatextually, Amoit and Omongo's dissent is made known in the narrative, meaning that the metaphorical implications that the narrative's expression of queer life outside of the story can be considered. It is noted in the story that in their private home "there [are] no cameras" (Dila 2017: 55) to monitor and police homosexual activity (or activity of any kind).

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This might suggest that Omongo's political deviance was implied since he seemingly has no interest in policing his home. Yet neither Amoit nor Omongo take the risk of voicing their deviances with one another. In other words, in their private space, where there is no systematic monitoring to keep their actions in check, neither Amoit (sexually) or Omongo (politically) are willing to risk revealing to one another that they do not meet the expectations of their society. For Lorde, risk is essential in the transformation of silence into action, despite the consequences that one might face when voicing the silenced aspects of one's identity (Lorde 2007: 40). In her discussion of Naledi Raba's poem "To Whom It May Concern" (2013), Barbara Boswell indicates that "the poetic admission of queerness thus risks her [Raba's] life, but at the same time she is compelled to use poetry [writing] as a form of testimony in remembrance of those who lost their lives because of their identity" (2020: 91). In the mention of risk, Boswell gestures towards Lorde's assertions that to voice one's identity in the face of state silencing is, especially for the African queer woman, a risky business that can threaten her life. However, this risk, although it is never easy, is essential to solidify its existence and the validity of this existence. Dila's narrative suggests that silence can also constitute a form of action and that it is not necessarily always a marker of inaction or stagnation.

Thus, it is necessary, when considering silence and the risk of speaking, to redefine silence, action and risk when relating this work to queer African narratives. "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017) reveals the complexities (and also the dangers) of silence and speaking when considered from an African perspective. Although Lorde's assertion that silence must be transformed into public action is valid, Dila's narrative makes it clear that such matters are not so simple for African queers whose lives are often criminalised. One must note that Amoit and Aceng's relationship, although it is secret and confined to a private space, necessitates a great deal of risk on their part. In their case, their use of silence is strategic; a survival strategy. Their choices are fairly limited within their context. If they were to defy their social order publicly, they would be killed by the Christian Council, much like the death that Lorde is wary of. To die in this way would be to waste the possible contributions and value of the queer subjects in question, even if these contributions are to exist within constraint. Amoit and Aceng's silence stems from their need to survive their social context. Thus, "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017) reframes

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risk and action to align the realities of voicing queerness and publicly announcing queerness in Uganda, where such identities are criminalised.

Dila's narrative does not, however, present Amoit and Omongo's resistance as entirely private. Although their honesty marks the end of their marriage and the end of the collaborative possibilities that their honest partnership might have made possible, it is important to note that the characters do eventually reach a point where they voice their grievances. Through his letter, Omongo is honest with Amoit. Omongo's honesty, however, is practically motivated in that his actions have placed Amoit in danger since she is his wife. This danger necessitates honesty so that Amoit might escape the Christian Council's wrath. Omongo's letter explains that the Christian Council has been lying to the public regarding food production so that they might maintain monopoly over the food their people eat. In order to combat this, Omongo rams his "bruka" (a mode of futuristic transportation that closely resembles a helicopter) into the "B-Gete tower" (a building where Uganda's genetically modified food is produced and distributed to the public) in order to cripple the Christian Council's production of modified food (which is laced with hallucinogenics that the Christian Council intends to use in order to placate and control the Ugandan public) (Dila 2017: 74-75).

Omongo's actions necessitate Amoit and Aceng's need to escape Uganda, since they are now fugitives. The story ends with the two women planning their route to a church where they might be safe until they are able to plan their escape from the Christian Council (Dila 2017: 74-75). Omongo's rebellion inadvertently compromises Amoit and Aceng's private love as they might be discovered. In order to survive, the women flee because they must survive as African, Black, female, and queer people. The two women decide to flee to the safety of a local priest, referred to only as Pastor, who is also silently queer, but is using his silence and his position to aid the Ugandan queer populace (Dila 2017: 74). Amoit notes that "[m]aybe […] there [is] a basement in the church" and that "[m]aybe Pastor [will] allow them to hide until they [figure] a way out" (Dila 2017: 74), which indicates that the two women have now become displaced in their own country/private home. The tentative register of the above quotation highlights the uncertainty that the two women now

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face; they are now in a position of danger. It implies that these women are now in a state of heightened precarity and that their survival is not certain.

Dila's narrative ends by illustrating how queer Ugandans must often dislocate themselves from their country in order to seek refuge in countries where their queerness does not involve personal risk. It is pertinent to point out that these rejections are rooted in the legacy of colonial distortions imposed upon the African continent, distancing Africans from their own conceptions of sexuality and gender. Historically, the representation of Africa (and African understandings of sexuality and gender) perpetuated by European colonisers, as a flawed and inherently uncivilised continent, has resulted in the internalisation of these non-African ideals, which "has given the continent false identities that require serious interrogation" (Kisiang'ani 2004: 17). Edward Waswa Kisiang'ani suggests that, although it is necessary to dismantle the historically accepted representation of Africa through post-colonial studies, it is necessary for "gender research [to] endeavour to reconstruct the African woman and man, and [to] go beyond the politics of domination, which merely diverts debate from the critical problems facing Africans" (Kisiang'ani 2004: 18). Following Kisiang'ani's assertions, it is clear that the ending of "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017) highlights the critical problem of queer Africans who are not accounted for by African states that attempt to make them disappear from public life through state policy bolstered by religious and political dogma.

Although it differs from "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017) in that it is realist fiction and not speculative science fiction, Diriye Osman's story "Ndambi" (2013), tells the story of a woman who has been rejected by her family for being "a black African Muslim lesbian" (2013: 73). In the same way that Amoit and Aceng are displaced from their native Uganda, Ndambi is also displaced and isolated from her family. Like many of the stories from *Fairytales for Lost Children*, "Ndambi" (2013) is a playful exploration of African queerness. The story's protagonist, who is named Samira but has renamed herself Ndambi, or "most beautiful" (Osman 2013: 71) as an act of defiance, is a lesbian who claims her own sexual agency despite familial policing that discredits and silences her identity. In their rejection of Ndambi's sexuality, they protect and preserve the power that stems from the heteronormative silencing and omittance of the queer.

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And yet, during the opening telephone conversation with her sister, Hawa, points out an amusing paradox that "*you* [Ndambi] maintain while the rest of us carry bare burden" (Osman 2013: 70, emphasis in original). Unwittingly, Hawa admits to her sister that her heteronormative life is unsatisfying, and yet she makes no attempt to voice this malcontent publicly in the way that Ndambi has voiced her outrage. Thus, it is evident that Hawa is erotically repressed while Ndambi, who has taken the risk of public voicing, revels in her erotic power to the point that she seems to have very little need for her family's approval. During this phone call, Ndambi is playfully defiant, ending the encounter by brushing her sister off and stating that "self-preservation is what's really going on today" (Osman 2013: 71). However, Osman's "Ndambi" (2013) does not offer a queer utopia, and this becomes evident when Ndambi's loneliness permeates her playfulness following the phone call with Hawa. Much like Amoit and Aceng, Ndambi's primary concern in the narrative is her survival. For Ndambi, this survival requires lying to her family and pretending that all is well even though her lover, Adrienne, has left, and that this has led to intense loneliness. To admit this to her family would validate their disapproval and affirm the fact that Ndambi's deviations result only in misery and are, therefore, invalid.

Later in the story, Ndambi revisits her sexual experiences with Adrienne, who "would melt [Ndambi] down until [she] stank of sex and satisfaction" (Osman 2013: 71), indicating that their time together is an important and contributing factor to Ndambi's embodiment of her erotic power. Following the phone call, the story is fragmented into three parts; "Night-time" (Osman 2013: 71 – 72), "Love Egg" (Osman 2013: 72 – 73) and "Freedom" (Osman 2013: 73 – 74). Each section of the story illustrates the way Ndambi masturbates with a "*Jade Love Egg*" (Osman 2013: 72, emphasis in original) in order to steady her loneliness and insecurity that stem from the rejections she has faced from her family; a wound newly opened after Hawa's phone call, and the rejection of her dear Adrienne. The sectioning off of the story allows one to travel with Ndambi through her journey into freedom; the act of masturbation leads her through the darkness, into a self-love making and then, finally, into freedom through claiming ownership of her body across all of its intersections.

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However, Ndambi does not allow this momentary lapse into melancholic reflection to crush her playful spirit. Ndambi embodies and names (in other words, voices) herself despite the multiple intersecting rejections that she has faced from her family and her ex-lover through sensual masturbation that becomes a powerfully defiant private gesture. Ndambi's masturbation allows her to access her erotic power because she does not allow these rejections to stifle her sexually playful spirit. Boswell notes that the act of black women loving their bodies is a radical act. She states that "[i]t is through loving th[e] most insulted body parts – that to which Black women are often reduced in order to objectify and dehumanise them – that freedom is claimed" (Boswell 2020: 88). Boswell's analysis indicates the importance of reclaiming the Black female body from the clutches of dehumanisation. To love her body is to reject the undue damage her queer female African body faces in the private and public spheres. In making love to her own body, Ndambi does not require the validation of others in order to achieve self-worth, despite the loneliness that she faces.

In the story, Ndambi explains that her queer body is a site where her "[h]ome is in [her] hair, [her] lips, [and in her] arms" (Osman 2013: 74), solidifying the validity of her identity by attributing it to a space that is tangible; her body.

The last section of the story allows Osman, by using Ndambi's playfully defiant voice, to ruminate on what it means to be free in a queer body that has been rejected by society. Ndambi mentions that her "family, friends, colleagues [, and even strangers,]" have claimed that "[she] is not included in [The Prophet's] vision" (Osman 2013:73) and yet, despite this, she does not allow this rejection to disintegrate her sense of self. She defiantly states that "[she] is [her] own home" and "[r]eminds herself that it's all about that forward motion" (Osman 2013:74), indicating that the adversity Ndambi has faced will not stagnate her growth. Ndambi's words echo Lorde's sentiments in that they emphasise that finding fulfilment is only possible by locating erotic power within oneself and not from an external, heterocentric forces. Lorde states that "[w]hen released from its intense and constrained pallet, [the power of the erotic] flows through and colours my life with a kind of energy that heightens and sensitizes and strengthens my experience" (2007: 57), a sentiment that is mirrored by Ndambi as she exits Osman's narrative. Although "queer critics argue that sexuality cannot be reduced to sexual activity" (Slagle 2003: 134), they do not deny that sexual activity is an important aspect of de-centring sexuality from the

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heteronormative as the act of sex (and the act of not having sex) is integral to each person's experience of sexuality.

In Welcome Lishivha's piece "Site visits" (2018), he/they provide an in-depth retrospection on a gay sex club located in Johannesburg named The Factory. Lishivha asserts that "[t]he idea that sex is an act that can only be accessed by a heteronormative couple in the bedroom has resulted in a public arrangement that is produced in every aspect of our [humanity's] social life" (2018: 100). Lishivha's reflections on The Factory as a space of queer sexual exploration challenges the colonial patriarchal master script that mystifies gender and sexuality by limiting their expression to the private realm. By engaging directly with Warner and Berlant's work (1998), Lishivha suggests that it is necessary to create spaces where queers will be able to "[challenge] the idea of sex being a private act that can only be enjoyed within the heteronormative institution" and that "[t]hese spaces exist and ought to exist outside hegemonic practices of sex and sexuality" (2018: 100) in order to dismantle the effects of the patriarchal master script.

Berlant and Warner's (1998) work refers to "queer zones and other worlds estranged from heterosexual culture" (547). As I argue, the world of literature can be one of these spaces (or zones) that Lishivha states is necessary in the detangling of African bodies from identity practices that do not align with socially acceptable genders and sexualities. Additionally, queer African narratives must be hyper vigilant regarding patriarchal structures that have been justified and fortified by the colonial project. Boswell discusses various Black South African female poets who discuss queer themes in their work, and in her discussion of Tsholang Bodibe's poem "Afriqueer", Boswell notes that queer spaces are "vital for a transformation of our society from homophobic, sexist and violent to accepting and embracing of subjugated sexualities; yet, managing the dangers of this space remains fraught with difficulty" (2020: 91). Despite these difficulties, this literature contributes to the "construct[ion …] of queer space in a homophobic environment" (Berlant & Warner 1998: 551). Berlant and Warner's work questions the concept of hegemony when they state that "[h]egemonies are nothing if not elastic alliances, involving dispersed and contradictory strategies for self-maintenance and reproduction" (1998: 553).

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Berlant and Warner's statement makes clear the inherent contradiction with heteronormative master scripts: heterosexist systems claim that cisgendered heterosexuality is the correct way for being human but also claim regional and geopolitical specificity in performances of cisgendered heterosexuality. Thus, the narration and dissemination of queer experiences and narratives becomes an important part of undoing cisgendered heteronormativity while also voicing queer lives within the sphere of the reading public's imagination in order to make these experiences articulable. To narrate an African experience of queerness in a piece of short fiction, then, is to shoulder the risk that comes from publicly defying the supposedly universal and fixed norms that complicate gender and sexual identity.

Ndambi claims that in order to exist in the world, it is necessary to "give yourself permission on how to lead your life, naysayers be damned" (Osman 2013:74) since "no one *allows* anyone anything [authors italics]" (Osman 2013: 73-74). To claim that her home is in her body, Ndambi also subverts the complications of being caught in an African diasporic positionality, as she asserts her African-ness despite being caught between Somalia, her birthplace, Kenya and London (Osman 2013: 74). Although it must be noted that her diasporic positionality is also what allows her to assert her queer authenticity as an African safely.

Before the story reaches its end, Ndambi reflects on freedom and its meanings in a section of the story with the apt subheading "Freedom" (Osman 2013: 73). Because Ndambi locates herself within her queer black body, she also uses this body in her everyday life to remind her of the expectations placed on her. In other words, the private accessing of her erotic power manifests when Ndambi reminds herself (using her body) that because of these private moments, where she takes pleasure in her queer, black and Muslim body, she can achieve public survival.

Arguably, the act of writing queer experiences and queer selves into existence through the art of fiction is an act of the erotic too. Through writing and narrating queer experiences, African writers are taking part in what can be described as a mass rejuvenation of queer African perspectives by tapping into and exploring the erotic. This is not to say that all of

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the selected fiction features scenes of sex, since Lorde's conception of the erotic indicates that the erotic "relegated to the bedroom alone" (Lorde 2007: 57) is a reproduction of the system that uses a stunted understanding of the erotic. Rather, all of the selected short fiction taps into the erotic in order to explore the power of being a queer African. In the voicing and embodiment of the queer body through art, the queer is able to liberate themselves by releasing the erotic from its socially imposed and self-policed constraints, resulting in "a kind of energy that heightens and sensitizes and strengthens all [female and queer] experience" (Lorde 2007: 57).

Through the articulation and exploration of their body and their sex, the writer in Africa is able to assert their existence. Lishivha notes that "the privatisation of sex is where the policing of sex and morality began" (2018: 100). When combined with Lorde's reflections on the transformation of silence into action and also her reflections on the power of the erotic, it is clear that, once drawn together, that it is the privatisation of queer sex that allows queer sex to remain silenced. Thus, the act of writing and disseminating this sex into existence through short fiction can be read as an act of voicing in the face of systematic mystification. The articulation of the queer erotic experience "challenges the notion that sexuality is a private matter that is best left in the bedroom" (Slagle 2003: 134), while also shifting the dynamics of power in a system that seeks to reserve erotic power for the heterosexual male. Thus, stories that place queer sex at the forefront of their narrativity are engaging in a renegotiation of the ways in which sex is spoken and thought about.

In "Watering the Imagination" (2013), a two-page story that serves as the opening story of *Fairytales for Lost Children*, an elderly Somali woman contemplates her daughter's, Suldana's, love for other women. The hooyo[2] explains that: "[i]n Somali culture many things go unsaid: how we love, who we love and why we love that way" (Osman 2013: 3). The hooyo indicates that Somali culher ture, has been marked by a silence that has obscured the mechanics of how one can love. This silence obscures the many ways in which one can love, making it easier for the master script of heterosexuality to be enforced through religious and political mechanisms but also for people to escape it. The hooyo

[2] "Mother", in English.

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goes on to explain that "[she] does not know why [Suldana] loves the way she loves" and "why [Suldana] loves who she loves" (Osman 2013: 3).

The hooyo explains that she is "letting [Suldana] dream in a way that [her] generation was not capable of" and that she is also "letting [Suldana] reach for something that neither [she nor Suldana] can articulate" (Osman 2013: 3-4). That the hooyo states that she is "respecting [Suldana's] privacy" (Osman 2013: 3) implies that it is more than possible for those who conform to their society's ideal conceptions of identity to respect those who cannot. If the hooyo is supportive of her daughter, despite her inability to articulate her daughter's experience of sexuality, it means that Suldana has taken the risk of being open about her sexuality to her mother. Suldana's risk has resulted in support from her mother, thus opening up the possibility of solidarity between the two despite the potential risk of straining their relationship, as is the case with Ndambi and her family.

The hooyo provides a vision of what could be the case if older generations, despite their supposed lack of understanding of queerness, were to cast aside their doubt for the sake of the survival of younger generations, it provides a blueprint for building community between queers and cisgender heterosexuals who are often positioned as sitting on opposite ends of a hierarchal spectrum. The hooyo's reality has not been undone by the revelation of her daughter's sexuality as it has, in fact, enriched and enhanced her relationship with her daughter by creating the possibility of new intimacy between the two. The story ends with the hooyo stating that "Suldana must take history and forge her own future. And when she does go forth, [the hooyo] will honour [her] promise as [Suldana's] parent and go forth with her" (Osman 2013: 4).

Through this statement, the hooyo rejects the need to use political or religious master scripts to reshape her daughter's queer experience and, in doing so, she encourages her daughter to articulate her experience in her own terms; providing Suldana with a support network through which she can publicly voice herself. That this experience is articulated through the eyes of Suldana's mother suggests that it is possible for this experience to be understood by preceding generations; that it is possible for there to be a sharing of experience across generations despite the differences between these generations. It also implies that this experience can be articulated with care and empathy even from the eyes of people who are not queer themselves. If Suldana can voice her experience publicly, and if

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this voicing is supported by her family, then she will be able to resist the narratives of queerness that disingenuous political discourse and religious dogma peddle to create self-regulation. Thus, Suldana becomes self-affirming, instead of self-regulating, since she is encouraged within her familial, private sphere to articulate herself in the public space. Through these characters, we gain a sense that muted queers *are* speaking, and exploring the possibilities and shapes that their lives can take by embodying their queerness in both private and public spaces.

According to these stories, the landscape of African sexuality is untangling itself from the confines of heteronormative, colonial and patriarchal constrictions, which involves, primarily, an interrogation of the role and place of silence. Each story illustrates how silence itself can be used as a tool that leads one to articulation, although Osman indicates in "Watering the Imagination" (2013) that it would be ideal if issues of queer gender and sexuality in African contexts are neither overlooked nor relegated to the private domain. The title, too, gestures towards Osman's collection hopes to achieve; to spark a reimagining of what shapes African lives are able to take by describing experiences that previously have been thought to be unimaginable Gordon indicates that "[a] haunted society is full of ghosts, and the ghost always carries the message […] that the gap between personal and social, public and private, objective and subjective is misleading" (2008: 98). Osman uses writing to imagine a present in which these ghosts are faced in unity; a future where older generations and younger generations work alongside one another towards a more fluid understanding of gender and sexuality. The hooyo ends the narrative by stating that: "[w]e will not turn back" (Osman 2013: 4), which captures the spirit that all of the recent publications of queer short fiction anthologies from Africa and ruminations on the legitimacy and future of queerness on the continent and its diasporas are trying to articulate and rearticulate.

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Chapter 2

New Queer Worlds:

Simulacra and Simulation in Queer African Short Fiction

> 'I love you too,' he said into the phone, and he believed himself because that was better than thinking he might never love again.
>
> Chukwuebuka Ibeh, "A sickness called longing"

As the landscape of writing changes due to changing technology, it is not surprising that some short fiction presents perspectives on the various possibilities that technology and simulated escapism can afford the African queer. In addition, technology and the online world influence queer narrativity because they affect the ways in which queer African authors express themselves through writing. The internet can be a space where queer people are able to construct what Abosede George refers to as "new queer world[s]" (2018: 97), where they can reimagine and renegotiate what is expected of a human being regarding gender performance and sexuality. Johnathan Alexander and Elizabeth Losh indicate that "the Internet has been an important, even vital venue for connecting with others and for establishing a sense of identity and community" (2010: 39). They indicate that the cyber world can be a location for the establishment of queer communities.

The short stories chosen for this discussion tap into and illustrate a simulative modus operandi that queers can use to make contact with one another through the internet, technology and social media. Damon Lazzara points out that "gay men have used online identities to seek friendship, sex and partnership" (2010: 51), and the same holds true for queer people all over the world. The online world is a 'place' of endless possibility as any individual can create or conceal their identities, meaning that the rules and regulations of their contexts do not necessarily apply. With simulation and simulacra in mind, this chapter discusses Diriye Osman's "The Other (Wo)man", taken from *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013), Alistair Mackay's "Going Home", taken from *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (2017), and Chukwuebuka Ibeh's "A sickness called longing", taken from *The Heart of the Matter: The Gerald Kraak Anthology* (2019). Each of these stories provide narrative snapshots of the contemporary queer experience in Africa where simulacra are used to subvert and, in some cases, reverse the alienation that befalls queer bodies in

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heteronormative, African contexts. Queer simulacra are not strictly limited to the cyber-techno space as this would ignore the ways in which queer Africans facilitate simulation and simulacra by other means, like fantasy and the imagination.

Jean Baudrillard, in his examination of simulation and simulacra, reveals the complications in the conception of a 'true' reality by noting that simulation "is the generation by models [simulacra] of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1994: 1). With the distinctions between the real and the simulated blurred, the simulation then becomes more than an echo of a real, or true, thing. One must be cognisant of the fact that Baudrillard wrote his *oeuvre* in a context where anxiety regarding technology was rife. Baudrillard's work engages with what he considers to be the death of the true and the death of the real since, according to Baudrillard, the duplication of a simulated image "suffices to render both [the image and its simulation] artificial" (1994: 9), leaving no possibility for any kind of authentic 'real' or 'true'. Baudrillard "compares the trajectory of present society with the irreversible growth of a cancerous cell in which all attempts to control the process of decay only result in intensifying it until the hypertrophy of culture and social life exhausts itself" (Bogard 1990: 5). However, Baudrillard's fatalism about the changing dynamics of the social cause him to overlook the opportunities they might make possible. Where Baudrillard's engagement with simulation is peppered with mistrust, this chapter's conception of a queer simulacrum argues that it does not disintegrate queer African meaning or further queer African alienation, in totality. Instead, the queer simulacrum is posited as something akin to a wasteland that is neither positive nor negative in nature. Yet, it is also can never be neutral, since it amplifies the scaffolding of social prejudice that haunts people's experiences of gender and sexuality.

In response to Baudrillard's discussions of technoculture and (often limited) science fiction, Vivian Sobchack points out that "[i]f we don't keep this subjective kind of bodily sense in mind as we negotiate our technoculture, then we, like Vaughan, like Baudrillard, will objectify our-selves to death" (Sobchack 1991: 329). Sobchack's observations reveal that Baudrillard overlooks the necessity of maintaining the human and humanity when discussing, conceptualising and navigating simulation and simulacra. Sobchack goes on to say that "Baudrillard's techno-body is a body that is *thought* always as an *object*, and never *lived* as a *subject*" (Sobchack 1991: 327, emphasis in original). Although Baudrillard maintains that simulacra and simulation "[bombard] the modern subject with idyllic

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simulations of what it means to live a fulfilling existence" (Moser 2014: 76), this does not mean that simulacra and simulation cannot be fulfilling. The selected short fiction, for instance, illustrates the ways in which simulacra and simulation might lead to African sexual exploration as technology facilitates their escape from society's expectations. Thus, online identity simulation can afford the queer a space in which they can explore and articulate their erotic power.

Social media applications like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Grindr and Tinder allow for a 'space' where queers are able to exist outside of the society that rejects them by fostering social interactions via online platforms. Mark Nunes suggests that "the conceptual model of a cybernetic 'space' does not augment the world; it abandons the world for one that can be fully realized and fully encompassed: a world of transparency and immediacy" (1995: 316). Nunes's stance highlights the possibilities of the cyberworld: it is a space that goes beyond the body to a place where the queer is able to access and construct selves without the fear of compromising their safety in a world that otherwise seeks to disregard their sexual identity and desires. Nunes also notes that "[t]he implosion of real distance creates the need for a strategy of deterrence: a simulation of space and distance that the body cannot breech but that a simulated self (complete with computer prostheses) can travel" (1995: 316). According to Nunes, the cyber world causes the distance of the real world to become irrelevant, or to implode, and so, there is an immediacy that transcends the body when one engages in online interactions. Further, Nunes's stance indicates that this implosion of distance necessitates the need for the subject to then disembody themselves in order to create a 'self' that can travel through this cyber world.

Richard Seymour's work points out that writing is crucial to online platforms; they are all mediated by the technology of writing. And while platforms amplify the rot of culture and society, they are a space of infinite cyber-queer possibilities. Christopher Pullen indicates that the cyber world is a space where "LGBTs [are able to] offer personal expressions of self, in the construction of a public identity" (2010: 5) as the cyber world is a 'space' that bridges public and private space. Pullen also indicates that "[o]ur increasingly bold presence on the [internet …] offer[s] identity connections, but also contributes to the reconstruction of everyday physical living space, which ideally should be democratic and all encompassing" (2010: 11). Pullen's work makes it clear that the cyber world can become an integral space of societal renegotiation and identity negotiation. The stories

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analysed in this chapter display how technology has affected the ways in which queer Africans express narrativity as queer Africans use the cyber world and imagination in order to renegotiate the parameters of what are 'truly African' sexualities and gender performances.

One of the selected stories that makes use of queer simulacra is "The Other (Wo)man" (2013) by Diriye Osman. The story makes mention of the gay dating website, Gaydar, which allows queer men to interact with one another. By using Gaydar, the protagonist, a gay Somali man named Yassin, can exist in cyber-space to escape the confines of heterosexual masculinity, and explore his attraction to men. Coming from Kenya, where "homosexuality was something to be hidden for fear of violence" (Osman 2013: 127), Yassin is someone who "quietly buried his desire[s]" (Osman 2013: 127). He assumed that moving to London would allow him to express his sexuality more easily. Although his migration lets his "mask to slip" (Osman 2013: 127), Yassin admits that "four years later, he was lonelier than ever" (Osman 2013: 127).

Changing his physical location was not enough to fight the alienation that seemingly goes together with being queer and so Yassin turns to the cyber world of online dating to combat his loneliness. Yassin's explorations on Gaydar lead him to Jude. Jude, who eventually becomes Yassin's lover, uses Gaydar to escape the trappings of his unhappy heterosexual marriage, a marriage only maintained for the sake of Jude's children. Yassin and Jude's relationship eventually comes to an end after Jude suggests that Yassin wear woman's stockings during sex (Osman 2013: 135-136). Feeling that his masculinity has become threatened because of this request, Yassin throws Jude out and falls into a pit of despair. He feels that "he [has] strayed too far from his own roots that there [is] no going back" (Osman 2013: 136). Yassin feels that the intersection of his identity, "gay, Somali, [and] Muslim […] le[ave] him excluded" (Osman 2013: 137) despite his moving to London from Kenya. To combat the inertia of being "caught in perpetual arrested development" (Osman 2013: 138), Yassin eventually decides to "find other ways of being" (Osman 2013: 138) that are not restrictive and do not cause the various intersections of his identity to clash.

Before completely cutting ties with Jude, Yassin decides to wear the female stockings during a final sexual exchange where Jude requests that Yassin, who had previously

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played a 'submissive' role during their sexual exchanges, play a more dominant role during sex. Jude requests that Yassin be the one to penetrate, rather than being the one who is penetrated. In doing so, their final sexual exchange becomes a moment where both characters stretch the limitations of their identities. Wearing the stockings leaves Yassin feeling "gorgeous, uninhibited, [and] self-assured" (Osman 2013: 139) and he admits that, after this, "things will never be the same" (Osman 2013: 139). After this encounter, Yassin cuts ties with Jude, and it is at this point that Yassin explores the fluidity of his gender performance when he adopts an alter ego named Yasmeen during an evening out with a friend at a lesbian bar. Yassin dresses as a woman, fooling and enticing heterosexual men (Osman 2013: 148) and lesbian women (Osman 2013: 151) alike, as they believe Yassin to be a woman. By dressing as Yasmeen, Yassin simulates a female body; and if there is no real difference between the simulated image and 'the real' (Baudrillard 1994: 9), then Yassin is, in that moment at least, a woman.

Although Yassin does not lay claim to a transgender identity, the act of simulating Yasmeen is indicative that a fulfilling performance of his gender identity does not align with the standards set out by any 'established' notions of what it is to be a man or those set out by patriarchal structures. Simulating Yasmeen is an opportunity for Yassin to explore his gender in ways in which he had previously thought to be limited. The story's title, "The Other (Wo)man" gestures towards this same notion: that Yassin's gender expression can be located between what he understands to be man or woman; it is located between these polarities which are not as separate as one might be led to believe. It is an indication that there is something fluid to Yassin's conception and experience of gender as an identity category and that he is in the process of exploring this.

For a moment, Yassin transcends the boundary between the binary of male/female and can distort reality by existing in a more ambivalent space, but Yassin eventually abandons Yasmeen and the clothing that allowed him to simulate her. Retreating to the safety of his home, he notes that the "night had been a dystopian fairytale but [that] the spell [is] broken and he [has] awoken" (Osman 2013: 152). Though the story does not leave Yassin in high spirits, his simulation of Yasmeen successfully subverts his understanding of the binaries of masculinity/femininity and passive/dominant. Osman's story can be read as an attempt to not only push and distort the boundaries of heterosexual and queer identity in terms of the binaries of male/female, submissive/dominant and male/female, but also as an attempt

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to reconcile the various intersections of Yassin's identity that clash because of his social context. Through his simulation of Yasmeen, Yassin renegotiates the "scene of restraint" which characterises the "practice [of gender]" (Butler 2004: 1). Overall, the story illustrates the ways in which queer Africans can utilise the simulations of the cyber world in order to renegotiate the identity categories that are said to be authentic and static. These cyber explorations, as illustrated by the story, can lead one to blurring the edge of one's gender and sexual expression even outside of the simulated space, as Yassin shows when he becomes Yasmeen.

Yassin's interaction with queer simulacra is not, however, indicative of a queer cyber-utopia. The beginning of "The Other (Wo)man" (2013) reveals many social ills that prevail in the global online queer community, which are amplified once the hyperreal world is constructed. In the beginning of the story, before Yassin meets Jude, Yassin's experience on the website brings to light an obvious misogyny, as body shaming and a shaming of feminine traits in the gay male body are rife on the website (Osman 2013: 120). During his foray into online dating, Yassin mentions that "Gaydar ran a competition to determine the sex appeal of its members" (Osman 2013: 120). The winners of this competition highlight the importance that most queer men place on muscular bodies and what is called "straight-acting" (Osman 2013: 120) personality traits and Yassin notes that "[m]anliness was the thing most worth embodying" (Osman 2013: 120).

The competition Yassin mentions at the beginning of "The Other (Wo)man" (Osman 2013: 120) highlights the alienation that non-masculine queer men face when engaging with queer simulacra that could, if used in a way that does not reproduce the masculine/feminine binary, allow them to live as their hyperreal, queer selves. The title of the story points towards the way in which words like 'man' and 'woman' can metonymically slide over each other; that gender expression is often more complicated that a simple division between two sexes. After his encounters with Jude and his identity as Yasmeen, Yassin's interactions with queer simulacra lead him to begin his journey away from the alienation that seemingly goes hand in hand with being queer, into an exploration of a more ambivalent and comfortable sense of identity. As a result of how his experience ends, Yassin's interaction with online queer simulacra reveals first danger and difficulty but, at the same time, Yassin's experience also reveals possibilities that ambivalent gender identity might offer him.

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Yassin's experience makes evident that "[t]erms of gender designation are […] never settled once and for all but are constantly in the process of being remade" (Butler 2004: 10), and that this process can take place online. Whitesel suggests that "[c]yberspace offers fat gay men a forum where they can reconfigure imagery and text, to signal issues of personal, collective, and gender identity" (Whitesel 2010: 215), indicating that the cyber world is not only a place where non-heteronormative queer bodies and people are abused and rejected, but that the cyber world can be a space of the renegotiation of societal identity codes, if it is detached from prevailing social codes.

"Going Home" (2017) by Alistair Mackay centres on two gay men who value heteronormative masculinity, while also engaging with queer alienation that is rooted within the queer community itself. Nick is a South African expat who has recently arrived in New York and finds himself longing for some sense of familiarity in this big, alienating city. Dustin, another South African expat who, crucially, is a former classmate of Nick's, has been living in New York City much longer. Initially, Nick finds himself longing for South Africa, his home, and is only able to receive momentary glimpses of it through "that little black screen" (Mackay 2017: 207). Social media allows him to be transported back to South Africa for a few through exchanges on social media applications. Nick encounters Dustin in the unfamiliar terrain of New York City and the pair make a vague, but seemingly "genuine", promise to make future plans "to get together sometime" (Mackay 2017: 208). This promise leads Nick to engage in what he refers to as "good old-fashioned Facebook stalking" (Mackay 2017:208) and the two eventually engage in an exchange via Facebook messages.

Their messages reveal crucial information about Nick's character. Throughout their exchange, Nick flits through Dustin's photos that have been posted to his Facebook page. Using Dustin's uploaded photos, Nick fashions an identity for Dustin that eventually informs the way Nick perceives him. In the same way that Butler notes that gender is performed "without one's knowing and without one's willing" (Butler 2004: 1), this part of Mackay's story illustrates the ways in which individuals use online simulations to gain an understanding of another human being without their knowledge. Nick notes that Dustin "often [attends] galas and gallery openings" (Mackay 2017: 208), and this minute attention to detail foreshadows the disdain that Nick feels is a reflection and projection of his own

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feelings of inadequacy. The message exchange on Facebook also reveals that Dustin's responses are immediate, perhaps indicating that he, too, is feeling alienated in his foreign surroundings and that Nick provides some semblance (or a simulation) of familiarity, as it is noted that the two were never close during their time at school.

Much like Yassin and Jude's meeting, Nick and Dustin surpass the boundaries of their online interaction and decide to catch up with one another at a bar. The bar, chosen by Dustin, reminds Nick of Cape Town, but only if he "ignore[s] the accents of the bar staff and pretend[s] the beer in his hand taste[s] like Black Label" (Mackay 2017: 209). For Nick, this meeting is a simulation of his South Africa, making the title "Going Home" apt as he has simulated his way home, despite 'physically' being in New York City. Through this simulation, Nick "renders [both South Africa and New York City] artificial" (Baudrillard 1994: 9), meaning that it is not necessary for him to be 'physically' located in South Africa in order to enjoy a connection with the familiarity he longs for. He has momentarily relocated himself in a place that he readily identifies as home, however this feeling quickly dissipates as he realises that "[b]eing from the same country wasn't enough to feel at home" (2017: 210).

And yet this bubble, and the comfort that it brings, does not last very long. Despite his attraction to Dustin, Nick notes that Dustin exhibits characteristics that Nick deems feminine and that he finds distasteful, such as Dustin "purs[ing] his lips" and "cross[ing] his legs like a girl" (Mackay 2017: 209). Nick's reaction, although he does not verbalise it aloud, reflects a heteronormative disdain for femininity. Nick expresses the desire for "gays to be normal men" and to not "spend life in a big act" (Mackay 2017: 210). Nick's thorough scrutiny of Dustin's masculinity/femininity is symptomatic of heterocentric masculinity that is internalised by Nick and is inflicted upon Dustin. Nick's internalisation of this set of codes that is contrary to his queer being reveals "[h]egemonic masculinity [to be a deeply entrenched and] reified system in which people come to understand the social roles for cisgender males as normal, where everything else is either abnormal or equated with femininity" (Bartone 2018: 505). All that keeps Nick from leaving is sexual tension – he likes Dustin's muscular body and the fact that Dustin is coloured. Nick exoticises Dustin's body and race, causing him to overlook Dustin's humanity.

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Once they get to Dustin's apartment, Nick attempts to seduce Dustin but his attempt goes awry when Dustin lashes out and forces Nick to remember the cruel bullying that Nick and his schoolmates inflicted on him during their time at school. Having been haunted by memories of Nick's torment, Dustin forces Nick to face his ghosts. The moment passes and Nick's bubble bursts completely as "[s]ome nasty kid [intrudes] on [his] straight A childhood" (Mackay 2017: 215). In order to avoid being haunted by his past behaviour, Nick has simulated his own memories in order to overlook the fact that his abusive behaviour as a child has had negative consequences for other people.

Nick's disdain for the feminine can be attributed to the prevailing norms of his context which, as mentioned before, is a result of the binary pairing of masculine/feminine but also through race relations in South Africa. That Nick and Dustin are noted to be white and coloured respectively is important because their race plays an important role in the attraction that Nick feels for Dustin. Dustin is sexualised by virtue of his race, which has no bearing on any biological reality. According to Ian López, "[r]ace is neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions" (López 2004: 966). One can argue that race itself is a simulation created to aid in the self-reinforcement of whiteness and, Nick's attraction to Dustin is rooted in exoticisation of the other. Racist worldviews permeate the global queer experience in the sense that queer people reproduce racial oppression upon members of their ilk. López indicates that "[r]ace must be viewed as a social construction" and as a "human interaction rather than natural differentiation [that] must be seen as the source and continued basis for racial categorization" (2004: 968). Frantz Fanon points out that the fetishisation of Black people by white people is harmful, using the word "sick" to describe white people who use race to fetishize (2008: 2). Nick's fetishism of Dustin's race, in light of Fanon's assertion, indicates that Nick, despite embodying a sexuality that places him outside of the traditional conception of masculinity, reproduces racist stereotypes

Because of Nick's past abuses inflicted on Dustin, Dustin eventually ends their sexual activity. That Dustin is able to make this decision reveals his erotic power since those who are attuned to their sense of erotic being are, according to Lorde, "less willing to accept powerlessness [… and …] other supplied states of being" (2007: 58). Nick assumes that Dustin will not reject his sexual advances because they were able to isolate themselves

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within their own simulation of South Africa, and because they attended the same school. Yet what Mackay's story brings to the fore is how heterosexist masculinity and racial ideology underlie and complicate attraction and acts of queerness. The character of Nick reveals some of the ways in which white privileged cisgender male queers participate in racial fetishisation and othering within a community that must already deal with so many systemic and intersectional concerns.

Dustin's rejection, then, becomes an assertion of erotic power in that he rejects Nick on the basis of the abuses Nick inflicted on Dustin during their adolescence Thus, Mackay's ending indicates that queerness that internalises and upholds oppressive ideals must be rejected. Queerness that is not thoroughly self-reflexive can only evoke and reproduce sex, gender, race and class-based systemic traumas. Nick is clearly unwilling to confront the ways in which he can potentially harm others because of how he has constructed a simulation of his past and present for himself. Heteronormativity (and also queerness that seeks to preserve the power provided by heteronormative models and systems) can be a mechanism that allows the masculine to assert its dominance over social structures and society at large. If masculinity is a mechanism, this mechanism can be used differently or in a less damaging way, a fact that Nick exits the narrative of "Going Home" (2017) with, and a fact that Yassin eventually discovers in his explorations of sexual desire and gender in "The Other (Wo)man" (2013).

"A sickness called longing" (2019) by Chukwuebuka Ibeh, presents yet another example of queer African reinvention triggered by technology which then has consequences in real life. Ibeh tells the story of a lonely retired university professor who, abandoned by his adult children, finds himself playing a game where he either intentionally or unintentionally calls strangers while trying to dial his children's phone numbers. Professor Odinchezo is a playful old man, utilising a phone to inadvertently access and become part of a virtual queer simulacrum by pretending to be a younger man named "Nedu" when a stranger, who is referred to only as "the boy", answers the call in an unexpected way (Ibeh 2019: 68–71). The Professor becomes obsessed with the stranger, who is a university student enamoured with another man named Nedu, whom the Professor begins to simulate. Because he is so overcome by longing, the Professor transplants his undirected love and affection, usually reserved for his children, towards this new stranger who seems to need him in a way that his children do not. The stranger has his own need, the need for Nedu

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and for a love that is denied to him because of prevailing heteronormative social expectations. During their third phone exchange, the boy tells the Professor, who listens attentively, about an experience where he was "waylaid […] after [his university] classes" (Ibeh 2019: 70). In his account, a nearby food seller helps him and explains that these incidents will not stop until his assailants are sure that he "start[s] behaving like a man" (Ibeh 2019: 70). In response to this account, the Professor reacts in a way that he, himself, does not anticipate. Listening to the boy's woes, the Professor finds himself so overcome with longing that he instinctively curves his hand into "an imaginary embrace" and the third-person narrator states that "[h]e had never wished to hold someone so close in his life" (Ibeh 2019: 70). The Professor is overcome with longing again when the stranger's calls begin to wane and he finds himself – once again – faced with "the brutality of the silence" (Ibeh 2019: 71).

Although he is surprised and shocked that he not only finds the stranger's calls thrilling, he is also shocked that he, "Professor Odinchezu, Doctorate in Education" (Ibeh 2019: 72), finds himself longing so strongly for someone who thinks that he is a young man named "Nedu". The Professor continues to call the boy's number and, eventually, the boy answers the call after having ignored it. During an awkward conversation with the boy, the Professor begins to feel as if the eyes of his dead wife, Nkoli, are "watching him steadily with a quiet and reserved disappointment" (Ibeh 2019:73), evoking a sense of being watched in the same way that queerness is monitored and hounded. The spectre of Nkoli, a symbol of heterosexual partnership, is now looking over the Professor's sexual affairs and is delivering judgement upon the Professor as a ghost – haunting the Professor's sexuality. Avery Gordon explains that "[t]he ghost makes itself known to us through haunting and pulls us affectively into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience as a recognition" (2008: 63). Nkoli haunts the Professor and his sexuality, forcing him to face the structure of feeling within his own loneliness and leading him to seek companionship within these phone calls. Professor Odinchezu's relationship with his wife was both playful and fulfilling because Nkoli had the freedom to take "control of her own pleasure" and witnessing this allowed the Professor to fulfil his own sexual need (Ibeh 2019: 67).

In this way, one could take a cautious step towards calling their matrimony 'queer' in the sense that their marriage did not involve the policing or repression of sexuality that is commonly expected within heteronormative relationships. The Professor's marriage and

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sexuality, thus, always contained the possibility of queerness – even unknowingly within a heterosexual pairing. To lose this erotic fulfilment is clearly the cause for the Professor's profound loneliness and so to find a similar form of fulfilment in an exchange of phone calls between the simulation of Nedu and the boy is indicative of the ways in which queer simulacra and queer simulation can also be used to explore one's identity at any point in their lives. That Ibeh's narrative includes the elderly African is important in the sense that it is an indication that the possibilities of sexuality and queerness do not lessen with age; it is always possible for one to find themselves untangled from the wreckage of gender and sexual norms.

What Ibeh's narrative brings to the fore is the fact that the elderly are systemically marginalised using similar strategies of alienation that befall queer bodies in oppressive binary dichotomies. Alexandra Hoswon indicates that the visual landscape of ageing across all mediums of art and media reveal social anxiety about the process of ageing when viewed from a western-centric perspective. Ibeh's narrative, then, reimagines the ways in which old age is framed. Through his interaction with queer simulacra, the Professor finds his body reinvigorated by desire that he had not thought possible in his old age (2019: 71). Additionally, that Ibeh does not shy away from the sexuality of the elderly is an indication that one's identity can always be in a state of flux and fluidity that is always susceptible to renegotiation. Although Ibeh character's mutual simulation of Nedu takes place via phone call exchanges, the idea that the Professor simulates Nedu over the phone is the same gesture as creating a profile on an online platform – one constructs a persona that is used to enter the simulacrum. The queer utilising the queer simulacrum is able to construct and explore multiple personalities that align with the various self-perceptions of their own reality.

Cooper and Dzara point out that the act of creating a self in the cyber world "is not merely an act of sharing one's personal details, but is also an active construction of one's perception of who one is" (2010: 101). Perception, in this case, is integral to the process of creating personas online, as our perceptions do not always reflect what could be considered 'reality'. Thus, following Cooper and Dzara's discussion, it is evident that the performativity that comes with the construction of an identity becomes clearer when one must actively invent or construct a persona online; whether it intended to be a reflection of oneself or an invented someone else. And because this persona is typically informed

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heavily by one's perception of one's self, it is a safe opportunity for a queer to explore and play with their personhood.

Ibeh's narrative indicates that the re-examination and renegotiation of the very concept of family and home is necessary to establish fulfilment in this aspect of African life. As much as the Professor simulates Nedu, the boy, too, takes part in simulating Nedu on account of how strongly he desires him. Despite having had past experiences with Nedu, the boy fully accepts that the person he is speaking to is his Nedu, and it is never made clear as to whether or not the boy is aware that he is being lied to. Because the boy is a queer person in an environment hostile to queerness, it is safe to assume that he lives caught between his sexuality and the alienation that befalls queers in Nigeria. Zethu Matebeni indicates that "many gay people spend some part of their lives in transition, moving from one place to another or looking for safe and more conducive areas, zones or landscapes" (2011: 50). Matebeni's work implies that many queer Africans spend much of their formative years searching for a space in which their existence is validated and in which they can live their lives. It is clear that the boy is still currently locked in this state of transition and, thus, is searching for a way to alleviate his loneliness – the Professor is haunted by Nkoli and the boy is haunted by his love of Nedu. As a result, the boy's queer loneliness informs his need to rely on his simulation of Nedu. Thus, the two men are linked as a result of the simulation of an individual who exists through the human need for love and connection. By the end of the story, it is clear that the boy is aware that the Professor is not Nedu as his response is "implausibl[y] theatric[al]" (Ibeh 2019: 72) which causes the Professor to suspect that he has been found out. Regardless, the boy does not reveal whether or not he is aware of the Professor's deception. The story ends with the two characters professing their love for one another and the Professor notes that he "believe[s] himself because that [is] better than thinking he might never love again" (Ibeh 2019: 73). Although the ending indicates that the Professor professes his love only to alleviate his intense loneliness, both he and the boy are able to find comfort in this exchange.

The Professor's newfound desire in his old age complicates his identity as he is discovering the ways in which the desire for another man might lead him towards the joy that Lorde argues is integral to the manifestation of erotic power. Lorde indicates that "[t]he sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared

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between them" (2007: 56). Although they do not say it aloud, both the Professor and the boy benefit from the shared simulation of Nedu. The simulation of Nedu is a shared relief for both the Professor and for the boy, both of whom feel alienated and abandoned within their social contexts. Bruce Drushel notes that "[s]ocial networking sites [and other forms of queer simulacra] may be of particular value to gay, lesbian, […] bisexual [and queer] teens and young adults" (2010: 66), and while this is clear in the case of the boy, who is a young student, Ibeh's narrative illustrates the ways in which the disembodiment of simulation can also benefit the elderly.

By making use of the cyberworld that simulates social interactions via online websites and social media applications, queers have been, and are able to avoid interactions that might put them at risk of violating the status quo. Additionally, queers can find other ways to simulate themselves out of alienation, as illustrated by Mackay's "Going Home" (2017) where Nick and Dustin create for themselves a bubble that shields them from their lack of familiarity from their surroundings. Arguably, there is nothing sinister about social media and the technology that makes it possible. Rather, what is sinister about simulated and online spaces results only from a usage of media and technology that is tied to the interests of capital and the norms that are the consequence of a global history that is rooted in colonisation and eugenics.

Nikki Usher and Eleanor Morrison map out the ways in which the cyberworld has changed the landscape of queer community away from physical spaces in favour of disembodied online spaces. Usher and Morrison indicate that "[t]he transformations that have happened in gay neighborhoods [the shift from physical to online] reflect a decline in the traditional storytelling network and communication action context" (2010: 278) which indicates that the advent of disembodied online space has significantly changed the ways in which queer communities, in the United States and beyond, are now organised as the idea of community is no longer limited to physical space and neighbourhoods. Usher and Morrison indicate that, instead, queer communities are now "unbounded by geography" as they "have gone online" (2010: 279). The fact that one is able to construct identities online is often met with suspicion as it highlights the potential dangers of the cyber world, as illustrated by the risk that Yassin and Jude take in choosing to meet one another despite being strangers after exchanging messages online in "The Other (Wo)man" (2013). However, the ability to construct cyber selves also presents one with the opportunity to

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explore the social factors that form an individual's identity, in addition to the dangers that come with it.

For Lorde, the confrontation of risk is essential in the pursuit of erotic freedom and fulfilment (2007: 40). Similarly, Butler states that the "limits [of identity …] can only be tread or interrogated by risking a certain security through departing from an established ontology" (2004: 27). For bother Butler and Lorde, the risk that comes with the engagement of queer simulacra is part and parcel of the confrontation of societal policing. In addition, Usher and Morrison indicate that "[l]ife online can be rich and rewarding, with physical space not quite as necessary for our social life as may have been thought" (2010: 281). The fact that this space is also conducive for social abuse is a very real danger that might have detrimental consequences for the user, but the same abuse can take place outside of the queer simulacra as well; risk is a part of existing in the world, which is unavoidable. It is not the simulation or technology that creates danger that necessitates risk; rather, the dangers of the online world are a reflection of prejudices that already existed and were already deployed prior to the existence of the online space.

Queer simulacrum can be a gateway for the queer subject to explore their hyperreal subjectivity. This aligns with Butler's assertion that "limits that exercise a certain force [societal identity restrictions …] are not grounded in necessity" (2004: 27), indicating that the apparent necessity of strict identity codes is not as essential as historical social constructions would have us believe. The queer simulacrum makes this fact more evident while it also illustrates the ways in which queers are able to renegotiate their bodies, their identities and also the spaces in which they can facilitate community that transcends the limitations of the physical.

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Chapter 3
Queer Blood, Queer Flesh:
The Body in Queer African Short Fiction

I lost both my legs to hunger.

Lindiwe Nkutha, "Rock"

The stories in this chapter establish African understandings and representations of the queer African body. Short fiction that concerns itself with the bodies of queer African characters, then, reimagines the African body and reshapes the narrativity surrounding African embodiment. In a sense, representing queer African bodies in this short fiction rewrites the pseudoscientific fodder that has plagued the scientific analysis of the African body while also establishing these bodies as African, challenging the claim that queer African bodies are damaged symptoms of colonialism. Further, these short fictions display the ways in which queer bodies are able to exist while also allowing for an explorative space where sexual and gender categories in African social contexts can be safely renegotiated and established without the immediate threat of violence upon the bodies of those who are writing them. Additionally, these narratives help to dismantle and disentangle African corporeal conceptions from the "Western myth[s] of Africa" that have marked Africans and Africa as "backward and sub-human" (Kisiang'ani 2004: 10).

Chris Shilling notes that "[i]t is our bodies that allow us to act, to intervene in, and to alter the flow of daily life" (2012: 13). According to Shilling, classic sociology recognises that "the body [is] integral to human agency" and he argues that "it is impossible to have an adequate theory of human agency without taking into account the reflexive, thoughtful and practical potentialities facilitated by our embodiment" (2012: 13). Following Shilling's reflections on embodiment and sociological theory, to consider the ways in which queer African bodies are constructed through narrative is to consider the ways in which these bodies are conceptualised and viewed by writers and their audiences. The literary depiction of queer African bodies is reflexive of how these bodies are viewed. These stories, then,

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are reflexive of the ways in which queer African bodies are constructed by African writers themselves. Many of the narratives in queer African short fiction grapple with the ways in which their bodies are perceived within the framework of their societal pressures.

To 'scientifically' justify the slavery of African bodies, the European body first needed to establish a binary model that would frame African bodies as subordinate to European, white bodies. Sylvia Tamale notes that "African sexualities [were] depicted as primitive, exotic and bordering on nymphomania" (2011: 15) which distanced Africa and Africans from the parameters that supposedly constitute civilisation and civilised bodies. The ideas of "civilisation" and "civilised peoples" have been used throughout history to "justify" colonial endeavours. The binary between civilised European bodies and uncivilised African bodies perpetuated the view that African bodies were "uncivilised, [with] uncontrollable sexual [urges]" to the point that their very being "threatened the moral order of Western civilization" (Shilling 2012: 59). As part of the colonial attack on African embodiment, African bodies were characterised as uncivilised and hypersexual; unable to control their desires, which allowed them to become a systemic contrast to European bodies who met the supposed standards of 'civilised' embodiment. The colonial mission attacked the African body with pseudoscience in order to 'prove' that the African body is in need of 'redemption' and 'civilisation'. It must be noted that the hyper-fixation on the subordination of the African body ensured not only physical control but also extended the ideological imprint of colonialism.

Since the gendering of bodies was key to European understandings of embodiment, this meant that African bodies were forcibly gendered according to the binaries of masculine/feminine and male/female, which are not necessarily congruent with classical African understandings of gender. Shilling's work maps out the trajectory of the human body in Western discourse, beginning with naturalistic understandings of Western and European embodiment. In his work, Shilling asserts that naturalistic views of the body resulted in modern Western sexism that became absorbed into African social structures and mentalities. Shilling's assertions are supported by African post-colonial gender scholars who point out that "independent African nations inherited European myths about Africa" (Kisiang'ani 2004: 12) through colonisation. Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí points out that "[t]he oppositional male/female, man/woman duality and its attendant male privileging in western gender categories is particularly alien to many African cultures" and that

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"[i]nterpreting African realities based on these Western claims often produces distortions, obfuscations in language and a total lack of comprehension since the social categories and institutions are incommensurable" (2004: 7).

Alexandra Howson notes that embodied "self-classification is developed from a shared vocabulary of body idiom and social perceptions about appropriate bodily conduct" and that societal "meanings attached to physical appearance and bodily performances become internalized by people as self-image, which exerts degrees of influence over their sense of self-worth and moral value" (2013: 24). Howson's work indicates that societal understandings of embodiment pre-suppose the individual subject according to perceptions of embodiment relevant to their current context. In other words, if embodied gender is a performance, as Butler's work argues, then the stage is set before the individual exists. And so, if the individual finds the pre-supposed embodied norms of their social contexts unsatisfying and erotically stifling, then it becomes necessary to engage in narrative fantasy (Butler 2004: 15) in order to stretch the bounds of these performances to undo the repression of the subject's erotic power.

Barbara Adair's "Phillip" (2017) sees its titular character grapple with his queerness and his queer body that is continuously labelled as "fat" (2017: 21). "Phillip" (2017) allows for an in-depth reflection of the queer body that is denied the power of the erotic, in addition to general fat shaming, bourgeois homophobia and heteronormative policing. Despite his financial and white privilege in South African society, Phillip notes that "thin is applauded" and the "heterosexual is celebrated" (Adair 2017: 23). This draws out the fact that "a fat homosexual" (Adair 2017: 21), like himself, will never be 'applauded' or 'celebrated' in his society. His embodiment, despite the privilege, still excludes Phillip for being a homosexual and for being fat, as being fat in the queer community (or even in general) is not regarded as "fashionable" (Adair 2017: 31). Howson notes that "slenderness has emerged as a[n embodied] cultural norm" and that "the attributes that denote [embodied] normality have the potential to exclude people from full social membership" (2013: 26) as a result of their unruly bodies.

This same sentiment is explored in other stories as well, such as in "The Other (Wo)man" (2013); each story depicts the ways in which queer people are marginalised even further if their bodies do not conform to strict rules of thinness. Phillip is a character who embodies

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a form of queerness that is deemed grotesque and has been denied access to the erotic. In "Phillip" (2017), this policing is characterised by Phillip's wealthy father, who has previously taken Phillip on "a secret excursion" to a doctor with the intention of having Phillip's jaws clamped in order to deter Phillip from eating. Although the doctor does not entertain the idea, as it "may be considered cruel and that [the doctor] could be struck from the medical roll" (Adair 2017: 30), Phillip's father cannot allow his son to be fat, and he is willing to exert agency over his son's body in order to achieve this. Because Phillip is also queer, the narrative becomes allegorical for queer conversion therapy. Additionally, these ideals are determined and are evangelised upon as universally determinate without the consent of the individual who is being thrust into them. Although Phillip's father is supposedly unaware of his son's queerness, his attitude towards Phillip's fatness conjures the spectre of queer conversion therapy and indicates that social conformity is more important than the wellbeing and contentment of his child.

"Phillip" (2017) is a story that is concerned with the labels that are attached to the body. The narrative structure fleshes out the ways in which Phillip's fat and queer body interjects and disrupts the expectations placed on queer South African bodies. Phillip's desires spill into the story's narration, providing insight into the mental machinations of a character who is obsessed with food and eating. His obsession stems from the fact that he is denied the consummation of his sexual desires because these desires do not match the master script of heterosexuality. Eating and food are within Phillip's control, whereas his sexual desires are not, because realising them would mean violating the social codes that are sacred within a queerphobic society. "Phillip" (2017) takes place at a "gathering" which is "held in the sacred halls of Phillip's father's […] sailing club" (Adair 2017: 22). Phillip, because he is overweight and queer, feels that he does not belong in his current surroundings; he describes it as a place for the "affluent and [the] pale" (Adair 2017: 22), indicating that this space is one of wealth and white privilege.

Phillip fixates on his father, and his father's body, and it is noted that Phillip's father "never stops telling Phillip how fat he is" because Phillip "does not eat authentic whole foods" (Adair 2017: 26). And so, Phillip then "projects his unwholesome desire for sex onto food" (Adair 2017: 28), and onto the consumption of food that is not nutritious. Phillip's consumption, therefore, can be argued to be an act of defiance in the face of the multifaceted policing that Phillip's overweight and queer body faces. Phillip's body does

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not meet neither the standards of masculine beauty because "he is fat and he looks rather effeminate" (Adair 2017: 23). Phillip's distance from these expectations inadvertently turns his story of an erotically repressed queer and grotesque body into an opportune critique of social standards that govern our bodies.

Phillip's weight is his assertion of agency, as it ultimately resists the heteronormative master script. He feels that he cannot be open about his love for men, and so overeating and taking up space is his way of expressing both disdain and criticism for the ways in which bodies and queerness are policed. In his body, a site of contestation and unruliness, Phillip takes up the space that he has not been afforded. The scorn that his body draws from his father and everyone around him is, in a way, an acknowledgement that his assertion of agency has not gone unnoticed. Although his body is cruelly policed, Phillip refuses invisibility. He is not openly queer, but he is able to manipulate his body to take up space and to announce himself in spaces that would rather not include or accept him. Using his body, Phillip gains some form of power, although this power stems from the repression of his erotic desire instead of its realisation. His body is his site of agency that falls outside of his father's and society's control. In this way, Phillip's assertion of agency over his body is a form of rebellion in the face of societal constructions that would either erase him or omit him. Adair's story illustrates that Phillip's body cannot be ignored and, because of this, his assertion over the size of his body becomes weaponised against the strict and suffocating ways in which queer African bodies are policed.

Chinelo Okparanta's writing consistently narrates the experiences of Nigerian queer women, making known what it means to be a queer woman while also being a Nigerian woman. Her short story "Wahala!" (2014), taken from her debut collection of short stories entitled *Happiness, Like Water* (2014), narrates the troubled marriage between Ezinne and Chibuzo. Chibuzo and Ezinne are unable to conceive children because Ezinne experiences "stiffening [… and] pain" (Okparanta 2014: 25) whenever she and Chibuzo make an attempt at intercourse. This state of affairs is unacceptable because of the expectation that a married woman should bear children. The story opens with a party being thrown "to ensure [that … Ezinne has] the well-wishes, and sympathy, and even the gratitude of the neighbours" (Okparanta 2014: 22), so that they will be discouraged from taking any action that would interfere with Chibuzo and Ezinne's child conception. The party is intended to prevent any jealous neighbour from negatively impacting the couple's conception of a

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child. Chibuzo's paranoia is ignited by the rumours that the first wife of her neighbour, Mbachu's, had been cursed with childlessness by neighbours jealous of her beauty. This curse led to two miscarriages and eventually motivated Mbachu to cast out his first wife who was unable to bear children in favour of a new wife (Okparanta 2014: 22).

From the very beginning, the main concern is Ezinne's inability to give birth to a child for Chibuzo. In a moment of frustration towards the end of the narrative, when Ezinne is unwilling to have sex, Chibuzo says that they "need a child" or their "marriage is null" (Okparanta 2014: 32). Women are often reduced "to be child-productive wives by the dominant social group of heterosexual men" (Rivkin & Ryan 2017: 897). Within this framework, women are denied autonomy over their sexualities and bodies; their desires and bodily autonomy are not considered. Because Ezinne is unwilling to fulfil her 'obligations' by sacrificing her bodily autonomy, her life and her body are both in jeopardy. This outlook also removes the African woman from her own body as it centres her worth (bodily and otherwise) around reproduction, effectively meaning that her body does not solely belong to her and is, thus, the communal property of her husband's family. However, Ezinne is not merely a powerless recipient of abuse, her reluctance is an indication that she is unwilling to fulfil her 'purpose'. Thus, she and her body become a problem to be solved with pregnancy.

The fact that her reluctance during sex is, in and of itself, an act of defiance in which Ezinne's body asserts authority and rejects the policing that is enforced upon her, Ezinne reflects on her situation and wonders if "the imperfection was not really even in her" (Okparanta 2014: 23). This indicates the unfair burdens that are placed upon women in transactional heterosexual marriages, and also implies that this performance of sexuality is not something that Ezinne finds any pleasure in. Although it is subtle, Ezinne's thoughts indicate that she has simply not been allowed to explore her sexuality. Yet Ezinne does not voice these thoughts, because '[i]t [is] generally understood that such things [are] the fault of the woman" (Okparanta 2014: 23). Patriarchal systems refuse to take responsibility for the bodies that they, paradoxically, also wish to police, shifting any and all shortcomings onto the shoulders of those who are othered, in this case specifically women.

The marriage is also troubled by the interference and meddling of Ezinne's mother, Nneka, whose very presence in their household represents the spectre of trite societal expectations

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surrounding heterosexual marriage practices. Neither Chibuzo nor Nneka display concern for Ezinne's wellbeing despite the obvious implication that her inability to enjoy sex with Chibuzo indicates that something is amiss. Neither Chibuzo or Nneka, at any point, show concern for Ezinne outside of her ability to become pregnant and bear a child. They become so desperate that they decide to take Ezinne to a dibia so that her affliction can be cured. Much like Phillip's father's willingness to physically alter his son's body in order to force his body to conform to accepted notions of embodiment, Ezinne's body befalls a similar fate when Nneka and Chibuzo take her to a dibia to correct her body's inability to reproduce. Even the dibia's body is subject to embodied scrutiny when it is noted that "her teeth [are] cracked and yellow, […] her lips [are] tightened and wrinkled" and she noted to embody a "[remnant] of old beauty" (Okparanta 2014: 25). While age and aging are unavoidable for bodies, even the dibia is subject to bodily appraisal that gauges her beauty in order to determine her reproductive possibilities.

Howson indicates that "people of a particular chronological age become surplus to the requirements of capitalism and industry" and as global capitalism runs rampant across the globe "old age has increasingly come to be defined in terms of productivity, the absence of which leads to social and economic marginalization" (2013: 190). The dibia, within this system of appraisal, cannot reproduce because of old age and, additionally, her body no longer conforms to beauty standards that make her sexually appealing according to the male gaze. She is condemned to descriptions that characterise her body in a way that devalues it, despite playing a vital role in her community and still contributing to local productivity. The only thing that saves the dibia from complete marginalisation is, indeed, her productive role in local customs, indicating that the elderly are more than capable of still being productive. The dibia blames Ezinne's affliction on a "[curse] by the enchanted" which have placed impurities within Ezinne, preventing her from falling pregnant (Okparanta 2014: 28). Through a ritual, the dibia rids Ezinne of these impurities.

Throughout the narrative, Ezinne receives Chibuzo's touches "a bit hesitantly" (Okparanta 2014: 28). While it might not be entirely accurate to call Ezinne queer or lesbian, since the story never identifies her as such, it is worth noting that her malcontent with her marriage and the ways in which her heterosexual marriage manifests does not feel natural to her. This is enough to lead one to assume that Ezinne's discomfort with her heterosexual marriage is manifested in her body. Ezinne's body, through this stiffness and pain, is trying

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to warn Ezinne that her current situation is unsatisfying to her. This story has been included in this dissertation because, although she is not explicitly identified as queer, Ezinne's bodies hints towards a possible queerness that goes unnamed throughout the story. Ezinne's embodied dissatisfaction with her marriage hints towards a longing for the alternative possibilities that queerness might provide. It is through this dissatisfaction that Ezinne might be implied to be queer, making her story a queer one.

"Wahala!" (2014) ends dismally for Ezinne with Chibuzo raping an unwilling Ezinne while Nneka listens at the door (Okparanta 2014: 30–34). Chibuzo approaches Ezinne gently at first, indicating that since the curse has been lifted, procreation is now both possible and necessary. Despite Ezinne's unwillingness, "[s]he allows him to continue" (Okparanta 2014: 32), causing Chibuzo to assume that this is a reciprocal act. Yet Ezinne's body reacts in the same way that it has before. Her body experiences "pain, sharp and as wilful as ever before" while Chibuzo confuses her moans of pain for moans of pleasure (Okparanta 2014: 32-33). Chibuzo forces himself on his unwilling wife because his "patience is running out" (Okparanta 2014: 32) and his assertion of patriarchal masculinity over her bodily autonomy results in the ultimate violation of another human being's body.

Helen Moffet's discussion of rape in a post-Apartheid South Africa reveals how rape has permeated across the African continent as a punitive consequence for women who are unwilling to co-operate with the patriarchal policing that dominates women's bodies systemically. Moffet indicates that heterocentric policing results in a toxic dependency on the individuals involved in marriages and relationships in post-colonial contexts. Moffet states that because men rely on women to bear the burdens of the household, they are unable to properly take care of themselves and that "this form of dependency generates anxiety and a need to regularly display authority to sustain the services of the oppressed" (2006: 140). This state of affairs, according to Moffet's argument, inflames "a propensity for violence, particularly in the intimate sphere" (2006: 140). Chibuzo's rape of Ezinne is, indeed, an act of violence since Ezinne's resistance removes the possibility that this final sexual exchange in the story is consensual. According to Moffet's argument, rape in post-colonial African contexts can be seen as a manifestation of "vitriolic patriarchal imperatives" (2006: 143) and although Moffet's discussion is contextually focused on South Africa, Okpanranta's narrative reveals the ways in which the patriarchal imperative of ensuring reproduction can override women's bodily autonomy. Neither Ezinne nor

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Chibuzo can fathom different possibilities for Ezinne's body since the importance of reproduction is greater than her embodiment and bodily autonomy.

"Rock" (2013) by Lindiwe Nkutha centres on Zibusiso, her mother Ncedi and her mother's estranged] lover, Danisile. "Rock" (2013) tells the story of how Zibusiso, who is referred to by others and herself as Rock (Nkutha 2013: 185), "lost both [of her] legs to hunger" because her family's neighbours' dogs were starved to the point that Rock's legs "were mistaken for lamb shank" (Nkutha 2013: 185). This suggests that states of extreme precarity and poverty place the body of the individual at heightened risk; the bodies of the precarious and the poor are disposable and that there is more of a chance that their bodies might be damaged. Immediately, there is a focus on Rock's body and the ways in which it falls short of the expectations that are placed on bodies in the sense that bodies are generally expected to look a certain way, with two arms and legs. Because Rock does not have legs, the guests of Ncedi's casino, which she operates from their home, do not acknowledge or speak to Rock because she is "as good as anything Ncedi own[s]: there, but not fully functional and thus not worthy of any serious attention" (Nkutha 2013: 189). Shilling's work on the sociological views of embodiment points out that inequalities of embodiment result from "the suppression of bodily similarities and the exaggeration of bodily differences" (2012: 108), which mimics the ways in which Eurocentric thought establishes inequalities via binaries.

In other words, biological essentialism claims that two legs are what is 'normal' for a human body and is, thus, essential to human embodiment. Although Shilling speaks of the ways in which gendered embodied sexism is perpetuated, his assertion that the "process of visual filtering whereby the physical similarities between females and males are negated through sensory patterns of 'attention' and 'disattention'" (Shilling 2012: 109) can also be used to explain the ways in which bodies that differ physically from others suffer from social "disattention" (Shilling 2012: 109). The word 'disabled' further adds to the damages done to these bodies by linguistically reducing them and privileging their 'abled' counterparts. Because Rock does not meet the required standards of embodiment that have arisen in Africa through colonial biological essentialism, she finds herself marginalised by others who expect her body to look like theirs. In this way, her body becomes queer and unexpected.

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Nkutha's story focuses much of its attention on the bodies of its characters while also focusing on the complex ways in which these bodies are gendered. The focus on gender in the story is symptomatic of the ways in which African bodies were gendered through colonisation. Nkutha's story interrogates this gendering and offers queer alternatives that help to disentangle its characters from the burdens of the strict male/female binary. Ncedi and Rock's neighbour, Bra Phandi, displays an alternative heterosexual masculinity which is, according to the strict expectations of the masculine/feminine binary, more feminine and, thus, ambiguous in nature.

Bra Phandi, who "fit[s] neatly into the government's newspeak-inspired definition of previously and currently disadvantaged", is noted to have lost his job at "the Unharmonious gold mine […] [e]xactly six years before his dog mistook [Rock] for Sunday lunch" (Nkutha 2013: 186–187). As a result, Bra Phandi "took over his wife's duties and established himself as the neighbourhood's first male washerwoman", an act which eventually leads to Bra Phandi facing scorn for emasculating himself (Nkutha 2013: 187). However, Bra Phandi is then noted as having managed to turn this into a viable and profitable enterprise, and soon the scorn he initially faced becomes praise for "being responsible and manly enough to take care of his wife" (Nkutha 2013: 188). Although Bra Phandi's deviation from gender norms is eventually salvaged by an adherence to capitalist models of masculinity, he does, if only for a moment, display an alternative to the ways in which African men can embody their masculinity. His success, however, is seated in a task that is traditionally viewed as feminine.

Kopano Ratele's assertion that the established models of masculinity that have become normalised in our current social contexts are "not a fact of nature" (2011: 409) indicates that men like Bra Phandi, whether they are aware of it or not, renegotiate understandings of masculinity and the ways in which masculinity can be embodied in African contexts. Gender performance is not stagnant and is subject to renegotiation and flux. Bra Phandi can be read as a masculine character whose practice of surviving the capitalist structure of his society renegotiates the parameters afforded to African men within Eurocentric, heterosexist social structures. Although it might not entirely accurate to call him queer, Bra Phandi performs his masculinity in a way that is queer in that it is unexpected and defiant of strict social norms. His name, "Bra Phandi", indicates also a specifically masculine

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gendered identity, meaning that his performance of an unexpected masculinity does not exclude him from masculine identity by those around him.

It is important to note that the first person to acknowledge Rock's body, who is not her mother or part of their family, is a queer body that does not meet the standards of feminine embodiment or heteronormative sexuality. Danisile is initially referred to by Rock as "it" (Nkutha 2013: 191) because Danisile shifts "from resembling a man to resembling a woman with such speed [that Rock can] not keep up" (Nkutha 2013: 191). Rock initially makes note that "it looked very masculine, with a distinctly feminine feel about it" and how Danisile walked with "a swanky rhythmic right heel forward, right shoulder back, a shuffle-like drag of the left foot forward, and a jive-like twist of the left shoulder forward" (Nkutha 2013: 191). Danisile's body and its movement ignite a confused suspicion in Rock, leading her to scrutinise and analyse Danisile's body and appearance in order to tease out a certainty of her gender. Rock's suspicion and need to gender Danisile is a manifestation of the fact that "anyone whose body or gender expression does not adhere to the male/female binary are subject to discipline in a society that believes in only two, opposite genders" (Mann 2012: 249). The need to gender someone's body is symptomatic of the vigorous gendered policing that takes place in social structures that strictly adhere to the male/female binary.

Immediately, Rock searches for clues that allow her to make sense of Danisile's ambiguously gendered body. Danisile's body does not signal any of the normal codes of socially expected gender performance which means that her character proves Butler's point regarding gender designations in that "[t]erms of gender designation are […] never settled once and for all but are constantly in the process of being remade" (Butler 2004: 10). Danisile's fluid gender performance emphasises Butler's assertions that gender performance is not as fixed as the heteronormative master script would have one believe. Located within an African context, Danisile's ambiguous gender performance indicates that ambiguity in African gender performance might aid in the disentanglement of African embodiment from "Euro / American cultural hegemony" (Oyewumi 2004: 1) that constrict embodied beings within binary oppositions since queerness seeks to destabilise strict identity performances.

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Shilling also notes that, throughout history, "body management norms gradually became *internalised*" which has resulted in embodied "codes of behaviour [that] gradually became subconscious" (2012: 169, emphasis in original) in the same way that colonial scorn of African bodies was internalised through enforcement of binary inferiority. Because Rock is not used to acknowledgement, she is initially unable to answer Danisile and thinks that Danisile will assume "that disabled people are also mentally challenged" (Nkutha 2013: 194). Rock's anxiety is indicative of the ways in which embodied norms are internalised by African bodies. However, Danisile's acknowledgement of Rock differs from what she is accustomed to as Rock begins to perceive Danisile "both in demeanour and decorum [as] more and more [of] a woman (Nkutha 2013: 194). From this point on, Danisile is described using feminine pronouns 'she/her', instead of 'it' or 'he/him'. After reconnecting with Ncedi, the women are able to reconstruct their home. Rock notes that once Danisile and Ncedi are able to reconnect with each other and reverse the systemic suppression of their erotic power "[m]usic dance[s] through [their] home" (Nkutha 2013: 198).

In the afterword of Trifonia Melibea Obono's Equatorial Guinean novel, *La Bastarda* (2018), historian Abosede George reflects on how Obono's novel illustrates the possibilities of "creat[ing …] new queer world[s]" (George 2018: 97). Okomo, the novel's queer protagonist, exits Obono's narrative by joining her queer uncle, Marcelo, his lover and three other queer girls in a "new tribe [who …] live in a queer way, defying how the world around them eats, looks, dresses, and loves" while also "choos[ing] to live in the forest, a space associated with danger, death, and the madness of wild animals and hunters" (George 2018: 97). While this chapter is not engaging critically with Obono's striking narrative, it is George's notion of "new queer world[s]" (2018: 97) that becomes important when considering Nkutha's ending of "Rock" (2013). By accessing their queer erotic power, Ncedi and Danisile are able to escape the trappings of viewing African embodiment through a Eurocentric lens. They are able to renegotiate their familial model; once they find a way to live in a manner that is more organic and fulfilling to their embodiments, their understanding of home changes. "Rock" (2013) illustrates the ways in which African bodies can disregard the traditional ideas of home and family altogether.

The creation of a new familial space that is more fluid and malleable is congruent to the ways in which queer lives are experienced, since the traditional conceptions of concepts like 'family' cause frictions that arise from the haunting of gender and sexuality.

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Ambiguity can be a useful tool in redefining concepts so that they metonymically slide over meanings in ways that are more attuned to the ways in which queer lives are experienced and lived.

"Warm" (2017) by Emma Paulet demonstrates the possibilities of gendered ambiguity through an avoidance of gendered pronouns in the construction of its narrative. The story revolves around a protagonist and a relationship they have with another person. Yet neither character is gendered through pronouns and neither character is named, leaving the narrative open to the interpretation of those receiving it. Paulet employs, for example, the direct pronoun "you" (2017: 41) when referring to the protagonist's former lover in order to avoid the pronouns 'he' or 'she', meaning that the gender of their lover is kept free from the baggage that comes with those gendered pronouns. The ambiguity regarding the gender of the characters allows for the possibility of any gender and sexuality pairing to be drawn over the text. By remaining neutral in the gendering of the story's characters, Paulet's story cannot be forced into the gendered corporeal categories that mark western, Eurocentric understandings of embodiment. Transgender theorists point out that "the gender binary have oppressive effects for everyone" (Mann 2012: 249) and in their questioning of the broader aspect of gender oppression, transgender theorists utilise the established epistemologies of feminism and queer theory to pull the binary apart even further. Transgender theory indicates that "even the body and its sexed components […] are given shape and meaning by preexisting beliefs about gender, including the gendered assumptions of medical authorities" (Mann 2012: 249).

With this in mind, Paulet's narrative displays the possibilities of gender neutral narrativity for Africans, leaving the baggage of colonial wounds behind so that the queer possibilities are emphasised. The story's grammatical avoidance of gendered language calls to question the systemically informed knee-jerk desire to label, box and categorise gender upon bodies that are able to exist without these categories. "Warm" (2017) centres around the unnamed and ungendered protagonist who recounts the story of a love affair that has come to an end because the protagonist exits the narrative by leaving to study abroad. The story begins with the protagonist/narrator stating "[t]hat night I decided that if I ever wrote about us our time and gender would be a blur. Could such constructs ever capture us? And here we are now, then" (Paulet 2017: 41).

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Paulet's opening sentences actively distance its characters and their bodies from the expected and heteronormative constructions and performances of gender. By avoiding gendered pronouns, Paulet's story delivers a linguistic rebellion that enables queer African bodies to escape the claustrophobic stereotypes that are attached to gendered bodies. The body is also central to Paulet's narrative, which is unsurprising considering the transgender possibilities that its grammatical play illustrates. Towards the end of the story, the narrator explains how they have begun having sex with their roommate (Paulet 2017: 46). This affair is described with a keen focus on the narrator's body in relation to their new lover (who also remains gender-neutral), while their sexual exchanges are, for the narrator, haunted by the spectre of their past love. The protagonist notes that their "roommate reminds [them] of [their former lover]; the laugh, the shape of the eyes, the hands – which [they have] felt" (Paulet 2017: 46).

Paulet's pronoun play displays the ways in which language itself can be used to reimagine current conceptions of gender (and even sexuality) by keeping these conceptions vague and ambiguous (and both arguably queer, by definition) to avoid heteronormative readings of gendered beings and concepts. Paulet's story prevents one from gendering the characters, allowing for any and all possible gendered identity to be drawn over Paulet's fictional lovers. The dissemination of such a story provides representation for human beings whose experiences of gender differ drastically from what the western cisgendered heterosexist patriarchy expects of the human experience of gender and sexuality. Ambiguously gendered beings cannot be called a new phenomenon, but the existence of stories that attempt to articulate these experiences within the daily life provide insight into the possibilities that are available to Africans through language. Using English and its grammatical tools to dismantle colonial concepts can be argued to be a postcolonial and postmodern gesture that uses the mechanisms of western colonial thought and communication (in this case, specifically, gendered pronouns and titles) in order to display a manner in which an individual can dismantle it, such as Paulet's complete disuse of gendered pronouns in "Warm" (2017).

When drawn and discussed together, the short stories in this chapter illustrate some of the possible ways in which queer African bodies are abused and policed in African systems that have been warped and perverted by colonialism. Importantly, these narratives renegotiate the colonial framing of the African embodied experience, discursively

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expanding the options for queer African bodies. These short stories also solidify the existence of queer African bodies by virtue of the fact that these narratives insert queer African bodies into the demarcation of what constitutes an African body. Dismantling the unnecessarily vigorous ways in which African bodies are gendered does not mark the end of binary gender categories but, rather, this dismantling will expand the options for Africans and the ways in which they can inhabit their self-determined bodies.

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Chapter 4
Rubbing Along and Against:
Grief and Haunting in Queer African Short Fiction

> I stub my toe when I return the towel to the rack. No matter. It reminds me, I think, that I am alive.
>
> Wamuwi Mbao, "The Bath"

In this chapter's epigraph, taken from Wamuwi Mbao's "The Bath", taken from *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013), a woman knows that she is still alive because her body is able to affect and to be affected. This woman's experience of stubbing her toe and remembering that life flows through her veins describes a process that is seemingly simple; we know we are alive because our bodies respond to the environment around us and because those around us might recognise the life in us as well. But life is not simple; living is always abundant with complications and frictions. Bodies collide and affect takes place as these bodies rub against one another.

Avery Gordon opens *Ghostly Matters* (2008) by indicating "[t]hat life is complicated [and that this] may seem like a banal expression of the obvious" (3). Gordon continues and explains that "the power relations that characterize any historically embedded society are never as transparently clear as we give to them imply" (2008: 3). Not many people would want their lives to be complicated, but, as Gordon points out, any situation is uniquely informed by a particular formation of power relations relevant in a specific context. By extension, Gordon mentions that each human being is in possession of a complex personhood, as "all people (albeit in specific forms whose specificity is sometimes everything) remember and forget, are beset by contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize themselves and others" (2008: 4). To discuss queerness, for example, is to take note of what arises from the complications of living and each short story discussed in this dissertation involves a description of the messiness that arises from living.

This chapter explores how the word queer can do "new kinds of work with different objects and archives in a range of historical, cultural, and geographic contexts" (Amin 2016: 185) by applying Sara Ahmed's framework of an affective economy to Wilfred Jean-Louis's "Maimuna Doesn't Know" (2017), Wamuwi Mbao's "The Bath" (2013) and

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Juliet Kushaba's "This Tomorrow Was Christmas" (2017). Additionally, Gordon's theorisations on ghostliness and hauntings are used to argue that narrative descriptions that detail experiences of queerness in Africa reveal the varying ways in which the lives of queer Africans draw out ghosts. To acknowledge a ghost and haunting is to grapple with the reality that "the ghost will inaugurate the necessity of doing something about it" (Gordon 2008: 206). According to Gordon, an awareness of one's ghosts and hauntings means that it is harder to ignore these ghosts and their affects. This leads one to what Gordon calls sensuous knowledge, which is "a different kind of materialism, neither idealistic nor alienated, but an active practice or passion for the lived reality of ghostly magical invented matters" (2008: 205). This sensuous knowledge is what the ghost makes possible. This knowledge is an itch that one will scratch until the relief of action alters one's orientation to the ghost.

In "This Tomorrow Was Christmas" (2017), for example, Kushaba's main character Siima finds herself taking action that causes friction in her family. This results from her dissatisfaction with living a half-life by hiding her wife from her family. Siima confronts the fracturing of her family because of her queerness; this queerness which comes to represent her family's haunting by sexuality. This action is necessary because Siima is no longer able to live with being haunted by the truth of her sexuality and assumed heterosexuality. An awareness of one's ghosts and hauntings results in an attempt "to grab that thing inside that will not cease, that prickle, that scratch, that irritation" (Macharia 2019: 166). This itching leads to friction, and this friction leads to Gordon's sensuous knowledge, which opens the door of possibility to the word queer to do its affective work of reshaping one's perception of oneself and of one's surroundings; it changes the way in which one is able to affect and be affected.

The idea of friction is also central to this chapter. Keguro Macharia's work is framed through idea of frottage, which refers to the act (sometimes sexual) of rubbing against another body or object. Macharia explains that "[f]rottage is this: […] rubbing along and against, […] pressure that builds into rubbing, perhaps pleasurable, perhaps not" (2019: 166). Frottage results in the friction that is needed for Gordon's sensuous knowledge. Frottage can account for the ways in which queer Africans are able to reshape and be-shaped by their surroundings, challenging essentialist notions of a homogenous experience of gender, sexuality, and quotidian African life. To account for the frictions that occur

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when the word queer rubs up against the word African is to take seriously the ways in which the frottage of these two terms creates the grounds for the grief and mourning that haunts issues of sexuality. This chapter argues that the friction of bodies, of emotions and, of lives, is a helpful way to understand how the characters in these stories are "navigating [the impacts of] colonial modernity and changing the meanings and practices of sex and gender" (Macharia 2019: 95). By providing a glimpse into the fictive quotidian life, these stories reveal three perspectives of queer African experience that illuminate its complicated nature. Additionally, each story also provides perspectives on how queer African lives can haunt or be haunted by ghosts who are sometimes a dead girlfriend, the woman your boyfriend has married, or the family who does not know that you are a woman with a wife.

Gordon's work stresses the importance of understanding that, because life is complicated, discussions of race, gender, class, and sexuality cause friction. This is because these terms haunt experiences of human physical and emotional embodiment. Gordon states that "[b]eing haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feelings of a reality we come to experience, not as a cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition" (2008: 8). Gordon's mention of a structure of feelings is significant because human embodiment and emotionality are visited by ghosts that stick to bodies and that haunt our human experiences. Although the frictions of human experience can, and do, arise from physical human embodiment, there is also the emotional realm of experience to consider.

For Ahmed, "emotions are crucial to the very constitution of the psychic and the social as objects" (2004: 10), which implies that our emotions and their affective histories shape and constitute the body. Ahmed indicates that "[e]motions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time" (2004: 4) in order to explain how, within her model, human embodiment is intrinsically linked to the affective histories of the terms applied to this embodiment. The relationship that individuals have with certain emotions emerge over time through the metonymic sliding that occurs in the understanding of concepts and words. Ahmed indicates that the "movement between signs converts into affect" and that "[a]ffect does not reside in an object or a sign, but is an affect of the circulation between objects and signs" (2017: 1315). Here, movement is necessary for affect to be constituted and deployed; without the circulation of signs, no affect can

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take place because these signs are without motion. Once in motion, however, the circulation of signs can produce affect because it is movement that creates the possibility of affective accumulation. When applied to emotions, one can create a framework that can help one to consider how emotional association can shape and be shaped by the world around us. Ahmed crucially points out that emotions and their affective economies are used to stick certain bodies and concepts together. The word 'queer', for example, is used to stick together anybody that does not meet heteronormativity's scripts.

It is through this metonymic sliding, or haunting, that the term 'queer' can, for example, be associated with terms like "injury, negativity, utopianism, transgression, defiance, righteousness, superiority, radicalism, hipness and rage (Amin 2016: 181). That the term can be associated with other terms gestures towards the ways in which the word queer summons ghosts and makes the haunting of sexuality clearer to the observer. Using the example of the emotion of fear, Ahmed explains that "[f]ear both envelops the bodies that feel it, as well as constructs those bodies as enveloped, […] as if it comes from outside and moves inward" (2017: 1319). Ahmed's work points out that personhood stems from an amalgamation of various cultural practices which is complicated by identity policing aimed at preserving the 'essential' nuclear family model. This creates the impression of the heterosexual nuclear family unit as being under attack by sexual deviants and perverts who can/must then be policed by those who adhere to the scripts of heterosexuality. The emotion of fear, in Ahmed's example, lays bare the mechanisms through which certain bodies are created in juxtaposition to bodies that are assumed to be 'adherent' or 'normal' in relation to what society posits as the ideal.

Ahmed notes that "[*i*]*t is the very failure of affect to be located in a subject or object that allows it to generate the surfaces of collective bodies*" (2017: 1320, emphasis in original). Since affect cannot be tied to a specific subject or object, Ahmed implies that affect can, thus, potentially be attributed to any subject or object depending on the context of the situation. In other words, the heterosexual subject is encouraged to live in fear of encountering the queer, who threatens to expose the artifice of an essentialist identity that fits neatly into the wants of neoliberal societal structure. Queer bodies reveal to the cisgender heterosexual that the assumed homogeneity of their identity is neither set in stone nor necessarily compulsory. It is this trick that obscures the fact that the heterosexual must deny themselves gendered and sexual possibility for the sake of societal formations

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that ultimately do not wholly serve them. The generated surface of a collective body that can be hated obscures the fact that the ideals purported to be inherent in all beings are, in fact, constructions that are typically used to serve a neoliberal, neocolonial agenda that requires exploitation and precarity to function.

Wilfred Jean-Louis's "Maimuna Doesn't Know" (2017) depicts a scattered-but-intertwined community of queer men in the city of Mombasa who both meet and violate the expectations of their society regarding compulsory heterosexual marriage by maintaining private queer relationships amongst themselves and public marriages to women, simultaneously. While it is perfectly possible to assimilate willingly to something, Ahmed points out that "[a]ssimilation and transgression are not choices that are available to individuals, but are effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals" (2004: 153). The story focuses mainly on the secret relationship between Idris and Salim, who are lovers despite Salim's recent marriage to his wife, Maimuna, who is unaware of her husband's double life. The story indicates that the nuclear family model is the fate for Islamic men in Mombasa as these men go to great lengths to mask their activities. By maintaining the appearance of compliance, the men are able to skirt the boundaries of comfort and discomfort as they live between heterosexual and queer worlds.

"Mainmuna Doesn't Know" (2017) opens with Idris and his friend, Abu, having coffee in Café Mansour and evokes a sense of Macharia's focus on the quotidian. As he argues, the frottage of concepts rubs up against the repetition of the everyday and making only a minimal effort to hide their queerness in the café, Idris and Abu discuss their same-sex relationships within earshot of other café patrons. After noticing that a woman sitting nearby is listening to their discussion the two men shrug it off, with Abu saying "[l]et her" (Jean-Louis 2017: 150). Idris and Abu are able to take advantage of this moment in order to speak openly and within earshot of others about their queerness and queer lives.

Outside of this moment, Abu and Idris (and their partners) must still, however, at least in the eyes of the public maintain the appearance of heteronormative relationships. Idris and Abu mention a man named George who has confronted the wife of his lover Hamid, publicly embarrassing them and resulting in her "almost [taking Hamid] to the Kadhi's courts for a divorce" (Jean-Louis 2017: 148) until Hamid eventually satisfies her with a trip to Dubai and a pregnancy. Hamid has no choice because the alternative means risking

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juridical punishment in the Kadhi's courts. Additionally, he might face other kinds of social consequences like ostracization or the threat of physical violence. Hamid's life here has been specifically affected by his queerness; the material conditions of his existence are at risk should this news travel further than places like Café Mansour. Hence, in more practical terms, Hamid, his lover George, Hamid's wife and their unborn child have created a queer family.

The fact that they have found a way to navigate the situation indicates that their family is now queer and that this lays bare "the failure of the ideal" (Ahmed 2004: 152). In this way, the structure of their family has changed, morphing it from the heterosexual ideal into a queer family structure through the compromise enacted to keep the family intact. That Abu and Idris are able to gossip about Hamid's affairs indicates that these men who weave new queer families from dishonesty in Mombasa communicate amongst themselves. This gestures toward community, albeit predicated on dishonesty and flimsy alliances of sameness (in that they are all queer and lying) in the face of difference (compulsory heterosexuality). This is important to note because it indicates that there is a sense of shared camaraderie amongst men who make compromises to explore their queerness and redefine the heteronormative family.

Abu and Idris's gossiping in the café attracts the attention of the people around them. One of the women "moves her chair closer to their table" (Jean-Louis 2017: 149) in an attempt to hear more of their gossip. When queer bodies enter spaces, their bodies affect this space. Therefore, the woman decides to move her chair closer to hear more and it is also why an elderly man sitting at a table nearby informs them that it is "[h]aram to look at somebody else's down-there in public" (Jean-Louis 2017: 151) when Idris describes a banker who he had flirted with. The elderly man's response indicates how "the other has to get too close, in order to be recognized as an object of fear" (Ahmed 2017: 1323). Within the close confines of the café, the elderly man has now come into proximity that which represents sexuality that does not adhere to accepted forms. Because he has gained proximity to that which he recognises as queer, his instinct is to lash out to that which represents his fear. The confirmation that Idris makes regarding his flirtations with the banker provide the elderly man with a platform upon which her feels he can assert a correction. And so, he makes a statement that is punitive but polite; vague enough to not directly address the men he is speaking to or about.

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The elderly man specifically mentions the word "haram" (Jean-Louis 2017: 151), indicating that he is attempting to re-establish 'normalcy' by pointing out that the activities described by Abu and Idris are against the religious instructions of Islamic faith. Ahmed notes that "emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity but is produced only as an effect of its circulation" (2017: 1314). The fact that he is saying this to queer men is a suggestion that they should also not engage in or talk about homosexual activities as they violate the scripts of religious doctrine and, thus, the heterosexual family. However, this utterance does not have the effect that he hoped it would have; the queer men react to this with "shock and amusement" (Jean-Louis 2017: 151), and return "the old man's glance with a smirk" (Jean-Louis 2017: 151). The citation of convention is entirely ineffective as Abu and Idris seem amused, rather than humbled in the face of 'correction'. Their reaction indicates that there is no conflict between Abu and Idris's queerness and their religion.

In this space, at least, Abu and Idris are able to accumulate joy without the disruption of comfort. The reactions of the women and the elderly man represent two (of many) ways in which queer bodies affect the spaces around them, causing reactions of varying degrees that highlight the attitudes of heterosexual people. Each of the two reactions represent two possible impressions that queer bodies can leave in public spaces in Mombasa. However, these possibilities rely on the emotions of heterosexuals who dominate the space and who are affected by the presence of queer bodies in this space. Although Abu and Idris have made this space queer by embodying queerness in a public setting, their reaction to this space is reliant on the feelings of the heterosexuals around them. The women's interest in them affords them a moment of affective capital in which they are then able to disarm the corrections that stem from dogmatic perceptions of the body and humanity.

Throughout the story, there is evidence that Salim and Idris's relationship might not survive the strain of their deceit. Their relationship is haunted by the necessity of their lie. During his talk with Abu in Café Mansour, Idris reveals that Maimuna's relationship with Salim leaves him "feel[ing] out of place" (Jean-Louis 2017: 150). This feeling of displacement stems from the fact that Idris and Salim's relationship is disrupted by the ideal of the heterosexual family, which is manifest in Salim's marriage to Maimuna. That Idris feels displaced indicates that he has come into contact with ghostly material in the

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form of Maimuna, and Salim's marriage to her. While the marriage is the reason that their relationship can continue in secret, the dishonest union is also a source of conflict and friction. Maimuna's presence hangs over them like a ghost even when she is not physically present, causing frottage between their queerness and the heterosexual veneer Salim and Maimuna create. Now that Maimuna is in the picture, Idris is unsatisfied with needing to share his lover to adhere to a heterosexual ideal. Adhering to social codes by including Maimuna in their lives results in a frottage that is too much to bear as it makes the ghost of heterosexuality far too visible. This highlights the emotional price that he must pay to achieve fleeting moments of erotic fulfilment.

Idris ultimately finds himself at a bar with a "flirtatious tax agent" (Jean-Louis 2017: 154) from Nairobi named Ounda to spite Salim, who has informed Idris that he and Maimuna will go out for the evening (Jean-Louis 2017: 154-155). Idris, initially, intends to stay in and drafts a message to Salim expressing his anger but, upon reflection, Idris opts to weaponise his text messages to Salim. Idris tells Salim that he will go out for the evening as well, to upset Salim (Jean-Louis 2017: 155). Here, Idris finds something to be done. Coincidentally, Salim, Maimuna, Idris and Ounda find themselves at the same bar, setting up the story's climax where Idris and Salim break through the confines of text messaging. In this moment, Idris and Salim's emotional need for one another manifests in their bodies as it is noted that "[Idris's] ears feel hot, and his heart starts to beat rapidly" (Jean-Louis 2017: 161). If "emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds" (Ahmed 2007: 12), then the ways in which Idris and Salim's emotional reaction to finally being able to find a moment together highlights the effect that the two men have on each other. Despite the tension between them, the two men are able to indulge in a moment of tenderness, and in this moment the two men lessen "the threat of their difference" and to share "the passions of love, in its deepest meanings" (Lorde 2007: 56). Although they have found a way to explore their sexuality through deceit, it is constrained and limited to small bursts which are, in the end, not sustainable or conducive to a fairly balanced emotional life. And yet without these moments, the alternative for both Idris and Salim is self-regulation and unfulfilling performances of gender and sexuality.

Salim vows to visit Idris during the week and, in the same breath, he begs Idris not to go home with Ounda (Jean-Louis 2017: 161). Much like the momentary relief that Salim's

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text message provides, this moment is short-lived, and Idris returns to his date. Idris notes Ounda's intentions to have sex with him without leaving any clue as to whether or not Idris will take up his offer for "the best film [Idris will] ever watch" (Jean-Louis 2017: 162). Idris does not reject Ounda, and after he sees Salim kiss Maimuna's cheek, there is a strong sense that the relationship between Idris and Salim will eventually end under the burdens of their deception. Before Maimuna, the ghosts of heterosexuality seemed further away and Idris felt more secure in his relationship. Now that Salim has married a woman to fulfil societal obligations, Idris is forced into a framework of feeling and is able to recognise his malcontent with this arrangement. To see Salim being intimate and tender with Maimuna forces Idris to face the fact that his relationship is haunted. Macharia explains that "[f]rottage is wool-scratch fabrics that promise to be soft, [… t]he endless ways skin is reminded it is present, and feels" (2019: 166).

By brushing up against the ghost of heterosexuality that is now embodied by Maimuna, Idris must face his grief by coming to terms with the fact that his relationship with Salim will eventually come apart under the strain of frottage. The narrative ends with "Idris look[ing] at the little bubbles rising from the bottom of his beer, then out at the ocean" (Jean-Louis 2017: 162). Since it is implied that Idris will, indeed, take Ounda up on his offer, one could argue that he is reclaiming his dignity from a situation that has left him feeling alienated from any proper sense of erotic fulfilment. In other words, one can read the ending as a moment where Idris makes the decision to demand more from his situation by choosing to spend his evening with Ounda, who will, at least for the moment, not require him to live his life caught in an in-between space. This is largely due to Idris's realisation of erotic power through his relationship with Salim; however, their relationship is bound to fail since it is heavily strained by the stress and burden that comes with their arrangement. Yet Idris' realisation is heavy with grief because, despite the fact that he cares deeply for Salim, he is clearly not happy with sharing the intimacy of the man he loves. Now that Idris is facing this ghost, he is affected by his relationship differently. He has been made to grapple with "that thing inside that will not cease, that prickle, that scratch, that irritation" (Macharia 2019: 166). Sleeping with Ounda, then, becomes Idris' something to be done after he faces the ghost of heterosexuality which has haunted his relationship since its inception.

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A story that is also laden with grief that rubs against queerness is "The Bath" (2013) by Wamuwi Mbao. It depicts a woman named Olivia who has lost her unnamed lover due to heart failure two weeks prior. Faced with her grief and loss, Olivia decides to end her life using "chemical solvents" (Mbao 2013: 36) at two in the morning while taking a bath and reading her lover's journal. Olivia mentions that the last song her lover played on the guitar for her was the song "Saudade" (Mbao 2013: 37); a word that points to a "bittersweet, nostalgic yearning" and a "nostalgic memory" (Blackmore 2009: 641). Mbao's story also affects the way in which the conceptions of and terms for 'grief', 'saudade', and 'queer' are shaped when applied to a South African lesbian context through the delivery of this narrative. In many ways, queer existence is characterised by saudade because queer people experience a longing for an existence that is not punctuated by discomfort while the heterosexual mourns and experiences saudade for the lost possibility of their potential queerness which, in Ahmed's model, is snubbed so that the heterosexual will more closely adhere to the scripts of cisgender heterosexuality. The word saudade 'rubs against' Olivia's memory of her lover who is lost to her physically but is able to be embodied in objects that carry her lover's affects like her t-shirts and journal.

Ahmed notes that intimacy "shapes our bodies, our gestures, our turns of phrase", because "impressions are […] memories of this or that other, to which we return to in the sticky metonymy of our thoughts and dreams" (2004: 160). Olivia acknowledges the loss of her lover by recollecting the time that they spent together and through the things that were left behind in the flat. For example, Olivia contemplates how their "books still jostle for space in the bookshelf, [her lover's] classics alongside [Olivia's] crime" (Mbao 2013: 36). Here, the books are rubbing against one another; creating a metaphorical frottage of Olivia and her lover's bodies. Olivia is reliving the effects of her relationship by revisiting the objects and memories that contain the affective impressions they have left on one another.

Yet Olivia is not grieving her loss on her own. Although it is clear that her lover's parents were not happy with the fact that their daughter is a lesbian, they make their presence known by visiting the flat. Olivia begins the story by describing how her lover's father "drove thirty kilometres yesterday, just to say he was sorry" (Mbao 2013: 35) and how her mother "came by the day before yesterday [… and] made soup [… which is] her way of understanding" (Mbao 2013: 36). These acts of tenderness on the part of Olivia's lover's parents are acts of processing and sharing their loss. It is also important to note that

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because they did not acknowledge their daughter's queerness in life, they are now made to acknowledge this queerness through a collective mourning with Olivia. Through their collective grief, they are acknowledging their daughter's queerness and the shared intimacy between the women who inhabited the apartment. In other words, Olivia and the affective impressions that surround her allow them the space to sit with their lost daughter in a way that they did not when she was physically there. Facing their grief has caused Olivia and her lover's parents to face a "[r]eckoning [which] is about knowing what kind of effort is required to change ourselves and the conditions that make us who we are, that set limits on what is acceptable and unacceptable, [and] on what is possible and impossible" (Gordon 2008: 202).

Speaking about queer grief, Ahmed notes that "[t]o support others as grievers – not by grieving for them but allowing them the space and time to grieve – becomes even more important when those others are excluded from the everyday networks of legitimation and support" (2004: 161). According to Ahmed, queerness and queer loss often go unacknowledged and ungrieved because "queer lives are not recognized as lives 'to be lost'" (2004: 156). Olivia's lover's parents were unwilling to acknowledge their daughter's sexuality while she was alive. It is through their shared intimacy and memories that they were able to process and renegotiate the contours and shapes of their lives together as a queer couple. This process inevitably means that they will fail to meet the ideal image of women who are meant to love men for the sake of an imagined ideal that is not possible to fully and properly embody. The ideal image of the heterosexual woman is a ghost that can haunt women because of the infinite ways in which one fails to meet its image.

In Ahmed's framework, the act of acknowledging queer loss crucially involves sharing this loss and the way it shapes you with others. These moments between Olivia and her lover's parents are an important and necessary part of what Ahmed calls "[t]he ongoing work of grief" (2004: 161). This process of grieving is unconstrained and left open to risk, meaning that these exchanges between Olivia and her lover's parents are not binding their grief and loss to a set of rules that dictates and governs the shape of their emotions. Her parents were estranged from their daughter's life, in the sense that they did not acknowledge her being in its entirety. It is through these shared moments with Olivia that they are able to immerse themselves fully in the shapes that her life took. In keeping her lover's memory alive through memories induced by the impressions left on objects, Olivia and her lover's

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parents are redefining the shape that their family can now take after cataclysm. In other words, visiting Olivia allows them to access impressions of their daughter that were previously inaccessible to them because of their failure to recognise and acknowledge their grief that surrounds their daughter's embodiment of her sexuality. Olivia's lover's parents are able to further redefine the shape of their family by finally experiencing their daughter's life in full, but through impressions left behind on their daughter's lover and their shared living space. In this way, their loss is "translated into the work of care for others" (Ahmed 2004: 162), enabling each of them to care for one another. Their aggrieved arrangement, while temporary in the sense that their feelings will change as their grief is processed, is a different form of family because it is a linkage of connection forged through the processing of loss. This mourning leads Olivia and her lover's parents to sensuous knowledge which changes the way in which they experience family.

The story also explores how queer relationships are affected and shaped by the affective histories of race. As a White South African woman who lives in Cape Town, Olivia's experiences of life and of queerness differ from those of her Black South African girlfriend. As Lorde emphasises, the differences that emerge between people need not contribute to societal rot if they are considered to be a strength, which must involve honest communication and critical thinking to communally unpack these differences (Lorde 2007: 59). Crucially, Lorde states that we must consider "how we move toward and through [differences]" (2007: 55). Lorde places the same emphasis on 'passing through' that Ahmed discusses; indicating that it is only by passing through the hauntings of the situation that one can arrive at erotic and sensuous knowledge. During her reminiscing, Olivia makes note of a conversation regarding their differences in race. Oliva mentions how her lover "had a thousand faces [she]'ll never know" (Mbao 2013: 37). This makes it clear that there were differences in experience and understanding between Olivia and her partner in relation to race, class and sexuality.

Their relationship did not disintegrate the differences that arrive from the frottage of colonial modernity. The frottage which arose from loving one another allowed the women to reach "[a]n expansive notion of intimacy" (Macharia 2019: 138) that "reinvision[s] histories and theories of sexuality that, to date, have been dominated by white Euro-American experiences" (Macharia 2019: 143). Their love is haunted by the brutality of racism that underpins colonial modernity, meaning that their love is located at the margins

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of what is considered to be sexually acceptable. Grada Kilomba explains that "the margin is a location that nourishes our capacity to resist oppression, to transform, and to imagine alternative new worlds and new discourses" (2019: 36). Thus, Mbao's narrative stretches the boundaries of what is sexually imaginable for women in contemporary Cape Town, South Africa. By facing the ghosts of queerness that haunt issues of sexuality, the characters are able to renegotiate what is possible for women within colonial modernity, going beyond what is afforded to women within oppressive frameworks.

The ending of the story sees Olivia stubbing her toe against the towel rack, commenting that "[i]t reminds [her …] that [she is] alive" (Mbao 2013: 38). This is significant in the sense that it is, once again, motion that indicates that Olivia is still alive and is currently in the 'process of living'. By stubbing her toe, Olivia realises that she is still alive because she able to affect and to be affected. She knows that her suicide attempt has failed and that the other alternative available to her is to continue living while keeping her lover alive through affect. She describes one of the shirts that she has held on to and states that it is to keep "some small trace of you" (Mbao 2013: 35). By holding on to keepsakes that conjure the love that she grieves, Olivia edges herself against her grief in order to honour her commitment to the woman that she loves. But her grieving is, crucially, not an individual undertaking. Together, the characters in Mbao's story come to reshape the contours of the family, keeping the spirit of their lost loved one alive in order to honour their memory of her and in order to continue their relationship with her through the effects of her ghostliness.

"This Tomorrow Was Christmas" (2017) by Juliet Kushaba is a story about Siima, a woman who informs her family a day before Christmas that she has invited a friend to spend Christmas with them. Siima's family misunderstands what she means by friend, and they assume that she means she has invited a male love interest. Because of her previous refusal "to marry a man from one of the most affluent families in the village" (Kushaba 2017: 173), Siima's family, particularly her mother, is overjoyed at her announcement. Her siblings purchase Christmas gifts for Siima's friend, and her mother prepares the guest bedroom for Siima's companion. Yet her family has not yet considered that an alternative romantic and sexual life might be possible for her because a woman who decides not to reproduce, or to reproduce outside of the confines of the heterosexual master script, is then considered to be betraying both her societal destiny and her 'duty' to maintain a

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heteronormative home. In a discussion on sex work in Uganda, Sylvia Tamale points out that "[w]omen's sexuality is particularly interwoven with ideologies of reproduction and domesticity" (2011: 147). Tamale also notes how "[s]tudies across cultures seen to hold the consensus that acceptable female sexuality is that mediated through the framework of heterosexual marriage and procreation" (2011: 151). Here, Tamale points out how women are especially reduced to their reproductive possibilities and how the sexuality of women is policed across the bounds of many identity formations.

From the onset, Siima knows that her family's enthusiasm will change when they discover that her friend is her wife of two years, Nyonyozi. Ultimately Siima does not tell her family the truth until Nyonyozi arrives. Siima does not seem sure of how her family will react to realising that she did, indeed, invite a lover to spend Christmas with them and this decision, Siima notes, might cost her either her family or her wife. When Nyonyozi arrives, Siima and her younger siblings Aine and Meeyi go outside to greet her. Siima notes how Aine "covered her mouth with her hands" and how Meeyi "did not ask any questions. She just gaped" (Kushaba 2017: 176). The younger siblings have now been faced with the possibility of their sister being queer, a possibility that they seem uncomfortable with. Because Nyonyozi and Siima might now possibly embody a sexual identity that is not congruent with the expectations of compulsory heterosexuality, Siima's actions invite risk to the table. She is leaving her loved ones with no choice but to face her queerness without warning. Ahmed notes that "[a] risk is also a potential" (2019: 198); a something to be done and Siima is risking potentiality; she forces a confrontation between her family and the queer family she could potentially have with Nyonyozi. Yet while she is greeting and giving Nyonyozi a hug, Siima realises before returning to her home with her sisters and wife that she "ha[s] lost something" (Kushaba 2017: 176). At this point, Siima is not sure if she has lost her wife, who seems to be hurt by Aine and Meeyi's reaction to her, or her family, who already seem discomforted by the queer potential that Nyonyozi now represents.

As soon as she realises that Nyonyozi is a woman, Siima's mother "looked like she had had a sudden attack of stroke" (Kushaba 2017: 177). As was the case with Siima's sisters, Siima's mother's reaction is based off associations that she has with queerness. Her mother's discomfort stems from the fact that her certainty of her daughter's adherence to heterosexuality is now precarious. Comfort, in Ahmed's model, stems from one's

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adherence to the forms of identity made available to them through the scripts of compulsory heterosexuality. To pass through a space as a queer body is to queer this space; and it is this effect that makes Siima's risk worth it. Because she has chosen to take the risk of visibility, Siima has "release[ed] a potentiality" (Ahmed 2019: 200) which might result in her family's eventual integration of Nyonyozi into their family. Meeyi eventually disappears into the house and re-emerges with the gifts that she had bought for what she had assumed would be Siima's male suitor (Kushaba 2017: 178). Nyonyozi hugs Meeyi and apologises to Siima's sister on the basis that she has wasted her money on gifts that Nyonyozi has no use for. This exchange hints towards the possibility that Siima's risky decision to force confrontation might result in a redefinition of her family, but one interaction alone is proof only that the process of renegotiation has commenced.

The reactions of Siima's family indicate that they have already been affected by the queering of their space. Ahmed's work on queerness indicates that spaces are not inherently queer until a queer body has passed through this space. Although Siima has passed through their space many times, it has been with the understanding that she adheres to heterosexuality. Now that she is possibly not a heterosexual, Siima has queered the space. Ahmed points out that "queerness […] is injected into spaces by queer users" (2019: 200). Ahmed's framework makes it clear that it is sometimes necessary to intentionally cause discomfort in order to disrupt and renegotiate notions of normativity, even when one is not inclined to do so (2004: 166). Similarly, Achille Mbembe mentions that direct action against oppressive regimes involves "[a] way of violently eliminating every objective counterforce that stands opposed to changing society's foundations" (2019: 21). Mbembe's assertion indicates that Siima's risk has rocked the foundations upon which her family understands itself and it will not allow for the further imposition of false narrative to maintain the appearance of the normative.

Her mother eventually finds her voice and, after evaluating the situation, decides that the situation can be understood as a communication error. Here, Siima has the opportunity to take advantage of assimilation and to allow her mother to continue to shroud her sexuality but Siima recognises that if she does not take further direct action, she will be pulled into further dishonesty in order to survive with her familial relations intact. Her mother makes the stakes clear when she says to Siima that "step[ping] into my house with that girl" (Kushaba 2017: 178) will result in Siima's expulsion from the family. It is here that Siima

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chooses to abandon all pretence by directly admitting to her mother that Nyonyozi is, indeed, her wife. Siima notes that "I knew if I did not clear this, [Nyonyozi] could decide never to put her feet again across this place [that Siima wants] her to call home" (Kushaba 2017: 178). Kushaba makes no description of Siima's family's reaction to this news because their reaction, at this point, is not relevant. By directly voicing her queerness, Siima has solidified the process of change that her risk has made possible. Ahmed notes that "[t]he hope of queer politics is that bringing us closer to others, from whom we have been barred, might also bring us to different ways of living with others" (2004: 165).

Because Siima has not been able to be honest with her family about her sexuality, she has been barred from authentic and fulfilling experiences and interactions with them. Prior to marrying Nyonyozi, Siima had also been barred from a fulfilling performance and embodiment of her sexuality. Siima has certainly changed the make-up of her family by queering their familial space through the impressions made by her queer body, but it is important to note that this shift is not a total transcendence of the familial order upon which normative associations of families in Siima's context are constructed. Ahmed notes crucially that "[*i*]*t is in the non-transcendence of queer that allows queer to do its work*" (2004: 165, emphasis in original). Siima's resolve to not recede back into invisibility stems from the fact that her marriage to Nyonyozi represents her reckoning with the queerness that haunted her desire and sexuality. But this ghost was replaced by another ghost; Siima is still haunted by the fact that her family perceive her as a heterosexual woman. Ultimately, for Siima, and although it is clear that she would prefer for the convergence of her familial ties and her wife, her relationship with Nyonyozi is what is more fulfilling. The story ends when Siima declares that "[she] had to keep Nyonyozi" (Kushaba 2017: 178), implying that whatever the outcome of this confrontation, that she is fully committed to the process of dismantling her family's conceptions of normative narratives surrounding gender and sexuality for women in Uganda.

Nevertheless, this action leads Siima towards sensuous knowledge; Siima is now aware that her place in her family is, indeed, precariously contingent on her fulfilling the role of the heterosexual wife and mother. Although Siima has scratched the itch, she has risked her place in her family. Siima has created friction between the words family and queer and has now found that her experience of their definitions has shifted. And she has also found renewed grief in the process. A different grief, but grief nonetheless. This ending

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illustrates what Macharia means when he says that "[c]olonial modernity enables new psychic and material possibilities, but it exacts a heavy toll" (2019: 78). Because African nation building involves the refusal of queer possibilities to distance African people from further definition as sexual deviants, the price that one pays when these narratives clash is often high, despite the possibilities that queerness can offer. And Siima has chosen to pay this bittersweet price in Kushaba's story because she refutes stagnation and seeks "to stretch toward and beyond [the] horizon" (Gordon 2008: 195) of what was previously available to her.

Similarly, Mbao's story illustrates how Olivia has found a new path (or strategy) that differs from her previous one to make her queer life possible by loving another woman. Her toe connects to a towel rack and frottage occurs. Olivia has tried to sever her connection to the living world, presumably because she is trying to escape this reality or reunite with her lover. But regardless of the success of her attempt, what is most important is that Olivia has been haunted towards a something to be done. This relationship illustrated to both women that while their relationship did not transcend the dynamics of race between them, that "[q]ueers need fabulation. We need to imagine and theorize and practice strategies that make our beings possible" (2019: 125). For Olivia, the reckoning of communing with her lover's ghost, so soon after her passing, shows her "what kind of effort is required to change [herself] and the conditions that make [her] who [she is], that set limits on what is acceptable and unacceptable, on what is possible and impossible" (Gordon 2008: 202). In other words, Olivia now understands that the most ethical way to mourn her partner is to keep her impressions alive. Olivia followed the itch that expanded in the wake of an insurmountable loss, and it led her to the sensuous knowledge she needed to understand that her mode of living in this world requires a new strategy if it is remain liveable for her.

Each story details the ways in which queer Africans can be haunted in matters of the heart. Grief and mourning interact with ghosts to affect the lives of people who are trying to navigate the contradictions of colonial modernity. Each character faces their own thing to be done regarding their respective ghosts and hauntings and each story provides a redefinition of family structures that depart from previously venerated shapes that families can take in African contexts. These reshaped familial structures can account for the lives that African nation building projects excluded. These stories would see nations produce

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new possibilities through the affects and impressions that haunting can leave on us and the worlds we inhabit and embody. The possibilities that queerness provides to these characters allows them to renegotiate the effects of "a market whose exchange relations continue to transform the living into the dead" (Gordon 2008: 169).

Here, life is remade from unliving and into a queer reliving; an arrangement that fundamentally changes the way each character is perceived and reacts to the world around them. Each story describes how its characters navigate "the past-that-is-not-past and […] the inchoate future-in-the-present" (Macharia 2019: 165). Idris now understands that his relationship with Salim, while fulfilling and satisfying, is haunted and thus he begins to consider its eventual demise, or another alternative possibility. Siima has taken the risk of visibility of her queerness in the familial home and it has resulted in the possible severance of one familiar configuration and the creation, out of necessity, of a new one. Neither story portrays the definitive end of these familial relationships, however each story proposes new possibilities for familiar relationships in the wake of queer haunting. And, finally, Olivia now knows how she will keep her relationship alive; by hanging on to her partner's ghost and impressions – keeping her alive even in death.

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Conclusion

We will not turn back.

Diriye Osman, "Watering the Imagination".

In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to publish short works of fiction that narrate queer African experiences. Anthologies like *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013), *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (2017), *Happiness, Like Water* (2014), *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013) and the three editions of *The Gerald Kraak Anthology* each contain stories that explore the possibilities that are available for Africans in matters of gender and sexuality. Each story maps out states of being which were previously purported to be unimaginable.

This dissertation has attempted to explore the range of these stories; from narratives about a speculative Uganda where a woman can marry another woman to ones about an elderly heterosexual man who pretends to be younger man who reinvigorates his lonely body. Each of these stories deliver the powerful potential of queer African life by exploring its contours that come together to compose a larger mosaic which confirms that queer life is possible. Though these lives are complicated, dangerous, and fraught with grief and frustration, queer short African stories show how queer African lives are equally as joyous, simple, and fulfilled. And, if short fiction anthologies "productively disrupt […] the potent discourses currently circulating on what it means to be African, to be queer and to be an African creative writer" (Martin & Xaba 2017: 312), then queer African short fiction ultimately explores what it means to turn away from restrictive conceptions of being and to, rather, face the ghosts that haunt issues of gender and sexuality.

In this dissertation, hauntings and ghostliness are argued to be an ever present set a preoccupations when discussing and writing queer short African fiction. This dissertation has argued that matters of gender and sexuality are haunted by the accumulated narratives that historically have encircled and have been disseminated. Thus, haunting and ghostliness represent a golden thread which links each story together; in some way, whether it be a story featuring technology or a story focused on the grieving body, each

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piece of short African fiction involves the confrontation of a ghost which somehow haunts gender and sexuality.

Each chapter of this dissertation approached the narration of African queerness from a particular perspective that was prompted by the stories themselves. Thus, four main themes emerged from each chapter in order to highlight areas of importance or focus in contemporary short fiction, all tied together by the idea that these themes involve the confrontation of ghosts. Chapter 1 was concerned with how silence looms over several short stories. In the ones chosen for analysis, I explored how queer life has often been physically and discursively muted. As the chapter revealed, Dilman Dila's "Two Weddings for Amoit" (2017), and Diriye Osman's "Ndambi" (2013), and "Watering the Imagination" (2013) explore how queerness can complicate matters of silence and voicing and that these terms must be reimagined in the context of what is possible for gender and sexuality in Africa. These stories portray how silence can enable survival and help the character to face the ghost haunting their sexuality; for example, Amoit's silence about her marriage to Aceng allows both women to fulfil their sexual desires without uttering them to others.

As Chapter 2 explored, the permeation of technology into everyday life, as described by each story, has consequences for the ways in which each character lives their lives. In other words, each story displays how the interaction with a queer simulacrum might affect a queer African Stories like Chukwuebuka Ibeh's "A sickness called longing" (2019), Alistair Mackay's "Going Home" (2017) and Diriye Osman's "The Other (Wo)man" (2013) are all narratives in which technology affects queer African life. Each story provides a glimpse into the lives of queer Africans who make use of technology to bypass the norms that constrict issues of gender and sexuality. This chapter argues that online spaces and simulation can be seen as a wasteland that circumnavigates societal norms but is also rife with ghosts and haunting because it amplifies the problems that underpin modernity. Each story provides an essential view into the ways in which a queer African might navigate and react to the problems of modernity.

Chapter 3 argued that queer African short fiction forms part of a renegotiation of what constitutes a self-defined African body. This chapter focused on the ways in which the queer African body is discursively constructed and explored how writers draw attention to

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the African embodied experience. Through an examination of Barbra Adair's "Phillip" (2017), Chinelo Okparanta's "Wahala!" (2014), Lindiwe Nkutha's "Rock" (2013) and Emma Paulet's "Warm" (2017), this chapter argued that these narratives are essential in the assertion of African perspectives on the queer body, meaning that they are no longer cast aside and purported to be unimaginable. These stories describe queer "[b]odies [that] move against each other, learning new choreography with each twist and turn, each bump and pothole, each alighting and gathering. Our silences mingle with our conversation, our fantasies with our quotidian, and, for the length of a journey, we are rubbing along" (Macharia 2019: 164). Thus, these narratives ensure that these bodies are accounted for and are described without the distortions of stereotypes that would argue that these body are not and could never be possible. In these stories, these bodies are not only possible, but are an essential focal point of each narrative.

Finally, Chapter 4 explored Wilfred Jean-Louis's "Maimuna Doesn't Know" (2017), Wamuwi Mbao's "The Bath" (2013) and Juliet Kushaba's "This Tomorrow Was Christmas" (2017) by using Avery Gordon's work on ghostliness and haunting. Gordon argues that being haunted by ghosts leads one to a sensuous knowledge which, once recognised, cannot be ignored and which leads one to the necessity of action. Each story illustrates how queer grief affects the lives of queer Africans whose gender and sexuality are haunted by colonial modernity. As shown, each character faces their own 'thing to be done' with regards to their respective ghosts and uses this as a basis for the redefinition of family structures.

Overall, this dissertation has aimed to show how queer African short fiction forms part of a larger network of queer narrativity which can be read through various lenses. Through writing, one can "take continuous action to transform and transcend [the restrictions of] reality" (Sardar 2008: xix). Thus, the stories analysed in this dissertation are argued to be acts of imaginative reinvention as the characters and their authors describe lives that have been neglected within the frameworks of colonial modernity as part of a systematic series of attempts to historically restrict people's gendered and sexual behaviours.

As Macharia explains, "[f]or queers, the space provided by an attention to friction and pleasure expands the ways we can claim and practice belonging across our varied positions

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as ethno-national, ethno-diasporic, and Afro-diasporic" (2019: 138). Thus, any story which describes and explores these frictions can lead one to the sensuous knowledge necessary to help untangle the narratives surrounding queer African experience. By paying attention to that which haunts gender and sexuality, this dissertation has explored only a small portion of the complications and possibilities that colonial modernity provides to Africans in matters of gender and sexuality.

Each short story that features queer Africans (or African queerness) serves as a piece of a larger tapestry which provides the space for the epistemological and systemic exploration and expansion of sexual and gendered experiences in Africa. Moreover, these stories provide insight into the everyday queer African experience. By reimagining the everyday and quotidian of queer African life, these stories reframe the conversations surrounding gender and sexuality and direct them towards an understanding of these issues that is more realistic because it presents queer African life from perspectives that are not distorted by colonial modernity.

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If I didn't define myself for myself,
I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me
and eaten alive.

Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*

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