DSPACE

https://dspace.org/

“An odd form of love”: Women Writing Friendship in African Short Fiction

Ntsepo, Nomonde Terry

2025
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/49516
Ntsepo, Nomonde Terry. (2025). “An odd form of love”: Women Writing Friendship in African Short Fiction [PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WIReDSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/10539/49516

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

"AN ODD FORM OF LOVE": WOMEN WRITING FRIENDSHIP IN AFRICAN SHORT FICTION

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

at

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

by

NOMONDE TERRY NTSEPO

February 2025

Supervisors: Dr Sofia Kostelac and Professor Srila Roy

Contents

Acknowledgements 5

Abstract 7

Introduction 8

Rationale 10

African Women Writing Love and Friendship 13

Women Writing Friendship 22

Theorising Friendship: feminist, queer, and ecological approaches 31

African short fiction 38

Chapter Outline 43

Chapter One: Gender, Friendship and Solidarity in South African Short Fiction 46

1.1. Introduction 46

1.1.2 Contextualising Black South African Women's Writing 49

1.1.3 Sindiwe Magona and Makhosazana Xaba in Context 56

1.2 Friendship and Political Consciousness in Sindiwe Magona's *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* 61

1.2.1 Theorising Domestic Work 62

1.2.2 Leaving 66

1.2.3 The Women at Work 69

1.3 Networks of Care in Makhosazana Xaba's *Running and Other Stories* 77

1.3.1 The Trip 79

1.3.2 The Weekend 84

1.3.3 Running 89

1.4 Conclusion 97

Chapter Two: Friendship, queer ordinariness, and companionship in Selected Short Fiction from *Queer Africa* 99

2.1.1 Introduction 99

2.1.2 Ugandan Women Writing 101

2.1.3 Kenyan Women Writing 105

2.2 Theory and Context 107

2.2.1. A Note on Terminology 107

2.2.2 Reading and Writing Queer Africa 111

2.2.3 Writing Queer Sexuality in Uganda 123

2.2.4 Writing Queer in Kenya 126

2.2.5 Queer African Anthologies in Context 131

2.3 Friendship in Selected Ugandan and Kenyan Women's Short Fiction 134

2.3.1 Jambula Tree 134

2.3.3 Chief of the Home 140

2.3.4 Pub 360 145

2.4 Conclusion 150

Chapter Three: Reading Friendship as "an enlarged sense of community" in Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish* and Sofia Samatar's *Tender* 152

3.1.1 Introduction 152

3.1.2 Doreen Baingana, Sofia Samatar, and Women Writers of the African Diaspora 155

3.1.3 Afrofuturism 159

3.1.4 Ecofeminism and African Ecocriticism.....162

3.2.1 Reading Christine and the natural world in *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe*

.....170

3.2.2 Lost in Los Angeles and Questions of Home 171

3.3.1 Reading Friendship in the Wasteland in *Tender: Stories* 177

3.3.2 Tender 178

3.3.3 The Closest Thing to Animals.....183

3.4 Conclusion 187

4. Conclusion 190

References.....196

Acknowledgements

I thank my supervisors, Dr Sofia Kostelac, and Professor Srila Roy for standing by me through the many years this thesis has taken to come to be. Sofia, thank you for your kindness, guidance, and support. Srila, thank you for your constant generosity and your incisive feedback. Without you both, this thesis would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the scholars who took the time to examine this thesis. I am grateful for your time and thoughtful comments and suggestions, which have helped me improve the thesis.

Thank you to Professor Lynda Spencer, who has been my mentor, guide, and friend for so many years. Thank you for your personal and professional guidance, your time, your openness. I could not have done this without you.

I am incredibly grateful to NGaP for allowing me to complete this thesis while lecturing at Rhodes University. Not only for the time and financial assistance afforded to me, but also for the community that Rhodes University NGaP has given me. Dr Amanda Hlengwa, thank you for going above and beyond to support me as a single mother in academia. I appreciate your support and understanding more than I can say.

The financial assistance of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, in collaboration with the South African Humanities Deans Association, towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NIHSS and SAHUDA.

I am also grateful to the NIHSS for the mentorship they provided. Thank you for allowing me the possibility of undertaking this project. I am particularly grateful for the mentorship of Professor Peace Kiguwa and Professor Malose Langa. I would also like to thank the Andrew Mellon Governing Intimacies project for their support in the early stages of this thesis. Thank you again to Professor Srila Roy, who believed in the project and went on to supervise it, and to Professor Shireen Hassim. Thank you also to the Mellon Mays

Undergraduate Fellowship Programme, which encouraged me to pursue graduate studies. Especially to Alison Button and Lerato Posholi for their love and support.

Thank you to the Department of English Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand for first introducing me to literary studies and giving me the opportunity the write this thesis. I also thank the Department of Literary Studies at Rhodes University for giving me space and support to write.

I am so grateful for the family who have given me unwavering love over the years. To Nima, thank you for the light you have brought to my life. To Lindiwe, thank you for the phone calls, the card games, the beach days, and the space for healing. To my mother, Sheila, thank you for the support, generosity, and care.

Misha, thank you for a friendship that opened up worlds. And finally, to the many friends who inspired this thesis, past and present. Thank you all.

Abstract

This thesis contributes to the growing body of scholarship on African women's writing. It focuses on representations of friendship in selected short fiction by African women written in English. While conversations around love and intimacy have increased in recent years, friendship in African women's writing is seldom a sustained area of study. I argue that friendship offers rich ground for expanding emerging scholarship on representations of love and intimacy in African women's writing. I identify three critical areas of friendship in the short fiction I examine in this thesis: feminist friendship, queer friendship, and friendship with the more-than-human world. These three areas, historically marginalized in scholarship on African writing, as well as in African fiction itself, have found a home in short fiction from the continent, especially as the short story has burgeoned post-2000. Using feminist, queer, and ecocritical theory, I examine the friendships in the short fiction selected for this thesis. In my examination of friendship, I first turn to feminist depictions of friendship in selected South African women's short fiction. I argue that friendship plays a central role in forming personal and political consciousnesses that allow women to position themselves against violent, racist, and sexist realities. In so doing, I map the possibilities and limitations friendship offers the female characters in these texts. I then turn to selected Ugandan and Kenyan representations of queer friendship. I demonstrate that friendship allows the characters in these texts to be alternatively seen or unseen in contexts that are often violent, racist, and homophobic. Finally, I show that depictions of friendship with the more-than-human world are a key aspect of African women's writing from the continent and the diaspora. I analyse depictions of friendship between human and nonhuman subjects in the context of the extreme violence of the Anthropocene. In ending with this expanded conception of friendship, I emphasise friendship's role in the depiction of dying worlds and stress its potential for world-making.

Introduction

> Friendship is an odd form of love," in which people develop a relationship without relationship as a goal… The key to friend-friends is enactment without the desire to 'become' (insert: famous, legitimate, important) by our association, but instead to become more whole, more fully human.
>
> - Cynthia Dillard

Friendship can affect us profoundly both on a psychological and physiological level. Drawing on scientific research, science journalist Lydia Denworth shows that friendship bonds can not only improve our mood and mental state, but also affect our immune systems, reducing our probability of getting sick, and positively affecting our longevity (see Denworth 2020). Writing about friendship's opposite – loneliness – Olivia Laing records similar findings in *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* (2016). Those without strong friendship bonds suffer from increased physical illness, mental stress, and morbidity rates. As Laing puts it, "loneliness can prove fatal" (29). Friendship, then, is integral to our lives. It evokes ideas of human connection, of closeness, care, and support. It can be a way of being vulnerable, and a deep way of being open to another. Sometimes friendship means solidarity, and sometimes kinship. Often friendship evokes more difficult images – fraught relationships, tensions, and distress, friends who outgrow each other, and friendships that come apart. Friendship can consist of profound misunderstandings, or differences that cannot be overcome. These are the risks of friendship, and as the risks of friendship increase, so do the impossibilities of new friendships forming. For Cynthia Dillard, whose quote I use to open this thesis and from whom I draw my title, we take the risk because friendship is about becoming "more whole, more fully human" (Dillard 115). Accordingly, friendship is rich ground for exploring and depicting the human.

Spanning visual culture and literature, academic scholarship to online blogs and cultural criticism, work concerned with friendship is becoming more and more prevalent. Filmmakers, directors, and writers have placed recent emphasis on friendships, and especially on friendships between women. This is evident in visual culture, with the emergence of series such as *Broad City* (2009), *Girls* (2012), and *Insecure* (2016), and in web series such as *Ackee and Saltfish* (2015) and *Brown Girls* (2017). These shows place friendships between young women at their centre and explore the complexities of these relationships. They take different approaches to women's friendships: celebrating them, as in the case of *Broad City*, which revels in the friendship between its protagonists Abbi and Illana, or critiquing them, as *Girls* does, in its depiction of the tenuous relationships between four women living in New York City. *Insecure*, *Ackee and Saltfish*, and *Brown Girls* are unequivocal in their intention to depict friendships between young black women, and women of colour, exploring the intricacies of these relationships in their protagonists' everyday lives. In literature, Elena Ferrante's quartet *The Neapolitan Novels* (2011-2014) and Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* (2016) have garnered popular and critical attention for their difficult and messy depictions of friendship. In non-fiction, popular science books such as Lydia Denworth's *Friendship* (2020) discuss life's "fundamental bond." Clearly, depictions of friendship are a recent preoccupation in diverse fields and disciplines.

This thesis examines friendship in selected African short fiction written by women and published over the last thirty years. In it, I offer a close reading of friendship in selected short fiction from South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, and the African diaspora. I read Sindiwe Magona's *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* (1991), Makhosazana Xaba's *Running and Other Stories* (2013), Monica Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" (2006), Beatrice Lamwaka's "Chief of the Home" (2013), H W Mukami's "Pub 360" (2017), Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* (2005), and Sofia Samatar's *Tender: Stories* (2017). In placing a sustained

focus on representations of friendship by these writers, I argue that friendship offers rich ground for expanding emerging scholarship on representations of love, sexuality, and intimacy in African women's writing. Furthermore, representations of friendship also allow for broadening conversations on migration, urbanism, globalization, and the environment.

When I began writing this thesis, I was concerned with the marginalisation of friendship in African literary scholarship. I noted that friendship had often been side-lined and passed over, ignored in a relentless focus on romantic and heteronormative relationships. A focus on African women's friendships is even rarer, as is a focus on queer friendships. Hoping to centre friendship, this thesis began by asking if friendship is a preoccupation in contemporary African women's writing, and if so, to what extent. As I began to research these questions, representations of friendship in three critical areas have stood out: friendships between women, between people in the LGBTQIA+ community, and friendships between people and the more-than-human world. In each of these areas, I have found that friendship allows the protagonists of the short fiction I read to navigate the violence and injustices that characterise their worlds. This violence may be patriarchal and misogynistic, it might be rooted in racism, homophobia, economic inequality, or ecological destruction. Often, it is the result of a complex overlapping of these systems. In each of the texts I read here, what has stood out is the ways in which African women writers contend that friendship can offer resistance to, and refuge from, these oppressive systems, albeit in limited ways.

Rationale

As I have outlined above, this thesis examines representations of friendship in selected short fiction by African women. To reiterate, the theme of friendship warrants attention because this vital relationship offers rich ground for expanding discussions of love, intimacy, and sexuality in relation to broader systems of power in postcolonial and global contexts. As such, this thesis asks what role African women's fictional representations of friendships play in their texts. I

explore representations of friendship in short fiction because the form has historically provided a home for African women's writing and the depiction of marginalized subjectivities, especially gendered, racialised, and more recently, queer. Therefore, I argue that short fiction is an ideal site for analysing representations of friendship, a relationship that has been marginalised both in fiction and scholarship.

I choose to study African women's short fiction from four regions. These are South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, and fiction from the Somali-American diaspora. Studying four disparate regions allows me to perform a broad, albeit preliminary, analysis of African women's depictions of friendship on the continent as well as from the diaspora. Although this study is necessarily limited to these regions, it provides a starting point from which to examine depictions of friendship. Reading stories from disparate regions alongside each other allows me to examine the parallels between them while remaining attuned to local contexts. In this way, I can perform both a detailed close reading of each author, as well as draw broader comparisons of depictions of friendship across time and space.

In these regions, I focus on varied depictions of friendship. In the South African short stories, my focus is on women's friendships in short fiction by Sindiwe Magona and Makhosazana Xaba. I focus on Magona and Xaba because both are established authors writing at different points in South African literary history. By reading the two authors alongside each other, I can tease out continuities and point out the differences between their depictions of friendship, published more than twenty years apart. So, analysing Magona's *Living, Loving, and Lying Awake at Night* allows for an interrogation of women's friendships on the cusp of South Africa's transition to democracy, while reading Xaba's *Running and Other Stories* allows me to trace these same concerns two decades into the country's transition. I read *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* and *Running and Other Stories* specifically for their sustained focus on friendship, which has not yet been explored in literary scholarship on the

texts. I use a feminist framework to pay attention to analyse these texts. I draw on feminist scholars such as Pumla Dineo Gqola, Meg Samuelson, Jessica Murray, and Barbara Boswell to interrogate depictions of women's friendships in this chapter, because these scholars allow me to deepen my analysis of gender in relation to friendship.

In the short fiction from Uganda and Kenya that I read my focus is on queer friendships. I select stories from *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* and *Queer Africa 2: New Fiction* because these anthologies offer a plethora of queer short fiction from the continent. I was interested in what the authors writing in these queer-themed anthologies had to say about friendship, especially given that friendship is seldom prioritised when it comes to same-sex intimacies. I read Monica Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree," Beatrice Lamwaka's "Chief of the Home," and H.W. Mukami's "Pub 360" because these three short stories stand out for their sustained focus on friendship. They allow me to discuss queer writing from Uganda and Kenya, and to interrogate the ways in which friendship can offer depictions of queer complexity: love, joy, pain, and the everyday. By reading authors from Uganda and Kenya, I am also able to reflect on queer East African writing more broadly, and the role friendship plays in this fiction. I use a feminist and queer African framework to read the friendships in these texts, drawing on scholarship by Edgar Nabutanyi, Keguro Macharia, Stella Nyanzi, Sylvia Tamale, Lynda Gichanda Spencer, and others. This framework allows me to interrogate the authors' representation of queer friendship.

Finally, I turn to representations of friendship from the African diaspora. Including writers from the diaspora allows me to explore friendship's intersections with writing that explores central questions of home, travel, and belonging. It also allows me to put writing from the continent in conversation with writing from the diaspora. I include Sofia Samatar and Doreen Baingana because they allow me to extend the depictions of the friendships I study from human to nonhuman subjects. In their depiction of friendship with the nonhuman world,

Sofia Samatar's *Tender: Stories* and Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* open up space for new, ecocritical readings of friendship in African women's fiction. I use an ecofeminist and postcolonial ecocritical framework to read Samatar and Baingana. I draw on scholars such as Donna Haraway, Jane Bennett, Rosi Braidotti, Anthony Vital, Graham Huggan, and Helen Tiffin in order to analyse the relations between the human and the nonhuman in these texts.

By paying attention to women's friendships, queer friendships, and ecological friendships in this thesis, I contribute to discourses that surround contemporary African literature and focus on themes that remain uncanonised, thereby expanding conversations surrounding love and intimacy in African literature.

African Women Writing Love and Friendship

Love is more and more being regarded as an important area of study in various academic fields (Ferguson and Toye 5). I refer to love here in its broadest sense; reading love, as Keguro Macharia does, as a "leaky concept" that "amasses objects and situations and relationships" (68). In other words, love encompasses romance, friendship, familial and other affiliations. The field of feminist love studies, including, as it does, Black feminisms, provides a framework for theorizing love in ways that pay attention to the intersections of gender, class, race, sexuality, nationality, and other social differences, and so is central to my intersectional reading of friendship in this thesis.[1] This framework allows me to recognize, as David Eng puts it in a different context:

[1] Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to discuss overlapping and interlocking systems of oppression that affect individuals, such as discrimination along the lines of race, gender, and class (Crenshaw, Bello and Mancini 12).

> the ways in which race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation continue to be articulated and constituted in relation to one another in the ongoing struggles for equality and social belonging. (ix)

Ann Ferguson and Margaret Toye offer a productive mapping of feminist love studies. They demonstrate that analysing love was central to many early feminist thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Emma Goldman, and Simone de Beauvoir (Ferguson and Toye 5). Following this, disparate feminist thinkers such as Shulamith Firestone, Nancy Chodorow, and Silvia Federici offered radical critiques of love's role in perpetuating patriarchal systems (Ferguson and Toye 6). However, these scholars focused on gender, and elided different experiences women face along lines of class, race, sexuality, and nationality. In the late 1970s and through the 1980s, several feminist scholars offered a nuanced reading of gender, race, nationality, class, and sexuality, as well as analyses of love "as a productive force in feminist theory" (Ferguson and Toye 6). These included Audre Lorde, the Combahee River Collective, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Cherríe Moraga. These scholars emphasise love's ethical, social, and political implications (Ferguson and Toye 6). Cherríe Moraga puts it this way:

> An important aspect of the kind of love I'm talking about is that it branches out beyond a couple of people to encompass the larger world. That's what politics means to me, creating a bigger world of love and human compassion, at least as the bottom line for everything else. (Moraga and Quintanales 12)

hooks concurs and argues that "all the great movements for social justice… have strongly emphasized a love ethic" (xix), while Macharia reminds us that "reclaiming love has been central to liberatory politics" (68). This is clear in Sandoval's understanding of love as "a technology for social transformation" (Sandoval 20). In the context of affect theory, Sara Ahmed writes that "emotions 'matter' for politics," demonstrating that "emotions show us how

power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds" (4). Here, Ahmed links love to broader structures of power. I am interested in this thesis in the ways in which African women writers explore the interaction between of friendship and broader systems of power in their fiction. Does friendship, like love, offer insights into the operations of power? Therefore, I argue that friendship should be prioritized in the study of African women writers, who for decades have placed the critique of oppressive systems of power at the centre of their writing, as I go on to demonstrate below.

Love has not been explicitly and deliberately theorized in African feminisms (see Moolla 2024, Spencer 2024). As Lynda Gichanda Spencer and Fiona Moolla demonstrate, "African feminists have been reticent to theorise about love, except in relation to lesbian love"[2] (Spencer, "The Life of a Woman" 4). Historically, the term African 'feminism' was itself contested. Writing in 1994, Nigerian feminist and writer Molara Ogundipe-Leslie describes the "broad range of attitudes about feminism in Africa" at the time (532). She outlines two main strands of the debate. The first contended that African women were not oppressed, did not need feminism, and that feminism was a Western import. The second argued that women "suffer subordination" on more levels than one, referring to gendered, raced, and classed oppression (542). Ogundipe-Leslie herself offers a strong rebuttal to the first strand of the debate, writing:

> When they argue that feminism is foreign, are these opponents able to support the idea that African women or cultures did not have ideologies which propounded or theorized women's being and provided avenues and channels for women's oppositions and resistance to injustice within their societies? Certainly these channels existed. (547)

Here, Ogundipe-Leslie is referring to the multiple indigenous feminisms which have long existed in diverse African societies. Even if not called 'feminism,' struggles for gender justice

[2] Here, Spencer refers to early African feminist rejection of lesbian love in the work of feminists such as Catherine Acholonu, Mary Kolawole and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi ("The Life of a Woman" 5). African feminist contemporary engagement with lesbian love has changed significantly, as I will show in my analysis of queer African writing in Chapter Two.

have always existed. Scholars therefore refer to African feminisms, rather than feminism (548). Within the different strands of these African feminisms, women debated the terms by which they should be called. Many rejected the term "feminist," as Dobrota Pucherová demonstrates, which was "understood as the struggle of bourgeois white women for the right to reject marriage and motherhood," while ignoring the urgent issues of racism and neocolonial capitalism (4). Other terms were suggested for African women's feminism, including "womanism, motherism, stiwanism, nego feminism and feminism with a small f" (Pucherová, *Feminism and Modernity* 5). Writing in 1986, Boyce Davies provides an overview of early African feminist writing by reading Ogundipe-Leslie and others, including Filomina Steady, Gwendoline Konie and Micere Mugo ("Notes" 561). She identifies seven basic tenants of African feminisms at the time. First, the recognition of a "common struggle with African men" against foreign domination (563). Next, the recognition of "inequalities and limitations" that exist in traditional societies, and that colonialism both reinforced and added to. Third, the recognition that "African societies are ancient societies," and so African feminisms have a long history. Fourth, acknowledgement that African women can either value or reject traditional and cultural institutions, depending on whether they are detrimental to women or not (563). Fifth, African feminisms respect African women's "self-reliance" and "the penchant to cooperative work and social organization" (564). Next, African feminisms pay attention to women's positions in post-liberation societies where gendered struggles have often been delayed (564). Lastly, African feminisms consider "traditional and contemporary avenues of choice for women" (564). Different feminisms engaged with these tenants in different ways and to varying degrees.

More recently, Chielozona Eze and Pucherová have offered analyses of contemporary African feminisms (see Eze 2016; Pucherová 2022). Pucherová describes an "epistemic shift" in understandings of African feminisms between the 20th and 21st centuries (*Feminism and*

Modernity 1). Writing in *Feminism and Modernity in Anglophone African Women's Writing: A 21st - Century Global Context* (2022), Pucherová argues for a reading of African feminisms as a "relational, global process that can lead to cross-pollination and dialogue about women's shared experiences without cancelling out their differences" (2). She therefore reads African women's writing as part of transnational feminism. Drawing on African feminist writers, activists and scholars such as Pumla Dineo Gqola, Desiree Lewis, Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, Sylvia Tamale, Ayaan Hirsi, Stella Nyanzi, Chimamanda Adichie, June Eric Udorie, Panashe Chigumadzi, Zineb El Rhazoui, Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah, Warsan Shire, and Akwaeke Emezi, Pucherová maintains that: "For contemporary African women writers and theorists, sexuality is the primary area of women's negotiations of their rights, framed as human rights" (*Feminism and Modernity* 10). Alongside sexuality, she identifies the following significant themes: "nomadism, border-crossings, unhomeliness, deterritorialization, displacement and explorations of themes of otherness resulting from disillusionment about the direction of postcolonial Africa" (7).

Scholars such as Eze and Pucherová explore pain, human rights abuses, empathy, pleasure, desire, agency, freedom, and power in contemporary African feminism (Pucherová, *Feminism and Modernity* 3). However, love itself is still undertheorized. One of the reasons for this is the repeated portrayal of poverty and violence as typical of Africa. In his famous article, "How to Write about Africa," Binyavanga Wainaina makes this point. He demonstrates that, especially in the West, images of pain and suffering on the continent are given preference, while love is a "taboo subject" (334). Notably, in a recent article, Peace Kiguwa offers an analysis of love as it occurs in Black and African feminism. While Kiguwa reads writers such as hooks, Toni Morrison, and Maya Angelou as part of an already established African American canon of love studies which I have discussed above, her reading of African feminist scholars and writers such as Gqola, Sharlene Khan, Stella Nyanzi, and Zethu Matebani is

notable for her attention to how love figures in their work. As Moola posits above, their focus on love is not often as clear or direct as it occurs in African American feminisms and womanism (see Nash 2011). However, Kiguwa is able to tease out love's role in their thinking. Kiguwa argues for reading love as method, arguing that African women writers have often been engaged in the work of naming and recovering of women's contributions which have historically been erased. In this she reads a politics of love. She cites Siphokazi Magadla's work on recovering South African women's contributions to the African National Congress's armed struggle against the Apartheid state in this regard, as well as Xaba's naming of Xolobeni women's resistance to seizure of their land by mining corporations (Kiguwa, "Love as Method" 1).

In addition, as Moolla demonstrates through a reading of celebrated Ghanaian author Ama Ata Aidoo's oeuvre, African women writers *do* offer a theorization of love in their fiction (92). However, literary and feminist scholars need, as Spencer argues, to pay attention to it ("The Life of a Woman" 4). That is what this thesis does in its focus on friendship in African women's writing. African feminist scholars have argued for reading African women's fiction as theory (see Nfah-Abbenyi 1997, Boswell 2020, Spencer 2024). They posit that because African women have historically been excluded from more formal modes of theory making, their theory can often be found in creative spaces (Spencer, "The Life of a Woman" 6). Writing in relation to romantic love, Spencer argues that "the theories of romantic love that are rejected, absent or silent in African feminists' debates, can be found in the creative works of African female authors" ("The Life of a Woman" 6). Following Spencer, I argue that it is not only theories of romantic love that can be found in the creative works of African women writers, but theories of friendship as well.

African women writers are often understood though a generational framework. This framework identifies first (1950s – 1970s, broadly concerned with the anticolonial struggle)

second (1980s, broadly concerned with independence) and third generation writers (contemporary authors). However, Chris Dunton and Pius Adesanmi draw attention to the difficulties of delineating literary generations in this way. They note that defining a generation "…can never escape the problem of semantic, thematic and ideological indeterminacy" (13), and draw attention to the fluidity and overlaps that necessarily exist between generations of writers. In her analysis of third-generation women writers, Jane Bryce stresses these concerns, arguing that third-generation women writers "… can more profitably be seen as part of a larger dialogue with both male and female writers of earlier generations" (53). Following Bryce, I understand the women writers I examine in this thesis to be part of this larger dialogue.

As Elleke Boehmer notes of the colonial and postcolonial periods, native or subaltern women were "*doubly* or *triply marginalized*" (216). She elaborates that they were "disadvantaged on the grounds not only of gender but also of race, social class, and, in some cases, religion, caste, sexuality, and regional status" (216). Early African women's writing was initially side-lined and ignored by popular and literary critics (see Davies 1991, Newell 2006, Andrade 2011). In fact, Carole Boyce Davies, writing in 1991 argued that the terms "African", "woman" and "writer" were often placed alongside each other only with unease (249). She uses the terms "marginality," "minoring" and "effacement" to describe the treatment of African women writers and their works by literary critics. The reception of Aidoo's (now celebrated) debut novel *Our Sister Killjoy: Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint* (1977) is a case in point, met with non-recognition and silence (Wilentz 159). Writing in 1986, Aidoo described the tendency for literary critics to forget African women writers as "standard practice," and combats this through the deliberate naming of writers such as Efua Sutherland (Ghana), Bessie Head (South Africa), Flora Nwapa (Nigeria), Mariamâ Ba (Senegal) and Loretta Ngcobo (South Africa) (514). In the West African context, Stephanie Newall shows that male literary critics tended to "marginalize" and "dismiss" women's writing as trivial and domestic (138).

In her study of early African women writers, Susan Andrade concurs, demonstrating that these writers were mostly considered apolitical because their "representations of politics rarely involved explicitly nationalist or syndicalist themes" (5). Andrade reads Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria), Mariama Bâ and Aminata Sow Fall (Senegal), Tsitsi Dangaremba (Zimbabwe), and Assia Djebar (Algeria), to demonstrate that these writers' representations of the domestic are in fact a simultaneous exploration and critique of the political (6). As she puts it: "The domestic… offers as sharp an analytic perspective on collectivity and national politics as does the arena of public political action" (1). Accordingly, early African women writers are now often understood through their simultaneous critique of public and private, and the ways systems of power operate in these mutually constituted spheres.

Self-definition was a central preoccupation of many early African women writers (see Davies 1991, Boehmer 2005, Newell 2006). Writing explicitly against colonial and patriarchal misrepresentations of womanhood, African women writers used literature to "call into being an image of autonomous selfhood" (Boehmer 217). While Boehmer considers the work of South African women writers such as Emma Mashini, Ellen Kuzwayo, and Mamphela Ramphele to make this point (217), Newell identifies similar themes in women writing from West Africa (139). Davies does too, in autobiographies by Nafissatou Diallo (Senegal), Charity Waciuma (Kenya), and Noni Jabavu (South Africa) among others ("Private Selves" 272). Reflecting on the portrayal of the self in West African women's writing, Newell posits that

> … what these authors seem to share with one another is a concern to portray the *processes* whereby women are socialized: rather than simply representing the mother a 'natural' woman or a national icon, many of these writers count the costs and benefits of such cultural ideals. (137)

As Newell demonstrates here, many early African women writers analysed the social construction of gender and its impact on the self in their writing. Often, they did this through

the exploration of themes such as "motherhood, female infertility, women's relationship to nationalist discourses, domestic violence and the education of girls" (Newell 138).

Chielozona Eze shows that the interest in depicting the self continues in third-generation African women's writing[3]. Eze argues that contemporary women writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta, Lola Shoneyin, Chinelo Okparanta and Chika Unigwe (Nigeria), Baingana (Uganda), Petina Gappah and NoViolet Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), and Patricia Jabbeh Wesley (Liberia) "write back to self" and centre the body in so doing (2). The rich and varied emerging scholarship on contemporary African women writers gives insight into some of the many preoccupations that characterise this field and which intersect with representing the self. These include concerns such as gender and sexuality (see Siundu 2011, Mtenje 2017, Spencer, Ligaga and Musila 2018, Spencer 2019, Murray 2019), migration (see Uwakweh 2023), violence, pain and war (see Norridge 2013, Nkealah and Nnaemeka 2021) and queer and African intersections (see Osinubi 2016, Munro 2017).

Despite the varied areas of focus I have outlined here, Jennifer Cole and Lynn Thomas demonstrate that even though representations of love on the continent proliferate in literature, film, and popular culture, scholarly attention has rarely been given to representations of love on the continent (2). Recent publications which take love as their focus include Cole and Thomas's interdisciplinary study of romantic love in Africa (2009), Jennifer Leetsch's study of love in African women's diasporic writing (2021), Bimbola Akinbola's analysis of romantic love and the erotic in selected African films (2022) and Moolla's analysis of romantic love in Ama Ata Aidoo's oeuvre and African women's writing more broadly (2023). While these scholars centre romantic love and the erotic in their analyses, I argue that friendship in African

[3] Eze suggests that third-generation African literature breaks from postcolonial women's writing in that where postcolonial women's writing wrote back to the West, third-generation women writers "write back to self" (2). Although Eze does acknowledge that perhaps the self has always been a focus of much African women's writing, he does stress this break more strongly than necessary, given the history of writing the self in African women's writing I have outlined.

women's writing has received even less attention than romantic love. To date, there are no full-length studies of women writing friendship from the continent. In this thesis, then, I contribute to the debate by foregrounding African women's depictions of friendship between women, between queer characters, and between human and non-human subjects.

Women Writing Friendship

As medieval scholars Karma Lochrie and Usha Vishnuvajjala note, women's depictions of friendship have a long history. In this section, I provide a broad context for my reading of African women's depictions of friendship in this thesis. I begin with early theorizations of friendship in Ancient Greece and demonstrate how women were excluded from such theorizations and continued to be in succeeding centuries. I go on to trace scholars' retrieval of women's depictions of friendship, ending with Smith and Ferrante in the contemporary moment.

Many accounts of the history of friendship in the West begin with the writings of classical philosophy (see Caine 2009, Schweitzer 2016). As Dirk Baltzly and Nick Eliopolous suggest, friendship is "one of the most pervasive themes in writing to have come down from the ancient Greeks" (2). Aristotle and other classical philosophers wrote about friendships under the term *philia*. *Philia* is commonly translated as friendship, although it included several relationships not generally referred to as friendship at present, such as relationships between colleagues, relatives, acquaintances, and business associates (Caine x). Friendship was conceptualised as a far more public relationship than it is now considered, and it played a large role in political relations, both between individual actors and states (Baltzly and Eliopolous). Barbra Caine details Aristotle's taxonomy of friendship, identifying three main categories: advantage friendship, pleasure friendship, and virtue friendship (x). Virtue friendship often receives the most attention from scholars. It was considered the rarest, most valuable, and ideal

form of friendship, and could only be experienced between those who were "morally virtuous" (x).

Drawing on Jacques Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship* (1997), Ivy Schweitzer shows that virtue friendship relied on the concept of sameness, or likeness. Virtue friendship could only occur between equals, a term which implies "parity" and "symmetry" (Schweitzer 340). In this way, Schweitzer argues, "we can understand ideal friendship as a deep-seated fantasy of similitude, even merging" (Schweitzer 346). Schweitzer's use of the word "fantasy" here is revealing. It indicates that ideals of sameness and likeness are inherently unattainable. To be "like" someone else, to be "the same" as an other, is impossible. The very concept of likeness itself necessitates difference. The fantasy of likeness was by definition androcentric, as friendship could only occur between those who were like each other: male and elite (Schweitzer 341). Women, then, were doubly excluded from friendship, as they were excluded from both cross gender and female friendships (Schweitzer 341). Significantly then, friendship, and especially virtue friendship, was conceptualised in classical Athens as "exclusively masculine" and "elite" (Schweitzer 337).

The exclusion of women from friendship persisted into the following centuries. Writing during the formation of the Roman Empire, Cicero, like Aristotle, argued that true friendship was only possible between the elite and between men, surpassing the friendships of "ordinary people" (Schweitzer 342). Cicero's reflections on friendship, like those of the classical philosophers, are notable for their pervasive influence, both at the time and in the following centuries (Caine x, Mews and Chiavaroli 65). Friendship in subsequent eras, until the Renaissance, was also conceptualised as male, white, and elite, as Constant Mews and Neville Chiavaroli write: "While we cannot doubt that friendships existed between women throughout this period, it is only occasionally that they come to public attention" (73). As Mews and Chiavaroli make clear, it is the absence of a public record that renders women's friendships

before the Renaissance almost invisible. This may be the case, but as Penelope Anderson emphasises, *almost* invisible is not invisible (246). Drawing on the work of Marc Schachter, Anderson argues that women's absence from friendship discourse is not complete, and that claiming it is so would further act to erase women from conceptualisations of friendship (246).[4]

Anderson goes on to detail the work of early modern scholars who have worked to uncover erased histories of women's discourses on friendship (See Mendelson 1998, Gowing 2005). Their research adds to the "… growing body of work on political manoeuvrings, particularly those of elite women, [that] shows the practical value of alliances between women" (Anderson 248). On the other hand, Anderson argues that friendships between women who did not belong to the elite classes are not as easily traced, as these friendships were not recorded (248). Following Anderson, then, it is important to note that work on women's friendship in the West before the 14th century is ongoing. Edited by Karma Lochrie and Usha Vishnuvajjala, *Women's Friendship in Medieval Literature* (2022) is a significant addition to this scholarship, offering chapters that examine depictions of women's friendships in the Middle Ages.

Published posthumously in 2003, Alan Bray's *The Friend* details the history of attitudes towards same sex friendships in England, beginning in the fourteenth century and spanning all the way to the nineteenth. To do this, Bray reads tombstones, graves, and religious monuments as records of friendship (5). Through his careful reading of these monuments, Bray unearths evidence of early attitudes to friendship. In doing so, he reveals a long history of institutionalised same sex friendship, in the form of sworn oaths of friendship that men and women made to each other through the church. Bray begins his analysis with a reading of the shared tombstone of two English Knights (Bray 15). In the course of his historical analysis of this and other tombs, Bray explores the practice of sworn friendship. For centuries, couples of

[4] See Schachter's *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship: From Classical Antiquity to Early Modern France* (2016).

the same sex swore their commitment to each other and to their friendship. This oath-taking took place in the church and was sanctified by the taking of the Eucharist. Significantly, Bray shows how these oaths overlapped with and were similar to marriage and baptism (25). All took place in church, and all were considered essential to establish bonds between families. In this way, Bray argues, friendship was a form of kinship making (Bray 83). Friendship as kinship is a concept I will return to many times over the course of this study. However, Bray notes that women are mostly absent from the stories and records he reads, and if present, are figured as enemies to men's friendship (176).

In the Renaissance period, scholars had greater access to a record of women's friendships, and to those friendships that existed outside of the elite classes. Women were beginning to have access to the practices of reading and writing, and did so for professional, religious, and personal reasons. In this way, "more and more women, both religious and lay, came to participate in the Renaissance discourses of friendship" (James and Kent 115). One of the ways that women could participate in public discourse on friendship was through poetry. Lorna Hutson shows that the poetry of the seventeenth century poet Katherine Phillips "… challenge(s) the male monopoly on the notion that only men's souls are capable of elevated friendships" and argues that Phillips "appropriates and 'regenders' the eroticized rituals and discourses of elevated friendship between men" (201). Through Hutson's analysis of Phillips's poetry, we can understand the ways in which women's discourses on friendship might become a means of resisting traditional "male" and "elite" versions of friendship. Hutson uses Phillips to mark what she identifies as a "turning point" in public conceptualization of friendship. I understand this transition through Anderson's description of the period: "a historical move from masculine to feminine friendship." To summarise, scholars argue that the masculine, public utility of friendship as a political tool begins to fade from public discourse, and that the

emotion associated with friendship becomes feminised (Anderson 245). Friendship is, as Anderson puts it, "relegated to the intimate" (246).

The conceptualization of friendship as feminine continues in the eighteenth century, and Moyra Haslett demonstrates that in this period, women's private and domestic friendships and homosocial relations were for the most part portrayed negatively, citing numerous fictional depictions of women as either frivolous gossips or petty rivals (81). It is in relation to this context that a node of scholarship on women writing friendship in eighteenth-century literatures emerges (see Myers 1990, Carnell 1998, Anderson 2012, Haslett 2018, Cole 2024). These scholars also read women writers' reflections on the role friendship plays in their own lives, as well as their fictional depictions of friendship, to recover their attitudes towards friendship and its significance. Reading women's fictional and nonfictional depictions of friendships recovers and gives insight into women's lives and political contributions at a time when these were largely dismissed. For example, in her study of eighteenth-century writer Eliza Haywood, Rachel Carnell takes up the question of women's friendships and probes their position in public and domestic life. Looking specifically at Haywood's periodicals, Carnell argues that Haywood uses friendship between women as a model for ideal political debate, allowing her to criticize women's exclusion from the public sphere, as well as to criticize the nature of political debate between men (204). In her reading of women's eighteenth-century literature, Megan Cole focuses on depictions of close female friendships (which she terms queer platonic relationships[5]) in Margaret Cavendish's *The Covenant of Pleasure* (1668), Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* (1748) and Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762). Cole reads these depictions as a challenge to the heterosexual and patriarchal systems that governed the lives of

[5] Cole notes that a queer platonic relationships is a "coined, defined, and redefined by asexual and aromantic people to describe a relationship that is not romantic, but emotionally closer than what we generally think of as friendship" (279).

eighteenth-century women in England (269). In these examples, Carnell and Cole provide new ways of reading depictions of friendships between women in the eighteenth-century as political.

There are several full-length works on women's friendships in the nineteenth century. In their study of the Victorian era, scholars such as Carroll Smith-Rosenburg (1975) and Sharon Marcus (2007) have drawn on letters, biographies, memoirs, journals, as well as novels, conduct books, and fashion magazines in order to analyse friendship, desire, and marriage between women. Through a reading of these texts, Marus demonstrates that friendship fulfilled varied and complex roles. In particular, friendship allowed women opportunities to act beyond the limits of the gender system:

> Female friendship reinforced gender roles and consolidated class status, but it also provided women with socially permissible opportunities to engage in behaviour commonly seen as the monopoly of men: competition, active choice, appreciation of female beauty, and struggles with religious belief. As friends, women could comport themselves with one another in ways forbidden with men, without compromising the respectability too prized by the middle class. (Marcus 26)

Marcus thinks about friendship through the lens of what she terms "elasticity." She argues that in friendships, women were given space to stretch the gender system without actually changing it (27). What emerges from reading women's writing on friendships is the complexity of these relationships and the multiple roles they fulfil.

Unlike the centuries preceding it, there are few full-length works that focus on women's depictions of friendship in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rather, scholarship focuses closely on women's depictions of friendship in specific texts, or by particular authors. For example, Kristina Lee Knotts's doctoral thesis offers a reading of American women's depictions of friendship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She reads texts

such as Louisa May Alcott's *Work: A Story of Experience* (1873), Mary Wilkins Freeman's *A New England Nun* (1891), and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905). Focusing mainly on texts that emerge later in the twentieth century, Lousia Clare Brown Kirk's doctoral thesis examines women's friendships in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), Nella Larson's *Passing* (1929), Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1973), Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1973). In addition, Chandra Lee Wells's doctoral thesis (2005) is notable for its focus on twentieth-century representations of interracial friendships in texts by women writers such as Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976) and Shirley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose* (1986), among others. While scholarship on earlier centuries often elides questions of race in women's depictions of friendship, scholarship that focuses on twentieth-century African American women writers' depictions of friendship brings race to the fore. This is evident in scholarship on Toni Morrison's oeuvre. *Sula*, for example, has been the locus of a sustained analysis of the depiction of female friendship between black women (see Coleman 1993, Fulton 2006, Fetters 2016, Nedaee and Salami 2017, Stahl 2024). Scholars have also examined the friendships in other of Morrison's works, including "Recitatif" (1983), *Paradise* (1997) and *Love* (2002) (See Morris 2013, Kiguwa 2022). In her reading of *Love*, South African feminist scholar Peace Kiguwa argues that Morrison asks what it means to love against a backdrop of racist, classist, and patriarchal systems (33).

As with Morrison's works, Ferrante's quartet *My Brilliant Friend* (2011), *The Story of a New Name* (2012), *Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay* (2013), *The Story of the Lost Child* (2014), and Smith's *On Beauty* (2005), *NW* (2012), and *Swing Time* (2016) have received scholarly attention in recent years for their portrayal of friendship (see Carbajal 2014, Lee 2016, Taylor 2016, Guarro 2019, Nandi 2023, Taylor 2023). Both authors have been studied for their portrayals of difficult friendship – Smith for her exploration of class, race, and sexuality in friendship, and Ferrante for her exploration of the taboo. The texts I have discussed

above, however, are overwhelmingly Western, indicative of the lack of scholarship on women writing friendship in other regions. Maryam Mirza's *Intimate Class Acts: Friendship and Desire in Indian and Pakistani Women's Fiction* (2016) is notable, then, for its exploration of friendships across class in novels by women writers from India and Pakistan. She examines "romantic, platonic and sexual cross-class intimacy" in novels such as Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988), Brinda Charry's *The Hottest Day of the Year* (2001) and Moni Mohsin's *The End of Innocence* (2006) (Mirza xxiv).

Also particularly notable for this study is the slim critical attention given to African women writer's depictions of friendship. This includes Kadidya Sy's doctoral thesis on women's friendships in four African women writers' novels, both from the continent in the diaspora: Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *Love*, Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* (1979), and Seffi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* (2005). I am most interested here in Sy's reading of Bâ and Atta, whom she argues present female friendship as a "form of sisterhood" and a "sincere commitment" (1). Written in epistolary form from one friend to another – from Ramatoulaye to Aïssatou – Senegalese writer Bâ's *So Long a Letter* is arguably one of the most well-known representations of friendship between African women. The novel has received some attention in relation to its treatment of friendship (See McElaney-Johnson 1999, Sehulster 2004) and, in her assessment of the novel, Patricia Sehulster argues that Bâ presents women's friendships as "central to survival" (365). Other African women writers who have received attention, albeit limited, for their depictions of friendship include Yvette Christiansë for *Unconfessed* (2006) and Futhi Ntshingila for *Shameless* (2008) for their erotic depictions of female friendship (see Kaoma 2016.) As can be seen from the brevity of this list, there is a lack of critical attention on friendship in African women's writing.

However, a recently published collection edited by Jon Soske and Shannon Walsh, *Ties that Bind: Race and the Politics of Friendship in South Africa* (2016), is notable for its

sustained focus on the ways in which race and friendship have been conceptualised, and at times mutually constituted in South Africa. The collection provides an analysis of race and friendship in South Africa, beginning with how colonial rule viewed interracial friendship, and moving through the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. The authors are also interested in the insight friendships can provide into power relations, and what effect they have on these relations, arguing that friendships can both disrupt and reinforce them.

In their introduction to the collection, Soske and Walsh trace attitudes towards friendship in South African political discourse in the colonial and apartheid periods. They demonstrate that friendship plays a central role in this discourse and argue that "a history of colonial power in South Africa must therefore incorporate a genealogy of the language practices of friendship" (4) . Significantly, friendship emerges as both "a mode of liberal power" and a way in which to resist and subvert colonial systems (4). As Soske and Walsh put it, friendship carries the potential for both "intimacies and complicities" (4). For example, friendship was envisioned as an ideal mode of relation between colonial and indigenous peoples, in which the "native" should be "bound by affection and gratitude to the (former) colonial master" (Soske and Walsh 3). In contrast, friendship was also used as a mode of relation in movements for racial equality (Soske and Walsh 3).

In South African literature, "there is a long tradition of writing about the intersections of race and friendship in South Africa" (Soske and Walsh 9). Soske and Walsh argue that significant work on friendship and race unfolds primarily in the novel (Soske and Walsh 9). They discuss writers such as Olive Schreiner, Sol Plaatje, Es'kia Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, and Nadine Gordimer and argue that in their texts,

> The question of whether friendship was possible across racial lines served as a vehicle for reflecting on the conditions for building a common society. In this mode of writing,

> the personal serves as a microcosm: it stands for and makes visible a vision of social and political life. (Soske and Walsh 9)

I return to these questions in Chapter One, in my examination of South African women's writing. I extend the work of Soske and Walsh by offering a detailed analysis of friendship as it appears in the work of black women writers.

Above, I have traced the existing scholarship on women writers' depictions of friendship from the Middle Ages to the present. This scholarship informs my reading of the selected African women writers I examine. As I have demonstrated, scholarship that makes African women writers' depictions of friendship its focus is rare, and I hope to draw on and contribute to this literature in this thesis. It is also evident that much of the scholarship that examines women's depictions of friendship focuses on their depictions of female friendship. While the first chapter of this thesis continues this focus, chapters two and three extend the conversation to queer and ecological friendships. In this way, this study builds on and contributes to the field of women writing friendship in new ways.

Theorising Friendship: feminist, queer, and ecological approaches

As I noted above, the African women writers I read in this thesis explore friendship in relation to three main concerns: friendship between women, friendship within the LGBTQIA+ community, and friendship with the more-than-human world. Feminist, queer, and ecological approaches are therefore central to this thesis. Here, I map out a theoretical framework for each of these approaches, beginning with the ways in which friendship has been theorized in feminist theory.

In her article entitled *Making Equals: Classical Philia and Women's Friendship*, Schweitzer traces the theorization of friendship by feminist scholars. She demonstrates that in the early years of women's liberation and feminist movements, many white, Western-based feminists (such as Shulamith Firestone and the radicalesbians) focussed on systemic patriarchy

and assumed unity among women in their resistance to it, therefore eliding and ignoring the realities of oppression along the lines of class, race, nationality, and sexuality, and the differences among women these created (353). These feminists emphasised solidarity between women along the lines of sisterhood. Even among scholars who used friendship as a framework, inequalities were elided. Schweitzer offers Janice Raymond's *A Passion for Friends: Towards a Philosophy of Female Affection* (1986) and Mary Hunt's *Fierce Tenderness: A Feminist Theology of Friendship* (1991) as examples of conceptualizations of friendship that failed to recognize inequality other than gendered inequality (356). Countering this, women writers of colour and lesbian feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa and The Combahee River Collective wrote to expose the multiple and interlocking layers of oppression suffered by working-class, lesbian, women of colour (Schweitzer 353). Citing the work of Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich, Schweitzer argues that

> It was women of colour and lesbian theorists and activists who led the way in exposing the inequalities built into the notion of sisterhood and engaging in dialogues about the history of differences among women that affect friendship and collaboration. (356)

Notable here is Maria Lugones's theorization of friendship. Lugones argues that it is friendship, rather than sisterhood, which provides the ideal model through which to think about relations among women in the feminist movement. While sisterhood is fraught with a familial politics which erases the vast differences between women – race, class, nationality – Lugones argues that friendship allows for the exploration of these differences (see Lugones 1995). Also arguing for friendship as a feminist model, Marilyn Freeman posits that "voluntary choice" is important in distinguishing friendships from many other relationships (286). This choice has pertinent effects, as Friedman notes:

> Friendship is more likely than many other close personal relationships to provide social support for people who are idiosyncratic, whose unconventional values and deviant

> lifestyles make them victims of intolerance from family members and others who are unwillingly related to them. In this regard, friendship has socially disruptive possibilities, for out of the unconventional living which it helps to sustain there often arise influential forces for social change. (286)

For Friedman then, friendship can allow the formation of new, alternative communities, which might enable the transformation of hegemonic patriarchy.

Schweitzer demonstrates that themes of transformation and subversion have been central to much recent writing about the intersections between friendship and feminism. She notes that there has been a proliferation of "…films and texts about 'friendship with the Other,' especially among women in global cross-cultural relationships" (337). Two publications are notable in this regard: Leela Gandhi's *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-siecle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (2006) and Elora Chowdhury and Liz Philipose's *Dissident Friendships: Feminism, Imperialism and Transnational Solidarity* (2016). In *Affective Communities*, Leela Gandhi explores friendship's capacity for transformation and subversion of hegemonic patriarchy through the lens of nineteenth-century British anticolonialism. She explores what she terms "dissident friendships" between colonial and British subjects, and the capacity these friendships had to disrupt the empire and to foster anticolonial thinking.

Following Gandhi, Chowdhury and Philipose explore the role of friendship in solidarity movements. Again, the authors are interested in the types of community allowed by the unscripted characteristics of friendship. They emphasise that friendship is composed of intimacy, connection, and care, and write that these characteristics can oppose oppressive narratives informed by structural power through the exchange of real lived experiences. For the authors, "national, racial, imperial, class, gender, and 'enemy lines' fail to keep people from crossing lines in friendship" (3).

Friendship, then, emerges as a core aspect of feminist theory and praxis. In Queer theory, theorising friendship also plays a central role. One of the most well-known queer theorizations of friendship is Michel Foucault's interview with French magazine *Le Gai Pied,* which appeared in 1981. In this interview, Foucault describes friendship as a way of life. He states:

> As far back as I can remember to want guys [*garçons*] was to want relations with guys. That has always been important for me. Not necessarily in the form of a couple, but as a matter of existence: how is it possible for men to be together? To live together, to share their time, their meals, their room, their leisure, their grief, their knowledge, their confidences? What is it to be "naked" among men, outside of institutional relations, family, profession, and obligatory camaraderie? (136)

Here, Foucault describes friendship not just as a core part of life, but as a way of being. Notably, however, Foucault's conceptualization of queer friendship excludes women. This has been countered in subsequent scholarship.

More recently, Elizabeth Freeman and Tyler Bradway argue that kinship has been a central preoccupation of Queer theory, citing the work of scholars such as Gayle Rubin, Adrienne Rich, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Hortense Spillers, Gloria Anzaldúa and Kath Weston (1). Freeman and Bradway demonstrate that

> Kinship theory – as practiced in queer, feminist and critical race studies – contests structuralist accounts of kinship, particularly as the latter naturalize that mutual imbrications of heteronormativity, patriarchy, white supremacy, and Western imperialism. (1)

In other words, Kinship theory critiques systems that destroy, limit, and control forms of belonging, and suggests alternatives. Friendship is central to Queer and Kinship theories as it

has been theorized as an alternative site of belonging to the (heteronormative) nuclear family (see Weston 1997, Freeman 2007).

Reading friendship as an alternative site of belonging suggests a reading of friendship as kinship, where kinship is defined as "the set of possibilities for social relations in any given culture whether they are addressed in state policy or not…" (Freeman and Bradway 295). Kinship matters, as the ways in which kinship is interpreted by state policy determine significant economic and social aspects of people's lives, such as tax and inheritance, marriage, adoption, and even who might be allowed to visit whom in hospital, or who can take care of a child in case of a parent's death. As Freeman notes,

> kinship has… mattered to people of all sexual orientations whose emotional, financial, domestic, and other ties do not follow the lines of dyadic sexual union and genealogical descent. (Freeman, *Kinship* 295)

In other words, kinship matters because it can impact every part of an individual's life. It has been a central issue in queer organizing due to the failure of many states to recognize queer forms of kinship, such as same-sex marriage and friendship.

Kinship has also mattered to queer scholars, activists, and individuals because family is a troubled concept in queer theory, and many scholars advocate for a movement away from heteronormative, racist, and capitalist "family values" that fail queer individuals, and towards different formulations of family (see Halberstam 2007, Butler 2002). For example, in *Forgetting Family: Queer Alternatives to Oedipal Relations* (2007), Jack Halberstam argues for a movement away from family altogether and advocates "forgetting family" (315). Halberstam demonstrates that people are "enmeshed in multiple and complex systems of relation," and argues that these bonds can provide much-needed forms of belonging and support (316). Given this context, friendship emerges as a significant alternative site of belonging in queer studies, and recognizing friendship points to, as Jennifer Doyle puts it, "the

political importance of nurturing forms of relationship outside domestic and patriarchal structures" (Doyle 326). Kath Weston's conceptualization of "families of choice" remains one of the most well-known theorizations of queer friendship that has emerged in the face of troubled families. Published in 1995, Weston's *Families We Choose* maps the "movement away from oppressive families of origin toward alternative structures of belonging that may offer intimacy, care, eroticism and dependency in other forms…" (Freeman and Bradway 7). Weston documents friendship as one such "alternative structures of belonging," and argues that friendship can offer queer individuals belonging and support in instances where the family fails to do so. However, the emphasis on choice in this model has been critiqued, as access to such choice might be influenced by privileges granted by race, gender, class, and disability, among others (Freeman, *Queer Belongings* 304). In this way, friendship itself can be a "scene of exclusion" (Freeman and Bradway 9).

I have demonstrated above that friendship has been a central concern of feminist and Queer theories. It remains to trace the role of friendship in relation to the non-human world. Rosi Braidotti offers a way of thinking about our relationship to human and nonhuman others which is drawn from Donna Haraway and is characterized by what Braidotti terms an "enlarged sense of community." For Braidotti:

> Haraway calls for a renewed kinship system, radicalized by concretely affectionate ties to the non-human 'other.' Haraway argues that the subject-object, nature-culture divides are linked to patriarchal, oedipal familial narratives. Against them, she mobilizes an enlarged sense of community, based on empathy, accountability and recognition. Moreover, she extends these prerogatives to non-human agents or subjects, such as animals, plant cells, bacteria, and the earth as a whole. (Braidotti 199)

Here, Haraway calls our attention to the need to renew and reimagine humanity's relationship with non-human subjects. Her conceptualization of an "enlarged sense of community" provides

a framework through which to read friendship between human and non-human. In this thesis, I consider the ways in which the short fiction I have selected offers glimpses of what it might mean to forge a friendship with the earth and the landscapes we inhabit. As such, I read these texts in the context of ecopoetics, defined by Kate Rigby as "the incorporation of an ecological or environmental perspective into the study of poetics" (Hume and Osborne 2). For Angela Hume and Gillian Osborne,

> …ecopoetics can encompass experiments in community making, ranging from poetry and visual art, literary criticism, and performance to walking, foraging, farming, cooking and being alongside each other, whether human or other than human, in space and place. (2)

Here, Hume and Osborn stress the importance of community making to ecopoetics. In fact, Hume, Osborn, and Green all emphasize the centrality of community in the very etymology of the word. They show how "eco" is derived from the Greek "oikos," which can mean "family" or "house," and from which the word "ecumene" derives, meaning "being together" and "inhabited land" (Hume and Osborne 2). An ethic of friendship in humanity's relationship to the earth would require a breakdown of the binaries between human and non-human subjects, the modern idea, as Jane Bennett puts it, "of matter as passive stuff, as raw, brute or inert" (vii). For Bennett, the "quarantines of matter and life encourage us to ignore the vitality *of* matter…" (vii). In other words, the separation of matter and life, of living and "nonliving" subjects, hinders our understanding of how non-human subjects *do* act, albeit in different ways, such as a landfill, which is not inert, but generates continuous and powerful streams of chemicals and methane. Bennett encourages us to think about how our relationship to the earth would change if we privileged the vitality of matter.

Thinking along similar lines, Bryan Bannon argues that an acknowledgement of the vitality of matter could enable the adoption of an ethic of friendship in our relationship to the

natural world. He argues that viewing nature as passive "…allows humanity to assume the position of nature's benefactor, rather than acknowledging the myriad ways in which nature contributes, though not volitionally, to our wellbeing" (52). Bannon argues instead for a friendship with nature, which would acknowledge the ways in which we are in relationship with the natural world and foster an ethic of care. For Bannon, developing such a relationship would require a shift in how "we think about nature and ourselves" (46). A friendship with nature would require a shift away from an ethic of "mastery," in which we imagine ourselves as conquerors of the natural world. Significantly, it would also require a movement away from solely humanistic conceptions of friendship.

In this thesis, I draw on these theorizations of friendship, both between humans and between humans and the nonhuman world. I employ the theories I have traced here to understand the ways in which African women writers write friendship, and the ways in which they contribute to friendship theory.

African short fiction

As I have detailed so far, this thesis offers readings of African women's depictions of friendship in three critical areas: between women, between members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and between human and nonhuman subjects. I focus on these depictions in short fiction. I do so firstly because writing from the margins has often found a home in short fiction, and this is also true for many African women writers, and secondly because African short fiction requires critical attention.

Writing in 2013, Ernest Emenyonu identifies what he describes as a "critical gap" in African literature: a sustained lack of attention given to the short story (i). Writer and critic Helon Habila agrees, writing, "It's a sad but apparently undeniable fact that the short story has always taken second place to the novel in Africa" (ii). He argues that literary critics did not pay adequate attention to the short story, rather favouring the novel. He demonstrates that short

stories were often considered "light and inconsequential" and acknowledges the difficulties of publishing on the continent, which affected their publication (iii). However, Habila contends that the short story has always been a significant part of the African literary scene, citing, for example, the collections of authors such as Chinua Achebe, Alex La Guma, Taban Lo Liyong, Bessie Head, Aidoo, Ben Okri, Can Themba, Tayeb Salih, and Nadine Gordimer (iii).

However, scholarship on short fiction is increasing, and Habila posits that publication of short fiction on the internet plays a significant part in this (ix). Tracing the history of African writing on the internet, Shola Adenekan and Helen Cousins argue that African writing began appearing on the internet in the 1990s (Adenekan and Cousins 200). Adenekan, Cousins, and Habila detail the myriad reasons writers turn to the internet to publish their short fiction. They list the immediate nature of internet publications, the fact that the form lends itself to online publication, ease of access to wider audiences, the ability to form relationships with a readership, as well as cheaper publishing costs, among others (see Habila 2011, Adenekan and Cousins 2013). Adenekan and Cousins note that "It is cheaper and faster to publish creative writing on the internet, and this work will potentially reach a wider audience, fuelled by a rapid uptake of internet and mobile phone technology within Africa," and list Binyavainga Wainaina, Uwem Akpan, and Adichie as authors who have benefited from publishing online (201).

Short story prizes have also played a major role in short story production in Africa (see Habila 2011, Kiguru 2020). In her research on prizes such as the Caine Prize, the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, the Writivism Short Story Prize, and the Short Story Day Africa Prize, Doseline Kiguru demonstrates that

> … the increasing presence of the international literary prize for the African short story has served to foreground not only the genre but the networks within which it thrives. The literary prize has contributed to shaping the development of the short story in Africa, as well as bringing more critical attention to the genre. (39)

She posits that these prizes influence cultural and literary practices on the continent and demonstrates how they have helped launch the careers of writers such as NoViolet Bulawayo, Wainaina, Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Tope Folarin, Namwali Serpell, Leslie Nneka Arima, and Chigozie Obioma (40). However, these prizes have also received criticism. In her analysis of the Caine Prize, Pucherová argues that,

> …as a British prize for African writing, the Caine is unavoidably imbricated in the troubled history of postcolonial literatures in English, of which the primary site of evaluation and legitimation has been the West, given their historical dependence on western publishing and markets. ("Notes on the Caine Prize" 13)

Here, Pucherová critiques the implications of Western financing and networks that can market certain authors as representatives of Africa and African writing, labelling them as "authentic" (13).

Historically, however, short stories have provided underrepresented authors a space to write new stories, with different, non-mainstream publishing options, which market texts that might otherwise not be circulated (See Habila 2011, Awadalla and March-Russell 2012, Jonet 2012). As Catherine Jonet puts it, "... the short story is the place to openly confront difficult subjects that powerfully affect marginalised groups within a culture" (152). For example, Maggie Awadalla and Paul March-Russell show how little magazines, with both literary and popular bases, have been home to short story writing on the continent for decades, with titles such as *Okike*, *Kunapipi*, *Wasafiri*, *Drum Magazine,* and *Staffrider* (7). In these magazines, the form's "potential for dissidence" is evident, made greater, as Awadalla and March-Russell go on to note, by the form's ambiguous positioning in both popular and literary culture (4).

African women writers have turned to the form precisely for this potential for dissidence. As Jonet argues, "…the short story seems to be a central location for breaking taboos and analysing cultural ideas" for many women writers (152). Jonet lists transnational

women writers such as Edwidge Danticat, Kanchana Ugabe and Jhumpa Lahiri in this regard. I argue that the form has been a significant site for African women writers as well, if we take, for example, writers like Magona, Flora Nwapa, Bessie Head, Aidoo, and Adichie, for whom short story writing has been central to their careers.

African women writers have used the form to reflect on marginalised female, queer, and diasporic identities (Munro, "States of Emergence" 189). They have mined the form's "liminal, open-ended and fragmented" nature to explore these identities (Awadalla and March-Russell 5). For example, both Brenna Munro and Sally Ann Murray demonstrate that it is precisely these formal characteristics that have meant that the short story has become a vehicle for exploring queer representations in African writing (see Munro 2017, Murray 2020). In fact, Munro notes that the "Anglophone writing of African women who desire women… is primarily unfolding in the short story", citing Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree," (2007) Lola Shoneyin's "Woman in her Season" (1997), Unoma Azuah's "The Rebel" (written in the 1990s, published in 2008), Adichie's "On Monday of Last Week" and "Jumping Monkey Hill" (2009) and Chinelo Okparanta's "America" and "Grace" (2013) ("States of Emergence" 186). Short stories, then, have been a vehicle for the new, and this study aims to interrogate how friendships might be represented anew in this genre. Therefore, this dissertation examines the short story as a potentially productive site of analysis for friendship in African women's writing.

One of the regions in which African short stories have received the most attention is South Africa. As with the broader African context I have outlined, short story writing in the South African context is often associated with dissent against "repressive political orthodoxies" (Sandwith , Fasselt and Soldati-Kahimbaara 1). In the introduction to one of the first full-length academic books dedicated to the short story in South Africa, published in 2022, Rebecca Fasselt, Corinne Sandwith, and Khulukazi Soldati-Khahimbaara note that the "…genre of the short story, while often marginalized in national literary canons, has been central to the

trajectory of literary history in South Africa" (1). They go on to show that while scholarly attention dedicated to the short story genre in South Africa has been limited (critical attention has favoured the novel), it is increasing, especially with the publication of their edited volume entitled *The Short Story in South Africa: Contemporary Trends and Perspectives*.

Scholarship on the South African short story includes Rob Gaylard's work (2005) on R.R.R. Dhlomo, in which Gaylard considers Dhlomo's contributions to the early South African short story in English. Gaylard examines Dhlomo's short stories from the 1930s and 1940s, establishing Dhlomo as a significant writer of the short story in English at that time (53). Although Gaylard identifies a lack of scholarship on short story writing from this period, perhaps some of the most well-studied short stories are those that emerge just after Dhlomo, in the 1950s. While Gaylard notes of the 1930s that only the "occasional short story was published" in newspapers which favoured poetry and the essay form, Dorothy Driver comments that by the 1950s "… the most popular literary form for publication was the short story" (Driver 387). In her seminal analysis of the proliferation of short fiction from this period, Driver details the work and reception of writers such as Nadine Gordimer, Dan Jacobson, Phyllis Altman, Harold Bloom, Jack Cope, Alan Paton, and Dora Taylor (Driver 390). She also provides a detailed examination of the Sophiatown writers who wrote for *Drum* magazine, such as Bloke Modisane, Can Themba, Nat Nasaka, Es'kia Mphahlele, and Lewis Nkosi, and writers linked to District Six, such as Alex La Guma, Richard Rive, Peter Clarke, and James Matthews, commenting that

> *Drum* style is characterized, then, in part by the bravado with which the writers voiced their refusal to submit to the versions of blackness (both rural and urban) being delivered by apartheid, and in part by linguistic and generic experimentalism. (Driver 399)

For Driver, then, the stories by black South African writers published in *Drum* and other magazines, such as *Black Orpheus,* during this time are characterized by the realist mode, protest against the injustices of apartheid, and a shift from rural to urban settings (Driver 387). Notably, through her discussion of Bessie Head, Driver demonstrates how *Drum* magazine failed women writers, who faced sexist barriers to publishing. This sexism in short story modes of production continues into the following decades, as is evident from Pumla Dineo Gqola's work on depictions of women in *Staffrider* magazine from the late 1970s and early 1980s. In her analysis of the literary content in *Staffrider*, Gqola demonstrates that there is an emphasis on the Black, urban male, and argues that female characters are relegated to supportive, passive roles, only depicted in their relation to men (Gqola, "Female s/Staffriders" 36).

More recently, Sandwith, Fasselt and Soldati-Kahimbaara note that

> …contemporary short stories extend to numerous subgenres such as speculative fiction, crime fiction and erotic fiction, and increasingly examine and challenge conventional sexuality and/or gender-based norms and include characters who identify as LGBTQI+. This notable emphasis on the popular, rather than a shift towards a more modernist aesthetic, is visible in most of the selected stories and collections. (3)

This emphasis on a popular aesthetic will be central to my analysis of the short stories in *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* and *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* in Chapter Two. However, in its focus on contemporary short fiction from disparate African regions, this thesis examines varied short fiction, including stories that embrace a more modernist aesthetic, stories that employ a more popular mode, and science fiction. In this way, this thesis examines friendship as it is written by women writers working in a range of literary modes.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One examines the representation of friendship in South African women's selected short fiction. It focuses first on Sindiwe Magona's *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*.

Reading Magona as a literary forerunner to the texts that follow, I interrogate the political role friendship plays for Magona's female characters. I analyse the extent to which friendship informs Magona's characters' political consciousness in a South Africa transitioning from Apartheid rule to democracy. I then turn to a more recent text, examining the representation of women's friendships in Makhosazana Xaba's *Running and Other Stories*. Here, I discuss the significance of friendship in women's ability to resist, recover from, and cope with gendered violence in their everyday lives. Read together, these texts demonstrate the extent to which friendship is a significant relationship that allows for a navigation of the overlaps between the personal and the political.

In Chapter Two, I read selected short fiction from *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* and *Queer Africa 2: New Stories*. I argue that depicting friendship is a way to depict the fullness of queer lives on the continent. Beginning with the work of two Ugandan authors, Monica Arac de Nyeko and Beatrice Lamwaka, I examine the friendships depicted between LGBTQIA+ characters. I show how friendship allows these authors to engage with debates on queer visibility in Africa, as well as to explore the significance of friendship in their characters' lives. Reading these authors in the context of queer writing and activism in Uganda, I employ Gayatri Gopinath's theorization of "queer optics" to argue that friendship between the queer characters in these short stories provides them with an alternative way of being seen that acts as a counter to the heteronormative gazes they must endure in their daily lives. I then read Kenyan author H. W. Mukami and demonstrate how queer friendship in the city space allows for the creation of alternative worlds. I explore how friendships between queer characters allow them to engage in processes of queer world-making, even if these worlds remain fragile and transient.

In Chapter Three, the final texts I examine broaden the previous definitions of friendship to include friendships with the more-than-human world. I read Ugandan author

Doreen Baingana and Somali-American Sofia Samatar alongside each other to explore the ways in which they depict an ethic of friendship between humans and the non-human world. This chapter allows me to extend my analysis of friendship in African women's writing to the non-human world. I demonstrate that these authors argue for the importance of transforming humanity's relationship to nature, a pertinent task in the age of the Anthropocene.

Finally, Chapter Four offers a conclusion to the thesis. In it, I trace the arguments I have made and demonstrate that friendship is a central, yet underexplored aspect of African women's writing.

Chapter One: Gender, Friendship, and Solidarity in South African Short Fiction

Personal and political, private and public, a source of pleasure and sometimes pain, friendship is indubitably a feminist issue.

- Sasha Roseneil

1.1. Introduction

In the introduction to this thesis, I outlined three key areas of focus for this project: African women's literary representations of female friendship, of queer friendship, and of friendship with the more-than-human world. I demonstrated that these areas have received limited critical attention and warrant more, in order to deepen our understanding of representations of love and intimacy in African women's literature. In this chapter, I focus on African women's representations of female friendship. To do this, I examine the work of two prominent South African writers: Sindiwe Magona and Makhosazana Xaba. By placing the focus on Magona and Xaba in this chapter, I begin an analysis of the ways in which South African women writers write women's friendships. This chapter offers a new way of reading two established women writers in the South African literary canon, and gestures towards the work that still needs to be done to take into consideration the ways in which South African women writers, and African women writers more broadly, are thinking and writing about women's friendships.

In this chapter, I offer close readings of two celebrated short story collections: Magona's *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* and Xaba's *Running and Other Stories*. Although published more than a decade apart, in 1991 and 2013 respectively, these two collections offer rich ground for an interrogation of representations of women's friendships in South African literature. In the earlier *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*, the short story

cycle "Women at Work" offers a depiction of the friendships between a group of domestic workers on the brink of South Africa's transition to democracy. In *Running and Other Stories,* many of the stories interrogate women's daily lives in post-apartheid South Africa, and the role of friendship within them. By placing the focus on friendship, I aim to give space to the networks of care and concern between black women that characterize so many of the stories in these collections. In this chapter, then, I ask what role friendship between women plays in these texts and offer new ways in which we might read friendship in South African women's literature going forward. I argue that the friendships in *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* and *Running and Other Stories* function as networks of care, offering profound sites of resistance and solidarity in the face of raced and gendered violence.

As I demonstrated in the introduction to this thesis, a focus on friendship's capacity for gendered solidarity emerges in feminist studies, and there is a slim but significant body of scholarship that links theories of friendship to feminist theory and praxis. Often, friendship's non-institutional characteristics – its ability to exist to some extent outside of state-regulated relationships – are seen as a productive site from which women might forge relationships with other women, and therefore essential to feminist thought and practices. Sasha Roseneil, in *Foregrounding Friendship: Feminist Pasts, Feminist Futures*, puts it this way:

> While friendship is never outside the relations of power which shape the social world, neither is it ever fundamentally contained or defined by the core social institutions of family, work, and nation. (323)

Roseneil shows how friendship's capacity to exist outside of family, work, and nation affords women powerful ways of relating to each other through networks of support and care, which become fundamental to dismantling gender oppression. Drawing on Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, Roseneil argues that "… much that matters to people in terms of intimacy and care increasingly takes place beyond 'family', in and among networks of friends" (331).

For Roseneil, then, friendship offers women a mode of relating to each other which proves essential for care and solidarity between women.

Taking up Roseneil's argument, I give space to the intimacies that exist within black women's friendships in *Running and Other Stories.* I demonstrate how these quiet, personal moments of friendship might also be read as moments of political solidarity. While my focus in this chapter is on representations of solidarity among black women, many scholars are concerned with questions of friendship and solidarity across difference. Cognisant that solidarity has more overtly political connotations than the way in which I use it in this chapter, I find Yuanfang Dai's definition a productive way to illustrate the way I understand solidarity here:

> Solidarity is individuals acting together with one another with a bond or goal that differs from the pursuit of self interest in relation to shared or similar life conditions, in other words, certain patterns of oppression. (72)

While Dai examines solidarity in the context of more overtly political groupings of women, I interrogate how this definition might also extend to friendships between women that take on a political dimension when those women resist gendered oppression through their friendships. Xaba, whose short stories I read below, argues with Marion Stevens that "acting in solidarity demands consideration and risk as it assumes upholding of shared goals and objectives when the hows of upholding may differ" (Stevens and Xaba 1). Stevens and Xaba emphasise "listening deeply," nurturing "slow intimacy," and prioritising conscious and intentional engagement with others as central to solidarity (1).

It is within this context that I read *Living, Loving and Lying Awake* at Night and *Running and Other Stories*. Each of the short stories I analyse in this chapter explores the possibilities friendship offers South African women. Through their female characters' intimate relationships, Magona and Xaba interrogate the potential solidarities friendship might create as

the protagonists navigate the multiple gendered and raced oppressions endemic to their societies. In these stories, the authors' protagonists support – or do not manage to support – each other through both difficult and joyful moments in their lives. Taking up issues of domestic work, motherhood, reproductive justice, and sexual violence, these stories demonstrate the extent to which friendship might offer personal and political solidarity to Magona and Xaba's female characters.

I begin this chapter by mapping the field of black women's writing in South Africa to contextualise my reading of Magona and Xaba. I then offer a literature review of Magona and Xaba's work, providing an overview of their concerns and their literary reception, respectively. Having provided this context, I analyse *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* and *Running and Other Stories* in turn. I critically examine the ways in which each author depicts friendship between women in their texts, demonstrating the complex role friendship plays in black South African women's writing. Through my analysis of selected short stories from the collections, I show how friendship can be read as a site of resistance to patriarchal norms and raced and gendered violence, demonstrating how friendship becomes a mode of solidarity in these texts. Read together, *Living, Loving and Lying Awake* at *Night and Running and Other Stories* offer nuanced depictions of black women's friendships.

1.1.2 Contextualising Black South African Women's Writing

Black South African women writers have historically been excluded both from literary production and from critical attention (See Boswell 2020, Driver 2012, Samuelson 2012). In her chapter on South African women writers entitled *Writing Women*, Meg Samuelson compares two female colonial writers – Olive Schreiner (1855 – 1920) and Nontsizi Mgqwetho (1920s) – situated, as Samuelson puts it, "on either side of the colonial divide" ("Writing Women" 757). While both writers employed a male pseudonym to publish their work, Samuelson demonstrates that, in contrast to Schreiner, whose oeuvre has been the focus of

much critical attention,[6] Mgqwetho "vanishes from critical view" until Jeff Opland gathers her work into a translated collection in 2007 entitled *The Nation's Bounty: The Xhosa Poetry of Nontsiki Mgqwetho*. Still, the details of her life and death remain largely unknown (Samuelson, "Writing Women" 758). By placing Schreiner and Mgqwetho alongside one another, Samuelson draws attention to the multiple oppressions experienced by black colonial women writers along lines of class, race, and gender. Beginning with Mgqwetho, who is the first published black woman poet, Boswell traces the history of black women's writing pre-apartheid (*Wrote My Story* 30). Some of the earliest known novels and novellas of this period are Lilith Kakaza's *Intyatyambo Yomzi* (1913) and *UThandiwe wakwaGcaleka* (1914), and Victoria Swaartbooi's *UMandisa* (1934) (*Wrote My Story* 30).

As colonial structures barred black women from writing and publishing, so did apartheid laws and practices (formally beginning in 1948) (*Wrote My Story* 32). Boswell demonstrates how the Suppression of Communism Act (1950), the Bantu Education Act (1953), and the Extension of Education Act (1959) severely limited black women's ability to write and publish fiction (*Wrote My Story* 37). In effect, these acts denied black women adequate primary education, access to tertiary education, and ensured that any who did write could be banned. Later, the Publications Act of 1974 banned any material the state considered "undesirable," and the publication of such material was punishable by fines and prison time. Those who did manage to publish either fiction or non-fiction in the 1960s and 1970s included Noni Jabavu, Gladys Thomas, Bessie Head, Fatima Dike, Joyce Sikakane, and Miriam Tlali (*Wrote My Story* 43). Women were also excluded to a large extent from significant publications that did publish black writers, such as *Drum* and *Staffrider* magazines. While *Drum* magazine,

[6] See Liz Stanley's *Imperialism, Labour and the New Woman: Olive Schreiner's Social Theory* (2002), Ruth First, Anne Scott and Nadine Gordimer's *Olive Schreiner: A Biography* (1989), and Stanley and Andrea Salter's *The world's great question: Olive Schreiner's South African letters 1889-1920* (2014), amongst others.

associated with the strong output of protest literature, was a major site of publication for black writers in the 1950s, women were largely excluded from this site. Dorothy Driver demonstrates how *Drum* magazine "failed women writers," who faced sexist barriers to publishing (405). This sexism continues into the following decades, as is evident from Pumla Dineo Gqola's work on sexist depictions of women in *Staffrider* magazine from the late 1970s and early 1980s, which I discussed in the introduction to this thesis (see Gqola 2001). However, as Boswell notes, Miriam Tlali was one of *Staffrider's* founding members, and the magazine did publish women, including Carol Mathiane, Alice Ntsongo, Dudezile Ndelu, Jumaimah Motuang, and Susan Lamu (*Wrote My Story* 52). Despite this, the magazine and South African literature more broadly maintained a male bias. The histories of *Drum* and *Staffrider* that I have outlined here indicate the extent to which literary scholars have engaged with women's short fiction published during apartheid. I build on this work through my focus on women writers writing during South Africa's transition and post-apartheid.

Despite the systematic exclusion and misrepresentation I have described above, in the 1980s black women, such as Lauretta Ngcobo, Farida Karodiya, Zoë Wicomb, Agnes Sam, Emma Mashinini, Ellen Kuzwayo; Miriam Tlali, Gcina Mhlophe and Sindiwe Magona did write and publish (Boswell, *Wrote My Story* 44, Samuelson, "Writing Women" 761). Boswell, Samuelson, and others understand black women's writing under apartheid as "refusal" – fiction that refuses, critiques, and subverts the lived injustices of apartheid (See Boswell 2020, Driver 2012, Gqola 2001, Samuelson 2012). For Samuelson:

> Some women writing under apartheid resist the state's dichotomous, discriminatory logic through various counter-discourses, others speak through forked tongues or a 'double voiced discourse' enfolding their critiques of patriarchal structures deep within anti-apartheid plots. (Samuelson, "Writing Women" 761)

The idea of speaking with "forked tongues" or with a "double voice" refers to the ways in which much black women's writing under apartheid not only refutes apartheid ideology, but simultaneously critiques patriarchal oppression. It also refers to the subversive techniques they use to do this, such as irony, and satire. Black women's fiction under apartheid is therefore the site of a doubled subversion.

There is a marked increase in black women's writing and publication after the end of formal apartheid (See Boswell 2020, Samuelson 2012, Gqola 2009). The idea of the nation emerges as a central concern of fiction published in the period of South Africa's transition to democracy (Samuelson, "Writing Women" 770). In *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women?: Stories of the South African Transition* (2007), Samuelson demonstrates that the interregnum is a period in which the idea of the South African nation is, as she puts it, "actively re-invented and re-imagined" (2). Drawing on Benedict Anderson's theorization of the nation as an "imagined community," she posits that women's bodies become the "contested sites on which national identities are imagined and national unity is forged" (2). Furthermore, she argues that women are "dismembered" by dominant nation-building discourses that forcibly shape them into the "ideal form" of Mother (2). Women's writing in the interregnum questions and critiques such gendered nation-building discourse.

Writing on cultural production in the period following South Africa's transition, Boswell describes the "post-transitional" as a "contested discursive space, where meaning is fluid, incomplete and provisional" ("Conjuring" 9). Through their analyses of contemporary writers such as Kagiso Lesego Molope, Gabeba Baderoon, Xaba, and Kopano Matlwa, scholars such as Gqola, Samuelson, Baderoon, and Spencer demonstrate that women writers have shifted the focus of their writing to an exploration of the ordinary, blurring and broadening definitions of both the personal and the political (see Baderoon 2011, Gqola 2009, Samuelson 2012, Spencer 2009). Significantly, the only author of short fiction included here is Xaba,

although Wicomb's short story collections have also received considerable attention. Njabulo Ndebele's work on the "ordinary" in South African literature has remained central to this debate. Writing in 1986, Ndebele invited scholars and writers to think about the importance of depicting every day, ordinary moments in the lived experiences of black life. These moments in themselves can provide a mode of resistance to oppressive regimes and ideologies that seek to dehumanize particular groups of people. Ndebele cautions against the erasure of such moments in South African 'protest literature' that focuses only on spectacular moments in South Africa's history (see Ndebele 1986). South African women writers' shift to the intimate and the ordinary contrasts with the contentious reading of apartheid literature as protest literature with a political, realist, "spectacular" rather than "literary" aesthetic (Bethlehem 365). However, Boswell's detailed mapping of black women's writing under apartheid demonstrates that a focus on the ordinary has long been central to black South African women's writing. Boswell shows that writers such as Bessie Head and others I have mentioned above placed a strong focus on intimate, ordinary depictions of black life – especially on modes of relation such as love and friendship. I was struck, for example, by Boswell's reading of Head's oeuvre:

> Her literary output, as characterized by her three novels, *When Rain Clouds Gather*, *Maru* and *A Question of Power*, paradoxically places the 'ordinary' – friendships, love triangles, communal cooperation, people's relationships with their neighbour and to the land – in the service of larger, universal themes; among these are the irrationality of racism, the dichotomy between good and evil, and the human being's relation to God, themes that transcend the narrow focus of South African protest writing. (*Wrote My Story* 40)

As can be seen in Head's emphasis on the "ordinary," the depiction of intimate life is central to both apartheid and post-apartheid black women's writing, and this chapter aims to deepen the understanding of the significance of friendship within such depictions. While several

studies have made intimacy in South African women's writing their focus, none have yet given significant space to friendship. One of the main studies on the intimate in South African fiction is Kerry Bystrom's *Democracy at Home in South Africa: Family Fictions and Transitional Culture* (2016). Here, Bystrom considers depictions of the home and of private life in fiction that emerges out of South Africa's transition. She argues that the intimate depiction of private life at the time of South Africa's transition "engages in multiple ways with the task of national transformation at the heart of the extended transition" (2). That is, fictional depictions of private life participate in nation building discourses. Examples of scholarship that analyses depictions of the intimate in South African women's literature include Boswell's (2016) study of post-transitional black South African women's poetry, Gqola's (2011) analysis of the same, Baderoon's (2011) analysis of poetic form in recent South African writing, and Spencer's (2019) analysis of Ugandan and South African "chick-lit," among others. This thesis contributes to this scholarship through its particular focus on short fiction.

Inseparable from discussions about the intimate, one of the major concerns South African women's literature has taken up and placed at the centre of public discourse is gendered violence. Both inside and outside the domestic sphere, endemic violence permeates all levels of South African society (see Gqola 2007, 2009). Women in South Africa face violent threat to their physical and emotional safety, their reproductive rights, and their right to be treated equally both in the home and in the workplace. Gendered relations in South Africa are often read against the backdrop of the violent masculinities that were made explicit in public discourse by the Jacob Zuma rape trial in 2005. This trail dramatized the violent nature of masculinity in South Africa, and the multiple, gendered oppressions that women face in the country (see Gqola 2009, Graham 2015, Hassim 2014). At the same time, scholars have worked to show that this violence is not new – it has a long history under colonialism and apartheid (Graham 135). Violence against women is prevalent, not only explicitly, such as rape and

sexual assault, but, as Jessica Murray puts it, a more subtle, structured violence that affects women's everyday lives:

> Gender violence extends beyond physical abuse: indeed physical gender violence is enabled by a much more pervasive problem, a kind of structural gender violence that arranges our societies at institutional, discursive and epistemic levels. (23)

Women writers have critiqued the "violent masculinities" that characterize South Africa's political and intimate landscapes, and have explored gendered violence, and the textures of women's lives in their writing by focusing on the ordinary, everyday moments of women's lives, writing their intimacies and entanglements (see Gqola 2009). At the same time, scholars are working to demonstrate the significance of this writing.[7] Murray argues that

> Literary texts open up creative spaces where authors can expose the persistence of patriarchy; simultaneously, they can resist and oppose widespread patriarchal views by positing alternative, less oppressive understandings of women and their experiences in societies. ("Never Spoke" 24)

In this chapter, I argue that *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* and *Running and Other Stories* perform the fictional resistance that Murray hopes for. In each text, I demonstrate that the depiction of black women's friendships engages with the raced "persistence of patriarchy" in South African society. I demonstrate how placing an extended focus on friendship in these texts contributes to existing discussions about the significance of depicting private lives. To do this, I read these two short story collections, considering the context that I have outlined above – black South African women's writing. The next section of this chapter continues this work

[7] See for example Lucy Graham's *State of Peril: Race and Rape in South African Literature* (2012), Jessica Murray's *Violence and the Gendered Shaming of Female bodies and Women's Sexuality: A Feminist Literary Analysis of Selecetd Fiction by South African Women Writers* (2019) and *Disciplining Women: South African Literary Representations of Gendered Surveillance and Violence* (2018).

by contextualising Magona and Xaba more specifically. Below, I offer a reading of their lives and literary output.

1.1.3 Sindiwe Magona and Makhosazana Xaba in Context

Sindiwe Magona is one of the most established authors I examine for this thesis. As Renée Schatteman notes, "…Magona is well recognized as one of the country's most significant writers and a seminal figure in African women's writing" (Schatteman ix). Magona is the recipient of numerous awards for her literary endeavors and community service,[8] four honorary doctorates,[9] and holds a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of the Western Cape (Schatteman xii). Born in 1943 and publishing her first autobiography in 1990, I read Magona as a precursor to many of the other women writers I examine in this thesis. In the context of black South African women's writing, Magona is often read as a forerunner of more recent women's writing, celebrated for her deft treatment of the lived experiences of black women in apartheid South Africa and the country's transition period. Gqola, among others, reads her as a "Xhosa grandmother," noting her use of and contribution to both oral and written literatures ("Forced to Think" 55). Unlike some of the other writers I study for this project, Magona's life is well chronicled, thanks in part to her autobiographies (*To My Children's Children* (1990) and *Forced to Grow* (1992), as well as to the efforts of scholars who have offered critical study of her life and writing such as Siphokazi Koyana (*Sindiwe Magona: The First Decade*, 2004) and Dianne Shober (*Sindiwe Magona: Climbing Higher,* 2013). Read together, these texts offer a detailed chronology of Magona's life and work, as well as a selection of critical responses to her oeuvre.

[8] As listed by Renée Schatteman these include, among others: the Xhosa Heroes Award (1997), the Presidential Order of Ikhamanga (2011), the Mbokodo Award for Creative Writing (2012), the English Acadamy of South Africa Gold Medal Award (2016) and the André Brink Award (2018) (Schatteman xii).

[9] From Hatwick College, Rhodes University, Nelson Mandela University and Fort Hare University (Schatteman xii).

Born in what was then known as the Transkei (now part of the Eastern Cape), Magona emphasizes the peace that characterizes her early life as a child in the rural village of Gungululu. She describes her profound sense of community and belonging which is broken, as Shober notes, by her family's move to Western Cape, where they were soon forcibly removed to a Cape Flats township. The Western Cape, then, is the site of Magona's first experiences of racial oppression (Shober 5). In early adulthood, Magona earned her teacher's degree, but subsequently lost her position when she became pregnant. As Shober outlines, pregnant women at the time were not allowed to continue teaching. Magona went on to have two more children before being abandoned by her husband – a core experience which shaped her critique of both racial and patriarchal oppression in South African society, both before and after apartheid. As Shober puts it "… her husband and society disempower her both economically and physically, claiming ownership over her employment and her body and delimiting her potential" (Shober 6). Magona's ability to work and the type of work she could do was severely limited both by racist and misogynistic apartheid state law as well as by her husband, who took no responsibility for his children and offered her no support. To support herself and her children, Magona turned to domestic work. Her time as a domestic worker became another core experience, which she returns to in much of her writing, particularly in her short stories, such as in the collection I examine for this thesis: *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*. I will return to her treatment of domestic work as I analyse this text. While employed in domestic work, Magona studied for her bachelor's degree through the University of South Africa, and subsequently returned to teaching. She went on to earn her MA degree from Columbia and served at the United Nations for twenty years before returning to South Africa.

During this time, Magona also established herself as a prolific writer. Her oeuvre begins with her autobiographies *To My Children's Children* (1990) and *Forced to Grow* (1992). These autobiographies have received significant attention by scholars such as Konyana, Shober, and

Rosemary Gray. These scholars note Magona's exploration of selfhood in relation to cultural and political structures – notably patriarchy and apartheid – and her examination of the lived experience of race, class, and gender in apartheid South Africa. Magona's autobiographies are followed by two short story collections, *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* (1991), which is the focus of this chapter, and *Push Push* (1996). Perhaps the best known of her works, and the text which has garnered the most critical attention is *Mother to Mother* (1998). This novel fictionalizes the murder of Amy Biehl, an American exchange student who was murdered in 1993 in Cape Town. Written in letter form from the mother of one of Biehl's murderers to Biehl's mother, *Mother to Mother* grieves with Biehl's mother, while at the same time offering an account of the ways in which apartheid brutalized her murderers. Scholars such as Boswell, Adam Levin, Namrata Dey Roy, Jessica Lyons, and Amy Duvenage all offer analyses of *Mother to Mother* published within the last five years.[10] *Mother to Mother* is followed by a play, *Vukani!* (2003) and subsequently another novel, *Beauty's Gift*, both of which focus on South Africa's AIDS crisis. Magona's collection of poetry entitled *Please take Photographs* was published in 2009, while her recent novels *Chasing the Tails of My Father's Cattle* and *When the Village Sleeps* were published in 2015 and 2021, respectively. Most recently, in 2023 Renée Schatteman edited a collection of Magona's essays entitled *I Write the Yawning Void: Selected Essays of Sindiwe Magona*. *I Write the Yawning Void* offers scholars the opportunity to consider Magona's essays written throughout her career, which have received less attention than her creative writing (Schatteman xi).

The essays in *I Write the Yawning Void* give insight into the concerns that appear in Magona's fiction and help to place her in the history of South African women writers that I

[10] See Boswell's *And wrote my story anyway: Black South African women's novels as feminism* (2020), Dey Roy's "*Story of a Mother: a Biopolitical Reading of Sindiwe Magona's Mother to Mother*" (2021), Duvenage's *"Patriarchal forms of national community in post-apartheid literature: Re-examining ubuntu and gender in Sindiwe Magona's Mother to Mother (1998) and Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness (2000)"* (2022), Levin's *"The humanity of whiteness in Sindiwe Magona's Mother to Mother"* (2023), and Lyons's *"Realities of Apartheid and Idyllic Futures: Afropessimism and Afro-Optimism in Magona's Mother to Mother"* (2024).

discuss above. Significantly, the "yawning void" Magona refers to in the collection's title is in fact the void of black South African women writing their own experiences, histories and stories. Magona puts it this way:

> That first book… worked to fill the strange void of absence. Complete absence of me and people like me from books. Not as I know myself. Not as I know people among whom I lived. When there were women who looked anything like me, my mother, grandmother, aunt or neighbour – the African or Bantu in apartheid terminology – they were sure to be smiling maids in uniform, out at the park minding white children or pushing a pram on the pavement, with a white baby in the pram. It took me a long, very long time to see that absence… I write to tell a story – my story. My people's story. History as it is lived. (*Yawning Void* 3)

Here, Magona emphasizes her commitment to writing against the erasure of black South African women's voices that colonialism and apartheid legislated. In my analysis of *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* below, I will examine her emphasis on writing "history as it is lived," especially for domestic workers in South Africa in the late eighties and early nineties. In the quote above, Magona refers directly to the stereotypical image of black women as "smiling" domestic workers. In the following sections of the chapter, I explore the history of domestic work in South Africa and examine the significance of friendship in Magona's telling of this history as it is lived.

The second author I examine in this chapter, Makhosazana Xaba, is also an established figure in South African writing. Born in 1957 in Greytown, Xaba grew up in Ndlaleni in KwaZulu-Natal. She is well known for her political involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle as a member of the African National Congress (ANC) and Mkhonto we Sizwe (MK, the armed wing of the ANC), which she joined in 1984 (Magadla 51). Xaba is also trained as a midwife and a psychiatric nurse and has worked with various NGOs to support women's and LGBTQI+

rights, women's health, and philanthropy (The Poetry Archive). Her oeuvre reflects these interests, engagements, and concerns. As a celebrated poet, prose writer, scholar, and editor, Xaba's contribution to the field of South African literature is immense. She holds an MA in Creative Writing from the University of the Witwatersrand, and an Honorary Doctorate from Rhodes University, awarded in 2024.

Xaba is the author of four poetry collections: *These Hands: Poems* (2005), *Tongues of Their Mothers* (2008), *The Alkalinity of Bottled Water* (2019) and *The Art of Waiting for Tales: Found Poetry from Grace – a novel* (2022). She is also the editor of the poetry anthology *Like the Untouchable Wind: An Anthology of Poems* (2016), as well as a collection of essays, reflections, and conversations on black South African women's poetry entitled *Our Words, Our Worlds: Writing on Black South African Women Poets*, 2000-2018 (2019). Writing in the introduction to this collection, Baderoon posits that "Xaba is one of the great poets of the contemporary era" and details her central role in the proliferation of black women's poetry in post-apartheid South Africa (2). In terms of creative prose, Xaba is the author of several children's books. She is also the author of *Running and Other Stories* (2013), which is her debut collection of short stories and the focus of this chapter. I will detail criticism of *Running and Other Stories* below. Xaba is also the co-editor of *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013) and *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (2017), both of which I go on to discuss in Chapter Three. Her isiZulu translation of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* was published in 2024.

Writing in an essay entitled "Black Women Poets and Their Books as Contributions to the Agenda of Feminism," Xaba outlines her interest in Black women's poetry and creative writing, tracing both their marginalization, their history, and their contribution to feminism and South African public discourse (15). In her interviews with poets such as Myesha Jenkins, Vangi Gantsho, Natalia Molebatsi, Malika Ndlovu, Lebogang Mashile, and others, she furthers

these concerns (Xaba, "On Reading"). In her scholarship, her role as an editor, and in her own creative writing, Xaba continuously foregrounds her interest in black women's experiences in contemporary South Africa and how these can be depicted. Commenting on her short stories, she foregrounds this point, stating that she "… wanted to centre women as 'subjects of artistic attention' in most, if not all of the stories that now appear in *Running*" (188) She views these stories as filling a gap, deliberately writing against sexist and racist depictions of black women. She states:

> I brought into my writing of short stories the painful awareness of the sexism and racism present in the writings of many South African authors, which had befuddled me. I did not know how to express my discomfort with reading stories so full of sexist and racist spectacle. (186)

Taking cognizance of Xaba's critique and her emphasis on writing black women as subjects, I ask what role friendship plays for Xaba's women in *Running and Other Stories* below. Read together, I argue that Magona and Xaba provide nuanced depictions of friendship between black South African women.

1.2 Friendship and Political Consciousness in Sindiwe Magona's *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*

In the following section of this chapter, I examine the role of friendship in Magona's *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*. I look at the opening series of interconnected short stories, collected under the title "Women at Work." Through its depiction of a group of domestic workers and their private and public lives, this series takes domestic work as its focus.

The first piece, "Leaving," details the emotional and physical experiences of Atini, who must leave her children behind in her rural home to find work for their survival. The following eight narratives are set in one of the white suburbs of East London, the city in which Atini finds work as a domestic worker. Each story is told as a conversation between Atini and another

domestic worker whom she has befriended, taking the form of a monologue in which Atini's responses are implied. The first and last stories are narrated by Atini herself, framing the experiences of the other women. Published in 1991, "Women at Work" was published just before the formal end of apartheid in 1994, and the labour law reforms that began in 1995. Set in a time of political change, when its characters can sense that a change in the governance of the state might result in changes to their working lives, "Women at Work" is a study of domestic work at a time of transition.

Margaret Daymond examines the role of orature in "Women at Work," arguing that isiXhosa oral traditions and Western literary forms have a complementary relationship in the text (332). David Callahan, on the other hand, examines Magona's use of realism in the short story cycle (83). Both Daymond and Callahan discuss Magona's deft portrayal of gender, race, and class dynamics in apartheid South Africa. So too does Christine Loflin, who focuses her analysis on the relationship between the domestic workers and their employers and argues that the domestic workers "find it difficult to act collectively" (112). While I agree that collective action is difficult, I argue that the friendships in this text demand attention because subtle forms of collective action are evident within the realm of friendship in the narrative. I draw on and extend the work of scholars such as Daymond, Callahan, and Loflin by turning the focus to friendship in my analysis below.

1.2.1 Theorising Domestic Work

Domestic work in South Africa has a long history that can be traced back to slavery practiced first by the Dutch and later the English in the colonial period between 1658 and 1839 (Gqola, *Slavery* 175). As Baderoon demonstrates, black women were forced to enter domestic service "from the very beginning of colonial settlement in South Africa" ("Ghost in the House" 175). Baderoon discusses the figure of Krotoa, the first Khoisan woman forced to move into the Cape Dutch colony as a child (renamed Eva), where she performed the role of domestic servant, and

later of interpreter.[11] Drawing on historian Yvette Abrahams' (1996) work, Baderoon shows that both roles required Krotoa/Eva to act as a translator. While Krotoa/Eva's role as interpreter is one of going between, Baderoon demonstrates that the role of the domestic servant is also one of translation. As she puts it, "the role of the domestic worker translates between public and private, inside and outside" ("Ghost in the House" 176). Significantly however, Krotoa/Eva's early position as a domestic servant also mediated her own engagement with "outside," and Baderoon's point here is that, for centuries, household labour has played a central role in "mediating black women's access to public space in South Africa" ("Ghost in the House" 175).

The role that domestic labour plays in mediating black women's access to public space was cemented under apartheid. One of the seminal texts that demonstrates this is Jacklyn Cock's *Maids and Madams: Domestic Workers Under Apartheid*. First published in 1980, *Maids and Madams* outlines the conditions that forced over a million black women into domestic work during apartheid, and the ideologies that impacted their experiences while employed. The Native Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 ensured that 87 per cent of South African land was white-owned (Cock 5). This resulted in black rural women's separation from the land, the wealth it brings, and the agricultural practices that sustained life. Combined with the Group Areas Act, the Trespass Act, and the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, it also resulted in their alienation from public space. At the same time, black women's education opportunities were severely limited, as I have already outlined in my discussion of black South African women writers above. Black women, therefore, had few available modes of employment (Cock 4).

[11] In *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women? Stories of the South African Transition* Samuelson shows that Krotoa/Eva has become an almost mythical figure in South African history, read alternatively as traitor, translator or "rainbow mother" (15). She is considered the "first woman" to cross the colonial divide, first through her role as domestic servant in Van Riebeeck's household, then as translator, and finally through her marriage to the Danish Pieter van Meerhof (16). Samuelson critiques the ways in which Krotoa/Eva has been co-opted by some white South Africans as first "rainbow Mother," claiming relation to her to stake a genetic claim in democratic South Africa (19).

Those who turned to domestic work could access public space to some extent through access granted by the pass laws, though these laws severely restricted the movement of black workers.

Women who did turn to domestic work under apartheid experienced oppressive working conditions, with no legal protection. These conditions included irregular working hours, poorly defined duties, extremely low wages, and no contractual protection (Cock 3). In addition, domestic workers often lived at their place of work in "servants' quarters" or "back rooms," and employers regularly exerted control over workers' private lives by regulating visitors and inspecting accommodation and belongings (Cock 3). Thus, as Baderoon demonstrates, the "private sector of the house confirmed the public reality of racial separateness and hierarchy" ("Ghost in the House" 175). In this way, race relations (as well as class and gender) legislated by the apartheid state repeated themselves in the private (white) home, and the home became a site of "ideological maintenance" (Cock 3). This is evident even in the design of the built environment, with black women having to live on the margins (servants' quarters and back rooms) of the white home, reflecting the spatial separation of the "homelands" and the townships and continuing a tradition "lingering from the placement of slave quarters on colonial farms" (Baderoon, "Ghost in the House" 179). The ways in which the white home acted as a site that perpetuated apartheid ideology can be seen, too, in the relationships between black domestic workers and the white children they cared for. As Cock explains, "white children were socialized into the dominant social ideological order through nannies," while on the other hand, domestic workers were often forced to neglect their own children (Cock 4). In addition, domestic work itself "reproduces labour power" (Cock 3). In other words, it afforded white families both leisure time and the capacity to work, and therefore to amass financial as well as cultural capital (Ally 5). As can be seen from its oppressive nature and the ways in which it continued apartheid ideology and perpetuated race, class and gender

inequality, domestic work can be read as one of the central features of apartheid South Africa (see Cock 1989, Ally 2009, Baderoon 2014).

It is no surprise, then, that domestic work became one of the main areas of focus of the democratic South African state in terms of labour reform post-1994. As Shireen Ally argues, the democratic South African state crafted,

> what is one of the most extensive and expansive efforts anywhere in the world to recognize paid domestic work as a form of employment. Existing labour legislation was redrafted to include domestic workers, giving them the same rights as all other workers. These were extended with a landmark minimum wage, mandatory formal contracts of employment, state-legislated annual increases, extensive leave, severance pay, formal registration, a government sponsored pension fund, access to unemployment insurance benefits (a world first), and a national certificate in domestic work through government sponsored training (another world first). (3)

However, despite the reforms Ally lists, the legislation does not fulfil its promise to domestic workers in the democratic state (Ally 8). In many ways, it is little changed from apartheid practices, and is often "insecure, with limited financial and growth opportunities" (Dawood and Seedat-Khan 168). In fact, Q. Dawood and M. Seedat-Khan report signs of modern-day slavery among South African black domestic workers, characterized by "intensifying subjugation and exploitation," made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant unemployment and financial strain it caused (168).

As domestic work is such a stark feature of apartheid and post-apartheid life, scholars such as Ena Jansen and Baderoon have offered detailed analyses of literary and visual representations of the profession. Jansen examines the portrayal of domestic workers in post-apartheid novels, which she divides into a chapter on white writers such as Ingrid Winterbach, André Brink, Jo-Anne Richards, and Damon Galgut, and black writers such as Kopano Matlwa,

Zukiswa Wanner, Zoë Wicomb, and Imraan Coovadia. Jansen argues that while white writers "continue to project repressed fears, desires, shame and guilt concerning black people" onto domestic workers, novels by black writers "open new spaces," in their exploration of the employee-employer relationship, offering an often humorous critique of race, class, sexuality, and gender relations in these relationships (189). On the other hand, Baderoon characterises representations of domestic workers in white South African homes as "inherently unsettling" figures, a result of colonial and apartheid histories and oppressive working conditions coupled with the paradox of working in the intimate space of the home ("Ghost in the House" 180). She considers, for example, the motif of the black child who "shifts between role of daughter and servant" in Bessie Head's *Maru* (1971) and Marlene Van Niekerk's *Agaat* (2004) and offers a reading of the domestic worker's body as a site of suppressed desire in Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in the Light* (2006). Baderoon's most extended analysis focuses on Zanele Muholi's photography and Mary Sibande's sculptures, arguing that their work "explores the notion of black women servants in white households as objects of fantasy, erasure, curiosity, anxiety, memory, origin and ambiguity" ("Ghost in the House" 181). My reading of *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* below is in conversation with Baderoon and Jansen's analyses of domestic work in South African fiction. I offer a new angle by placing friendship at the centre of my analysis. I ask what role friendship plays in representations of domestic work. As Cock notes, domestic workers' private time was highly regulated and constantly surveyed by their employers during apartheid (Cock 3). Opportunities to receive visitors, including friends, were limited, if possible. Despite this, I argue that friendship is a central, yet unexplored aspect of Magona's *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*, as I will demonstrate below.

1.2.2 Leaving

"Leaving" opens the series of nine narratives, or fragments, that make up "Women at Work." It is different to the other eight stories in that its protagonist is unnamed. Although the reader

can later deduce that she is the protagonist of the following narratives, Atini, this initial unnaming points to the fact that Atini's experience is not only deeply individual but also part of the collective experience of over a million black women under apartheid. This experience is one of isolation and poverty in rural South Africa. The narrative opens with an image of the unnamed protagonist alone, at night, exhausted and sleepless. Magona emphasises her exhaustion with short, sharp sentences:

> She was tired. Spent, body and mind. The tiredness of her mind and body and heart came together as one. It robbed her of sleep. (3)

Magona's emphasis on tiredness creates an image of complete exhaustion, which sets the scene for the unnamed narrator's emotional turmoil that permeates the narrative. As the passage continues, the reason for the narrator's exhaustion and anxiety becomes clear:

> As always, yesterday she had been up with the first bird's song. Long before morning broke, her day started. She had crept away on her mat; not to wake the baby still sleeping. Fear-filled, she went to the cardboard box where she kept food. Enough mealie-meal for today's morning porridge. If she made it really thin, used as little mealie-meal as possible, she could save some for the next day, perhaps. But maybe it would not be enough even so. (3)

In this detailed depiction of the difficulty and anxiety that accompany the simple act of making breakfast, Magona stresses the extreme poverty that the woman faces. Magona continues the narrative by describing the woman's tasks of the day before in equal detail – she feeds her baby, settles her four older children, cleans the floor of the hut with cow dung, and goes to the river to fetch water (4). By describing these tasks in detail, Magona emphasises the physical exertion that the day's tasks demand. In other words, Magona foregrounds the physical labour of domestic work. While these tasks account for the protagonist's physical exhaustion, they are

also bound up with her mental and emotional state. For example, Magona describes how the woman cleans the floor as follows:

> One bit of floor at a time, until the whole floor was smeared; she spread her love through her fingers: dung and water and her tears mingling in her offering, seeping through her fingers as it spread sending its spread up her nostrils. (4)

In this description of cleaning the floor as "spreading love," and in the visceral nature of the work – the feel of the dung and water, its scent, and the tears that flow from her eyes mixing with the water on the floor – domestic work is more than a series of tasks. It is a series of tasks that sustains the lives of the protagonist and her children. It is revealing that she reflects on these tasks as she struggles with the decision to leave her children to find work in East London as a domestic worker. Here, Magona simultaneously demonstrates that domestic work sustains life – it is one of the most crucial forms of work – and critiques the ways in which it is left to black women to do alone. Due to patriarchal and apartheid systems, the protagonist is expected to perform these gendered tasks alone (her husband works in the Johannesburg mines and takes no responsibility for his children, financial and otherwise). At the same time, she cannot stay to perform these tasks for her own children due to poverty – she will have to leave her children and do similar work in a white home. In this way, Magona demonstrates the complex interweaving of patriarchal and racist structures that create the protagonist's dilemma: stay with her children and starve or leave her children and send money for their survival. It is these circumstances, and this decision, that culminate in her complete exhaustion: physical, mental, and emotional – "the tiredness of her mind and body and heart" (3).

Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of this opening fragment is that the protagonist struggles with this decision alone. Considered in this light, the fact that she is unnamed emphasises that there is no one to name her. Her marriage has ensured her isolation and her husband is absent, but so too are any other bonds of affection. She reflects that Manala, her

mother-in-law, would take care of the children in her absence out of duty, not love. She also considers how she will be perceived by her community for having left, cognisant that she will be labelled "wanton" and "slut," a "witch about her witchery" (8). Here, Magona demonstrates that women who fail to act according to cultural and societal gender norms are both demonised and sexualised. However, she also demonstrates that the protagonist is especially vulnerable to apartheid and patriarchal structures because she has no community of support. This changes significantly when the protagonist arrives in the city. Although the path to the city is difficult, and runs over "razor sharp stones" and alongside "brooding mountains" (9), it is also a journey that she makes from night into a new dawn, and Magona suggests that the protagonist experiences a difficult rebirth, characterised by the "angry red blotches" of the dawn and the image of "warm, wet, dying foliage giving birth to new soil" (9).

1.2.3 The Women at Work

In the following story, titled "Atini," the nature of the protagonist's difficult rebirth becomes clearer. The protagonist, whom we now know is Atini, has been working in East London for eighteen months. Magona immediately signals change in Atini by shifting from third to the first-person narrative perspective. Atini's personal growth is foregrounded by the fact that she can now tell her own story. Atini's first act is to name herself, stating in the opening line: "I am Atini" (12). However, she immediately qualifies this, following her statement with "… though Mrs Reed calls me Tiny."[12] Read together, these two statements suggest that Atini is concerned with negotiating her identity in urban apartheid South Africa. Continuing my focus on friendship in this thesis, I argue that Atini's tentative friendships with other domestic workers are central to the ways in which she negotiates her identity, as well as her survival, in the city.

[12] White employers often "renamed" their employees, citing the difficulty of pronouncing indigenous African names, and Mrs Reed, Atini's employer, does this here.

Before she secures employment, Atini's friend from her village, Nombini, accommodates Atini in her room, feeds and clothes her. As mentioned in my discussion of domestic work above, domestic workers' private space was often highly regulated, and Nombini must hide Atini from her employer, who they refer to as that "*mlungu* woman" (13). Atini recounts:

> Nombini kept me in her room and the other maids helped her with food and clothes because I came naked. Nombini burned the clothes I arrived wearing; they had been rags when I left. After the journey, some of it on foot through forests and rivers, by the time I got here they were flenters – threads hanging onto each other with nothing really keeping them together. But hey, my body was covered; and for that I thanked the Lord. (13)

In this passage, Atini is likened to a newborn who arrives naked and needs food and clothes. Nombini and the other domestic workers whom Atini meets participate in her rebirth and facilitate her survival in the city. In this way, it is her friendship that sustains her, in contrast to her isolation in the village.

Interestingly, Atini's early interactions with the domestic workers who work close by, and will later become her friends, are difficult. This is because she somewhat inadvertently takes another woman's position. Atini fills in for Imelda in Mrs Reed's household while Imelda travels home to care for a sick parent, and when Imelda's return is delayed, Atini takes her place working for Mrs Reed. Atini both feels guilty about her decision to accept Imelda's position and reflects that she does not have a choice, as her own survival hinges on taking this job. Here, Magona foregrounds both the negative effects of apartheid systems on domestic workers, as well as the ways in which the system demands their complicity. Due to the lack of legislation, Imelda's position is unprotected, and Mrs Reed is not bound by any contract towards her. Atini, in turn, becomes complicit in Mrs Reed's unfair dismissal of Imelda because

of the desperate economic position apartheid legislation places her in. In this way, Magona demonstrates how domestic workers might be pitted against one another by the very system – and people – which exploits them. Imelda confronts Atini:

> 'Atini, my sister, let that white woman go find her own maid. Don't do this to me. How can you?' This, she said in Xhosa, our mother-tongue, a language the likes of Mrs Reed had never bothered learning. She was standing outside, Mrs Reed, talking to her through the door opened only a crack. She could see me behind her employer's back, standing there wearing her uniform several sizes too small for me. (15)

Magona's placement of Atini behind Mrs Reed, both behind a door "opened only a crack", emphasises the complex web of relations between these three women. Imelda tries to forge a sense of solidarity with Atini by addressing her as "my sister," speaking to her in isiXhosa, and referring to Mrs Reed dismissively as "that white woman." Mrs Reed, however, stands between the women, and Atini, in Imelda's uniform, has already taken her place. Atini reflects: "What purpose would be served by the two of us treading Desperation Street?" (15). Here, Magona demonstrates that solidarity along lines of race and gender is made fragile under apartheid.

Imelda becomes a shadowy figure whose story haunts the text, and the reader gleans information about her through the narratives of the other domestic workers who visit Atini once her betrayal of Imelda is forgiven. The reader is only able to access Imelda's experiences through gossip, which is often negative. As Atini remarks: "But, of all the stories I like, the ones that show me in much better light than Imelda are best" (16), and the women share that she borrows but does not repay money, she gossips, and she dislikes hard work. By filtering Imelda's experiences through the gossip of the other women, Magona signals that the reader's view of Imelda is unreliable. Her story is lost, in stark contrast to the other women who voice their own narratives. Slowly, the reader can piece fragments of Imelda's story together. First,

Sophie reveals that Mrs Reed "messed up" Imelda (30). Here, the reader realises that Sophie is describing a forced sterilization. Later, Lillian, the eldest of the women and the most sympathetic to Imelda, hints at the circumstances under which Imelda became pregnant:

> That is how Imelda got into trouble. She would not say yes to any man. After some time she was staying in every night. Be careful of stay-in; especially if it is only the woman who is going out. Ask yourself why they need to stay in if the father of the children is there. Ask yourself that or you will find yourself minding children who have beards. (49)

Implied here by Lillian, Imelda's tragedy lies at the heart of "Women at Work". Not only is she a victim of sexual violence, she is also a victim of medical violence, and these experiences leave her unable to have children. While Imelda's story reveals the extent to which black women under apartheid were vulnerable to sexual and medical violence, it also reveals the severity of a lack of support during times of trauma.

While the figure of Imelda demonstrates that community and friendships are made fragile under apartheid, Magona explores their significance through Atini. As Atini gets to know the other women who work in the neighbourhood, she forms bonds with them. The six narratives that follow Atini's are each titled with one of these women's names: Stella, Sheila, Sofie, Virginia, Joyce and Lillian. Each of the stories is staged as a monologue spoken by one of these women to Atini, while Atini's responses are implied. In this way, Magona foregrounds the women's identities and voices, as well as the importance of their relation to Atini. Unlike Imelda's narrative, which is lost, friendship and community ensure that these women's narratives are recorded and acknowledged through each other.

Atini's friendships with these six women are formed in her room or in Mrs Reed's kitchen. In the conversations that "Women at Work" stages, Magona emphasises a sense of stolen time. These conversations are snatched, hurried, and often interrupted by the return of

one of the women's employers. Stella, for example, opens her conversation to Atini as follows: "Saw your medem's car drive off. Guess she's off to her Self Defence class? Thought I'd pop over. Put the kettle on, girl." And finishes it with "Anyway, I must go. I'm making yoghurt bread over there, the dough must be ready by now" (22). In this way, the friendships in "Women at Work" are formed in intimate, personal spaces, although these are severely limited. So, while Baderoon demonstrates how apartheid policies attempted to make domestic workers' lives "structurally impossible" (178) as I have discussed above, Magona's narratives explore the significance of the bonds of affection domestic workers *were* able to nurture despite apartheid policy. As Soske and Walsh show, thinking through space in relation to friendship can be productive. Focusing on interior, rather than physical space, they consider friendships as the spaces in which emotional events take place:

> …while friendships exist in multiple *times* and *scales*, they also provide *spaces* for emotional events, exchanges, fantasies, misunderstanding, confidences and secrets: they create worlds with unique sets of assumptions and expectations. (15)

The theorisation of friendship as a relationship that "provides space" is a productive way to read the friendships in "Women at Work". In an environment where private space is structurally impossible, the space that friendship provides becomes even more significant. The women in "Women at Work" do share "fantasies, confidences and secrets". For example, Joyce, the youngest of the women, fantasises about her plans with Atini. Joyce takes a job as a domestic worker because her matric classes have been disrupted by riots. However, she does not envision working in this position for long, as is evident in her words below:

> 'Do you know how many African women doctors there are? In this whole country? Five. F I V E – that's all. Well look at me. Look at me real well. Look! There will be six – that I promise you.' (40)

Here, Joyce's repeated demand that Atini look at her and the promise she makes underscore the way in which the friendship between the women becomes a site in which to imagine an alternative future. She continues by stating that the women in her family have been domestic workers for generations: "Four generations of domestic servants – that's enough. NO MORE. I refuse to be a slave" (44). For Joyce, friendship is a space in which she can articulate resistance and dream of a different future. For Joyce and the other women in "Woman at Work," friendship offers a site for dreaming and for resistance.

Friendship can also be read as a site of resistance because it offers the women a space in which to critique their working conditions. The women speak to Atini about the harsh, and at times revolting, physical labour they must undertake, their long working hours, non-existent pensions, exposure to sexual abuse, poor living conditions, separation from children and loved ones, and constant experiences of racism. Stella, for example, describes the lack of adequate sick leave and health care to Atini in the passage below:

> My sickness she never understands. She thinks I'm made of stone… "You think I run a clinic here, my girl?" That's what she says first day I'm sick. Day number two: "Maybe you should go home and send one of your daughters to help." You know this woman has children the same ages as mine. I must send my children here to help her and her children while I'm sick. My children must miss school to come and make sure their goat food is made, the beds are made, their shoes are polished, their clothes are washed. (21)

Often these experiences are recounted with wry humour. For example, when Virginia's employer buys her soap (in a racist insinuation that she is not clean), she humorously works it into her story as her second bout of bad luck that day and jokes that she should see a witch doctor, as someone must be trying to steal her job by making her employer "chase her away" (35). As can be seen here, the women's working conditions are related through the easy,

conversational nature of the friendship, in anecdote form. Their friendships offer them an emotional space in which to reflect on their experiences, to learn from them, and to offer advice and care to Atini as a new member of their community.

In addition to the relation of everyday experience, the women's conversations often engage the political discourses circulating at the time around workers' rights and racism in the workplace. The move towards politicization is evident in Sheila's words to Atini below:

> Have you heard about how maids should not let the white women call them girls or servants anymore? And we should join a group to fight for our rights? Do you think that can happen? White women can learn not to call us girl? After all these years they're used to calling us anything they like – never mind if the girl likes it or not; never mind if it's her name or not? Do you really think they'll learn that? Me, myself, I don't think so. I really don't think so. (25)

Although Sheila is doubtful, she invites Atini to attend a meeting with her (28). Some of the other women are more hopeful, especially Joyce, who integrates political critique into her conversations with Atini. She looks forward to the end of apartheid, critiques the delay of feminism due to "paternalistic attitude of white women towards black women" (42), and offers a solution in fair pay, arguing that until this happens "…maids will be stuck in poverty while in gainful employment (43). Although Atini does not attend the meeting she is invited to, the conversations she has with her friends help her to build political knowledge. Here, the women's friendships challenge traditional assumptions of who builds knowledge, and where it is built – political consciousness is developed in their friendships with one another.

Epistemic friendship is, in essence, friendship in which collaboration to create new knowledge for social justice takes place. Nicole Nguyen, Wendy Nastasi, Angie Mejia, Anya Stänger, and Meredith Madden propose the idea of epistemic friendship in their contribution

to *Dissident Friendships: Feminism, Imperialism, and Transnational Solidarity.* They define epistemic friendships as follows:

> Epistemic friendships are a learning for social justice with and by others. In our understanding, epistemic friendship is a distinct notion: more political than standard notions of friendship, but also not simply coalitionary or in solidarity. It does not explicitly seek to reach across difference, but rather strives to provide a community of support attuned to, but regardless of, ones location. An epistemic friendship is based on shared politics rather than shared identities, and is marked by a desire to push one another toward greater, more effective, more nuanced political work for radical justice. (20)

Epistemic friendships, then, allow for thinking about the connections between friendships and political knowledge production. Nguyen *et. al.* emphasise that it is a "community of support" which might facilitate radical knowledge production for social justice. The terms community and support suggest the need to think about the role of collaboration and care in knowledge production, both of which are central to many definitions of friendship.

The way in which Atini is affected by the knowledge formed in the friendships in "Women at Work" is made evident in the first two stories ("Atini" and "Leaving") and in the final story, "Atini's Reflections." In "Atini," Atini describes her unfamiliarity with the world of domestic employment, saying:

> … I don't have that much experience of medems and my situation was so desperate any medem would have looked like my guardian angel, I suppose. (12)

In the last story, entitled "Atini's Reflections," Atini provides an assessment of the knowledge she has gained and the political position of herself and the women she works with. She comments that she hopes Joyce, the youngest of the women, will succeed in becoming a doctor, though it seems impossible. She reflects that Lillian, the eldest, may not be able to claim the

pension promised to her as her employer has died and left her out of the will. In her reflections, she also asserts the significance of the friendships she has made, and the moments of friendship she has experienced. For her, the friendships are life-giving and keep the women from despair:

> But I am not alone. All the other women, like me, are suffering. That is why we laugh about our troubles. That is why. We have so many and they are the same – it is like a nightmare that gives us no rest. It is with us by night and by day. So, we laugh about it. (60)

Through laughter and friendship, Atini and the women around her are able to create small nodes of resistance. However, as the passage continues, Magona emphasises the nightmare-like quality of domestic work under apartheid. The above passage continues:

> But when a woman is alone – alone at night and can't sleep thinking of all these problems – then, she cries. She cries because she can see she may never escape from this hell. (60)

In these final lines, Magona describes the women's collective suffering as a nightmare in waking life, one that gives no rest. Through the image of Atini lying awake and isolated at night, Magona emphasises the severe alienation she faces, and underscores the necessity and significance of the friendships she has made.

1.3 Networks of Care in Makhosazana Xaba's *Running and Other Stories*

Makhosazana Xaba's *Running and Other Stories* has been the centre of recent critical attention, most notably for Xaba's treatment of Can Themba's "The Suit" in her reworkings entitled "Behind *The Suit*" and "*The Suit* Continued: The Other Side" which frame *Running and Other Stories*. First published in 1963, "The Suit" tells the story of Matilda, who is unfaithful to her husband, Philemon. Matilda's lover leaves his suit behind when Philemon discovers them together, and Philemon taunts Matilda by forcing her to treat the suit as a person until she commits suicide at the end of the story (Themba). In "Behind *The Suit*" Xaba both queers and

retells "The Suit" from the perspective of a new character: Philemon's lover, Mondliwesizwe. In "*The Suit* Continued: The Other Side" Xaba responds both to Themba and to another retelling of "The Suit": Siphiwo Mahala's "The Suit Continued." In "The Suit Continued" Mahala gives voice to Matilda's lover, whom he names 'Terence' (Mahala 193). Mahala states that he wanted to explore questions about Matilda's partner in adultery, but admits that his story, as well as Themba's original, "mute" the voice of Matilda (195). Cheryl Stobie argues that while Themba's original invites a critique of patriarchy and misogyny, Mahala's "The Suit Continued" perpetuates, rather than critiques these ideologies ("Retailoring" 81). In "*The Suit* Continued: The Other Side," Xaba gives voice to Matilda.[13] Xaba reimagines "The Suit" from Matilda's perspective, and queers the narrative by creating Gladys, Matilda's romantic partner, and detailing the difficulties of their relationship. For Stobie, Xaba's versions of "The Suit" are significant because they

> critique hetero-patriarchy; they queer marriage, procreation, Sophiatown, black communities and the South African nation; and they contribute meaningfully to present and future postcolonial queer writing and reading. (87)

"Inside," which I do not analyse in detail in this thesis, is another short story in *Running and Other Stories* which has received attention for its contribution to queer writing and reading for its gentle depiction of a sexually charged encounter between to women. For Lara Buxbaum "It exists as a rebuke to the homophobic and especially… lesbophobic, social climate" (531). While Jenny du Preez reads the ordinary depiction of the women's erotic encounter as significant given South Africa's context patriarchal, racist and colonial discourses ("Rediscovering the Erotic" 689).

[13] There are two other stories that engage with Themba's original, Zukiswa Wanner's "The Dress that Fed the Suit" (2006) and Mahala's "The Lost Suit" (2011), but for the purposes of my argument here I focus on Xaba's contributions.

While both Buxbaum and de Preez consider intimacy in their analyses of *Running and Other Stories,* I extend the conversation by placing the focus on friendship. I offer a close reading of "The Trip," "The Weekend" and "Running," and pay close attention to the friendships in each. I argue that friendships are figured as profound networks of care in the face of raced and gendered violence.[14]

1.3.1 The Trip

In "The Trip," Xaba interrogates the interplay between friendship and lone motherhood. Phakama Ntshongwana *et. al*. note that although the term 'lone mother' is not used widely in South Africa, it is a productive alternative to the more popular term 'single mother'. This is due to the fact that the term 'single mother' defines motherhood in relation to marriage or partnership, while many forms of motherhood exist that do not centre, or even acknowledge, marriage as significant (Ntshongwana, Wright and Barnes 81). The term lone mother is a move away from centring marriage. However, the term may be misunderstood to mean that the mother is alone (Ntshongwana, Wright and Barnes 81). As I show in my analysis of "The Trip," this is not the case.

The short story depicts a woman's – Qhamukile's – journey to visit her mother with her young daughter, Nontshisekelo. The two make the journey by car, leaving Johannesburg early in the morning, stopping for a break in Harrismith, and arriving finally in Pietermaritzburg. The story focuses on Qhamukile's thoughts and feelings as she makes the long drive, as well as the ordinary details of a long trip – going to the toilet, strapping in her sleeping daughter, putting in petrol at the halfway stop. For her, it is an important journey – the first trip she makes in her first car to visit her mother, with her daughter. She is a lone mother, and it is important that she makes this trip alone. While the short story celebrates the achievements that she has

[14] Xaba herself reflects on this type of friendship as solidarity with Marion Stevens. In their article entitled *The Intimacy of Held Solidarity: A Joint Memoir of Activism* Stevens and Xaba reflect on their personal friendship and how it has been central to their activism concerning women's health.

made as an individual, it also emphasizes the communities that support her. I argue that in her portrayal of friendship as central to mothering, Xaba writes against hegemonic versions of motherhood. I read "The Trip," as a rich, supported and positive representation of mothering alone.

Drawing on historian Anna Davin's analysis of motherhood in late 19th century Britain, Spencer demonstrates that normative ideas of motherhood classed "good mothers" as married and middle class and "bad mothers" as single and working class. These ideas emerged as women were figured in colonial discourse as reproducers of the nation ("House of Mothers" 55). Spencer argues that this hegemonic view of "good" motherhood was reproduced in colonial South Africa ("House of Mothers" 55). She demonstrates how colonial ideologies of motherhood, and womanhood, continued to surface in the narratives of African male nationalist writers who

> …restricted women's activities to the domestic space of the home, and insisted that women remain passive and submissive to male figures. The mother figure represented in these narratives tends to be essentialized, romanticized. ("House of Mothers" 55)

Spencer's argument here shows how women are confined to the home and portrayed in the fantasized role of "ideal" mother rather than subjects in their own right in the nationalist male literary imaginary. Boswell demonstrates how this plays out in in the broader political context of nation building, arguing that the figure of the woman stands in for the nation (*Wrote My Story* 115), and as I have discussed above, Samuelson argues that women are "forcibly shaped" into the "ideal form" of Mother by dominant nation-building discourses ("Remembering the Nation" 2). In this way, romanticized "good mothers" are placed in opposition to demonized "bad mothers". I argue that Xaba's representation of motherhood is significant in its insistence on the central role that friendship plays in mothering, especially single mothering. Commenting on single, or lone motherhood, Phakama Ntshongwana et al note that "in contexts where the

ideology of the nuclear family is dominant the notion of lone parenthood is often regarded pejoratively" (82). Lone mothers are stereotypically represented as inadequate and irresponsible caregivers, and their position of mothering outside of marriage results in the questioning of their sexual morality in postcolonial, heterosexist and patriarchal contexts.

Writing against the grain, Xaba emphasizes that Qhamukile's feelings towards motherhood are those of fulfilment. Xaba filters the short story through her perspective, in third person narration. In so doing, she ensures that the reader has immediate and unfiltered access to Qhamukile's thoughts and feelings, emphasizing their importance. The story opens, for example, with her reflections on her emotional state:

> Qhamukile wondered why people spoke of their feelings as being in the chest. Having thought of them that way for a long time made her feel them, right there, in her chest. The fullness was unbearable. (45)

Here, Qhamukile reflects on her own embodied joy, which she describes as "unbearable fullness." Xaba foregrounds Qhamukile's happiness throughout the story, both through the main character's own reflections and through the world around her. The landscape, for example, mirrors her joy.

> Driving in southeast from Johannesburg was like a free show of natural beauty. At this hour the horizon was doing its thing, with colours in the sky changing to announce the rising sun. The clouds and the sky seemed to have rehearsed this gracious performance. She thought of singers announcing the arrival of the bride, the joy, the voices. The skies and the clouds seemed to understand this well. The colours were the mystery. The kind of mystery its best not to unravel. (49).

In this passage, and the passages that follow, Qhamukile's joy is communicated through the imagery of performance: colour, music, song, and dance. Here, Qhamukile feels understood by, and connected to, the world around her. The mediums of art highlight this sense of

connection, underscoring the communal nature of such performances. Interestingly, Qhamukile compares the brilliance of the natural world around her to that of a bride. In foregrounding this comparison, Xaba at once signals Qhamukile's similarity to, and difference from, a bride. The image of the joyful bride evokes the stereotypical connotations associated with a woman who marries: joy, triumph, fulfilment. However, the source of Qhamukile's joy, triumph and sense of "unbearable fullness" hinges on the fact that she is *not* a bride. The passage continues:

> She was the happiest woman today. The further she travelled from the skyscrapers she could see in her rear-view mirror, the more exhilarated she became. She recalled the day she first arrived in Johannesburg, on a long-distance bus, seven months pregnant, no home, a new and sort-of first job, and no bank account. A rural girl who had won a few battles and was prepared to win a few more. But she had never been pregnant before, had never felt so alone, had never been to Johannesburg and never been thirty-four years old. Those days were fading from memory. (45)

As the passage above suggests, the source of Qhamukile's fulfilment comes from the complexity of her experience of mothering alone, and the journey that motherhood has initiated for her (her move from home, her first job, her financial instability, her isolation). Xaba does not erase the difficulties Qhamukile faced. Rather, she emphasizes her determination and tenacity through the image of the "rural girl who had won a few battles and was prepared to win a few more." In this way, the short story's title – "The Trip" – refers both to the five-hour journey she undertakes in the text, as well as the five-year journey she has undertaken since her pregnancy. This trip is her triumphant return home.

Her joy also stems from her feelings of connection, sharply contrasted to the isolation she experiences when she first arrives in Johannesburg. Over the course of her journey, Qhamukile reflects on the network of friends who help her to mother. Although alone on this trip, Qhamukile's thoughts often turn to her friends. They are in the background of the story,

but are clearly her support structure, and make up some of the most important relationships in her life. In fact, Qhamukile's thoughts are web-like, extending, with her at the center, from one friend to the next. She reflects:

> All her friends were concerned about her first long drive. They each had a piece of advice for her. They all agreed this was a major step in her life. Her first car, her first daughter, her first long ride. (48)

The advice Qhamukile's friends offer is practical and detailed. It is attuned to the littlest details that a long trip entails, such as what to eat (apples, peanuts), and where to stop (where many others stop, for safety). Qhamukile reflects on this advice as she carefully follows it. In this way, "The Trip" depicts Qhamukile's friendships as a network of care and support, which is integral to the functioning of the protagonist's daily life. Xaba depicts the profound role Qhamukile's friends play in her life through the advice they offer her, and the frequency with which she reflects on it as she undertakes her journey. One area that her friends cannot help her with, however, is Nontshisekelo's ability to go to the toilet while asleep. She wryly reflects: "No amount of friendly advice could help Qhamukile with this part. Her daughter had not come with a recipe book" (48).

The importance of friendship in navigating daily life is not limited to Qhamukile. She also reflects on her mother's long friendship with her neighbour, MaMkhize:

> Her mama had known MaMkhize for fifteen years. She was there when Mama moved to the area. She took care of Mama's orientation. She did more than invite her for meals at home with other women. She informed Mama about deaths and funerals in the neighbourhood, and made sure Mama attended. She explained relationships among the neighbours, infusing life to their characters. (46)

In this passage, MaMkhize acts as Qhamukile's mother's connection to the community, incorporating her into the network of people who live in her neighbourhood. This network

connects her to some of the most integral areas of her neighbourhood: births, deaths, meals, and relationships. Like Qhamukile, friendship allows Qhamukile's mother to navigate daily life. Like Qhamukile then, her mother is also a single parent who is helped by friends. MaMkhize herself performs an alternative form of motherhood: she raises her grandchildren while her daughters complete their education.

> MaMkhiza's husband had left her for a younger woman. She had four daughters who each had a child without getting married to the father. She was now raising the four grandchildren while her two younger daughters were finishing higher education. Qhamukile was looking forward to current news about the neighbourhood. She was sure MaMkhize would make time to tell her everything. (46)

In the passage above, Xaba's depiction of MaMkhize's alternative mothering – the mothering of her grandchildren – is rendered in a manner that is matter of fact, without judgement. In this story, Xaba presents two generations of women who do not comply to hegemonic versions of motherhood. The elder generation are MaMkhize and Qhamukile's mother, and the younger are Qhamukile and MaMkhize's daughters. Xaba does not dwell on the absent fathers, but rather portrays two generations of women who mother in varied ways. What emerges are networks of women who look out for each other, keep each other safe, and regard each other as some of the central relationships in their lives over the course of two generations. Through these networks of care, Xaba illustrates the vital role women's friendships play for her characters. Her depiction of the role of friendship in motherhood combats negative ideas of lone motherhood – we cannot view these mothers as "alone" once we consider their friendships.

1.3.2 The Weekend

"The Weekend" depicts a friendship between two women who are separated in age by about 15 years. The younger woman is named Zaba, the older, Phatheka. The short story details the weekend they spend at a guesthouse for Zaba to complete an abortion that has been medically

induced. It is an extremely moving depiction of this termination, and of the support which the friendship provides her. Although a representation of a deeply traumatic moment for Zaba, this story insists on the ordinary care and support friendship provides. Reflecting on this short story, Xaba describes it as a depiction of "a successful complications free termination of pregnancy" (192). This is an important depiction given the South African context. Abortion was illegal under apartheid and legalized in the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (CTOP) of 1996 (Stevens and Xaba 9).[15] However, stigma towards abortion within the medical field still prevents women from accessing reproductive health care, as does lack of adequate healthcare facilities and sex education. The number of women who die from illegal abortions is still incredibly high, and as Rebecca Hodes poignantly puts it: "The South African government has identified 'septic abortion' as among the most common causes of female death" (2) This is a devastating statistic given the fact that abortion is now one of the safest medical procedures in the field. It is in this context that I read Xaba's depiction of abortion in "The Weekend".

In a broader literary context, images of women isolated and alone as they both make the decision to terminate their pregnancies and go through procedure itself are common. In *Confronting the Abject: Women and Dead Babies in Modern English Fiction*, Sally Minogue and Andrew Palmer consider representations of abortion in English fiction from the 1930s and the 1950s/1960s (Minogue and Palmer). They note the social isolation of the women in depictions from the 1930s by Jean Rhys and Aldous Huxley:

> Rhys and Huxley locate the distress of their female protagonists in the inner consciousness – both characters' responses to their abortions take the form of delirious dreams or visions. The emphasis on consciousness, arising out of modernism, presents

[15] Xaba was herself involved in working with parliament to draft the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, noting that "A women-centered abortion policy and law was one of the dreams that were grounded on the constitution we had participated in drafting" (Stevens and Xaba 3).

> the individual as being isolated from the common social body, trapped in her own angst. (105)

I find this emphasis on isolation from the "common social body" as Minouge and Palmer put it, a productive point from which to analyse friendship's role in "The Weekend." To begin, the two women in "The Weekend" are indeed isolated from their society, and this isolation is emphasized both by the setting and temporality of the short story. The story is set at a guesthouse in which Zaba and Phatheka are the only two occupants. In this way, they are alone except for each other, and they are outside of their usual contexts of family, work, and social life. In addition to this, the story is set over the weekend, as the title suggests, and therefore is also set at a remove from the daily life of the week. The reader knows very little about either woman's life beyond their experience of the weekend that the short story details. The omission of the details of these women's everyday lives works to emphasize their isolation from their community. This omission could also be read as an ethical one: Zaba is not, and should not, be required to explain the reasons for her abortion. At the same time, the sparseness of detail emphasizes the bond between the two women: they are alone, save for the other. Their isolation is emphasized throughout the text as they are isolated in the boarding house they visit for the weekend.

> The gate was not locked. The younger woman, Zaba, let Phatheka walk in first. The green front door had a welcome sign and the name "Menzi's Boarding House" on it. Phatheka unzipped her bag, found the keys and unlocked the door. "Someone is coming," Zaba whispered, touching Phatheka on the back as if to stop her opening the door. Phatheka was not deterred: "Whoever it is, they cannot be coming here…" (113)

Here, Zaba's anxiety is evident in her use of the whisper, and her need to touch Phatheka. Unlike the female characters that Minouge and Palmer analyse, Xaba's depiction of the woman who undergoes an abortion foregrounds the figure of the friend: Zaba lets Phatheka lead her in

and relies on her throughout the short story. In this way, Xaba disrupts the portrayal of women who terminate their pregnancies as isolated and alone, as she disrupts the idea that lone mothers mother alone in "The Trip". However, this disruption is not clear cut, and Zaba, to some extent, does remain isolated. The story is narrated from the third person perspective, focalized by Phatheka. Like Phatheka, the reader has little to no access to Zaba's thoughts or feelings. Significantly then, the reader does not have access to Zaba's consciousness. Rather, the distance between the two friends is foregrounded through the recurring imagery of locked doors, as can be seen in Phatheka's inability to access Zaba in the passage below:

> Then she walked down the corridor, trying each door handle as she passed. When no door opened, she knew they were all locked. She tried the toilet door. It was locked. She put her left ear against the door, her eyes wide open as if to aid her hearing. She heard nothing. She walked back to the kitchen. (121)

As can be seen in this passage, Zaba is isolated even from Phatheka to a certain extent. Her experience remains her own and cannot be shared. While Zaba's actual miscarriage happens behind a closed bathroom door, the reader is locked outside with Phatheka. The difficult realities of Zaba's termination happen offstage. The quietness that characterizes this short story adds to the depiction of Zaba's isolation. The women walk to the guesthouse in silence, and whisper as they enter the guesthouse (113). At the guesthouse itself, there is very little dialogue between them. This quietness is further emphasized in images of darkness early on in the narrative, such as descriptions of the guesthouse as "… the only house without lights on" (112), and a line characteristic of the short story: "Darkness had ushered in the weekend" (113). Although Zaba's experience is her own, the ending of the short story suggests that she will be able to share this with Phatheka and receive support. She asks Phatheka: "What do you think is best? Dying before you have been given a name or afterwards?" (127). Phatheka replies: "Child, this is why we need time. We have to talk. About everything." Here, the final image of

the discussion that is to come contrasts with the silences that have come before it. In this final image, Zaba is not alone. Her friendship with Phatheka supports her. It is implied that this is the only support she receives, that her pregnancy and abortion alienate her from her community and her job, suggesting societal norms which condemn pregnancy and abortion outside of sanctioned structures.

Phatheka's friendship and support is practical. She is there alongside Zaba, although she cannot share the experience. She can only make Zaba tea, try to make sure she eats, and offer physical support, as can be seen in the passage below:

> "Is this it?" Phatheka stood up immediately, stepping on her bundle of knitting. She reached Zaba from behind, putting her arms around the body that now felt like a rigid frame. She walked slightly behind her, slightly to her left. When they got to the door, Phatheka opened it and started to edge out. (118)

In this description of a woman who walks "slightly behind" and "slightly to [the] left," implies the quiet solidarity that friendship offers in this short story. In this image of a woman walking alongside one another, can be read a depiction of what solidarity in regard to reproductive rights might look like. Images of blood permeate the short story and underscore the profound solidarity between the two women.

Stephanie Selvick explores the use of blood imagery in the South African political imaginary. Selvick argues that blood "…is an important political and erotic metaphor that documents the reality of violence, HIV infection, and rape at the same time as it evokes menstruation and sexual desire" (444). Significantly, Selvick describes how blood is often read as a trail. In her their linkage of blood to haunting, Selvick provides a lens with which to read the images of blood in "The Weekend," as can be seen in the passage below:

> Phatheka's eyes were drawn to the fresh drops of blood on the plastic tiles in the doorway. She stared, unmoving. Then she took a few steps, her eyes bent on tracing

> subsequent drops of blood on the toilet door. The door was already shut behind Zaba. Then she heard the inner toilet door bang. She wondered what toilet Zaba had chosen. Then she looked at the blood again. The drops began to spread into one another, Phatheka knew she would have to give her friend privacy. She could not follow her to get a cloth to wipe up the blood. If she could wait, so could the blood drops. (119)

Here, the figure of the friend follows the trail of, and becomes witness to, Zaba's bleeding. Blood here represents the extreme loss Zaba suffers, and the violence of this loss. In this way, Zaba's blood can be read as a symbol of the violence that inadequate access to reproductive health care enacts on women. There is another way to consider the images of blood in "The Weekend." In the broader South African context, Selvick suggests that

> …allusions to blood, with its association to kinship and family, signals queer belonging to nation beyond legal constructions of citizenship that continue to be contested. The poetic imagery of blood loss makes both belonging and its threat hypervisible. (446)

Following Selvick, I read the images of blood in "The Weekend" as a way in which Xaba can investigate kinship. The blood in the passage above can signify Zaba's deep loss of her child, the violence of a health care system that fails her, and at the same time, a kinship with Phatheka. In "The Weekend," friendship lies in the act of "tracing the blood". While in "The Trip" Qhamukile's friends are present in a moment of joy, for Phatheka and Zaba, friendship means being present with another in times of pain. Read together, these stories offer a nuanced portrayal of friendship in women's lives.

1.3.3 Running

The titular story of the collection, "Running" is set shortly before South Africa's transition to democracy. It describes a conference held in Lusaka by the women of the African National Congress (ANC), dedicated to editing the new draft constitution to make it non-sexist. The protagonist is a member of the ANC, a trained soldier for the liberation movement, and a

member of the administrative support team for the conference. Although Xaba does not depict close personal friendships here as she does in "The Trip" and "The Weekend," I am interested in her depiction of the affective relationships between the women at the conference. Similar to the friendships in "Women at Work," I consider how we might read the relations between women in "Running" as epistemic friendships.

Shireen Hassim's work on ANC women's organising in exile, particularly in the 1980s, provides a productive context in which to read "Running". Hassim shows that due to both their own experiences and their knowledge of the experiences of African women in other post-liberation contexts, many women both in South Africa and in exile began to argue "not only that the liberation of women could not be separated from national liberation, but that it was an integral part of how liberation itself was defined" (86). However, through her detailed analysis of the debates between women, and with men, often at conferences such as the one described in "Running," Hassim demonstrates that the process of placing gender at the centre of debate, as well as women's shift to "acting as political agents in their own right with their own set of interests" was "slow and painful" (114). Xaba stages this process of change and debate in "Running".

Xaba's choice of protagonist signals her interest in women's roles and experiences in political movements. The protagonist is a trained soldier of Mkhonto we Sizwe (MK, the military wing of the ANC), but has, in her own words, "become a civilian" (63).

> I've become a civilian. I'm a bit conflicted by that, actually, because as a trained soldier of the people's army, I should be with the other soldiers, preparing for a military takeover. Besides, there are so few women soldiers. I love the action, the discipline, the precision, the myriad skills, the versatility. (63)

By choosing a female soldier as her protagonist, Xaba centres the role of women in the MK, which has often been erased, or made marginal, in national discourses. In *Guerrilla's and*

Combative Mothers: Women and the Armed Struggle in South Africa, Siphokazi Magadla highlights the lack of scholarship and documentation concerning women in MK and emphasizes that "Women who were guerrillas in MK have complained about the silence and erasure of women's contribution to the armed struggle" (5). While Xaba's protagonist makes her love and longing for the "discipline" and "action" of military life clear, she also explicitly recognises the importance of other roles in the liberation movement.

> My running role at this conference is similar to my role as a soldier. But being a soldier at a women's conference is unique. I'm moving between the two pillars of our struggle: mass mobilization and the armed struggle. This conference brings in another dimension, the international mobilization, and I am a part of it. When I think of it this way, my conflict fades away. (64)

Here, Xaba employs imagery of running to emphasise the protagonist's role in varied areas of the liberation movement: mass mobilization, armed struggle and international mobilization. Narrated from the first-person perspective, "Running" centres women's experiences in these roles through the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the unnamed protagonist, and the ways in which she relates to the other women at the conference. The story opens with the following passage:

> I'm a runner. That's the role I've given myself. A sub-role, if you like. I run from the plenary room to the rooms for small groups, to prepare them. I run from these rooms to the office to fetch and deliver messages and requests. I take children from the playroom to their mothers and vice versa (there are three toddlers and one on the breast). I run to call for technical help, something we seem to need often… Yesterday I ran all the way to the taxi, and we drove to the nearest chemist to get anti-allergy medication after a comrade reacted to no one knows what. The doctor said my running made a big difference. (46)

In these opening lines, the protagonist defines herself and narrates her own story. The role she has given herself here is significant in that it foregrounds essential, but often overlooked aspects of liberation work, such as childcare and medical support. In choosing to depict a young woman as part of the administrative team of the conference, Xaba also foregrounds the significance of telling ordinary stories of people who participate in liberation movements, rather than a focus on the movement's leaders. Her role as a runner, then, is an image of a woman running between other women, offering an essential service. She is a figure of connection. In an extension of her role as a runner between others, the protagonist herself is fascinated by the affective life of the conference and is thoughtful about its energy and emotion. This is evident in her description of her experience, which is characterised by an emphasis on the women's bodies. In reflecting on being at the conference she states:

> The women of the ANC have decided to revise the draft constitution in order to make it non-sexist. That's why we are all here, one hundred and twenty of us, and only fifteen men. Seeing all these women in the flesh, in one place, made my pores sing a love song for my country. The names on the registration forms are now bodies I can touch. (46)

In these few lines, the immense hopefulness of the conference is conveyed. Xaba emphasises the roles that sight, sound and touch play in the transmission of feeling. In particular, the image of pores that "sing" portrays the way affect might work, and how it might move between people. The image begins with a description of one woman's feelings in relation to other women, and broadens quickly, in the space of one line, to country. Xaba's choice of words in this passage is significant: flesh; pores; bodies; touch. The protagonist feels connected to the other women at the conference in a deeply visceral sense. She feels "privileged" to be working with these women, many of whom are older than her and who she feels she can learn from (62).

Initially then, the conference is introduced as a hopeful depiction of the potential power of women's organising. Xaba creates a vison of a potential future shaped by women, describing

the purposeful and deliberate reimagining of gender in South Africa. The constitution functions as a symbol for the reshaping of this future and provides space for imagining alternatives to specific patriarchal and misogynistic practices, such as what non-sexist cities might look like, as one of the papers presented at the conference considers. The protagonist reflects:

> Today's agenda is more stimulating than yesterdays. We are getting into the content details of non-sexism. The more interesting, practical things. Yesterday we focused on contextual issues, concepts I know well. I hope I'll be able to listen to some of today's sessions. I want to listen to Comrade Lungile from Washington. Her paper, "Making Town Planning Non-sexist: A Model for the New South Africa", promises to be educational. It's the most unusual thing to choose to talk about. I'm curious. She is the first woman town planner I know. (46)

Through the idea of non-sexist town planning, Xaba depicts what the practical outcomes of women's organizing can look like.

While it offers this hopeful vision of gendered change, this short story, however, is also one about gendered violence and sexual assault, and it is through this narrative that the limits of epistemic friendship are probed. The conference is disrupted by an announcement: a respected male member of the ANC is dead. This sets off the protagonist's memories of sexual assault, as it is her uncle and attacker who has died. The reader slowly discovers the details of the assault as the protagonist's memories reveal more and more of what happened to her in childhood. The incident takes place when the protagonist is much younger and had been visiting her sick aunt to help her with housework and childcare. She was invited to go to a game reserve alone with her aunt's husband. When she was in the car with him, he attempted to rape her. After some struggle, she managed to open the car door and runs into the game reserve.

I read Xaba's depiction of sexual assault and attempted rape in light of feminist understandings of rape in the South African context. Writing in *Rape: A South African*

Nightmare (2015), Gqola defines rape as "sexualised violence" and argues that rape is "the communication of patriarchal power, reigning in, enforcing submission and punishing defiance" (21). Xaba's depiction of attempted rape in "Running" is in conversation with two myths that circulate about rape: the first is that it is (only) strangers who rape, and the second is that powerful men do not rape because "they have a large pool of willing, available, obligation free sex" (34). "Running" disrupts these stereotypes as it is a family member, a respected and powerful member of the ANC, who assaults the protagonist.

The narrative is broken into two parts: before the announcement, and after the announcement, when memories of the attempted rape haunt the protagonist and alter her experience of the conference. After the announcement of her uncle's death, the narrator is plunged into her traumatic memories of him. Once the narrator hears the name of the man who attacked her the feeling of community ends abruptly. In stark contrast, the feeling of being alone is repeatedly stressed. She wants to speak but cannot, and experiences immediate voicelessness. Gqola demonstrates that silence surrounds rape for a variety of reasons. One of the main reasons is that rape survivors are often not believed and are required to prove that a rape took place. Writing about the racist and classist stereotypes that circulate about men who "can" rape which stem from apartheid and colonial discourse, Gqola shows that to be believed

> …the accused has to fall into a category of potential rapist; strangers, poor men, Black men, socially inept men are seen as potential rapists. Powerful, popular, successful men are often excluded from the category of potential rapist. (*Rape* 32)

In "Running" then, one of the reasons the protagonist cannot speak, even in private to the other members of her team, may be that she fears her experience will be discounted. Furthermore, Magadla shows that women, especially those newly arrived to the ANC and MK, often kept silent rather than report abuse because they "feared being labelled as traitors" if they spoke against powerful men in the organization (83). In addition, Xaba herself has critiqued the fact

that women in the South African context are often expected to speak about their trauma *before* healing has taken place. Pointing to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, she shows that the Commission "assumed that speech, the articulation of violence, ought to precede healing instead of vice versa" (Magadla 15). In "Running," Xaba demonstrates that speech cannot come before healing. Rather, the text portrays the protagonist's severe trauma.

Xaba's form reflects the trauma the protagonist has and continues to experience. From the moment the conference is interrupted, the mode of narration is changed. Where the beginning of the story is narrated in the present tense, after the announcement is made the text begins to include flashbacks to the protagonist's past, printed in italics. The protagonist does not have control over these flashbacks, described as unfolding images, "like a video" (70). The events leading up to her attack and attempted rape are interjected into the conference participants' responses to the announcement of her uncle's death, as well as the continuing conference. For example, as the woman presenting her conference paper begins to speak on the relationship between space and women's freedom, the protagonist has a flash back to her uncle pinning her down in the passenger seat of his car. Here, Xaba foregrounds how spaces are unsafe for women due to the threat of sexual violence. As the flashbacks come to a height – the moment of her escape from her uncle – she is no longer able to remain in the conference room and so runs out. Running, then, takes on a more sinister meaning than it does in the beginning of the story when it signified connection. In her trauma, she runs away from, rather than running towards and running between, as it has been used in her identity as a runner for throughout the earlier part of the story. As she runs both in the past and in the present, the timelines seem to merge, representing the continual nature of her trauma formally:

> I can't do this. I just know I cannot do this.
>
> "Comrades please, you have to excuse me. I have to, I have to run, I mean, I have to go to the toilet."

> I don't wait to hear what they have to say. I stand up, push the door open and run out and away, to my room.
>
> *I run faster and faster as his car gets closer. The plan in my head is clear. I will run until there's another car in sight. The wild animals can do as they please. I want to see him and his Christian conscience watch me getting eaten up.*
>
> *I run.*
>
> I run. (80)

The story concludes with the protagonist alone in her room, crying, and preparing to decide what to do next. Significantly, she is isolated, and that feeling of connection which so characterised the earlier part of the story is gone. Here, the profound trauma of sexual violence is presented as a limit of epistemic friendship. The protagonist cannot reach out to a community of support and feels no connection to others in the moment she experiences her trauma. Rather, she is left isolated and alone, and this is the last image the reader has of her. The reader is not told if sexual violence is to be discussed at the conference, but even if it is, it seems unlikely that the protagonist's isolation will be broken. Gender violence works to alienate the protagonist. She is disconnected and silenced.

In "Running," then, epistemic friendship cannot provide the support a victim of gender-based violence needs. I argue that Xaba depicts the hopeful potential of epistemic friendships through collaborative knowledge building in an organised political space. However, there are limits to the knowledge that can be created because the trauma of gender-based violence in contemporary South Africa still isolates and alienates women. The epistemic friendship in Xaba's texts cannot engage this experience. The story functions as a poignant critique of the gap between theorising political gender transformation and women's lived experiences, particularly in South Africa, where gender-based violence remains high and policies and laws for gender justice do not translate into actual, material change.

1.4 Conclusion

I have offered a reading of the women's friendships in *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* and *Running and Other Stories*. In reading Magona and Xaba, I have demonstrated that the depiction of women's friendships is a significant but neglected area of study in South African women's writing. I have shown that friendships emerge as complex, nuanced, and central relationships in the lives of the female characters. We can read Magona and Xaba's reflections on friendship here as a move towards theorising friendship and love on the continent. For both Magona and Xaba, friendship is an important mode of care, consciousness, knowledge, and solidarity.

In *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*, friendship emerges as a space of survival and support for Magona's characters. It allows them to navigate the world of domestic work, and the raced, classed, and gendered violence it entails. For Xaba's characters, friendship offers care, support, and solidarity for women in their experiences of motherhood and reproductive health. In different ways, Magona and Xaba both explore the role friendship can play in the development of political consciousness, and I have read this as epistemic friendship in both "Women at Work" and "Running". Significantly, however, both Magona and Xaba also depict characters who are unsupported. In "Women at Work," Imelda's rape and forced sterilization become the subject of gossip, while in "Running," the protagonist cannot express her need for support in relation to her experience of sexual assault and attempted rape. Thus, both Xaba and Magona explore the limits and failures of women's friendships, as well as their knowledge and world-making possibilities.

Although beyond the scope of this thesis, what future projects might do is consider how *other* South African women writers configure friendship in their fiction. While my analysis has focused on a "transitional" and "post-transitional" narrative, other studies might trace the representation of friendship in South African women's writing from the colonial and apartheid

periods. How, for example, do these differ from more contemporary representations of friendship? What I hope to have demonstrated in this chapter is that friendship is a significant and unexplored aspect of intimacy in South African women's fiction, which warrants more attention. It offers a lens on women's everyday lives and labours across political and personal worlds, and explores their knowledge and solidarity-creation practices, and political consciousness formation. It can also offer interesting insights into the workings and normalisation of gender-based violence in these societies.

Chapter Two: Friendship, queer ordinariness, and companionship in Selected Short Fiction from *Queer Africa*

2.1.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I read friendship as a site of potential resistance in selected South African women's writing. I argued that friendships function as networks of care that are integral to women's navigation of the high levels of gendered violence in South Africa, in particular. In this chapter, I consider the roles queer friendships play in selected women's queer short fiction from Uganda and Kenya. I analyse three short stories taken from *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013) and *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (2017), two anthologies of short fiction from the continent edited by Makhosazana Xaba and Karin Martin. The short stories I examine here are Monica Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" (2006), Beatrice Lamwaka's "Chief of the Home" (2013) and H W Mukami's "Pub 360" (2017). In my reading of these short stories, I extend my argument on friendships in African women's fiction by adding queer as another layer of analysis. I argue that the women writers I read in this chapter deploy friendship to depict the fullness of being and living queer on the continent in hostile environments.

The idea of depicting the fullness of queer African lives has emerged as one of the central themes in queer African scholarship to date (see Murray 2020, Nabutanyi 2022). In many contexts where mainstream political and social discourses frame dissident expressions of gender and sexuality as "un-African," and insist on crude and damaging stereotypes of people who practice nonnormative forms of intimacy, the fictional representation of the full spectrum of queer experience becomes important (see Osinubi 2016, Adenekan 2021, Nabutanyi 2022). As in the context of South African women's writing, which I discussed in the previous chapter, the representation of the everyday and the ordinary (of, for example, love, joy, pleasure, fear, pain, hope, and sadness) becomes a political project. These representations are central to a restorative reimagining of sexuality and gender, one which challenges the

erasure and misrepresentation of queer sexualities on the continent (see Osinubi 2016, Munro 2018).

In his writing about queer Ugandan fiction, literary scholar Edgar Nabutanyi argues that fiction can act as a counternarrative to damaging homophobic discourses by "centering ordinary stories of love, joy, and heartbreak of Ugandan gay people" ("Ugandan Queer Lives Matter"). For Nabutanyi, centring ordinary stories indicates that queer Ugandan lives matter. Writing in the context of queer South African short fiction, Sally Anne Murray emphasizes the importance of depicting "queer ordinariness and companionship," against examples that insist on queerness as "deviance, deficit, subversion, transgression, trauma, injustice, melancholy, grief, loss, death" (82). In these disparate contexts, both Nabutanyi and Murray argue for the importance of portrayals of full, rich, and complex portrayals of queer African lives. This chapter takes up their concerns by demonstrating that focusing on depictions of friendship is a significant way in which we can pay attention to the entirety of queer life on the continent. I argue that representations of friendship between LGBTQIA+ characters are sites in which we can read, as Murray puts it, "queer ordinariness and companionship" (82). Through an analysis of selected Ugandan and Kenyan women's short fiction, I show that friendship allows the authors to explore and imagine the fullness of queer life on the continent, in environments which severely limit it.

I begin this chapter by introducing the theoretical and political contexts against which I read these short stories. First, I place the women writers I read here in their national contexts. I then consider the use of the term 'queer,' especially in relation to African Studies. Next, I trace the political and social context of queer life on the continent. I then consider fictional representations of dissident gender expression and sexualities from the continent and the diaspora. Once I have established this broad context, I turn to Uganda and Kenya, in turn, to better understand the regions from which the short stories I study here emerge. I then consider

the representation of friendship in Ugandan writers Monica Arac de Nyeko's and Beatrice Lamwaka's work, before turning to the work of H.W. Mukami.

2.1.2 Ugandan Women Writing

The women writers I focus on in this section, Beatrice Lamwaka and Monica Arac de Nyeko, can be read in the context of contemporary Ugandan women's writing. To begin, I draw mainly on Spencer's doctoral thesis on emergent South African and Ugandan women's writing as well as on Marie Kruger's study, *Women's Literature in Kenya and Uganda: The Trouble with Modernity* (2011), to contextualise the authors I have selected for analysis. I then provide an overview of FEMRITE, the Ugandan Women Writers Association, to which Lamwaka and de Nyeko belong, as well as an overview of some of the women writers who have published with FEMRITE over the years and who characterise the Ugandan women's literary scene. To conclude the section, I provide some pertinent information on each author.

Both Spencer and Kruger argue that prior to Uganda's move to a multiparty political dispensation in 1986, women's voices were silenced and erased. Spencer demonstrates that post-Uganda's independence from Britain (1962), during the dictatorial regimes of Milton Obote and Idi Amin, ordinary citizens were subjected to gross human rights violations. These brutal atrocities "…included but were not limited to murder, mass killings, torture, detention without trial, kidnappings and political disappearances" ("Writing Women" 1). In addition, the Ugandan economy suffered, and the publishing industry collapsed ("Writing Women" 2). Therefore, between 1962 and 1985, very little was published in Uganda, especially by women writers. Only the work of four women was published in English in this period: Barbara Kimenye with *Kalasanda* (1965), and *Kalasanda Revisted* (1966), Elvania Zirimu with *When the Hunchback Made Rain* (1975) and *Snoring Strangers* (1975), Jane Bakaluba with *Honeymoon for Three* (1975), and Grace Akelo with *My Barren Song* (1979) and *Iteso Thought Patterns in Tales* (1981) ("Writing Women" 3). Elizabeth Oldfield examines Kimenye's work

in her analysis of early postcolonial East African women's writing. She argues that Kimenye (as well as Kenyan writers Espeth Huxley, Oludhe Macgoye and Grace Ogot) uses writing to create women's identities and transgress boundaries (xi).

In 1986, the National Resistance Movement's rise to power under current President Yoweri Museveni resulted in the easing of conditions for women to write and publish (Kruger 5). For Spencer (who writes on both Uganda and South Africa):

> The transition to new democracies in both countries has provided women's movements with new opportunities to negotiate for the incorporation of social transformation for women in the nation-state. These new political freedoms have opened up spaces for previously muffled female voices to construct forms of female representation that engage both the literary and the political. In the midst of these new freedoms, female writers are emerging and finding cracks in which to foreground the female experience in the new nation-state, inserting women's voices and concerns into the national agenda of Uganda and South Africa. ("Writing Women" 5)

One of the most prominent organisations for women writers that emerged in the aftermath of Uganda's transition was FEMRITE. First envisioned by Mary Karoro Okurut, FEMRITE is the Ugandan Women Writers Association and was founded in 1995. It is "…an indigenous, non-governmental, non-profit making women's organization publishing, training and promoting writers" (Kiguli 137). In her reflection on the first ten years of FEMRITE's existence, Ugandan poet, scholar and FEMRITE member Susan Nalugwa Kiguli identifies four "deliberate strategies" that were adopted to "ensure that Ugandan women writers hold their own on the Ugandan literary scene" (141). First, she describes the "deliberate effort" to focus on issues of gender and sexuality in the short story and the novel. Kiguli notes that the decision to focus on the short story and the novel was because these genres were thought to have a "ready market" in the country at the time (141). FEMRITE's particular focus on the short story is evident in

their focus on publishing anthologies. For FEMRITE, the short story anthology (as well as the poetry anthology) is a significant genre because of the possibility of including and showcasing as many women's voices as possible (150). Second, she details FEMRITE's insistence on the importance of women's representation at "linguistic, social and political levels" as the only way in which to ensure that a "balanced canon" of African literature emerges. By this she means a canon that includes male and female authors. Third, she describes the "deliberate effort to build a body of work by women writers," and fourth, to realise this body of work, the establishment of FEMRITE's publishing arm (142).

A list of some of FEMRITE's published women writers demonstrates that the organization has indeed built a body of work by women writers. FEMRITE lists its publications on its website. At the time of writing these include seven novels, including Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* (1999) and Apio Eunice Otuko's *Zura Maids* (2017), and five anthologies of poetry including, most recently, *Go Tell Home*, the first multilingual poetry anthology in the country (ref). Notably, the conveners also list eleven short story anthologies, the first published in 2000 (*Directory of Ugandan Writers*) and the most recent in 2016 (*The Pot and Other Stories*). Other publications include seven works of creative nonfiction. Prominent authors and FEMRITE members also include Mary Okurut, Lillian Tindwebwa, Goretti Kyomuhendo, Glaydah Namukasa, Jackee Budesta Batanda, Doreen Baingana who I study in Chapter Three of this thesis, and the two I study in this chapter, Monica Arac de Nyeko and Beatrice Lamwaka (Kruger 3). Many of these authors cite FEMRITE's networks, reading groups and writers' workshops as integral to their success (Kruger 3).

Ugandan women writers still lack scholarly attention. Spencer's doctoral thesis is notable for its focus on contemporary women writers such as Kyomuhendo, Okurut, Baingana, and Bananuka Jocelyn Ekochu. In her analysis of these writers and others, Spencer argues that these women

> …are involved in a process of self-creation as they attempt to carve an identity for themselves, one that is unmistakably unambiguous in the way it portrays the ambivalences, anxieties, contradictions, complications, complexities and nurturing that women experience in their everyday lives. ("Writing Women" 9)

Similar to the broader context of African women writers I discuss in the introduction to this thesis, Spencer reaffirms here that many Ugandan women writers are interested in questions of identity. Elsewhere, she argues that "Ugandan and South African contemporary women's narratives reflect on the rapid pace of change in the social lives of women in two countries that are contending with the aftermath of conflict and violence" ("In defense of chick-lit" 155).

Contemporary women's fiction also looks back on women's experiences of conflict and violence. Commenting on the prevalence of armed conflict on the African continent in the 21st century, Pauline Ada Uwakweh notes that

> African writers have become not only the chroniclers of the war experience, but also the "medium" by which its atrocities are exposed. They are witnesses with a mission to capture war's physical and psychological consequences, and more so, human resilience in adversity. (3)

Uwakweh goes on to emphasise the "gendered and sexualized" nature of war, noting that "gender violence is integral to war stratagem" (5). For example, Spencer argues that Kyomuhendo's *Waiting: A Novel of Uganda at War* (2007) reflects on the ways in which women are drawn into conflict, and the effect of violence on their lives ("Visible Wars" 109). Kruger concurs, arguing that some of the main themes that emerge from this corpus are militarized violence as well as "the inability or unwillingness of the postcolonial state to protect vulnerable populations" (11). She cites the work of Kyomuhendo, de Nyeko, Batanda, and Waltraud Ndagijimana in this regard. Tomi Adeaga examines the depiction of domestic violence in China Keittetsi's *Child Soldier*. In *Women and War in Contemporary Love Stories*

from Uganda and Nigeria, Sofia Ahlberg reads de Nyeko and Baingana alongside Nigerian authors Sefi Atta and Anthonia Kalu. Significantly, Ahlberg interrogates these authors' depictions of love in the time of war. Ahlberg shows that love in these narratives is politicized, but that it is also there for "pleasure alone" (408).

Furthermore, Kiguli notes that FEMRITE encourages a deliberate focus on issues of gender and sexuality (146). This is striking given the harsh denouncement of homosexuality in the country, which I will detail below. For Kruger, this is evident in the writers' critique of "patriarchal institutions and practices." She argues that they explore the "production of modern sexual bodies" (11). She lists the work of Okurut, Hope Keshubi, Baingana, Namukasa, and Tindyebwa in this regard, noting also their focus on HIV/AIDS (12). FEMRITE's collections of life writing have also received some critical attention. Catherine Hallemeier examines *Today You Will Understand* (2008), *Farming Ashes* (2009), and *I Dare to Say* (2012), which all include the life writing (collected and translated by FEMRITE) of women who experienced war in Northern Uganda (57).

2.1.3 Kenyan Women Writing

I read H.W. Mukami in the context of contemporary Kenyan women's writing. Writing broadly about East African literature, Simon Gikandi asserts that the late colonial period, as well as the move to independence by East African countries, are important historical markers, both for the production and thematic content of literature (1). As Macharia Mwangi argues, the establishment of Kenya as an independent state in 1964 under President Jomo Kenyatta "coincided with the emergence of a literary tradition" to which writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Jonathan Kariara, and Grace Ogot belong (228). This period was defined by social, economic, and political transition brought about by the end of British rule in Kenya and the spread of modernity (Mwangi 231). Writers from this period are often understood as pioneers in the Kenyan and East African literary landscape (Mwangi 228).

Pioneering Kenyan women writers played an important yet often overlooked role in the East African literary and cultural scene (Kruger 1). Their works critique both indigenous and colonial systems of patriarchy and discrimination against women (Pavlov 130). For example, writers such as Elspeth Huxley, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, and Grace Ogot wrote about the complexities of colonialism in Kenya, and the formation of gendered identity (Oldfield xi). Huxley's books include *Red Strangers* (1939) and *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1959), while Macgoye's include *Growing up at Lina School* (1971) and *Coming to Birth* (1986). Ogot's works include *The Promised Land* (1966), *Land Without Thunder* (1968) and *The Other Woman* (1976). Also notable is playwright and novelist Rebeka Njau, well known for her one-act play, *The Scar* (1965), and her novel *Ripples in the Pool* (1975). Significantly, *Ripples in the Pool* is considered the first sustained representation of a lesbian character in postcolonial African literature (Wanjala 93). I will go on to discuss this novel later in the chapter. Muthoni Likimani also published in this period, including his works *They Shall be Chastised* (1974), *What Does a Man Want?* (1974), and *Passbook Number F.47927: Women and Mau Mau in Kenya* (1985).

The period in which many of these texts were published, the late 1960s and 1970s, is associated with a "politics of disillusionment" in East African literature, in which writers critiqued postcolonial failures of governance marked by elitism, corruption, military coups and dictatorships (Gikandi 15). Both Ogot and Njau, for example, are concerned with the violence towards and oppression of women in non-democratic regimes (see Gikandi 2007, Wanjala 2011, Yana 2023). Alongside gender, thematic concerns of these and other early women writers include education, social mobility, modernity and tradition, race, land and landscape, and nationhood (see Gikandi 2007, Kruger 2011, Muchiri 2019, Yana 2023). In the 1980s, Kenya was officially declared a one-party state under the presidency of Daniel arap Moi, and women writers continued to publish works that were concerned with the devastating effects of the

failure of democracy on women's lives. For example, Ogot's *The Graduate* (1980) and *Island of Tears* (1980) explore the effects of politics on the private lives of women (Gikandi 19). Other examples include Macgoye's *Coming to Birth* (1986), which depicts the failure of democracy in post-independence Kenya (Pavlov 113), and Likimani's *What Does a Man Want?* which explores the complexities of gender construction in the post-independence period (Pavlov 127-128). Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* (1994) was also published in this period.

Kenya's transition to multiparty politics in 2002 created new spaces for women's voices and writing (Kruger 5). Women writers have featured prominently on platforms created by collectives such as Kwani Trust, a literary collective founded in 2003 by Binyavanga Wainaina, which aims to create space for creative expression and address socioeconomic inequality (Kruger 7). Writers who have featured in the collective's renowned journal, *Kwani?,* include Judy Kibinge, Yvonne Owuor, Parselelo, Muthoni Garland, Shailja Patel, Andia Kisia, and Jakie Lebo (Kruger 7).

2.2 Theory and Context

2.2.1. A Note on Terminology

Used in English as a slur towards sexual minorities since the nineteenth century, the term 'queer' has a long history (Bernini 100). In his analysis of the term, Bernini emphasises its etymology, arguing that the term has been, as he puts it, "traversed by a long history of semantic variations" (100). It originates from the Latin "torqueo," which means "to twist, to bend, but also to torment" (Bernini 100). Derived from the Latin, the Germanic form "quer" means "transversal," "diagonal," and "oblique" (Bernini 100). By paying attention to these meanings (at once twisted and tormented), Bernini demonstrates that the term becomes the opposite of heterosexuality, which is associated with moral clarity.

> ‘Queer’ can then be considered the opposite of ‘straight,’ which means both ‘upright’ and ‘righteous,’ and by extension, ‘heterosexual’ – since, in a regime of compulsory heterosexuality, heterosexuality is traditionally associated with moral rectitude.” (100)

It is with this meaning that the term comes into use in the context of the United States, as a slur towards sexual minorities during World War II. Despite, or rather because of this use, it was co-opted and embraced by the American gay liberation movements of the late 1960s and 70s (Epprecht 12). As Marc Epprecht shows, the term “queer” was then adopted by North American gay and lesbian intellectuals to

> …describe their efforts to stretch feminism, Marxism, subaltern, and other radical critical theories in order both to facilitate enquiry into issues regarding same-sexuality that are hidden within the dominant discourse and to deploy the enquiry toward healing or dismantling coercive ideologies of gender, sexuality and national or other sexualized identity. (12)

Scholars emphasise that “queer” as it is used in academic contexts – in the contexts of queer theories – is indeterminate and versatile (Bernini 101). For Bernini, queer theories are “critical political philosophies that question the relationship between power and sexuality, adopting a sexual minority’s perspective” (168) Scholars have traced the beginnings of queer theory to writers including Michel Foucault (for his impact on the ways in which we think about sexuality and power), Hortense Spillers (for her contribution to the ways in which we think about race, gender and power), Frantz Fanon (for his theorizations of race and power) and Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (for their theorizations of race, gender, nationality, sexuality and power) (Bernini 103). However, it is Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) which are most often recognized as the “founding texts” of queer theory (Bernini 111).

In African Studies, "queer" is a contested term. As I have shown above, the term is Western in origin, and furthermore, most queer studies have marginalised and ignored African perspectives (see Currier and Migraine-George 2016). Keguro Macharia demonstrates that queer theories consistently mine African sexual minorities for "data" or "evidence" from which to theorise, rather than valuing queer knowledge and theories from the continent ("On Being Area Studied" 185). As Anjali Arondekar and Geeta Patel argue on a broader scale in relation to transnational queer studies, "geopolitics provides the exemplars, but rarely the epistemologies" (152).[16] In addition, Epprecht argues that African scholars are often "overlooked" in queer theory, and that queer theory remains "dependent on Western empirical evidence and [is] referenced by Western theoretical frameworks" (14). Many African scholars are therefore reluctant to use the term (Epprecht 14).

However, especially due to queer scholarship that considers race and theorizations of the global political economy, the term has gained some traction in the African context (Epprecht 12). Epprecht demonstrates that on the continent "queer" often serves as

> …a convenient shorthand to describe an antiessentialist approach to researching gender and sexuality that is open to the whole range of human sexual diversity; that underscores sexuality as a critical component in the construction of class, race, national, ethnic, and other identities; that analyses language and silences in relation to material conditions and struggles; and that engages with current debates about global economic and other inequalities coming out of African feminist, subaltern and critical masculinity studies, both as these debates play out in academe and in the broader political sphere. (13)

[16] The field of transnational queer studies addresses the issues of Western dominance in knowledge production that Arondekar and Patel raise here. For example, see Rahul Rao's *Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality* (2020), Evren Savci's *Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics Under Neoliberal Islam* (2021) and Srila Roy's *Changing the Subject: Feminist and Queer Politics in Neoliberal India* (2022).

This use of queer is evident in several popular and academic publications which use the term queer alongside 'African' in recent years, including the *Queer African Reader* (2013) edited by Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas, *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities* (2014) edited by Zethu Matebeni, and the *Routledge Handbook of Queer African Studies,* edited by S. N. Nyeck (2020). In addition, the anthologies of short fiction which I read in this chapter, *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* and *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* use the term. As Adriaan van Klinken and Kwame E Otu argue,

> …many African sexual and gender diversity activists, artists, and scholars have embraced 'queer' as a political and theoretical term to name their struggles, especially in Anglophone contexts. (512)

In the context of the texts I name above and African studies more broadly, 'queer' remains an "indeterminate" and "versatile" term. For example, in *The Routledge Handbook of African Studies*, S. N. Nyeck uses 'queer' as a "non-exhaustive umbrella for non-heteronormative sexualities and gender identities" (1). As Matebeni and Jabu Pereira write in *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities* however, 'queer' is not only a marker of identity. Rather, it is also "…understood as an inquiry into the present, as a critical space that pushes the boundaries of what is embraced as normative" (7). Here, Matebeni and Pereira embrace a definition of queer which emphasizes a critique of normative heterosexuality as well as pushing beyond it. Similarly, for Stella Nyanzi, "…queer Africa must necessarily explore and articulate local nuances of being non-heteronormative and non-gender conforming" (67). For other scholars, such as Ekine and Abbas, queer is a political frame. They write:

> We use the term 'queer' here and in the title to denote a political frame rather than a gender identity or sexual behaviour. We use queer to underscore a perspective that embraces gender and sexual plurality and seeks to transform, overhaul and

> revolutionise African order rather than seek to assimilate into oppressive hetero-patriarchal-capitalist frameworks. (3)

The two collections I analyse in this chapter engage with these multiple meanings of, and debates about, 'queer.' In the introduction to *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction*, Pumla Gqola writes:

> … the many discussions and debates on the use of queer in African contexts are varied and on-going. These debates have discoveries, frustrations, excitement and anger that come with all politically difficult conversations worth having. While some use the label comfortably, others are worried about whether it adequately speaks usefully to contexts outside of the geographical politics of its emergence. Does it give credence to or help challenge the homophobic claims of importation? Does it contest African hegemonies by using terms of reference that come from a place that paid no attention to queer his/her/hirstories on the continent? (2)

It is beyond the scope of this project to answer the questions Gqola poses here, but I take cognizance of them and the debates I have traced here while using the term in this thesis. I use 'queer' in this thesis as an indeterminate and versatile term to refer to the fiction that depicts the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people both living on the continent and in its diaspora, as well as fiction that critiques heteronormative ideologies on the continent.

2.2.2 Reading and Writing Queer Africa

I read the literary representations of queerness I examine in this chapter in the context of contesting political, social, cultural, and religious discourses on the continent. First, I provide a brief overview of the political context continent-wide, as well as the ideas that circulate about African sexualities more broadly and in African literature. I then offer a review of scholarship on the discourses that surround same sexuality in Kenya and Uganda respectively. Writing a decade ago, in 2014, Zethu Matebeni and Jabu Pereira argue that

> The last few years have been deeply challenging for sexual and gender non-conforming persons in Africa. Various laws, legislations, traditional and religious fundamentalism have been strengthened in order to police and regulate nonnormative sexualities and gender identities. (7)

Here, Matebeni and Pereira are referring to laws in various countries on the continent that criminalise same-sex practices. Writing in 2013, Olajide Akanji and Marc Epprecht demonstrated that homosexuality had "…been criminalized in many African countries with varying degrees of sanctions, while hate campaigns, discrimination and brutal attacks by state security officials against LGBTI people are widespread" (19). In 2025, these assertions hold true. Same sex practices are criminalised and punished with imprisonment by thirty-three countries on the continent ("IAS statement"). The International AIDS Conference (IAS) reports that in 2023, at least six countries took steps to tighten legislation that criminalises same-sex practices (Kenya, Ghana, Namibia, Niger, Tanzania and Uganda) ("IAS statement").

Some countries, such as Seychelles, Lesotho, Botswana, Gabon, and Angola, have decriminalized same-sex relationships in recent years ("IAS Statement"). South Africa, too, remains a notable exception as it protects LGBTQIA+ rights in its constitution. However, members of LGBTQIA+ communities face high levels of homophobic violence in South Africa despite rights that are enshrined in one of the most progressive constitutions in the world (see Namaste 1996, Reid and Dirsuweit 2002, Posel 2004, Munro 2012). Put differently, the rights accorded to queer communities and individuals in South Africa are "unevenly guaranteed" (Bhagat 155), and the lived experience of those rights is inflected by location, race, gender, class, and nationality (see Livermon 2014, Bhagat 2017, Canham 2017). Brian Michael Müller's evocative reading of South African poet Tshidi 'Latifah' Mokhele's "The Streets," for example, highlights the threat of harassment, assault, rape, and murder that faces working-class, black lesbian women in particular (1610). Reaching back to my description of the

treatment of women in South Africa in Chapter One, it is clear that South African black lesbian women experience layered discrimination along the lines of gender, race, class and sexuality (see Matebeni 2013, Carlse 2018).

One of the most pervasive ideas that has dominated homophobic discourse on the continent is the assertion, often made by state and religious leaders, that homosexuality is "un-African" (Nyanzi, "Dismantling" 952). Akanji and Epprecht describe this idea as a "persistent, populist interpretation of history" in which "…homosexual behaviour is 'un-African,' a foreign 'disease' that was introduced to Africa by Arab slave traders, white settlers, or missionaries and is now being spread by foreign tourists and sexual predators" (20). This interpretation of history is described by Ekine as a "culturally essentialist position" which relies on the false notion of an "authentic Africanness" and an African culture that is intrinsic, authentic, and fixed ("Contesting Narratives" 80). At the same time, religious fundamentalisms draw on homophobic interpretations of religious texts to claim that same-sex love is immoral and unnatural. This interpretation of history and religion has been, and continues to be, used both to ignore and to persecute sexual minorities on the continent, through the argument that "queer sexualities threaten African social and cultural norms" (Ekine, "Contesting Narratives" 80).[17]

Epprecht and Sylvia Tamale dismantle the idea of fixed "African social and cultural norms" or a "heterosexual Africa" in their scholarship through a detailed focus on the ways in which African sexualities have been conceptualized historically (see Epprecht 2008 and 2013, Tamale "Researching and Theorising" 2011). Epprecht uses the phrase 'African sexuality' to describe the idea that "Africans shape a common sexual culture distinct from people elsewhere in the world" ("The Making of 'African Sexuality'" 54). As he demonstrates, this idea is centuries old and has had "numerous incarnations" ("The Making of 'African Sexuality'" 54). For example, African sexuality has been problematized from colonial (as stunted and brutish)

[17] See also Rao (2020) and van Klinken (2013).

to modern times (as promiscuous and lustful) and has historically been used to justify raced and gendered oppression and inequality, or to explain HIV/AIDS infection rates on the continent (Epprecht "The Making of African Sexuality" 54). In colonial discourse, African women, in particular, were understood as "primitive" and "lustful" (Tamale "Researching and Theorising 15). Thus, much academic scholarship on 'African sexuality' has been dedicated to tracing the construction of this very idea in colonial archives (Tamale "Researching and Theorising" 15). Tamale notes too that much Western anthropological research on 'African sexuality' continued the colonial racist, mysoginistic and homophobic interpretations of sexuality on the continent ("Researching and Theorizing" 15).

Writing on colonial histories of seeing in the context of queer cultural studies, Gayatri Gopinath demonstrates the ways in which "imperial, settler colonial, and radical regimes of power… instantiate regimes of vision that determine what we see, how we see, and how we are seen" (7). Put another way, populations of postcolonial nations have long been subject to multiple "surveilling gaze(s)" (7). In the African context, Sylvia Tamale describes this way of looking as a "voyeuristic, ethnopornographic obsession," and demonstrates how it exoticises African sexual cultures and people (19).These ways of seeing continue to exert a large influence on legislature and attitudes towards sexuality in Africa (Lewis 208). Wesley Paul Macheso identifies "scrutiny and surveillance from state, culture, religion and social groups" which "controls sexuality, creating a disabling environment for queer subjects" (10). In such contexts, queer individuals and communities are at once systematically erased and dangerously hyper visible, subject to a heterosexual gaze which Macheso defines as "that position of privilege and authority occupied by heterosexual men and women who exercise power over gender and enforce sexual normativity…" (11).

For Gopinath, aesthetic practices can "…disrupt the normative ways of seeing and knowing that have been central to the production, containment and disciplining of sexual, racial

and gendered bodies" (7). She argues that queer diasporas engage in "queer optics," which can provide us with an "alternative model of visuality" (8). The idea of an alternative model of visuality is central to my reading of friendship in this chapter. I ask how friendships allow characters to *see* each other more fully, and so contribute to a rich and varied depiction of queer life on the continent. An example of an alternative model of visuality can be found in the work of visual artist Zanele Muholi's photographs of black lesbian women in South Africa. Pumla Gqola demonstrates that black lesbian women are often hyper visible in South African culture as "manifestations of the undesirable" (623). However, in her reading of Muholi's work, Gqola argues that Muholi's images "underline the importance of seeing the agency – life choices, decisions, failures, confusions, discoveries, rejections – of the Black lesbian in the picture" (623). In this way, Muholi's work refuses the representation of black lesbian women solely as victims. Rather, the photographs insist on seeing queer life in all its complexity.

In the wake of historically essentialist and heterosexual understanding of 'African sexuality,' Tamale advocates for using the phrase "African sexualities" to discuss sexuality on the continent.

> Reference to sexuality in the plural does not simply point to the diverse forms of orientation, identity or status. It is a political call to conceptualise sexuality outside the normative social orders and frameworks that view it through binary oppositions and simplistic labels. In other words, thinking in terms of multiple sexualities is crucial to disperse the essentialism embedded in so much sexuality research. ("Researching and Theorising" 11)

As Tamale reminds us, the experience of sexuality is neither monolithic nor singular for any group of people, or even for individuals ("Researching and Theorising" 11).

> The various dimensions of sexuality include sexual knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours, as well as procreation, sexual orientation and personal and

> interpersonal sexual relations. Sexuality touches a wide rand of other issues including pleasure, the human body, dress, self-esteem, gender identity, power and violence. It is an all-encompassing phenomenon that involves the human psyche, emotions, physical sensations, communication, creativity and ethics. ("Researching and Theorising" 12)

In addition to rhetoric from within the continent that claims homosexuality is "un-African," discourse from outside the continent often brands Africa as a site of "obsessive homophobia" (Ekine, "Contesting Narratives" 78). Ekine demonstrates that dominant global discourses that frame Africa as homophobic stem from both colonial discourse that pathologizes "African sexuality" as deviant, as well as from international human rights discourses that take on African issues without engaging with people who face those struggles on the continent ("Contesting Narratives" 78). Ekine describes the latter as a "contemporary neoliberal, global 'LGBT' agenda which seeks to universalize white American sexual norms and gender expressions" ("Contesting Narratives" 78).

The complexities of what Ekine describes as the "global 'LGBT' agenda" are evident in the contesting narratives that surround international aid and the treatment of LGBTQIA+ people in some countries on the continent. In the wake of international governments responding to homophobic legislation by withdrawing aid, activists, and scholars have argued that conditional aid can negatively impact the very communities it claims to support. For example, a statement made to the British government by African social justice activists reads:

> The imposition of donor sanctions may be one way of seeking to improve the human rights situation in a country, but does not, in and of itself, result in the improved protection of the rights of LGTBI people. Donor sanctions are by nature coercive and reinforce the disproportionate power dynamics between donor countries and recipients. (Ekine 93)

Both ideas of the framing of homosexuality as "un-African" and Africa as "obsessively homophobic" ignore and erase the numerous groups and individuals who are working to support and protect LGBTQIA+ rights on the continent as well as queer individuals and communities. This includes the many activist organizations, local non-governmental organizations, scholars and academics, journalists and, creative writers engaged in work that supports local and international LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities. For the purposes of this chapter, I focus here on literary scholars and creative writers' contributions to queer discourses, visibility and liveability on the continent.

Writing in an article entitled "'Wheyting be Dat?': On the Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature" in 1989, Chris Dunton discusses the slim body of literary texts that address non-normative sexualities in early African writing of the 1960s and 70s. So few are these portrayals that Dunton describes early African writers' treatment of homosexuality as an "sustained outburst of silence" (445). In the few texts that do offer some treatment of queer Dunton demonstrates that homosexuality is used as a symbol for the negative, exploitative, impact of the West on Africa, and its depiction is characterized by crude stereotypes in which homosexuality is foreign and deviant (422). For example, this is the case in texts such as Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), John Pepper Clark's *The Raft* (1978), and William Sassine's *Wirriyamu* (1980) (Dunton, "Wheyting be Dat?": On the Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature 424). However, Dunton reads Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1965), Yambo Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence* (1968) and Yulisa Amadu Pat Maddy's *No Past, No Present, No Future* (1973), as more complex, ambivalent representations of same-sex intimacy (Dunton, "Wheyting be Dat?": On the Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature 423). He argues that in these three novels,

> …the subject of homosexuality becomes liberated, in the special sense that whether or not it is treated sympathetically, it is granted a greater capacity to disturb, to call

> questions, than in texts where it merely forms part of the data of a social typology." (423)

However, as Dunton himself notes, and Lindsey Green-Simms emphasises writing twenty-five years later in 2016, texts such as *The Interpreters* do not actually depict same-sex intimacies in any detail. Rather, they "for the most part, loudly and forcefully neglected to tell the stories about the love, joy, and heartbreak of African men who love men and women who love women" (140).

As I mentioned, Rebeka Njau's *Ripples in the Pool* (1975) is notable as the first East African novel to depict a lesbian relationship (Pavlov 138). Pavlov reads this text as a highly ambivalent portrayal of queer (138). Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy: or Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint* (1977) is also particularly notable here as an early complex and ambivalent representation of queer intimacy (see Munro 2017). In Aidoo's text, the protagonist, Sissie, travels from Ghana to Germany and becomes close friends with the German, Maria. Their friendship is a complex one, fraught with questions of nation, race, and the continuing legacy of a colonial past. *Our Sister Killjoy* is significant for its early ambiguous portrayal of desire between the two women. Writing in 2003, Elleke Boehmer described *Our Sister Killjoy* as "one of the two most prominent instances of lesbian desire in Anglophone African women's writing to date" (Boehmer 136).

Albeit in limited and ambiguous ways, these two works can be read as precursors to the "polyphony" of queer African writing that exists today. The field of queer African writing has changed significantly since the publication of "Wheyting be that?" in 1989 (see Green-Simms 2016, Osinubi 2016, Dunton, "Tuning into the Polyphony" 2023). For Green-Simms, the silence on homosexuality in African writing is changing, becoming a "polyphony" of voices (141) Paradoxically, as some African governments have strengthened legislation that criminalises dissident sexualities, representations of same-sex love have become more visible,

and as Taiwo Osinubi notes, "…emergent representations have lately been framed as interventions in cultural politics or expressions of dissent due to the politicization of queer intimacies" (viii). At the same time, the Internet has enabled dialogue and exchange, facilitating the ease of access to and distribution of queer African literatures. Shola Adenekan demonstrates that queer Africans are at the forefront of digital writing that "challenges and undermines conventional thinking about history, affect, memory and sexual politics" (75). He argues that through the use of personal and fictional narratives, queer African writers use the digital space to contest predominant narratives of queer Africa (77). Writing in the Kenyan context, for example, Evan Mwangi argues that the digital space is paradoxical in that, in some cases, it can enable the spread of homophobic discourses, but it has also been used effectively by lesbian and gay communities to "assert their agency" (94). This is especially true of queer fiction published online (see, for instance several short stories published in the online African magazine, *Lolwe*).

In what follows, I offer a broad overview of contemporary queer African writing and scholarship before turning to a more detailed review of queer writing from Kenya and Uganda. There is growing scholarship on contemporary queer African writing, both from the continent and the diaspora. This scholarship often takes either a continent-wide approach or a more detailed regional approach or limits itself to a single author or comparative study. Foundational texts that discuss fiction from the continent as a whole include Neville Hoad's *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization* (2007), Chantal Zabus's *Out in Africa: Same-Sex Desire in Sub-Saharan Literatures & Cultures* (2013) and Taiwo Osinubi's "Queer Prolepsis and the Sexual Commons: An Introduction" (2016). Recently published doctoral theses which take queer African fiction as their focus include Jenny Bożena Du Preez's "Intersectionality and Complexity in the Representation of 'Queer' Sexualities and Genders in

African Women's Short Fiction" (2019) and Micaela Jade Shaw's "'In an Other World': Representations of the Other in Queer African Speculative Short Stories" (2023).

In "Queer Prolepsis and the Sexual Commons: An Introduction," Osinubi examines emerging queer representations in African literature and film and argues that these engage in a "restorative project" which reimagines what counts as "proper sexuality" (viii). For example, one of the genres Osinubi examines is African queer life writing. This is a growing field, which includes titles such as *Hijab: Unveiling Queer Muslim Lives* (2009), *Trans: Transgender Life Stories from South Africa* (2009), *Reclaiming the L-Word: Sappho's Daughters Out in Africa* (2011), *Proudly Malawian: Life Stories from Lesbians and Gender-Nonconforming Individuals* (2016), *Invisible: Stories from Kenya's Queer Community* (2014), *Stories of Our Lives: Queer Narratives from Kenya* (2015), and Binyavanga Wainaina's memoir, *One Day I Will Write About This Place* (2011). I discuss the three final texts from Kenya in more detail below. Osinubi offers a more sustained analysis of queer life writing in "African Queer Autobiographics: Drama, Disclosure and Pedagogy" (2020), with a particular focus on *Stories of Our Lives: Queer Narratives from Kenya.* Other scholarly engagements with African queer life writing include Cheryl Stobie's "'The devil slapped on the genitals": Religion and Spirituality in Queer South Africans' Lives" and Wesley Paul Macheso's "Vulnerability and the (Im)possibilities of Becoming: Transgenderism in Contemporary South African Life Writing" (2021).

Recent work on queer writing in the African diaspora includes Rocío Cobo-Piñero's study of celebrated Nigerian-born writer and artist Akwaeke Emezi's work. In "Queering the Black Atlantic: Transgender Spaces in Akwaeke Emezi's Writing and Visual Art" Cobo-Piñero deploys the foundational work of Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley (2008), Lyndon Gill (2012), and Keguro Macharia (2019) to consider Emezi's work. In another example, scholars

such as Aretha Phiri (2015), Brenna Munro (2016), and Bernie Lombardi (2020) consider queer representations in the work of another celebrated Nigerian-born author, Chimamanda Adichie.

Continuing the focus on Nigerian queer writing, scholars have also offered analyses of the work of critically acclaimed authors such as Chris Abani (*GraceLand* (2004)) and Chinelo Okparanta (*Under the Udala Trees* (2015)). Lindsey Green-Simms's 2016 article entitled "The Emergent Queer: Homosexuality and Nigerian Fiction in the 21st Century" remains a foundational article in this field. In it, Green-Simms offers an analysis of the works of authors such as Abani, Adichie, and Jude Dibia, as well as writing published on the internet. Other authors who have received critical attention include Unoma Azuah, Chike Frankie Edozien, and Uzodinma Iweala (see Chow-Quesada 2023, Munro 2016).

One of the regions that has received the most significant and sustained attention is writing from South Africa, due in part, as I have mentioned above, to the country's progressive constitution. It is not possible to give a comprehensive overview of the field here, but I sketch it in broad strokes below. To begin, titles such as Brenna Munro's *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom* (2012) and Andy Carolin's *Post-Apartheid Same-Sexualities: Restless Identity in Literary and Visual Culture* (2021) offer significant theoretical, historical, and literary analysis of the field. Significantly for my analysis of short fiction in this chapter, several studies take South African queer short stories as their focus and show that the short story is a significant site for queer literature in the country (see Murray 2020, Hall et al 2024). I will consider these more fully in my discussion of the queer-themed anthology below. Other studies consider genre fiction, such as speculative and science fiction, as sites of queer South African representation. For example, Grant Andrews (2020) reads Lauren Beukes's *Moxyland* (2008) and Nicky Drayden's *The Prey of the Gods* (2017) as examples of queer speculative fiction, while Bibi Burger offers an analysis of Masande Ntshanga's *Triangulum* (2019) as queer science fiction.

Also significant is the work that has solidified around particular authors and texts. For example, K. Sello Duiker remains one of the most celebrated figures in South African queer writing, and scholars such as Edgar Nabutanyi (2016), Thando Njovane (2020), and Meg Samuelson (2022) all offer recent analyses of *Thirteen Cents* (2002). Other authors who have garnered critical attention include Fred Khumalo for *Seven Steps to Heaven* (2007), Zukiswa Wanner for *Men of the South* (2010), Chwayita Ngamlana for *If I Stay Right Here* (2017), Koleka Putuma for *Collective Amnesia* (2017), vangile gantsho for *red cotton* (2018), and Mthunzikazi Mbungwana for *Unam Wena* (2021) (see Munro 2018, Andrews 2019, Chidi et al 2024).

While the countries I have discussed here – South Africa and Nigeria – are sites of growing scholarship on queer writing, it is important to note that many regions have had little or no critical attention paid to queer writing. In writing about the Maghreb, for example, Gibson Ncube demonstrates that queer writing from the region has received limited critical attention, even in studies or theories that aim to speak to the context of Africa (624). For Gibson,

> The way forward for African queer studies lies in trans-continental and inter-regional dialogue that will allow for a fuller and all-inclusive imagining and thinking through non-conforming sexual and gender experiences in Africa. (632)

Although this study does not look at the Maghreb, this chapter does examine queer writing from Ugandan and Kenyan women that have to date received little attention, and so hopes to contribute to this "fuller and all-inclusive imagining and thinking." To do so, I turn now to a more detailed contextualization of Uganda and Kenya. Although I look at each country in turn, it is important to note that Kenyan and Ugandan LGBTQIA activists and artists often work across national boundaries, and often take a pan-African, or global approach. In his work on digital queer writing in Kenya and Nigeria, for example, Shola Adenekan argues that "Queer Kenya and Queer Nigeria cannot be theorized without approaching them from a continent-wide

perspective because queer African writers do not limit their portrayal to a national boundary" (75). As he goes on to state "…their writings indicate that homophobia in one country affects queer people in other countries, and, therefore, that there is a sense of solidarity in their writings" (75). Adenekan's insistence on solidarity between queer writing that emerges from different countries is evident in my focus here on writing from Kenya and Uganda that is published together in South African edited anthologies, as I will demonstrate in my analysis.

2.2.3 Writing Queer Sexuality in Uganda

Ugandan literary scholar Edgar Nabutanyi characterizes debates about sexuality in Uganda as "polarized" (74). He argues that while "… one group upholds the conservatively patriarchal and religious notion of criminalizing and silencing unconventional sexual practices, another advocates for the agency of people engaged in same-sexuality" (75). Therefore, two main sides to the debate emerge, one that condemns same-sex love and the other that defends, celebrates, and advocates for the people who practice it.

Detailing the former, Ugandan feminist scholar, poet, and activist Stella Nyanzi demonstrates that same-sex loving individuals in Uganda are stereotyped as "immoral, evil, deviant, decadent, degenerate, diseased, poor and insane" (955). In her analysis, these stereotypes emerge out of dominant discourse in the following main areas: state rhetoric and legislation, religion, healthcare, popular interpretations of history, and patriarchy and heterosexism. As can be seen from this list, homophobic discourse remains prevalent as it is grounded in key areas of Ugandan culture and society.

Homosexuality is criminalized by the Ugandan state through various pieces of legislation (Strand 917). Furthermore, the Ugandan state has consistently acted to tighten legislation in order to criminalize homosexuality, such as the move to amend the 1995 Ugandan constitution to criminalize same-sex marriage in 2005 and the removal of "sexuality as a minority status" from the Equal Opportunities Commission Act in 2007 (Nabutanyi 74).

Although same-sex love was already outlawed by the Penal Code (a remnant of colonial law), one of the bills that has received the most attention is the Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2009 (Strand 917). As Nyanzi notes, the Anti-Homosexuality Bill received international attention because it "proposed the death penalty for 'aggravated homosexuality'" (953). Nyanzi also lists the Bill's less publicized penalties: "three years imprisonment for not disclosing homosexuality to the police within 24 hours of knowing," "seven years' imprisonment for the promotion of, conspiracy to engage in, aiding and abetting of or attempting to commit homosexuality," and "life imprisonment for same-sex marriage or the offence of homosexuality" (953). In her detailed analysis of the Bill's rhetoric, Nyanzi demonstrates that it justifies itself by putting forward the idea of a monolithic African culture and "traditional family" that need to be "protected" from same-sex love. This rhetoric ignores the pluralities of ways of making family on the continent, and in Uganda itself. It continues the myth that homosexuality was introduced from outside of Uganda, by "colonisers, missionaries, explorers and tourists from the West or with artisans, construction workers or traders from the Arab East" (955). The Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act was eventually passed in 2023.

While the state outlaws same-sex love, religion also plays a role in furthering homophobic discourse in Uganda. Nyanzi argues that "dominant religious interpretations frame homosexuality as an abomination to God" (955).[18] This is done through the use of scriptures that may be interpreted as homophobic, specifically biblical and qur'anic scriptures that reference the "sin of Sodom and Gomorrah" (957).[19] Nyanzi shows how religious clerics use homophobic interpretations of scripture to argue that same-sex love is immoral and un-

[18] See John Anderson's *Conservative Christianity, the Global South and the Battle over Sexual Orientation* for a detailed discussion of the influence churches in the Global North and Global South have on each other in terms of discourse on same-sex love.

[19] Sodom and Gomorrah were ancient cities referenced in the Bible and the Qur'an. In religious scripture they are described as sinful and were destroyed by God for this reason. The sin implied by scripture is often interpreted as homosexuality, however scholars have shown that it could be inhospitality, violence and sexual aggression (Britannica).

African. She cites Ugandan Archbishop Henry Orombi as an example, who, at the Global Anglican Future Conference in 2008, "failed to condemn torture, rape and discrimination based on sexual orientation, but instead emphasized the potential of forsaking homosexuality through Christian intervention" (958).[20] However, there is also a small but growing number of clerics who condemn homophobia and support LGBTQI+ rights in Uganda (958).

Describing the healthcare sphere, Nyanzi writes that "many healthcare providers still pathologise homosexuality, especially as psychosis" (955). The criminalization of homosexuality, coupled with homophobic religious discourse and dominant heterosexist and patriarchal systems, results in homophobic healthcare practices that treat same-sex love as physical and psychological illness, and which are detrimental to people who practice same-sex intimacy or who do not identify with the male/female binary system. Andrew Mujugira *et. al.* demonstrate that the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023 has had a detrimental effect on vulnerable Ugandans in several ways. For instance, this act has further deterred LGBTQIA+ Ugandans from accessing healthcare such as testing, treatment, and prevention services, especially in relation to HIV (1).

Various groups that defend and advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights in Uganda work in opposition to the context I have outlined above. Nyanzi defines these groups as a "growing body of opposing voices," which includes "sexual minorities, queer activists, human rights defenders and academics" (952). To this list, I would add creative writers. For Nabutanyi, these groups, including creative writers, aim to "reclaim the humanity of sexual minorities that are often erased in mainstream discourse, by underscoring the diversity and complexity that sexuality engenders" (75).

[20] For a more detailed analysis of this the discourse surrounding homosexuality at this conference see *Constructing the Boundaries of Anglican Orthodoxy: An Analysis of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON*) by Joanna Sadgrove et al.

Nabutanyi identifies queer writing in three sub-genres of Ugandan fiction: the historical novel (by writers such as Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and Nakisazane Segawa), verisimilitude short fiction (by writers such as Anthea Paelo, Beatrice Lamwaka, and Monica Arac de Nyeko), and science fiction (by writers such as Dila Dilman) ("Ugandan Queer Lives Matter"). In these genres, he argues that writers such as Makumbi, Paelo, Segawa, and two of the authors I read in this chapter, Lamwaka and de Nyeko, are authors who use their creative work to challenge homophobia in Uganda ("Contestations" 370). For example, he reads the historical novels of Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi (*Kintu* 2014) and Nakisanze Segawa (*The Triangle* 2016) as an interrogation of the "heteronormative foundational myths" on which Uganda is constructed ("Contestations" 369). Also notable here is *Sacred Queer Stories: Ugandan LGBTQI+ Refugee Lives and the Bible* (2021), a collection of life writing, poetry, and essays edited by Adriaan Van Klinken, Johanna Stiebert, Sebyala Brian, and Fredrick Hudson. For Nyanzi, this collection, amplifies "the everyday struggles and victories" of queer Ugandan immigrants ("Balancing" 74).

2.2.4 Writing Queer in Kenya

In Kenya, similar to Uganda, there are opposing sides to the debate about same-sex love and intimacy. As in Uganda, this debate takes place between homophobic religious actors, the state, patriarchal systems, healthcare discourses, and LGBTQIA+ activists, artists, and scholars. Writing on the contradictory nature of queer lived experience in the country, Eddie Ombagi argues that while "…the legal framework denies a queer existence, a dynamic lived experience reveals a queer ambivalence at odds with both the political and religious logic in the country" (106). I trace the contours of this ambivalence below.

As is the case in Uganda, religious rhetoric in Kenya is often deeply homophobic. Religious discourse (including that of Islam, Christianity, and traditional religions) often plays a dominant role in Kenyan society (Igwe 264). For Leo Igwe:

> The overarching influence of the religion on the Kenyan population and politics is evident in the public pronouncements that religious leaders in Kenya make. Clerics often present religious values as Kenyan values, or as norms that should guide all Kenyans in making laws and policies. Religious organizations take advantage of their huge populations to campaign and lobby the state authorities to recognize and adopt religious positions as state positions and policies… (264)

While political positions on same sex love can be influenced by religion, political logic on same sex love in Kenya is rooted in colonial law.[21] Isabel Marler, Daniela Marin Platero and Felogene Anumo explain:

> Attitudes, norms and laws around same-sex relations in Kenya are deeply rooted in colonial history and imperialism. In 1930, the British introduced the Colonial Office Model Code which replaced the Indian Penal Code. This Colonial Office Model Code was based on the Queensland Code of 1899 which still exists in Kenya today and is known as the Penal Code. (518)

The Kenyan Penal Code criminalises homosexuality through its sections 162 and 165 (Marler, Platero and Anumo 518). These sections state that a person who has "carnal knowledge against the order of nature" or permits a person to have "carnal knowledge against the order of nature" can receive a sentence of up to fourteen years in prison (Marler, Platero and Anumo 518-519). Significantly, these laws do not directly criminalise homosexuality. Rather, they obliquely refer

[21] While acknowledging the lasting impact of colonial law, Macharia and Ekine both caution against a limited turn to the archive which elides the ways in which homophobia was configured in the independence period (see Ekine 2013, Macharia 2015). Ekine argues that the anti-colonial struggle left patriarchal, homophobic, and misogynistic structures unchallenged ("Contesting Narratives" 81). She then reads the tightening of existing legislation that criminalises homosexuality as a continued project of nation building which takes heterosexuality as the basis for citizenship ("Contesting Narratives" 81). Writing on the Kenyan independence struggle Macharia demonstrates that gay men were excluded from narratives of the anti-colonial struggle and in turn, nation building. He argues that the figure of the male homosexual was associated with the repressive colonial regime. Through an analysis of prison archives, he demonstrates that "the male homosexual was understood to be indifferent to freedom struggles and complicit in anti-freedom criminality" ("Archive and Method" 143).

to "carnal knowledge against the order of nature," as do colonial laws common to all postcolonial societies. However, these laws have been used to target the LGBTQIA+ community and to criminalise homosexuality (Gathara). There has been opposition to these sections of the Penal Code by Kenyan LGBTQIA+ activists through legal avenues. Notably, the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission brought a petition to the court in 2016 to repeal the homophobic sections of the Penal Code, which was rejected in 2019 (Ombagi, "Stories we tell" 410). Although the petition was unsuccessful, its existence points to the strength of the LGBTQIA+ movement in Kenya. For example, Eddie Ombagi describes the court on the day of the ruling (May 24, 2019), highlighting the queer community's presence, resilience, and what he terms "constant reinvention" – the ability of the queer community to create and recreate queer identities and communities despite repression ("Stories we Tell" 411).

Okall *et. al.* note that the growing LGBTQIA+ movement in Kenya is "helping to make Kenya somewhat less dangerous for these minority groups than in other nearby countries" (1714). This is evident in the challenges to the Penal Code I mention above. Some examples of LGBTQIA+ activist organizations in Kenya include the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya, the Nyanza, Rift Valley, Western Kenya Network, and a movement called "Warembo Ni Yes" ("young women say yes"), an organization of young women who have challenged homophobic laws in Kenya (Marler, Platero and Anumo 520). In particular, Nairobi is known as the site of "a vibrant gay activist community" (Moyer and Igonya 1010), as well as a complex site of queer leisure and pleasure. For example, in his exploration of queer lived experiences in Nairobi, Ombagi reads a nightclub, a tavern, and a cruising café in the city as spaces that recuperate "…negative assumptions of queer lives and practices to more positive and affirmative tones of community, friendship and celebrations of love" ("Nairobi is a Shot of Whiskey" 108).[22]

[22] See also Efemia Chela's article on lesbian, bi, queer, and non-binary social life in Lusaka, Zambia (2023).

Existing queer literary work from Kenya continues this practice of resilience and recuperation and includes both fiction and nonfiction in both print and digital texts. Significantly, Shola Adenekan argues that queer Kenyan (and Nigerian) writing is often pan-African in its approach (80). For Adenekan, "Sexual politics is not local, its ramifications crisscross national boundaries" (80). This is especially true as authors use narrative to challenge the hegemonic notion that homosexuality is "un-African." Adenekan lists Binyavanga Wainaina and Shailja Patel as Kenyan authors whose work transgresses national boundaries to explore queer life and critique homophobia. Wainaina's brainchild *Kwani?*, for example, brought together writers from all over Africa, while Patel's play *Last Word: Caught in the Act* (2010) is about homophobia in Uganda (80-81). In an interview with Jabu Pereira, Kenyan performance artist and writer Neo S. Musangi comments on living and working beyond national boundaries. When asked, "… as a queer body, what would you do for your country?" Musangi responds:

> Um, I don't think there is anything I would do for my country, *per se*. There's something that I would do for queer solidarity across the universe. There's something I would do for an unpacking of oppression for everybody, which is not particularly located in my Kenyanness. It's much more located in individual freedom for queer people – whether I'm in South Africa, whether I'm in Kenya, whether I'm in Uganda – which is not nationally binding… But I don't think I particularly think of myself as – even when I get involved in queer work I Kenya – I'm not doing that for Kenya, I'm doing that for individual people who are struggling for the intersex community, for the gender nonconforming, for the trans community in Kenya because I identify with those struggles as human beings, I get them. (Matebeni and Pereira 57)

There is a small but robust body of scholarship that considers the local and global significance of queer Kenyan writing, to which this thesis aims to contribute. To begin, life writing is an

important genre in queer Kenyan writing, especially given the country's sexually repressive rhetoric. Life writing can act as an important site of self-articulation, resilience, and recuperation in the face of state and social erasure and repression. Kevin Mwachiro's collection of queer life writing, *Invisible: Stories from Kenya's Queer Community* (2013), is notable as one of the first books to detail narratives of the queer community in Kenya (Muchiri 171). For Jennifer Muchiri, this diverse collection dispels the myth that homosexuality is "un-African," and places an important focus on queer intimacies (171-172). The recently published collection of queer Kenyan stories from individuals aged fifty and above entitled *We've Been Here: Stories of Self-Discovery and Belonging* compiled by Mwachiro, Peter Irungu, and Nguru Karugu expands this work (Cole). Also significant is the NEST Collective's *Stories of Our Lives: Kenyan Queer Narratives* (2015), which Ombagi reads as a vulnerable space that explores how the participants "build and rebuild conceptions of self" ("Stories we tell" 412).

One of the most well-known queer Kenyan authors is the late Binyavanga Wainaina. Wainaina, who won the Caine Prize in 2002 and used the prize to found the Kwani Trust, which I discussed above. Wainaina published his memoir, *One Day I Will Write About this Place* in 2011, and four years later published a "lost chapter" in which he reveals his homosexual identity, entitled "I am a Homosexual, Mum." Wainaina has garnered widespread critical attention for his treatment of place, identity, and sexuality (see Hoad 2016, Lombardi 2018, Adenekan 2021).

Other queer authors who have received critical attention include poet and activist Shailja Patel (see Kulbaga 2016, Leetsch 2021, Adenekan 2021). While Kulbaga and Leetsch provide readings of nationality, gender, care, migration, violence and resistance in Patel's *Migritude* (2010), Adenekan reads Patel's depiction of queer pleasure and desire in the poems "Two Girls" and "This is How it Feels" and discusses Patel's critique of homophobia in *Last Word: Caught in the Act* (81-88). Kenyan-Somali-British queer writer Diriye Osman also

receives attention from Adenekan for the short story "The Memory Snatcher," while Bernie Lombardi explores Osman's depiction of queer childhood in the short story collection *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013) (691). Wesley Paul Macheso also studies *Fairytales for Lost Children*, and offers a reading of Osman's depiction of "living as an African, Muslim and gay man in an extremely repressive Somali community" (9).

2.2.5 Queer African Anthologies in Context

As I noted above, the three short stories I analyse in this chapter are taken from *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013) and *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (2017). Both are anthologies of queer short fiction from authors around the continent compiled and edited by Makhosazana Xaba and Karen Martin, and published by MaThoko's Books, an imprint of GALA. Taken together, they consist of forty-four short stories, some previously published, and some published for the first time in each of the two anthologies. While the anthologies were published in South Africa, the authors write from countries including Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Martin is a writer, editor, and artist who has been prominent in the South African queer literary landscape. She is the co-editor of *Balancing Act: South African Gay and Lesbian Youth Speak Out* (2005), *Sex and Politics in South Africa* (2007), and *Till the Time of Trial: The Prison Letters of Simon Nkoli* (2007) (African Books Collective). Chapter One of this thesis already provides a detailed biography of Xaba, although it focuses mainly on her role as an author. I will extend that discussion here by reflecting on her role as an editor.

Commenting on her editorial role, Xaba notes: "While being an editor resonates with the nurturing aspects of my personality, I think of it as a feminist act of service. It is a crucial and urgent political act of curation" (Xaba and du Preez 41). Xaba's description of editing as an "urgent political act of curation" can be read as referring to various factors in the context of queer African literature. The act of curation of queer stories is inherently political in a context

where either state legislation, social context, or both, are violently homophobic. The curation of queer African short stories can be read as a political act as the anthologies become mediums of representation; sites in which otherwise silenced and marginalized voices can be heard. In this way, Xaba and Martin note that *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* was curated with ideas of representation at the forefront of their minds.

> One of the earliest conversations we had with GALA was about how we could capture the widest range of stories – female and male, cis- and trans-gender, urban and rural, contemporary and historical, joyful and troubled – without compromising literary values. (vii)

Here, the emphasis on "capturing" the "widest range of stories" demonstrates how ideas of representation and visibility are central to these anthologies, and Gqola writes that the stories "offer testimony to the universality/multiversality of queer subjects and imaginations…" (Martin and Xaba 2). This idea of the "universality/multiversality of queer subjects and imaginations" speaks back to the key argument I make in this chapter. I argue that the depictions of friendship in the stories I read from these anthologies play a central role in the depiction of the fullness of queer life on the continent. Queer stories can subvert and expose homophobic discourses, depict alternative ways of being, and provide different ways of seeing and thinking. As both editors note of the first anthology,

> *Queer Africa* will confront the noisy political rhetoric that positions queerness as unnatural, amoral and un-African with intimate stories about individual lives, deeply embedded in the complexities of their contexts, and crafted by some of Africa's finest writers. (Martin and Xaba ix)

In this way, Martin and Xaba directly engage the hegemonic discourses I described earlier, which consider same sex love "un-African" and deny and condemn the existence of same sex love in Africa. They posit that the telling of "intimate stories" can disrupt these discourses. For

Gabeba Baderoon, *Queer Africa's* strength lies in its depiction of intimacies. She writes that "*Queer Africa* is a collection of charged, tangled, tender, unapologetic, funny, bruising and brilliant stories about the many ways we love each other on the continent" (Martin and Xaba). Baderoon, Martin and Xaba's emphasis on representing intimacy and love in these anthologies informs my decision to examine the friendships in the short stories collected within them.

The anthologies' focus on intimacies can be read as part of an emerging trend in short story anthologies published in South Africa post-2000. Writing on short story publishing in this period, Rebecca Fasselt, Corinne Sandwith, and Khulukazi Soldati-Kahimbaara identify a burgeoning emergence of popular subgenres, especially in anthologies. Here they refer to anthologies which focus on a particular field, which they refer to as the "niche anthology" such as "stories of personal emancipation, erotic stories, queer stories, crime stories, science fiction stories and flash fiction" (11). Fasslet *et. al.* identify sex, sexuality, and subjectivity as significant themes is this field, as can be seen in the publication of anthologies such as *Open: An Erotic Anthology by South African Women Writers* (2008) (11). The *Queer Africa* anthologies are significant examples of this trend. In his analysis of another queer African anthology, *Pride and Prejudice* (*The Gerald Kraak Anthology: African Perspectives on Gender, Social Justice and Sexuality*) (2017), Christopher Koekemoer argues that the queer-themed anthology creates "literary communities that work to center queer subjectivities" (1). Therefore, the queer-themed anthology can be seen as the embodiment of a broader definition of friendship, one that creates queer literary communities.

The anthologies are also significant for their trans-African focus – putting writers from different countries in conversation with one another. For Fasselt et al, this demonstrates the "viability of the form in cross-continental collaboration and literary exchange" (12). These anthologies are embodiments of Adenekan's theorization of queer literature that refuses to acknowledge national boundaries and that criss-crosses the global and the local. Therefore, the

anthologies can also be read as a cultural and literary collaboration between writers working in disparate regions, and as an embodiment of pan-African friendships and community making.

Significantly for my analysis, scholarship on the *Queer Africa* anthologies includes Wesley Paul Macheso's article entitled "Fiction as Prosthesis: Reading the Contemporary African Queer Short Story" (2021). In this article, Macheso reads short fiction from *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* alongside Diriye Osman's *Fairytales for Lost Children*. Macheso argues that "the writers employ fiction as a tool for rehumanising queer subjects in heteronormative African societies" (8). Similarly to the argument I make in this chapter, Macheso argues that portrayals of queer lives act as counternarratives to dehumanising and homophobic discourse. While Macheso focuses on themes of belonging, place, home, and agency, I contribute to this discussion by turning the focus to friendship. Also notable here is Leila Hall, Ronit Frenkel and Andy Carolin's article entitled "Intersectional (In)visibility in the 21st Century South African Queer-Themed Short Story" (2024). In this article, Hall, Frenkel and Carolin read among others, two stories from the first *Queer Africa* anthology and one from the second. They focus on the stories' depiction of queer visibility and, like Macheso, stress that depictions of queer lives in these anthologies humanizes queer subjectivities (Hall, Frenkel and Carolin). I turn now to an analysis of Monica Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree," Beatrice Lamwaka's "Chief of the Home" and H W Mukami's "Pub 360."

2.3 Friendship in Selected Ugandan and Kenyan Women's Short Fiction

2.3.1 Jambula Tree

Monica Arac de Nyeko was born in Kampala in 1979. A member of FEMRITE, she is best known for two short stories: "Bitter Fruit" and "Jambula Tree." "Jambula Tree" has garnered significant critical attention, winning the Caine Prize in 2007. In "Jambula Tree," de Nyeko depicts a friendship between two high school girls who fall in love and are subsequently discovered. It is set in a low-income housing estate in Kampala. The narrative details the close

friendship and romantic relationship that develops between its two central characters, Anyango and Sanyu. Written as a letter from Anyango to Sanyu, the narrative offers a retrospective reflection on the characters' girlhood and the events that shape their lives. The letter details the development of the girls' relationship, leading up to their discovery, in which they are exposed, naked with one another, outside their neighbour's house. This discovery causes a rupture in their relationship, as Sanyu's family decides she must move to London. The letter is written several years later, just before Sanyu's return to Uganda from the UK.

The short story was adapted for film by Kenyan filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu in 2018. The film, *Rafiki*, transposes the Ugandan narrative to Kenya and depicts the development of a romance between two young Kenyan women, Kena and Ziki. The adaptation of the Ugandan narrative to Kenya speaks back to Adenekan's argument that queer creative fiction and art criss-crosses national boundaries and is evidence of the cultural friendships that exist between different queer communities. Notably, while Kena and Ziki are separated as Anyango and Sanyu are, the two women are later reunited in an ambiguous but hopeful ending (Johnstone 40). This ending, which shows Kena and Ziki meeting again and smiling at each other, was one of the main reasons for the film's controversial reception (Johnstone 40). As Lyn Johnstone notes, the film was banned by the Kenyan Film Classification board for its lesbian theme but also precisely because of this hopeful ending, which refused to punish the lesbian couple and so disrupted heteronormativity (40). Johnstone discusses *Rafiki* in relation to Kahiu's theorization of an 'Afrobubblegum' aesthetic. For Kahui, the depiction of Africans living full, vibrant lives in "fun, fierce and frivolous" art is politically important in the face of development-driven narratives that only depict images of suffering and seriousness (Kahiu). Although I focus on "Jambula Tree" rather than *Rafiki*, I am interested in how the idea of 'Afrobubblegum' intersects with queer short fiction's depiction of the fullness of queer life on the continent.

Jessica Murray includes an analysis of "Jambula Tree" in her article entitled "Human Rights in Spaces of Violence" and focuses on de Nyeko's depiction of shame as a force that "continue[s] to structure understandings of lesbian sexuality" (Murray 93). In his earlier reading of "Jambula Tree," Nabutanyi focuses on the role the text plays to "…affirm the existence of this (queer) sexuality in Ugandan society" ("Paradox" 75). For Nabutanyi, the text is important because of its insistence on the ordinary existence of queer life in Uganda. However, he also argues that it highlights "…societal practices and technologies that erase or camouflage queerness" ("Paradox" 75). Like *Rafiki*, "Jambula Tree" both insists on queer ordinariness but also does not shy away from depicting the repression of queer expression. In her analysis of "Jambula Tree," Sofia Ahlberg discusses the significance of narrating a queer love story in times of war. For Ahlberg, love "becomes a powerful means of social and political change" (409). She reads Anyango and Sanyu's love as an act of defiance, even if they are separated (409). Similar to Nabutanyi and Ahlberg, I read the depiction of queer intimacy as politically important, however I contribute to the discussion by focusing on the role of friendship.

"Jambula Tree" is an intimate account of Anyango and Sanyu's relationship and draws on their many memories together. de Nyeko's use of the epistolary narrative creates an immediate intimacy which pervades the story. Anyango addresses Sanyu directly as "you," and often interrupts her narrative to ask Sanyu a question, asking frequently whether she "remembers" (91). By using the letter form, de Nyeko invites the reader to access the women's memories, foregrounding both their joy and pain. For example, the narrative opens as follows:

> I heard of your return from Mama Atim our next door neighbour. You remember her, don't you? We used to talk about her on our way to school, hand in hand, jumping, skipping, or playing run-and-catch-me. That woman's mouth worked like ants on a cob of maize. Ai! Everyone knows her quack-quack-quack mouth. But people are still left

> wordless by just how much she can shoot at and wreck things with her machinegun mouth. (91)

Here, de Nyeko places an image of the two girls at play alongside an image of Mama Atim, the woman who will discover them, and who will come to symbolise the community's homophobia. She juxtaposes an image of innocence, light-heartedness, and joy (emphasised by the movement of jumping and skipping) with images of pain and destruction: ants on a cob, and a "machine gun mouth". Throughout the narrative, Anyongo's memories are made up of joy and pain, such as these. The joy that Anyongo associates with her relationship with Sanyu is juxtaposed with the pain of a repressive society. The women's relationship forms in friendship, and they subsequently use friendship as a cover to function in public. The central action of the story is the unmasking of friendship to reveal a romantic, physical relationship. Friendship, then, acts as a mask for a relationship that is strictly forbidden in the girls' society. It allows, momentarily, for the perusal of queer love in the girls' violently heteronormative society.

Anyango and Sanyu's relationship is also juxtaposed with the poverty the community faces. The girls live in Nakawa Housing Estate, a community in which the struggles of economic hardship are starkly evident:

> Nakawa Housing Estates has never changed. Mr Wangolo, our SST teacher once said that those houses were just planned slums with people with broken dreams and unplanned families for neighbours. Nakawa is still over one thousand families on an acre of land they call an estate. (92)

The friendship and romantic relationship between the girls, however, is a profoundly positive space. In it, Anyango and Sanyu can imagine desired futures for themselves that escape economic hardship and the estate. These futures are contrasted with what they see as the futures women face in their community. Anyango describes these futures bleakly.

> Most of the women don't work. Like Mama Atim they sit and talk, talk, talk and wait for their husbands to bring home a kilo of offal. These are the kinds of women we did not want to become." (92)

The women Anyango goes on to describe use skin lightening creams and damage their skin. They are preoccupied with their husbands' infidelity. Faced with these images of unemployment and waiting, Anyango and Sanyu's dreams are professional ones:

> You said it yourself… we could be anything… You asked us to pause for a moment to make a wish. I was a nurse in a white dress. I did not frighten children with big injections. You wished for nothing. You just wished that you would not become what your father wanted you to be – an engineer, making building plans for his mansion, for his office, for his railway village. (92)

In this depiction, the relationship between the girls is central to the ways in which they see themselves, their lives, and their identities. It allows them to imagine a deeply transformed future for themselves, in which they can rethink the versions of womanhood they perceive around them. This transformative vision, however, extends only to the girls themselves, and not to the other women in their neighbourhood. Anyango draws on misogynistic language to describe many of the women's sexual lives. She embraces the pervasive image of women and women's sexuality which characterizes the neighbourhood. She describes, without comment or mediation, how her mother felt towards her father's new wife:

> Mummy said if Papa had any sense in his head he would not have left her with three kids to raise on her own to settle for that slut he called a wife. Mummy said Papa's new wife could not cook and that she was young enough to be his daughter. They had to do a caesarean on her when she gave birth to her first son. What did he expect? That those wasp hips could let a baby's head pass through them? (99)

Here, and elsewhere, negative attitudes towards women who are sexually active pervade the text. These attitudes are more starkly depicted against the backdrop of the sexual threat posed by the soldiers who guard Lugogo Show Grounds. These soldiers catcall and pursue the woman in the neighbourhood, and are the reason for the "spread of gonorrhoea." United in their dislike of Mama Atim, the neighbour who discovers and exposes their romantic relationship, the girls wish that she feel constantly the threat of sexual violence that the soldiers represent. Anyango writes:

> Mama Atim was terrified of soldiers. We never did find out why they instilled such fear in her. Either way it did not matter. Her fear became a secret weapon we used as we imagined ourselves being like goddesses dictating her fate. In our goddess hands, we turned her into an effigy and had soldiers pelt her with stones. We imagined that pelting stones from a soldier was just enough to scare her into *susuing* in her XXL mother's union panties. The ones she got a tailor to hem for her, from leftover materials from her children's nappies. How we wished those materials were green, so that she would see soldiers and stones in between her thighs every time she wore her green soldier colour, stone pelting colour and AK47 colour. (94)

The violence of this final image, and its endorsement by the text, is revealing. The friendship and romantic relationship between the girls offers them space to live, love, and imagine their futures differently, but this is not expanded to their view of the other women in the neighbourhood, who remain depicted in violently misogynistic ways. The queer vision their friendship offers, and the transformative space it provides, extends only to them.

In addition, the friendship and romantic relationship between the girls is one that sets them apart from their community, even while it unites them. de Nyeko emphasizes the forbidden nature of the romantic relationship throughout the short story, specifically through the "Judaeo-Christian trope of the garden of Eden" (Nabutanyi 77), evoked by the nature

imagery that pervades the short story. de Nyeko foregrounds the crossing of boundaries, a phrase that Anyango repeats often. The boundary, never explicitly articulated, is that between friendship and romantic relationships. Significantly, this boundary emerges both as insubstantial and concrete. Within the girls' own conception of their relationship, it is insubstantial. There is no particular point where friendship ends, and romantic desire begins. Rather, they overlap and blur. For their neighbours, however, the boundary is clear, and it is crossed when the relationship is discovered to be physical. In her depiction of the violently negative reaction to the crossing of this physical boundary, de Nyeko emphasizes images of exposure and nakedness. In a moving and visceral scene, the girls are discovered at night, naked, with a torch shone upon them by Mama Atin. The exposure of same sex love between the two women results in profound shame, which haunts Anyango, Sanyu, and their mothers. It also ruptures the relationship, as Sanyu is made to move to London.

Friendship emerges in this story as precarious protection against a homophobic and violently heteronormative society. It lends, for a brief time, a tentative space in which Anyango and Sanyu can live and imagine different lives. This space, however, is easily broken, and is limited in that it does not extend even to their conception of other women in their society.

2.3.3 Chief of the Home

FEMRITE member, journalist, fiction writer, and President of PEN Uganda, Lamwaka is an "important female voice in Ugandan Literature" (Murray, "Gender, Disruption and Reconciliation" 109). She is the recipient of various literary prizes, including the 2021 Janzi Award for Outstanding Fiction Writer and the 2011 Young Achievers Award, and is known for her short story collection, *Butterfly Dreams and Other Stories* (2016) (Adda Stories). Lamwaka's short fiction engages with the gendered experience of war and post-war life in Northern Uganda (Murray, "Gender, Disruption and Reconciliation" 109). Born in Alokolum in Gulu, Acholiland, Lamwaka herself comes from Northern Uganda, and her writing offers an

intimate and imaginative view into life from the region (Murray, "Gender, Disruption and Reconciliation" 109). She explores the region's violent history – the twenty-year-long conflict between The Lord's Resistance Army and the Uganda People's Defence Force rendered the Acholi "vulnerable to the violent vicissitudes and militarized masculinities of both the rebel forces and the government troops" (Murray, "Gender, Disruption and Reconciliation" 113) and still impacts the region today. Commenting on the prevalence of armed conflict on the African continent in the 21st century, Pauline Ada Uwakweh notes that

> African writers have become not only the chroniclers of the war experience, but also the "medium" by which its atrocities are exposed. They are witnesses with a mission to capture war's physical and psychological consequences, and more so, human resilience in adversity. (3)

Uwakweh goes on to emphasise the "gendered and sexualized" nature of war, noting that "gender violence is integral to war stratagem" (5). It is important to read Lamwaka's fiction in this context, and the short story I analyse here, "Chief of the Home," is exemplary of Lamwaka's gendered depiction of war. Set in Alokolum village in Gulu, an unnamed narrator tells the story of a visitor to her village before the war. The narrator comes to view this visitor, Lugul, as a friend, and "Chief of the Home" is the narration of the time Lugul spends at the village before his death at the hands of soldiers.

Ben de Souza presents a reading of Lamwaka's queering of gender in this short story (De Souza), and similarly, Sally Anne Murray argues that "Chief of the Home" is a meditation on "gender orientation as a potentially queer category of Acholi experience" ("Gender, Disruption and Reconciliation" 116). Murray reads "Chief of the Home" as a depiction of trauma as well as "hesitant optimism" ("Gender, Disruption and Reconciliation" 116). She demonstrates that the short story depicts "new ways of imagining gender" even as it shows the impact of devastating war ("Gender, Disruption and Reconciliation" 118). My analysis extends

this work on gender in "Chief of the Home" by emphasising the central relationship of the short story – the friendship between the narrator and Lugul. I argue that the narrator's queer friendship with Lugul offers her transformative ways of seeing Lugul, herself, and others, and becomes a catalyst for change.

The narrative is retrospective, set in a time just before the war has completely changed the community's way of life. The narrator emphasizes the disjuncture between past and present, stressing the change that the war has brought to Alokolum village. Significantly, the war has caused the displacement of thousands of people. Before the impact of the war is felt, the narrator describes Alokolum village as people-oriented, emphasizing close-knit family, neighbourly, and community relations. The village is largely self-sufficient: they farm the land, harvest water, and gather firewood. By contrast, once the impact of the war is felt, the village is characterized by distrust, suspicion, and "iron sheet houses," and the narrator comments that money, rather than the welfare of the family, is the topic of conversation. Through the narrative setting and the contrast of past (connection) and present (alienation), Lamwaka critiques the war as a catalyst for economic hardship, poverty, and displacement, alienating people from the land and from each other.

It is into this context that Lugul's story is told. The narrator emphasizes the importance of storytelling, given both the context of the war (Lugul is executed by soldiers under suspicion of being a spy) and Lugul's life itself. She addresses Lugul directly:

> This story is about you, Lugul. I am telling your story because I think your story deserves to be heard. Many people have talked about you but they let your story be buried with the dead. Your story is not the kind of story that is told from generation to generation at the fire. But it is a story that must be told. (159)

Here, the narrator foreshadows Lugul's death, which is revealed at the end of the narrative. She likens the forgetting of Lugul's life story to burial with the dead, emphasizing the importance

of the story's telling. Lugul's story is important to the narrator both because he was her friend and because of the queer nature of his identity and actions. For the narrator, telling Lugul's story becomes a way of archiving queer life in the face of silence and erasure. Her telling becomes what Arondekar terms an "alternative archive" – one that seeks to "remedy the erasure of the past" (11). The narrator's telling of Lugul's life becomes an alternative way of seeing and understanding Lugul. This way of seeing is based in friendship, and contradicts the way Lugul is understood more broadly in the village

Lugul is a mysterious figure in the village, characterized by multiple unknowns. It is not known, for example, why he has come or where he has come from. He becomes conspicuous for his behaviour: he consistently disrupts the gender norms that characterise the village. He cooks, he cuts firewood, and fetches water, which are all tasks prescribed to the women of the village. He does not socialize with men, prefers the company of women, and intervenes on behalf of several women in violent disputes between married (heteronormative) couples. Due to this behaviour, Lugul is closely watched by the other people in the village. The narrator informs the reader that the village's gaze is a critical one. Lugul is called a woman-man, a mad man, and said to be possessed by spirits. The village reads Lugul's disruption of gendered norms as insane, other-worldly, and dangerous. The narrator's father voices these concerns:

> My father said boys should not be close to you because you will teach them how to cook, that you didn't know that being near the cooking fire will burn your penis. Whatever anyone said didn't deter you from doing what you enjoyed most. (160)

The narrator counters the village's reading of Lugul with her own, which is based in friendship. However, unlike in "Jambula Tree," the friendship between the narrator and Lugul is not one between age mates, nor does it centre conversation. The narrator is a child of about ten when she befriends Lugul, who is an adult. Their friendship is not based on interaction, but rather on

looking. The narrator watches Lugul closely, as the others in the village do, but hers is the gaze of a friend. She notes:

> You didn't seem to notice me as I followed you down the village path. You never once stopped and asked why I followed you around. You only turned and looked at me, and then I saw a smile appear on your lips. I knew that was our connection. You were my friend and I would be yours. (162)

As a child, the narrator admires Lugul, and wishes to emulate him and his disruption of gender. Not only does their friendship allow the narrator to see Lugul more clearly than the other inhabitants of the village, it also allows her to see herself differently. Watching Lugul helps the narrator to question and offers her the possibility of forging her own queer identity.

Seeing Lugul differently does not only transform the narrator's life, it transforms her father's as well. Initially, the narrator describes her father as firmly entrenched in the village's gender norms: he ridicules Lugul and does not participate in domestic work. However, by the end of the narrative, the reader is presented with a different image of the narrator's father:

> He now lies next to you. He died during the war because he wanted to treat people who were injured, sick. He wanted to stand by the people of Alokolum. He didn't stop when he received warnings from the soldiers that he was supporting the rebels even though the rebels came into his home and stole his medication. The soldiers shot him in the head and left him to die. My father may have been motivated by you to help people. He died helping people. (163)

In this passage, the narrator identifies a shift in her father's actions, which transform from self-centred, misogynistic behaviour to care work. Lamwaka's choice to detail a shift in the narrator's father points to the transformative power Lugul's gender disruption has had on very different members of the village: both the narrator and her father. One of the final images of the short story, then, is that of Lugul and the narrator's father, who are buried next to each

other. For Murray, such resolution is undone by the story itself; she argues that "Lamwaka's narrative plotting throughout the story has thoroughly complicated simple notions of tolerance, accommodation, forgiveness and reconciliation" (Murray 120). I agree; however, I would argue that the final image of shared burial is particularly striking. It is evocative of Alan Bray's analysis of shared tombs in seventeenth-century England, which I explored in the theoretical framework of this thesis. Bray demonstrates how the burial of knights together suggests a queer friendship between men, who understood their relationship to be a version of nuptial. Being buried together indicates the extent to which the relationships between the knights were sanctified by the church and accepted by the communities in which they lived (Bray, The Friend). As such, I read the burial side-by-side of Lugal and the narrator's father as one that is cautiously hopeful, while profoundly sad.

This intertwining of sadness and hope, which characterizes the story, characterizes the friendship between Lugul and the narrator. Although the narrator grieves Lugul, the story also emphasizes that the friendship allows her space to imagine her life otherwise.

2.3.4 Pub 360

H W Mukami was born in Central Kenya in 1978. There is little written on Mukami or on "Pub 360." The short story is set in a quiet bar in an unspecified African city. "Pub 360" is told by an unnamed narrator, who sits in the bar and watches an interaction between two customers. The first customer is a regular (named Oluchi), a woman who often frequents the bar. The second is a newcomer (named Ashu), a woman the narrator has not seen before, and who disrupts the usually quiet scene by paying attention to the first customer. As the story develops, the attraction between the women becomes clear to both the watching narrator and the barman, creating tension in the bar. Eventually, the barman explodes into a homophobic rant and demands that the women leave. The narrator is then revealed to be the owner of the bar. She dismisses the barman, calls the two women back, and explains to them that she, too, identifies

as lesbian. The story concludes with the three women sitting together in companionship, sharing their stories, and emphasizes that a strong friendship between the women is beginning.

I argue that paying attention to the representation of the beginnings of a queer friendship in "Pub 360" allows for a focus on queer intimacies. Such a focus emphasises the fullness of living as a lesbian woman on the continent. While Mukami could have focused on the barman's homophobia in this short story, instead, her choice is to pay it only momentary attention. Rather, she insists on depicting both the erotic attraction between the newly-met couple, as well as the friendship that develops between them and its significance.

As with the stories I have already analysed, the act of looking and being looked at is central to this short story. In fact, the story begins with the act of looking. The opening lines of the short story are:

> I had been sitting in the bar for some while, when I noticed a woman walking towards the pub. The bar was almost empty, my only companion a woman who was a regular in the pub, sitting alone at the counter, so I watched the newcomer with interest. (237)

Here, Mukami situates the narrator as an observer. The emphasis is on watching, looking, and noticing. This emphasis is continued as the story unfolds. The narrator gives the reader almost no details of herself, and instead narrates the encounter between the two women.

As she narrates this encounter, she continuously emphasizes the women's decisions to look at each other, or not. The early description of the first woman – the regular customer – is an example:

> The woman sipped her beer, sighed and stared at the outdated calendar on the wall ahead of her. Her dark eyes had a glassy, faraway look; they seemed to fall sightlessly on the scanty display of dusty bottles of local and exotic wines and spirits. (238)

In this passage, the woman's eyes are glassy, faraway and sightless. Mukami's emphasis on *not* seeing creates the effect of listlessness and lifelessness, cemented by the images of the

outdated calendar, the scanty display, and the dusty bottles. Interestingly, while I have focused so far on the visibility or invisibility of the queer subject, Mukami pays attention to what it means when an individual is not truly seen and so fails to see. Here, the woman's inability to see, or to look around her, suggests boredom and death of the spirit. This changes completely when she is spoken to, and looked at, by the newcomer:

> Then something happened; the drinker dropped her tense shoulders like a coat falling from its hanger, her whole back straightened and her neck turned as if by remote control to confront the intruder. She looked more relaxed, her face looked smoother, as if she had just removed a mask. I hadn't seen that in her silent history of drinking in the tiny Pub 360. In the past, I had seen her brace herself against the voice of a man, but this was certainly no man. Like an angel she smiled, showing a mouthful of impossibly white teeth against her beautiful black face; tiny crow-feet wrinkles sprayed at the corners of her eyes as she blinked at the other woman. (238)

Here, the narrator describes a complete change in Oluchi the moment she is noticed. Whereas before she has been tense, her face changes when she looks at Ashu. The images of the coat falling from its hanger and the removal of a mask suggest a peeling away of something, to reveal Oluchi's true self. The tension that falls away is linked to her unease with masculinity: she is used to bracing herself against the voice of a man. In this intimate moment between Ashu and Oluchi, the act of seeing each other is the beginning of the act of creating their own world. Writing in "Sex in Public," Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner define queer culture as "a world-making project" (558). For Berlant and Warner, queer intimacies can be "a context for witnessing intense and personal affect while elaborating a public world of belonging and transformation" (558). This "world-making" allows for the creation of a "queer counterpublic" – a public site of belonging that subverts heteronormative culture (558). This is the process that takes place in "Pub 360."

Because the narrator is an observer of this world making, so too is the reader, and we are invited into the act of looking. The act of looking and watching two women in a bar could easily be read as voyeuristic. However, another reading presents itself if we consider the bar as a queer site of looking and recognition. In "Nairobi is a Shot of Whiskey: Queer (Ob)scenes in the City," Eddie Ombagi reads a specific bar in Nairobi, among other spaces, as a site of queer community making. He shows that the queering of this bar allows it to act as a "counternarrative" to the damaging discourses about dissident sexualities in Kenya that I have outlined above. For Ombagi, this bar and the other sites he examines "recuperate such negative assumptions of queer lives and practices to more positive and affirmative tones of community, friendship and celebrations of love" ("Nairobi" 108). In this way, the bar becomes a site in which it is important to be seen and recognized as queer, so that processes of friendship and worldmaking can take place.

Before queer worldmaking can begin – before Pub 360 can become a site of community and friendship – the women must face the barman.

> 'Ahem, hey!' the barman said in a voice that suggested he couldn't take it anymore. As if being pulled out of an enchanting fantasy, the two women froze and turned toward and turned towards the angry growl of the barman. His face was puffed in pent up rage and disgust and his eyes hard and cold like a pair of black marbles. 'Whatever it is you pair of black whores is doing in my bar, you better think twice. You can go and perform your free pornography to other clubs but not here, you are starting to make my other customers uncomfortable. You are watching too many foreign videos, you shameless copycats. This is Africa; so clear your bills and get your dirty demonic selves out of here.' (240)

In this verbal attack on the two women, the barman symbolizes the patriarchal, misogynistic, and homophobic discourses that circulate around queerness in Africa. Drawing on narratives

that characterize same-sex intimacies as foreign, he uses the phrase "this is Africa" as justification for his homophobia. At the same time, his use of the word "demonic" draws on religious rhetoric that associates dissident sexualities with immorality and sin. In addition, his description of the women as "dirty" and their behaviour (leaning against each other) as pornographic reinforces stereotypical images of people who practice same-sex love as depraved, shameless, and hypersexual. This is underlined by his use of the phrase "black whores." Here, he draws on racial and misogynistic narratives that hypersexualize black women and characterize their sexuality as depraved. In this way, his attack on the women is layered with homophobia, misogyny, and racism.

Significantly, the narrator's ability to dismiss the barman and to call Ashu and Oluchi back to the bar hinges on her ownership of "Pub 360:"

> My pub was a small one, sometimes it paid the bills and sometimes it didn't, but I was proud of it nonetheless. I was not about to let any paying customer be treated with disrespect by a moody and biased barman, not on my watch. I told him to hand over his apron, get out of my pub and come for his wages the following weekend. Then I took the high stool like a queen reigning over her domain. Time for damage control and fun! I knew what being different meant and how it felt. (241)

Here, Mukami shows how the process of queer worldmaking is also an economic one – it depends on who has financial ownership of public and private spaces that can be used by the queer community. The narrator, who is described as a queen to underline her power, consciously decides to create a space in which lesbian women can feel comfortable. She reflects:

> I missed spending time with women, talking quietly and intimately – so magical, fun, warm and companiable. I was going to take a chance and let these two get to know each other in my pub, so that they would have good memories of the place. I trusted my

> judgement in firing the barman. It was probably a sign from above; Pub 360 needed a change. (242)

In this passage, Mukami depicts the beginning of a queer worldmaking: the turning of Pub 360 into a space that is friendly to lesbians. The narrator emphasizes the importance of time spent together with women and insists of the pleasure of friendship with women as magical, fun, warm, and companionable. In this way, the depiction of friendship allows for the depiction of the moments of queer ordinariness and companionship. This depiction acts as a counternarrative to depictions of pain, violence, and death, especially for black lesbian women. As the three women spend time together in the empty pub, their friendship grows, and they recognize each other as "kindred souls" (243). The final line of the story "… the world in Pub 360 belonged to us that whole night" (243), highlights the world-making that has taken place. Although it is momentary and temporary, it is profoundly meaningful to the three women.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that de Nyeko, Lamwaka, and Mukami write friendship as a site through which to depict the fullness of queer life on the continent in all its ambivalence, complexity, contradiction, and creativity, and in the East African region specifically. I have read each author's short fiction in the context of women's writing in Uganda and Kenya, as well as queer writing that is emerging from these regions. Whereas Chapter One considered selected South African women writers' depictions of friendship as a mode of solidarity in the face of raced and gendered violence, this chapter shows that selected Ugandan and Kenyan women writers are using friendship as a site in which to imagine and create queer worlds in the face of homophobic discourse and practice. In "Jambula Tree," "Chief of the Home," and "Pub 360," friendship emerges as a relationship in which the queer characters who inhabit these stories spend time in companionship, see each other clearly, and imagine alternative, if not yet realized, worlds. The argument that emerges when considering chapters one and two alongside

each other is that friendship, for African woman writers, is a significant site of personal and political resistance, solidarity and care in the face of raced, gendered, and homophobic violence and of self and world-making.

Chapter Three: Reading Friendship as "an enlarged sense of community" in Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish* and Sofia Samatar's *Tender*

> … surely, it seemed to dawn on me, there was another way of thinking; another way of working together; another way of living with the earth…
>
> - Lesley Green

3.1.1 Introduction

So far, this thesis has explored the depiction of friendships between human subjects. Chapter One analysed the portrayal of friendships between women in selected short stories by Sindiwe Magona and Makhosazana Xaba. The chapter highlighted the central role of friendship for these authors' female characters in their negotiation of raced and gendered violence. In so doing, it revealed important moments of consciousness raising in community, and the power of epistemic friendships. Chapter Two turned the focus to friendships between LGBTQIA+ characters in selected Kenyan and Ugandan short fiction. In these short stories, friendship emerged as a site of alternative visibility, intimacy, and worldmaking in the face of homophobic violence. However, the examples of friendship in the final texts I analyse for this thesis occur between more unlikely interlocutors. At its core, this chapter considers literary representations of friendship with the more-than-human world. To do this, I read Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* (2005) and Sofia Samatar's *Tender: Stories* (2017) alongside one another. Although working with different genres (realism and speculative fiction, respectively), both Baingana and Samatar gesture towards an enlarged understanding of friendship, one that includes unlikely connections with human and non-human subjects, and affective ties with the natural world. I argue that Baingana and Samatar expand the traditional cartography of what we consider friendship from human to non-human subjects and offer glimpses of what it might look like to inhabit the earth with an ethic of friendship.

In the age of the Anthropocene, rethinking humanity's relationship to the natural world is an urgent task. In the context of the current climate crisis, Lesley Green calls attention to the "Capitalocene" – the devastating impact that "societies caught up in a globalized economic system based on natural resource extraction and capital accumulation" have had and continue to have on the earth (5). In *Rock, Water, Life: Ecology and Humanities for a Decolonial South Africa* (2020), Green details her attempt to find "another way of living with" the earth (5-6). I take Green's sense that there must be "another way" of relating to the earth as a way of framing my reading of the relationships between human and nonhuman subjects in this chapter. I take an "elementally inclined" (see Hofmeyr, Nutall, and Lavery 2022) approach, paying attention especially to the earth – to the soil, rock, and plant life that litters the pages of my selected texts, and how humans interact with them. As I signalled in the introduction to this thesis, Rosi Braidotti offers a way of thinking about our relationship to human and nonhuman others that is drawn from Donna Haraway and is characterized by what Braidotti terms an "enlarged sense of community" (199). By this, Braidotti means a new way of conceptualising relationships between human and non-human subjects. This reconceptualization asks that we blur the binaries we have constructed between human and non-human, and relate to the Earth, to bacteria, to plant life, and animals with "empathy, accountability and recognition" (199). Braidotti's conceptualization of an "enlarged sense of community" provides a framework through which to read the friendships between human and non-human subjects in *Tropical Fish*: *Tales from Entebbe* and *Tender: Stories*. I consider how these texts offer glimpses of what it might mean to forge a friendship with the earth and the landscapes we inhabit, based on "empathy, accountability, and recognition." I read the human/non-human friendships that Samatar and Baingana depict here in the context of Rob Nixon's conceptualisation of "slow violence" (Nixon). Nixon posits that we rethink our current planetary ecological crisis as "slow violence." He states,

> By slow violence I mean violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility. We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales. (2)

I argue that the texts I examine in this chapter ask us how we can be together with the land we inhabit and explore friendship as a possibility for such a relationship in the context of slow violence. As I discussed in the introduction, an ethic of friendship in humanity's relationship to the earth would require a breakdown of the binaries between human and non-human subjects. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which Baingana and Samatar imagine this breaking down of binaries through friendship with the natural world. In so doing, I demonstrate how they expand our conception of friendship and reflect on alternative ways in which we can inhabit the planet in a time of ecological crisis.

I begin the discussion by contextualising the authors I read in this chapter, Baingana and Samatar. While Baingana can be read in the context of Ugandan women's writing, which I outlined in Chapter Two, Samatar can be read in the context of Afrofuturism. Next, I trace the central debates of ecofeminism and ecocriticism, the frameworks through which I read both Baingana and Samatar. Finally, I turn to *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* and *Tender: Stories* and examine the depictions of friendship between the human and the nonhuman within them.

3.1.2 Doreen Baingana, Sofia Samatar, and Women Writers of the African Diaspora

Born in 1966, Doreen Baingana is a Ugandan author and member of FEMRITE, and can be read in the context of Ugandan women's writing, which I outlined in Chapter Two. As such, she writes in the context of postcolonial Uganda, and her writing shares preoccupations with other Ugandan women writers, including self-narration, subjectivity, gender, and nation. Writing from Uganda, Italy, and the United States of America over the years, Baingana has contributed to various periodicals and won several literary prizes. *Tropical Fish* is Baingana's debut collection, which was well-received and won the Associated Writers and Writing Programs Award for Short Fiction in 2003 (Fallon). Her most recently published work is the short story "A Girl," published in 2018.

Although Baingana now resides in Uganda, her work can be read in a migratory context, as she wrote and published *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* from the United States of America ("Travel," Spencer 190). Baingana left Uganda for Italy in 1989, before moving to the US. Due to this, Lynda Gichanda Spencer reads her as a literary exile ("Travel," 190). Drawing on Paul Tiyambe Zeleza's work on the poetics of exile (2005), Spencer demonstrates that exile can be conceptualised as the voluntary or involuntary leaving of the national space, due to social, economic, or political pressures ("Travel," 190). Such a framing of Baingana is important, as it highlights her concern with movement across national borders, home, and belonging. It also allows for a reading of Baingana alongside Samatar.

Novelist, short story writer, and scholar, Sofia Samatar is the only author I examine for this thesis who does not write from the African continent. Samatar is of Somali-American origin and writes from Harrisonburg, Virginia. Alongside *Tender: Stories*, she is known for her longer works, including *A Stranger in Olandria* (2013), *The Winged Histories* (2016), *The White Mosque* (2022), *Tone* (2023), and *Opacities* (2024). As a second-generation Somali

immigrant living in the United States, Samatar can be read as an African diasporic writer. She can be read alongside Baingana and other women writers of the African diaspora, many of whom I have already discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis. Significantly, Samatar also writes critically, and her work on Afrofuturism will inform my discussion below.

Drawing on the scholarship of George Shepperson, Zeleza notes that the term 'African diaspora' emerged in the 1950s and 1960s (31). For Zeleza:

> 'Diaspora,' I would suggest, simultaneously refers to a process, a condition, a space, and a discourse: the continuous processes by which a diaspora is made, unmade, and remade; the changing conditions in which it lives and expresses itself; the places where it is moulded and imagined; and the contentious ways in which it is studied and discussed. It entails a culture and a consciousness, sometimes diffuse and sometimes concentrated in a "here" separate from a "there," a "here" that is often characterised by a regime of marginalization, and a "there" that is invoked as a rhetoric of belonging "here" differently. (32)

This definition raises some key concerns in diaspora studies. First, Zeleza highlights that diasporas are neither fixed nor rigid, but are continuously evolving processes. Second, diasporas are necessarily specific to the locations and communities in which they emerge. Lastly, in his repetition of "there" and "here," Zeleza emphasises the complexities of homeland and host nation, and the concomitant questions of belonging these concepts raise.

Migration is a central characteristic of the twenty-first century (Kane and Leedy 1). Uwakweh reminds us that political, social, and economic factors have led to mass migrations from Africa (3). Alongside these factors, it is necessary to consider environmental crises. As Byron Caminero-Santangelo and Garth Myers note, environmental crises have already profoundly and disproportionately affected Africans:

> Global environmental problems – global warming, overfishing of oceans, disposal of toxic waste – have already deeply affected many Africans. Yet most Africans are not the primary sources of these problems, nor do many Africans generally benefit from the resource exploitation that engenders them. More localized problems too are often shaped by global factors… (18)

Therefore, an important focus in discussion about diasporic writing should be how environmental concerns influence writers' conceptions of home and belonging. How do writers depict home in wounded and dying environments? How is belonging impacted by ecological disaster? How is the portrayal of movement and migration affected in the wake of ecological crisis? This chapter addresses these questions.

One of the main distinctions scholars make in studies of the African diaspora is between a precolonial African diaspora and a new, postcolonial African diaspora (see Okpewho and Nzegwu 2009, Zeleza 2009, Uwakweh 2023). Uwakweh explains that scholars distinguish between an older diaspora formed by colonial encounters and the Transatlantic slave trade, and a new, postcolonial African diaspora, which was set in motion by both colonial exploitation of African regions and by economic, social, and political crises in African states (3). In *Women Writers of the* New *African Diaspora: Transnational Negotiations and Female Agency* (2023), Uwakweh provides a framework in which to read African women writers of the "new" African diaspora, the category into which Baingana and Samatar both fall.

Uwakweh notes that women make up "a significant portion of Africa's global immigrant population" (10). She demonstrates that the growth in African migration, and in women migrants specifically, has been accompanied by growth in the number of publications by African immigrant women (10). This includes works by authors such as Chimamanda Adichie, Aminatta Forna, Yaa Gyasi, Imbolo Mbue, Taiye Selasi, Chika Unigwe, NoViolet

Bulawayo, and Leila Aboulela. Uwakweh identifies the main preoccupations of these women writers as,

> the gender factor, cross-cultural conflicts, identity negotiations, the meaning of home and belonging, the importance of storytelling, memory, and cultural performance as forms of return to the homeland. (2)

In another study of African women's writing from the diaspora, Samantha Pinto reads authors including Deborah Richards, Jackie Kay, Zoë Wicomb, Elizabeth Alexander, Adrienne Kennedy, Ama Ata Aidoo, Bessie Head, and Pauline Melville. *Writing in Difficult Diasporas: The Transnational Feminist Aesthetic of the Black Atlantic* (2013), Pinto extends the definition of diaspora by arguing that diaspora is not only "a set of physical movements," but also "a set of aesthetic and interpretive strategies" (13). In her analysis, Pinto focuses on the ways in which women writers innovate and experiment with genre. Jennifer Leetsch's *Love and Space in Contemporary African Diasporic Women's Writing: Making Love, Making Worlds* (2021), reads authors such as Adichie, Zadie Smith, Helen Oyeyemi, Shailja Patel, and Warsan Shire. Leetsch argues that although writers of the diaspora approach their multiple contexts differently, at the core of their literary imaginings is

> …the tension that exists between the oppositions of home and away, everywhere, and nowhere. This tension creates a sense of multiple belongings that is carved out from an ambiguous and charged attachment to space. ("Love and Space," 2)

What allows me to read Baingana and Samatar together in this chapter is their "charged attachment to space," both at home and away. By this, I mean their characters' attachment to the very earth on which they live, and it is this that will be my focus in this chapter. However, Baingana and Samatar write in very different genres. While Baingana writes in the realist mode, Samatar's work benefits from being read through the lens of Afrofuturism, with its emphasis on alternative worlds and futures.

3.1.3 Afrofuturism

Afrofuturism refers to art that deals with blackness in the future (see Womack 2013, Frazier 2025). When coined by American cultural critic Mark Dery in his essay "Black to the Future" (1994), it referred specifically to African American art that was concerned with future technologies (Frazier 1). Initially, scholars such as Alondra Nelson conceptualized Afrofuturism as a "literary and artistic movement characterized by African American voices" that told stories about the future, which were "grounded in the historic experiences of black individuals and communities" (Lavender III and Yaszek 4). The movement addressed the marginalization of African American voices in histories of science, technology, and culture, as well as in science and speculative fiction (Lavender III and Yaszek 4). Afrofuturist scholar Ytasha L. Womack puts it this way:

> It's one thing when black people aren't discussed in world history. Fortunately, teams of dedicated historians and culture advocates have chipped away at the propaganda often functioning as history for the world's students to eradicate that glaring error. But when, even in the imaginary future – a space where the mind can stretch beyond the Milky Way to envision routine space travel, cuddly space animals, talking apes, and time machines – people can't fathom a person of non-Euro descent a hundred years into the future, a cosmic foot has to be put down. (7)

Critics now use Afrofuturism as an umbrella term to refer to a broad range of genres, such as black speculative fiction, science fiction, fantasy, magical realism, myth, and apocalyptic fiction (see Wolmack 2013, Lavender and Yaszek 2020). It also refers to media other than literature, such as film, visual art, and music. For DuEwa M. Frazier,

> Literature, film, music, and scholarship on Afrofuturism presents an alternative and empowering solution to destructive stereotypes, stigma, and Black trauma produced by racial prejudice, and offenses against the existence of Black people. (2)

In this way, the term is bound up with the portrayal of alternative futures, in which not only technology and current realities are re-imagined, but racial prejudice and its resulting trauma are engaged in novel ways. Frazier explains:

> Afrofuturism challenges us to envision a state of society and the world where Black isn't the enemy, where Black isn't inferior, where Black isn't ugly, where Black isn't wrong – a reality that centers Black perspectives and character in unison with technology, animation, film narratives, fantasy, magical realism, and multifaceted arts and intellectual output. (2)

Afrofuturism is concerned with pasts as much as with futures. It engages the violent history of colonization and the Atlantic slave trade, and literary scholars Isiah Lavender III and Lisa Yaszek explain that initially, "Afrofuturism was an extension of the historical recovery projects that black Atlantic intellectuals have engaged in for well over two hundred years" (3). For Samatar, Afrofuturism is concerned with "lowercase histories" which recover black stories from dominant historical narratives that erase them ("Planetary History," 177).

Early African American texts that scholars discuss using the framework of Afrofuturism include Samuel R. Delany's *Blake, or the Huts of America: A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States, and Cuba* (1859), and Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* (1979) (Lavender III and Yaszek 4). Contemporary Afrofuturist scholarship of the twenty-first century, however, has broadened to include texts from the African diaspora and from the continent itself (Lavender III and Yaszek 8). For example, Lavender III and Yaszek argue that Jamaican-born Canadian Nalo Hopkinson's *Whispers from the Cotton Tree Root: Caribbean Fabulist Fiction* (2000) demonstrates the "more global dimensions of Afrofuturism" (8). However, Hopkinson herself states in a panel discussion with Lavender III and Yaszek:

> "Afrofuturism" as a notion is way useful, but it doesn't cover the landscape. It comes out of an African American experience. It doesn't completely contain or reflect those of us whose root context isn't American; for instance, Caribbean artists, or those from the continent of Africa, or black European artists. When I write from a Caribbean place, it isn't solely black. It can be Afrocentric, but it's still rooted in a region that has been heavily creolized for centuries. (26)

Here, Hopkinson signals that art from Africa and the African diaspora cannot be seamlessly incorporated into Afrofuturism. While Hopkinson acknowledges the (limited) usefulness of the term for her work, South African author Mohale Mashigo argues that applying the term to African speculative fiction is inappropriate. Writing in the introduction to *Intruders: Short Stories*, Mashigo posits that Afrofuturism is an ill-fitting term as it suggests and encourages imitation of African American writing by Africans. She argues for the necessity of a new term, which meets the needs of African people living in Africa, necessarily different from African American imaginings (Mashigo). Also interested in new terms, Nigerian American author Nnedi Okorafor uses "Africanfuturism" and "Africanjujuism" to describe her work, rather than Afrofuturism (Lavender III and Yaszek 6). Samatar, Mashigo, Okorafor, and Hopkinson demonstrate that speculative and science fiction authors have disparate and nuanced relationships to Afrofuturism.

In an article entitled "Towards a Planetary History of Afrofuturism," Samatar emphasizes the danger of erasing the complex histories and differences of writing about the future in writing from Africa and the African diaspora. She agrees with Mashigo that incorporating all black writing about the future into Afrofuturism implies "a development narrative that assumes there were no African futurists before 2000" (176). She also argues that obscuring differences between writers from different regions detracts from opportunities for rich discussions (176). However, she argues that interpreting Afrofuturism as an "open space"

creates the possibility for "productive transnational conversations" (177). In sum, Samatar argues for the inclusion of African artists in conceptualizing Afrofuturism, but stresses that differences between writers warrant attention. Similarly, in her TED Talk on Afrofuturism, Kenyan artist and filmmaker Wanuri Kahui, whom I discussed in the previous chapter, uses Afrofuturism as an umbrella term which includes art both from Africa and the diaspora. However, she does not erase the different and converging histories of art emerging from these spaces. She argues that Africans have always made art oriented towards the future, explaining that myth, magical realism, and other fantastical genres have engaged with the future for centuries (Kahui). Writers that scholars discuss in relation to these debates include Hopkinson, Kahui, Okorafor, Zimbabwean Tendai Huchu, Ugandan Dilman Dila, Nigerian American Deji Bryce Olukotun, and Nigerian Chinelo Onawalu (See Samatar 2017, Lavender III and Yaszek 2020). It is in this context that I read *Tender: Stories*.

3.1.4 Ecofeminism and African Ecocriticism

The term 'ecofeminism' was coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 in essay entitled "Le Temps de L'Ecofeminisme" which translates to "The Time of Ecofeminism" (Carroll 1). There are varied and sometimes contradictory definitions of ecofeminism in the West (see Bile 2011, Carroll 2017). Jeffrey Bile argues that due to its heterogeneous nature, scholarship should refer to ecofeminisms, rather than ecofeminism. However, most ecofeminist approaches share a common preoccupation with "connecting feminist and ecological concerns" (Bile 1). As Valerie Padilla Carroll puts it, "…ecofeminism is a theoretical perspective and approach to activism that starts with an understanding of the connection between humans and environment" (1).

Bile demonstrates that ecofeminism "emerged in both critical ecology and feminist theory and found expression in what might be called *feminist ecology* and *ecological feminism*" (2). He shows that critical ecologists began to take feminist theories into account, while at the

same time, feminists engaged with critical ecological perspectives (2). From these intersections, ecofeminists argued that "the oppression of women (and/or that identified with women) and the domination of nature (and/or that identified with nature) are interrelated" (Bile 6). This connection lies at the core of ecofeminist theorizing. As Padilla puts it, "…the oppression of women and the destruction of nature are both similarly constructed and mutually reinforcing" (2).

Bile explains that early ecofeminism interrogated two main questions, among others. The first is how Western culture aligns women and nature (12). This is evident even on a linguistic level. Bile provides the following linguistic formulations as examples: "mother nature, fertile land, virgin forest, the rape of the earth" (12). Ecofeminist scholarship interrogates how the placing of women and nature together allows for the repression of both (Bile 12). Second, ecofeminisms interrogate the boundary between human and nature. They deconstruct this boundary and explore the ways in which it is socially constructed (Bile 13).

In their tackling of these questions, early ecofeminists such as Christ (1997) and Starhawk (1999) have been critiqued for taking an essentialist position on gender. They argued for a spiritual ecofeminism that sees the connection between women and nature as innate (Carroll 3). Clearly, such a position is the antithesis of a critique that aims to explore the ways in which gender is constructed in relation to the environment. Ecofeminists such as Maria Mies and Mary Mellor perform such a critique (Carroll 3). Carroll argues that recent ecofeminists such as Chaone Mallory (2010) and Great Gaard (2015) take an intersectional approach (3). As Carroll demonstrates, Mallory, Gaard, and others,

> …while centring women, also integrated race, class, nation, sexualities, species, ecosystems, and global location among other identities and positions within an ecofeminist matrix. This productive expansion of ecofeminist foci explicated how the unjustified domination of nature and of marginalised populations such as women,

> people of colour, animals, nature and citizens of the global South – are conceptually linked in mutually reinforcing systems of oppression. (2)

In this enlarged focus, ecofeminisms share similarities with African ecocriticism, the framework in which I read the short stories in this chapter. Ecocriticism is "'the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' when such study moves beyond treating the environment as background (setting) or symbol" (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 11). It places the representation of the environment and the social and political implications of such representation at the centre of study. The term first emerged in North American and European literary contexts in the 1990s (see Vital 2008, Huggan and Tiffin 2010, Caminero-Santangelo and Myres 2011). For the purposes of this chapter, I am interested in the development and preoccupations of an African-centred ecocriticism, so that I may read the relations between human and nonhuman in *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* and *Tender* in this context.

Scholarship that explores the intersection of ecocriticism and African literary studies originates in postcolonial ecocriticism (see Vital 2008, Caminero-Santangelo and Myres 2011). At its core, postcolonial ecocriticism places ecocriticism's concern with environment alongside the postcolonial study of imperial histories of expansion and conquest and their lasting effects on the present. For Byron Caminero-Santangelo and Garth Myres, both fields are defined by "a sense of political commitment, interdisciplinarity, and the interrogation of capitalist development and progress" (12). However, despite these similarities, the two fields are not easily reconciled (see Vital 2008, Huggan and Tiffin 2010, Caminero-Santangelo and Myres 2011). Postcolonial scholars have been critical of early ecocriticism's (also known as first-wave ecocriticism) limited focus on Western texts as well as the tendency to favour

> literary representations that focus on knowing, appreciating, identifying with, and protecting nature in a relatively pure state and/or natural forms of belonging. (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 12)

This focus makes several assumptions that postcolonial studies contest: that knowledge is fixed or stable, that it is singular and universal (read Western), and that nature is or can be "pure," ignoring histories of habitation, colonial conquest, and forced migration (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 12). Furthermore, Caminero-Santangelo and Myres note that

> First-wave ecocritics embrace mimetic approaches to environmental representation with a focus on the ways that literary writing might break through culturally and politically inflected constructions of the environment to achieve a clear, unmediated reflection of the natural world and give voice to nature. (13)

The conceptualization of a "clear, unmediated reflection" of the environment assumes that language can provide such a view. Postcolonial studies, with its emphasis on the ways in which both language and knowledge are shaped by history and culture, and so are always multiple, indeterminate, and provisional, rejects such a goal as well as its feasibility (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 13).[23]

For Anthony Vital, postcolonial critique and ecocriticism can be reconciled by recognising the "…complex interplay of social history with the natural world, and how language both shapes and reveals such interactions" (90). In this way, how history impacts the environment and how the environment impacts history is studied alongside an analysis of the language that represents both. For Caminero Santangelo and Myres, such an approach "emphasizes both the inextricable intertwining of cultural, political, and natural history, and

[23] See Dominic Head's "The (Im)possibility of Ecocriticism" (1998) and Rob Nixon's "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism" (2005) for detailed analyses of the overlaps and contradictions between postcolonialism and ecocriticism.

the 'role of mediation in representing the environment'" (13). Within such an approach, Emily McGiffin emphasizes the centrality of justice to both fields. She writes that the field

> coalesces around the term "justice," drawing together the social justice questions of postcolonial studies (exploitation, displacement, dispossession, and inequality), the environmental justice concerns increasingly taken up by ecocriticism, and tensions between the two fields. (3)

Such an approach is evident in postcolonial ecocriticism such as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010).[24] I focus on two key points made by Huggan and Tiffin in their tracing of postcolonial ecocriticism that inform my analyses of the primary texts in this chapter. First, colonial understandings of the environment were central to Western imperialism. Indigenous peoples were often categorised as part of nature, which justified their dehumanization (6). This explains how indigenous people were taken to Europe as exotic displays, along with fauna and flora. They were also "forced or co-opted over time into western views of their environment" and their own indigenous knowledge and language systems concerning the environment were devalued and erased (6). The colonial dismissal of indigenous knowledge systems continues in the present. For example, Caminero-Santangelo and Myres argue that conservation in Africa has often been understood as the need for Western protection of "pristine nature" from indigenous environmental practice (16).

The first point that Huggan and Tiffin make outlines the racism inherent in colonial understandings of the environment, and how imperial power structures used racial hierarchies to determine who could use, relate to, or understand the environment, and how. The second point they make is also about hierarchies, this time, concerning the colonial hierarchization of

[24] See also Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley's *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (2011).

the human and the non-human. In this hierarchy, it is taken for granted that human interests supersede those of fauna and flora, and that fauna and flora are resources available for human use. Huggan and Tiffin emphasize how this attitude continues to the present day:

> …in assuming a natural prioritisation of humans and human interests over those of other species on earth, we are both generating and repeating the racist ideologies of imperialism on a planetary scale. In working towards a genuinely post-imperial, environmentally based conception of community, then, a re-imagining and reconfiguration of the human place in nature necessitates an interrogation of the category of human itself and of the ways in which the construction of ourselves *against* nature – with the hierarchisation of life forms that construction implies – has been and remains complicit in colonialist and racist exploitation from the time of imperial conquest to the present day. (6)

Here, Huggan and Tiffin stress the issues at the core of this chapter. How can we re-imagine and reconfigure the human relationship with nature? How might it be possible not to be *against* nature? *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* and *Tender* address these questions in their portrayals of friendship between humans and non-human entities.

In the introduction to *Natures of Africa: Ecocriticism and Animal Studies in Contemporary Cultural Forms* (2016), Fiona Moolla discusses a conference entitled "Literature, Nature, and Land: Ethics and Aesthetics of the Environment" convened in South Africa, at the University of Zululand in 1992 (2). Moolla stresses that this conference predates the emergence of Western ecocriticism in 1993 (2). However, she notes that for the most part, contemporary African ecocriticism has been conceptualized in relation to postcolonial ecocriticism (3). Writing in 2008 in an article entitled "Toward an African Ecocriticism: Postcolonialism, Ecology and *Life and Times of Michael K*," Vital asks what African ecocriticism might look like. For Vital, African ecocriticism must be "rooted in local (regional,

national) concern for social life and its natural environment" (88). It must also consider the "complexity of African pasts" (88), as postcolonial studies invite us to do.

In the nineteen years since Vital's imagining of an African ecocriticism, more and more scholars have contributed to the field. Notably, Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt's *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives* (2010) offers readings of several African texts, including works by J. M. Coetzee and Bessie Head (Moolla et al 3). Moolla's edited collection *Natures of Africa: Ecocriticism and Contemporary Studies in Contemporary Cultural Forms* offers readings from varied regions, including works by South African K. Sello Duiker, Nigerian Helon Habila, and Shona musicology. Cajetan Iheka's *Naturalising Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature* (2018) argues for the importance of giving equal attention to human and nonhuman actors in the wake of ecological disaster (Iheka 2). Through a reading of literary depictions of environmental crises in the Niger Delta, Somalia, South Africa, Kenya, and Botswana, Iheka demonstrates how these texts "contribute to the larger project of envisioning alternative, sustainable ecosystems" (Iheka 3). Another significant full-length contribution to the field is Emily McGiffin's *Of Land, Bones, and Money: Towards a South African Ecopoetics* (2020), in which McGiffin offers an ecocritical reading of selected South African isiXhosa poetry, focusing on the relationship between racial oppression and environmental exploitation (3).

Various articles also focus on South African poets. Bibi Burger (2020) pays attention to the ocean in Ronelda S. Kamfer and Koleka Putuma's work, while Elisabeth Knittelfelder (2025) provides an ecocritical analysis of water in Putuma's "Water" (2016) and "Lalela uLwandle" by the Empatheatre Collective. Also recently published, Niyi Akingbe (2024) pays attention to the environment in Gabeba Baderoon's poetry. While this cluster of articles focuses on South African poetry, literature from the Niger Delta has also garnered critical attention from scholars such as Iheka (2018), Jennifer Wenzel (2020), Romanus Aboh (2024), and

Emmanuel Adeniyi (2024). Iheka, Aboh and Adeniyi consider literature in the wake of environmental crises. On the other hand, Buhlebenkosi Dlodlo (2024) focuses on the "everyday experiences of ordinary people as they experience nature in the wake of colonial modernity" in Zimbabwean writer Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning* (1998). Alongside single articles, there have also been several special issues that focus on African ecocriticism. Moolla offers a comprehensive list of these special issues, which predate 2016, including "Animal Presences, Animal Geographies" in *Current Writing, Text, and Reception in Southern Africa* (2006), and an issue focused on 'coastlines and littoral zones in South African ecocritical writing" in Alter*nation* (2013) ("Natures," 6). As is evident from this non-exhaustive list, recent African ecocriticism is varied in its consideration of texts, and scholars are working on a myriad of authors from disparate periods and regions. It is to this scholarship that this chapter adds.

With its focus on imagined futures, Afrofuturism has several critical intersections with ecocriticism. Anindita Ghosal and Aritra Ghosal explain that, with the surge of contemporary climate change fiction and eco-dystopian narratives, Afrofuturism has taken up the environmental imagination (178). In other words, African speculative fiction provides a productive site from which to think through ecological crises and write liveable (or unliveable) futures. For example, Jerome Winter argues that Samatar, N.K. Jemisin and Okorafor write environmental Afrofuturist fiction (190-191). For Winter, authors such as Samatar, Jemisin, and Okorafor interrogate African environmental crises while simultaneously gesturing towards alternative, livable futures (191). Winter argues that Afrofuturist authors "…are creating new modes of environmental science fiction (SF) that radically revise the colonial and postcolonial narratives driving environmental SF written from globally Northern perspectives" (189). For Winter, Northern environmental science fiction is often characterised by "narratives of environmental conquest and expansion" which obscure their connections to histories of colonialism and postcolonialism (189). Environmental Afrofuturist fiction, on the other hand,

exposes these connections (Winter 189). Winter demonstrates that Afrofuturist artists explore how environmental conquest leads to ecological disaster (189).

In this way, although they write in different genres, both Baingana and Samatar can be read in the context of ecocriticism. In what follows, I pay attention to the ways in which both authors reimagine the human relationship with the earth through friendship, albeit to different extents and with distinct implications.

3.2.1 Reading Christine and the natural world in *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe*

Published in 2003, *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe*, a fragmented novel, is made up of self-contained but interconnected short stories that follow the lives, from childhood to early adulthood, of three Ugandan sisters. Set before, during, and after Idi Amin's rise to power, each fragment, or short story, is narrated from the perspective of one of the three sisters: Christine, Patti, or Rosa. While the political and socio-economic state of Uganda is explored through and influences the sisters' narratives, Baingana's focus is on their intimate lives and their individual experiences of home, travel, work, love, and friendship.

In her article entitled "'Abagyenda bareeba.' Those who Travel, See': Home, Migration and the Maternal Bond in Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish*," Lynda Gichanda Spencer focuses on the mother-daughter bond. For Spencer, Christine's complex and contradictory relationship with her mother lies at the heart of her identity formation. Spencer details Christine's push-pull relationship with her mother and argues that Christine must travel away from her mother to construct her own identity ("Travel," 193).

Published a few years after Spencer's article, Asante Lucy Mtenje continues Spencer's work on identity in *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe*. Mtenje, however, makes sexual desire her focus, asking how *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* "engages with aspects of female sexuality such as eroticism, desire, and sexual agency" (26). Mtenje demonstrates that sexuality

is a fraught and complex site for Christine's negotiation of her identity, especially as it is coloured by gendered, patriarchal and political notions of the linkages between sex and identity. In this chapter, I continue Spencer and Mtenje's work by extending the discussion to friendship. I focus on Christine's experiences of loneliness and connection with the human and non-human world in the last two sections of this fragmented novel: "Lost in Los Angeles" and "Questions of Home."

Tropical Fish is preoccupied with the protagonist – Christine's – attempts at community making. While Christine's attempts at friendship with human subjects are more explicit in the narrative, a close reading of her interactions with the natural world demonstrates that her connection to the earth is also significant. The narrative follows Christine from girlhood in Entebbe to her student experience at Makerere University in Kampala. Later, she moves to Los Angeles, and then finally returns home to Entebbe. Throughout the fragmented narratives that focus on Christine, Baingana is preoccupied with Christine's search for identity. She explores Christine's attempts to centre her identity in ideas of womanhood, sexuality, nationhood, race, class, and, significantly for this thesis, friendship. Christine's friendships are most evident in the final two short stories that make up *Tropical Fish*, entitled "Lost in Los Angeles" and "Questions of Home," which detail her time in Los Angeles and her return to Entebbe. In this section, I explore Christine's friendships with human subjects in "Lost in Los Angeles," before turning to her relationship with the non-human world in "Lost in Los Angeles" and "Questions of Home."

3.2.2 Lost in Los Angeles and Questions of Home

In "Lost in Los Angeles," Christine, recently arrived from Entebbe, struggles to form friendships. She feels isolated and alienated from the people she meets, frustrated by their stereotypical understanding of her African identity and confused by their "Americanness". Eventually, Christine meets a friend called Light Feather at a poetry café, a woman who claims

she is Native American and dyes her blond hair brown because "too many people think she's white" (140). Light Feather's friend, Debbie, disputes her ethnicity, making anything Light Feather says unreliable. Despite this, Light Feather attempts to forge a connection with Christine based on a shared history of colonization and oppression, saying:

> Your voice is like a song, do you know that? I'm sure you sing well, what black doesn't? Just like us Indians, you people are favored by the gods. That's why indigenous people suffer. (141)

As can be seen from Light Feather's words above, her attempts at connection with Christine are essentialist, stereotypical, and draw on fixed notions of group identity that Christine rejects early in the narrative. Oddly enough, however, Christine *does* become friends with Light Feather, and this friendship becomes one of the most meaningful, if ambivalent, connections in "Lost in Los Angeles". Reflecting on Light Feather after their first encounter, Christine thinks: "There are so many of us who are lost, so many" (142). Here, the sense of being lost creates a sense of connection for Christine, and, ironically, Light Feather's misguided and offensive attempt at identity formation kindles a friendship between the two.

> Light Feather has a softness, an innocent vulnerability I like to be around. She really believes I'm like her. I can imagine what Africans here would say if they were to meet us together: "Surely, Christine, if you want white friends can't you pick better ones?" That's part of her attraction. Also, she shows me I can be anything I want. (144)

When thinking through the ambiguous nature of Light Feather and Christine's friendship, I am reminded of Chowdhury and Philipose's description of dissident friendship as "a process of coming to know each other's stories and unlearning 'an impulse that allows mythologies about each other to replace knowing about one another'" (2). Light Feather does not manage to "know" Christine, rather than the mythologies she constructs about her, and Christine remains acutely aware of this. For this reason, their friendship remains ambivalent. The relationship

between Christine and Light Feather is contrasted with Christine's cousin's friends, other Africans living in LA. Although Christine enjoys attending their gatherings at first, relishing all the ways in which they make her feel at home, she quickly tires of them. As class, gender, and other differences begin to cause her unease, she reflects:

> I admit, I am not entirely comfortable with the idea that these Ugandans, and Africans in general, are more *me* than anyone else. I didn't even know the people here when we were back home. How can I, in fact, *why* should I feel one with them, or with any African here? (132)

Here, Baingana's use of italics to emphasize *me* and *why* highlights the failure of connection purely through national identity. Comparing the final passage in "Lost in Los Angeles" to the one above reveals the odd meaningfulness that Christine finds in her relationship with Light Feather.

> Feather walks people's dogs for a living; she says they speak to her. She lives in one small room and a tiny yard, what at home we would call a boys' quarter. She has five or six cats, I can't tell, they completely fill her wreck of a room. The cats are furry and huge, and slink or spread all over us like physical music. Their fur floats in streams of sunlight. We hike up the Altadena hills often, where we drink cheap wine, write and read poems, and shout them out to the smog of Los Angeles. Feather teaches me Pueblo chants and dances. "This is my people's land you know," she says. "All this," sweeping her arms wide, around. "Mine too," I say. What the hell. (144)

Although Christine ridicules Light Feather's idea of a shared history of oppression, I also read genuine moments of warmth in their relationship, as can be seen in this passage. The description of Light Feather's room, for example, and the cats which "spread" over the women "like physical music" is one of intimacy, life, and warmth which contrasts sharply with Christine's earlier experiences of Los Angeles, characterized by machinery and lifelessness.

Light Feather *is* an unlikely interlocutor, but through forging a friendship with her, Christine feels a sense of belonging to Los Angeles, and seems also to forge a warmer, more gentle sense of self than those which have come before.

However, constructions of friendship also gesture beyond the human in *Tropical Fish*. At first, Baingana emphasizes Christine's sense of displacement through her relationship to the natural landscape of Los Angeles. Christine tries to form some attachment to the land itself, stating: "I'm trying to put my feet firmly on the ground, I'm trying to be here" (115), but the roads of Los Angeles are "too smooth to be real," the desert is "endless," the rocks "indifferent" and the shrubs "mean little favors" (115). In these lines, the act of placing one's feet "firmly on the ground" means being fully *there* – being connected to the world in ways Christine struggles to access. In fact, fleeting images of being grounded in this text are contrasted with multiple images of being unmoored. For example, in the titular story, "Tropical Fish," Christine reflects that at her lover, Peter's, house she:

> …was free to walk around the large, airy house naked, a gin and tonic melting in my hand. This made me feel floaty, a clean open hanky wandering in the wind. I didn't have to squash myself into clothes, pull in my stomach, tie my breasts up in a bra, worry about anything, be anything. (104)

In this passage, the house is "large" and "airy," Christine feels "floaty," and the image of the wandering handkerchief suggests an untethered freedom and lightness, free from worry. However, the sense of lightness that Christine feels in her freedom from being anything is quickly tainted. When Peter is slightly put out that Christine visits on her period and is unwilling to have sex, Christine feels "empty, a box of air" (107), suggesting a more serious unmooring, as Christine, rather than floating on air, becomes it. Christine's unmooring reaches its peak when she becomes pregnant and subsequently terminates her pregnancy. Baingana

likens Christine's experience of the procedure to sex with Peter, emphasizing Christine's dreamlike, semi-conscious state:

> At the clinic, the anaesthetist droned at me in a deep, kind voice as he injected me. I was going to remain conscious but wouldn't feel anything, he said. Just like real life. The doctor was cream-gloved, efficient, and kind, like Peter. I fell into pleasant dreaminess. Why did I always seem to have my legs spread open before men poking things into me? I let them. (109)

Baingana foregrounds Christine's numb, dream-like, and semi-conscious state, one which she associates with "real life". Travelling to Los Angeles aggravates Christine's earlier sense of being unmoored from "real life". While at first this state is linked to Peter, later it is linked to her alienation from the natural environment in "Lost in Los Angeles." Christine describes her workplace as a "glass cage," and work as "dull punishment" (123). Imagery of imprisonment pervades the early pages of the story, as do images of machinery. All interactions are automated, mechanical, robotic. "Metal, metal everywhere," reflects Christine in a wry reference to Coleridge, "I need a drink" (125). The images of entrapment, metal, and machinery emphasize Christine's initial experience of Los Angeles as alienating and dehumanizing. Significantly, she is complicit in her own alienation from the natural environment because she takes part in destroying it, through her new position working to support corporations responsible for oil spills. She reflects: "…I am suddenly involved, and guilty too, because I am making money from the suffocation of seals and ducks and fish that floated up dead, bloated with oil" (122). The stark images of animal life bloated and dead are extended to Christine herself in the following passage:

> I now know more about oil production that I ever thought possible. The oil spill soaks my dreams. I am deep, deep under the cold Alaskan ocean, frozen, slick, drinking oil

> for a living. I wake up dead to take another bus downtown toward the brown cloud that hangs over Los Angeles. This is where I have chosen to live. (122)

Here, Christine becomes like the seals, ducks, and fish she is complicit in killing. In extending the imagery of oil and death to Christine, Baingana emphasizes Christine's inseparability from the natural environment – what she does to animal life she does to herself. Significantly, the inseparable relationship between Christine and the earth – between human and non-human – is described in terms of friendship. Although Christine struggles to connect to a landscape so different from the one she knows, and is actively complicit in destroying it, it *is* one of her first forms of connection in this new, strange place. For example, in the passage below, the landscape offers some comfort to Christine in her loneliness:

> On Saturdays with no one to talk to, I go up to the hills above Pasadena, driving through the sunlight, my familiar friend. I recognize the sun at least; it is a hot dry hand on my back… The soil, like the sun, is familiar, although at home the soil is deeper brown, thicker, not so flyaway. (117)

In this passage, the image of the sun as a familiar friend, one of the only things that Christine can recognize, is significant. The sun is a "hand" on Christine's back at a time when Christine's world has felt cold, lonely, and lifeless. In this way, Baingana casts the natural world as a friend to Christine. The sunlight provides warmth to Christine who is otherwise "frozen" and "dead." This image of life and warmth is similar to the earlier depiction of Light Feather's cats whose "fur floats in streams of sunlight" as they cover the women.

Later, in "Questions of Home," Christine struggles again with a sense of unbelonging upon her return to Entebbe. As she struggles to fit back into work and family life, it is again the earth that offers her a more meaningful way of being in the concluding passage of *Tropical Fish*:

> The dark was closing in. Christine could hardly see now as the last blood-red streaks across the sky turned indigo. She sighed deeply. Patti and her boss were right. She should dig deep down into this mud with her bare hands until she couldn't remove it from her fingernails. Merge with it, like day had become its opposite, night. (177)

In this final passage, Christine senses that she needs to merge with the non-human world. To find meaning and belonging, she can no longer differentiate herself from the earth. As in this instance and those mentioned above, the moments where Christine allows herself a connection to – or friendship with – the natural world are some of the warmest and most hopeful moments in the text. I read Christine's friendship with the natural world as what Rosi Bardotti in another context describes as "an enlarged sense of community, based on empathy, accountability and recognition" (200). In *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe*, Baingana extends Christine's community to non-human subjects, such as animal life and the earth. Christine recognizes herself, tries and fails to be accountable to, and deeply empathises with non-human subjects. In so doing, Baingana gestures towards an "enlarged sense" of friendship, to use Haraway's term.

3.3.1 Reading Friendship in the Wasteland in *Tender: Stories*

Setting the short stories in *Tender* in East Africa, the United States of America, and elsewhere, Samatar, like Baingana, offers a broader, diasporic reading of friendship. Published in 2017, *Tender: Stories* was a finalist for the NPR Best Books of the Year World Fantasy Award, the British Fantasy Award, and the Locus Award. For the purposes of this thesis, I read two short stories in *Tender: Stories*, "Tender" and "The Closest Thing to Animals." While Baingana gestures towards the possibilities of relating to the earth with an ethic of friendship, Samatar explores the contours of such a relationship more fully through the lens of science fiction in "Tender" and speculative fiction in "The Closest Thing to Animals." Although working in

different genres, both authors offer friendship as a significant form of community making in the context of environmental disaster.

3.3.2 Tender

Through science and speculative fiction, Samatar is able to explore friendships between human and nonhuman subjects in a more sustained way in "Tender" and "The Closest Thing to Animals." While "Tender" demonstrates what friendship with the earth might look like, "The Closest Thing to Animals" can be read as a warning of humanity's future if our relationship to the earth does not change. "Tender" tells the story of a woman who becomes the titular "tender" of a radioactive, highly toxic wasteland. Set in the aftermath of the nuclear age, the unnamed protagonist must monitor the toxicity levels at a containment centre set up to store radioactive material before its permanent burial. The containment centre in which the protagonist lives and works houses plutonium, described as a poisonous, "radioactive chemical element," significant for "its use as a fuel in certain types of nuclear reactors and as an ingredient in nuclear weapons" (ref). The protagonist notes that the "…plutonium that the containment centre holds has a half-life of 24100 years." Here, the concept of a "half-life" (the time it takes for the plutonium to reach *half* its levels of radioactivity) illustrates that "political time is now also geological time" (Green). In other words, human activity has irrevocably altered the earth – the definition of the Anthropocene. A scientist herself – she was involved in the creation of the containment centres – Samatar's protagonist is interested in the people behind the scientific discoveries that have led to this devastation. She reflects:

> In my twenty-acre glass enclosure, in my beautiful little house, in my bedroom softened by quilts and golden lamps, I read about the dawn of the nuclear age. I am moved by the young physicists, their bravery, their zeal. The delicate, somehow childish cranium of Niels Bohr. Enrico Fermi's bright melancholy gaze. Glenn Seaborg, awarded a Nobel

> Prize for his role in discovering plutonium, said: "I was a 28-year-old kid and I didn't stop to ruminate about it." This-devil-may-care attitude seems to characterize many scientists and lies perhaps at the heart of all human advancement. Newton sticking a bodkin in his eye to investigate perception. The doctors Donald Blacklock and Saul Alder injecting themselves with Chimpanzee blood. (116)

Here, the juxtaposition of the harsh confinement in which the protagonist lives – a twenty-acre glass enclosure, designed to protect the outside world both from her and the plutonium she monitors – and the warmth of her house filled with soft quilts and golden lamps, is mirrored by the juxtaposition of the early physicists and the effects of their discoveries. The physicists, responsible for the development of technology that will be used in the utter devastation of both earth and humanity, are described gently, as "young," "childish," "delicate," and "melancholy". Through this juxtaposition, Samatar poignantly illustrates the seemingly inevitable nature of humanity's effect on the earth, characterized by ignorance and carelessness. In this way, Samatar destabilizes the linear narrative of "human advancement," characterizing it instead as a narrative of pain and recklessness, embodied by the visceral images of scientists who pierce their eyes and inject themselves with chimpanzee blood.

To further explore the effect of "human advancement" on the earth, Samatar employs the image of the wasteland – a sick earth. For Bryan Bannon, a wasteland is an area that has been so negatively impacted by human activity that it loses almost all "vitality." He argues that instead of shunning such an area, an ethic of friendship with the earth would call us to prioritize this area, and to act in ways that can restore its vitality (54). In a different vein, Jane Bennett asks us to consider how "our trash is not 'away' in landfills, but generating lively streams of chemicals and volatile winds of methane as we speak" (vii) (we can think of the radioactivity of plutonium in this way). Like Bannon and Bennett, Samatar evokes the image of the toxic wasteland as a way to emphasize humanity's effect on the earth, and in turn its effect on

humanity. The wasteland is nature made tender – an explicit site of pain. It is to this pain that the protagonist, in her position as Tender, must respond. She reflects:

> I am equipped with sensors, implanted under the skin up and down my back, which enable me to detect changes in toxicity levels the instant they occur. I can feel the degree of these changes, where they are located, and whether they require observation or action. It's like a sixth sense: not at all painful, and far more effective than collecting and interpreting data. I know, however, that most people find the idea of implantation distasteful. *They've turned you into a cyborg!* wrote my best friend, the one I privately call my hurt friend, the one who still visits me. (116)

With this image of a woman physically connected to the poisoned landscape, Samatar offers a profoundly visceral way of relating to the sick earth. The protagonist describes her connection with the earth as a "sixth sense," a more intuitive and effective, *bodily* way of knowing than standard scientific methods of data collection and interpretation. This way of knowing and connecting to the earth via the body is reminiscent of the final image of *Tropical Fish*, in which Christine plunges her hands into the earth, in an effort to merge with it. Significantly, it is science that allows the protagonist in "Tender" to relate to the earth in ways Christine cannot, disallowing any easy reading of science and technology as merely destructive in this text. The protagonist becomes, in essence, a cyborg, a

> …'bionic human,' one whose body contains mechanical or electrical devices and whose abilities are often greater than that of a normal, biological, human. (DeCook 1159)

For Haraway, a cyborg identity is a "halfway identity between humans and the machines that we use in a post-industrial world" (Cox 117). It offers a way to interrupt "… the divisions between 'humans and nonhumans,' 'nature and culture,' and 'science and technology'" (Jamison and Haraway 10). In "Tender," the protagonist's cyborg identity allows her a connection to the earth that is otherwise difficult to access. It becomes a way of disrupting the

divisions between human and non-human. The protagonist's relationship with the earth that arises from this disruption is likened to a friendship:

> I sit with the earth as if at the bedside of a sick friend. I am so tender now, I feel the earth's pain all through my body. Often I lie down, pressing my cheek to the dust, and weep. I no longer feel, or even comprehend, the desire for another world, that passion which produces both marvels and monsters, both poisons and cures. Like the woman in this story, I understand that there is no other world. There is only the one we have made. (123)

Here, Samatar's exploration of the dual meanings of the word "tender" – to care for *and* to be in pain – demonstrates the nature of the protagonist's friendship with the earth. For the protagonist, friendship with the earth in the age of the Anthropocene means both caring for and being in pain with it. Such an ethic requires that the protagonist be with the earth as it is. Through the protagonist's realization that there is no "other world," Samatar shows how relating to the earth with an ethic of friendship can create alternative ways of being with it. Rather than mastery, domination, or romanization, Samatar's protagonist can live alternative environmental values – ones that Bannon associates with friendship: "wonder," "compassion," "mercy," "benevolence," and "respect" (Bannon).

Integral to an ethic of friendship between the earth and humanity is the recognition that not only do we impact the earth, the earth impacts us in turn. Samatar explores this reciprocal relationship through the figure of her protagonist, the Tender. As I have noted above, due to her work at the containment centre, the protagonist lives in complete isolation, away from her husband, young child, and friends. Her work is considered a "sacrifice" (116) by the public, as her exposure to the plutonium buried in the earth affects her body, and she becomes "increasingly toxic" (119). Toxicity becomes a sustained motif throughout this short story,

characterizing natural and man-made elements, human bodies, and natural landscapes. The protagonist likens herself to the real-world "Radium Girls" who

> poisoned themselves while painting watch dials with luminescent paint at the United Radium Factory. Unaware that the paint was toxic, they licked the paintbrushes to give them a fine point for outlining the tiny numbers and lines. Later, the women's bones decayed to a kind of moth-eaten lace. Their teeth fell out. As factory workers, when they wanted a bit of fun, the Radium Girls had painted their nails and even their teeth with the beautiful, ghastly, phosphorescent, futuristic poison. (119)

Through the poignant image of the women's bones as "moth-eaten lace," Samatar explores the ways in which the earth and humanity affect each other. By describing the devastating effects of the Anthropocene with images that are at once sad and beautiful, Samatar hints again at a relationship that is characterized by care and pain.

Throughout this short story, the protagonist's relationship with the earth is juxtaposed with her human relationships. Alongside the story of nuclear physics, which the protagonist characterizes as a "grand romance," she tells the story of a "Toxic Lover." She describes a woman who is successful in a myriad of conventional ways: she has an impressive scientific career, a large home, a loving husband, and a beautiful daughter. She is, however, "completely unaware that she was toxic" (118), and conducts an imaginary affair:

> A banal story, really. Of course her husband discovered everything. He was devastated, especially by the texts to the phantom lover. The woman cried and promised to reform. Incredibly, despite all her gifts, her intelligence, her remorse, she was unable to do so. (119)

Through the story of the "Toxic Lover," Samatar explores toxicity as it is used in current discourse on mental health. The woman is unable to change her patterns of behaviour and loses her marriage and her relationship with her child. The woman, of course, is revealed to be the

Tender herself, who isolates herself in the containment centre as penance. While her relationships with her husband and child end, or are at least very limited, she is able to continue one relationship – a friendship. The protagonist describes her friendship with a woman she calls her "hurt friend." A dancer by profession, this friend is hurt on both a physical and emotional level – she attempts suicide and severely injures her body. The protagonist describes her friend as "a broken, greenish piece of glass," likening her to the Radium Girls.

> In the hospital, my friend explained that she had been feeling "trapped." This feeling had grown in her invisibly, like radiation sickness. It was a relief, she told me, to have it out in the open. It was certainly visible there in her hospital bed. It was all over her skin, it blazed from her eyes. She was aglow with pain. (121)

In this passage, the startling image of a woman who is "aglow with pain" is reminiscent of both the protagonist herself and the earth, poisoned as they are with plutonium. In "Tender" Samatar offers us these three entities that are hurt and full of pain, and through their relationships suggests that that friendship offers us a way to live with others in pain. In the age of the Anthropocene, Samatar demonstrates that friendship offers both human and non-human subjects a way to exist together.

3.3.3 The Closest Thing to Animals

Read alongside "Tender," "The Closest Thing to Animals" depicts the horror of humanity's failed relationship with the earth. Samatar sets "The Closest Thing to Animals" in a post-apocalyptic world. The narrative takes place in California at an undefined point in the future, when all plant and animal life has become extinct – in other words, a wasteland beyond repair. The characters live enclosed in a huge tent which they cannot leave due to an enforced quarantine, put in place due to the outbreak of a deadly and infectious disease – lanugo. The short story details the life and relationships of the narrator, known only to the reader as S. "The Closest Thing to Animals" can be understood as a depiction of humanity's future reality if our

relationship to the earth does not change. The characters are completely cut off from the destroyed natural world, living without stars, sunlight or wind in their quarantine. They can only access the natural world and animal life through memory and art. The first reference to extinct animal life is to the "Lolly Whales" in the form of a sculpture that the narrator's new friend, Hodan, has made.

> She had a sculpture of the Lolly Whales made out of plastic milk jugs. The Lolly Whale sculpture glowed faintly blue, exactly the way the real Lollies had done on the beach when I went to see them as a kid. There was even a Lolly Whale smell in the room: a gentle, wistful stink. (189)

Here, the sculpture recreates the narrator's childhood memory of whales beaching themselves during the environmental apocalypse, an eerie reference to real-world events – whales have been beaching themselves for decades. In her article entitled "Heat Is Not a Metaphor" (2023), poet Alexis Gumbs details the recent death of one hundred long-finned pilot whales, who beached themselves off the coast of Western Australia. Gumbs theorizes that the whales have beached themselves due to alarmingly high ocean temperatures, caused by "carbon emissions from fossil fuels, disproportionately burned by corporations and first-world consumers…" (Gumbs).

> I wanted to write a poem about how the extreme heat of the ocean is breaking my heart, but the whales beat me to it. In late July, almost 100 long-finned pilot whales left the deep, usually cold waters where they live – so deep, so cold that scientists have barely been able to study them. Together they came to the coast of Western Australia and huddled into a massive heart shape (if your heart is shaped like 100 black whales, like mine is). Then, collectively, they stranded themselves on the shore. As soon as they lost the support of the water, their chest walls crushed their internal organs. They literally broke their hearts. (Gumbs)

While Gumbs reflects on the ways in which the whales themselves have become a heartbreakingly poetic warning of our breaking world, Samatar's characters use animalistic artwork to remember and mourn an already devastated natural world. In "The Closest Thing to Animals," Hodan's art is always large enough to physically enter and engage – S must physically enter the artwork to experience it, such as in the case of the Lolly Whale sculpture, and another interactive piece called *Summer of the Swollen Bees*, which recreates the mass death of the bees – another apocalyptic event from S's childhood. The final image of the short story is another of these interactive art pieces, a quilt Hodan has made.

> On the quilt there were elephants and bees and whales. There were people fleeing their country and a dead woman by the side of the road and a little boy vomiting in the back of a truck. There were terrible crowded apartments and policemen banging the doors with their guns and a cat in a noose hanging from a mango tree. There were trees and trees and girls as slender as trees all lines up to draw water in dusty camps. There were lonely taxi drivers chewing qaat in the snow. There were bats and bleeding lizards and whales expiring on the sand, the brief, lovely, grotesque menagerie of our childhood. I snuggled down into it. Soon, I was lying curled around Hodan's feet. I drew the quilt over my head and went to sleep. (205)

As she did in "Tender," Samatar explores stark images that are at once beautiful and shocking to depict the devastation of human and non-human life. In this passage, the fragmented images of death and horror, each one laid on top of the other without explanation, evoke a deep sense of sadness for all the life Samatar describes – human and more-than-human. In the final image of the short story, S and Hodan snuggle down into these images of devastation and horror, S curled around Hodan's feet like a cat. This image is remarkably similar to the final images of Baingana's "Lost in Los Angeles," in which Light Feather's cats curl around Christine. In both of these short stories, although to different extents, human friendship offers comfort in a world

devastated by human activity. In the final image of the text, S draws the quilt over her head like a tent, creating an image of a tent within a tent, and cementing her alienation from the natural world. Significantly, she is in this horrific tent with Hodan. As she reflects earlier in the story, "A friend is like armor… Or like a tent" (197). Similarly to "Tender," rather than familial and romantic relationships, it is friendship that dominates the narrative in "The Closest Thing to Animals." The only relationships that exist inside the tent for the protagonist are her friendships. The one romantic relationship the reader is made aware of has failed completely – S's former lover does not even recognize or remember her until she jogs his memory. In addition, she has been physically cut off from her family, as her parents were on holiday in Florida when the quarantine was first enforced, years before the narrative is set. Like the containment centre in "Tender," the image of the tent is one of extreme isolation and alienation. However, while the narrator in "Tender" has chosen her isolation to some extent, the characters in "The Closest Thing to Animals" are trapped in the tent against their will, are terrified of contracting lanugo, and experience the artificial nature of life inside the tent as muted horror.

Although at the end of the narrative S experiences Hodan's friendship as comforting and armour-like, the narrative details the difficulties she has in maintaining the relationships she has with her friends. As the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that she has lost several relationships with friends – other women – who she knew before Hodan. When she meets Hodan, she is lonely and depressed, and does not experience herself as "really there." She feels that she "needs to find her centre (193)," that she "is made out of string (194)" and later states "I'm made out of cardboard" (202). She is slowly able, through a series of stops and starts, to forge a connection with Hodan, who, like S, is of Somali origin, although she grew up in Minnesota. In part, it is their common experience as second-generation Somali women in America that allows them to forge a connection, as well as their common experience of an apocalyptic childhood.

Like the extended imagery of toxicity in "Tender," sickness characterizes the life world of "The Closest Thing to Animals." People who contract lanugo (which in reality is the name given to the hair that covers a foetus in the uterus) grow long hair all over their bodies, and slowly become plant and animal-like. S's former friend Nadia has the most extended form of the illness ever seen. She is confined to a wheelchair, on medication for extreme pain, covered all over in hair, has knees that seem to be growing red peppers, and a voice that sounds "full of bees" (198). In a world in which all plant and animal life has been destroyed, lanugo can be read as a form of grotesque regeneration, taking place on the site of the human body. Like the cyborg body in "Tender," Nadia's body comes to represent a site where the enforced divisions between the human and non-human world are broken down. The longest surviving patient of lanugo, Nadia, believes that "Plant-Me is saving Animal-Me" (202), and through her, Samatar suggests that it is only through the dissolution of divisions between human and nonhuman that humanity might survive. Samatar also writes Nadia as S's harshest critic – she offers her no forgiveness for the loss of their friendship, which fails when Nadia becomes sick:

> I swallowed. My eyes were stinging. "Nadia, I am so sorry. It's just – you were busy. You were so busy all the time. Your appointments and interviews – "
>
> "I was busy *being sick!* I was busy almost dying! What is *wrong* with you? Are you actually made out of cardboard? (202)

Here, S loses her friendship with Nadia because she cannot exist alongside another in pain. In contrast, Samatar suggests that her new friendship with Hodan has potential through the final image of the quilt that I have already discussed above. S and Hodan can exist together in pain.

3.4 Conclusion

In this reading of *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* and *Tender: Stories,* it is evident that friendship plays a large role for both Baingana and Samatar's central characters. What is most significant when examining the friendships in these texts is how they offer brief but powerful

glimpses into humanity's relationship with the earth. While Baingana suggests that Christine's relationship with the earth might become pertinent to her future identity formation, it is Samatar who is able to explore earth-human relationships more fully through the lens of science and speculative fiction.

By reading Baingana and Samatar through an ecocritical lens, I have shown that friendship with the Earth offers solace to characters deeply affected by the Anthropocene. In turn, friendship helps the characters to consider ways in which they might provide solace to the Earth, and the ways in which humans and the Earth might recognise each other. In this way, both authors extend the traditional ways we might think of friendship as including human bonds alone, and gesture towards a much larger, planetary conception of humanity. In their reconceptualization of friendship, Samatar and Baingana take up the ecocritical call to reconfigure our relationship with the Earth. They replace an attitude of mastery and conquest with an ethic of friendship, and so map alternative modes of living in the Anthropocene.

This final chapter provides a complete reimagining of the ways in which we conceptualise friendship, expanding the ways in which we view friendship from human, to nonhuman subjects, to the planet itself. In this way, this chapter demonstrates that African women writers and women writers of the African diaspora are at the forefront of ecocriticism and are actively reimagining ways in which we can relate to the Earth in our time of ecological crisis. Further studies need to be done to include other writers in this debate and to more fully conceptualise friendship's role in ecocriticism.

4. Conclusion

This thesis set out to contribute to scholarship concerned with love and intimacy in African women's writing by placing a sustained focus on friendship. What is evident from this study is that African women from disparate regions are writing friendship in intricate and innovative ways. Writers such as Sindiwe Magona and Makhosazana Xaba from South Africa, Monica Arac de Nyeko, Beatrice Lamwaka and Doreen Baingana from Uganda, H W Mukami from Kenya, and Sofia Samatar from the US-Somali diaspora each take up friendship in their short fiction. This thesis offers a detailed analysis of friendship in the work of each of these writers.

When I began this thesis, I imagined that focusing on friendship in these texts would create space to focus on African women's depictions of joy, hope, and love, which are too often sidelined both in academic scholarship and in mainstream discourses. However, what emerged in my reading of these women writers was instead an insistence on friendship's relationship to the violent and painful realities of women's everyday lives. Although friendship does bring multiple moments of joy in these texts, the recurring theme is again and again friendship's capacity as a mode of resistance and solidarity in the wake of violent realities. By this I mean, friendship offers the women who populate the texts selected for this thesis a way in which to resist, survive, and sometimes thrive in real and imagined realities that are characterized by long histories of racism, sexism, homophobia, and ecological disaster, such as Apartheid South Africa, postcolonial Kenya, and Uganda, and speculative elsewheres.

In this way, this thesis offers a sustained consideration of friendship and its potentialities and limitations in the wake of broad histories of African colonization, independence, globalization, migration, and urbanism. Considering the specific histories of the regions from which the women I study here write (South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, and the United States), I have demonstrated how friendship allows the women in their texts to navigate their respective modernities. I suggest, then, that we turn to African women writers for

emerging and complex theorizations of friendship to broaden and nuance our understandings of these writers' contributions to theories, especially about love.

By drawing on African literary scholars such as Lynda Gichanda Spencer and Fiona Moolla, the introduction to this thesis demonstrated that African women writers' contributions to theories concerning love have not yet been recognized. Given the central role love plays in our social, cultural, and political worlds, this is a gap that demands attention. At the same time, I explored how friendship is an often-marginalised topic even in emerging scholarship that considers love and intimacy in African women's writing. What this thesis offers, then, is a way of reading friendship that situates the selected texts in a broader intellectual history of friendship as well as in the context of African women's writing and African feminisms.

Chapter One focused on texts by two prominent South African women writers, Sindiwe Magona and Makhosazana Xaba. By placing *Magona's Living, Loving, and Lying Awake at Night* (1991) and Xaba's *Running and Other Stories* (2013) alongside one another, I demonstrated that South African women writers offer a sustained interrogation of friendship that warrants attention. For Magona and Xaba, friendships offer women life-giving relationships in contexts of violence and inequality. Furthermore, friendships, such as epistemic friendships, can inform political consciousness and create change. Further studies might take up this area of enquiry and explore how other South African women writers respond to the question of friendship, given South Africa's precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial histories. Other studies might also make interracial friendships an area of focus. I demonstrated in this study that Magona and Xaba, though writing at different moments in South Africa's history (the transition to democracy and post-apartheid, respectively), both interrogate friendship's potential for solidarity and resistance in the face of raced gender-based violence. By drawing on scholars such as Pumla Dineo Gqola, Barbara Boswell, Gabeba Baderoon, Meg

Samuelson, and Jessica Murray, I critically considered friendship as a possibility for solidarity in the face of the extreme gender-based violence that characterises South Africa today.

While Chapter Two continued the focus on gender, it also added sexuality as another, overlapping layer of analysis. In this chapter, I offered a reading of selected fiction from *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013) and *Queer Africa 2: New Stories* (2017), both edited by Makhosazana Xaba and Karin Martin. By placing the focus on these anthologies, I showed how the anthologies themselves, with their multiple authors placed alongside each other, invite discussion and forge networks between writers working in otherwise disparate regions. By turning to the work of Monica Arac de Nyeko ("Jambula Tree"), and Beatrice Lamwaka ("Chief of the Home") from Uganda, and H W Mukami ("Pub 360") from Kenya, I demonstrated that these authors are using friendship to depict the complexity of queer life on the continent. Furthermore, friendships offer alternative modes of being seen and understood in the face of homophobic societies. As much of the work on queer African fiction necessarily focuses on romantic and sexual relations, this chapter's strength lies in its focus on other modes of queer companionship, such as friendship. Further studies might take up these questions by asking how African women writers depict queer friendship in other regions and time periods.

Chapter Three extends the work of Chapters One and Two by expanding the very definition of friendship. In this chapter, I draw on Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, and Bryan Bannon's enlarged understanding of friendship to consider friendships between human and non-human others. I read Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* (2005) and Sofia Samatar's *Tender: Stories* (2017) in the context of ecocriticism and diaspora studies to consider the ways in which African women writers are reimagining human relationships with the Earth. I demonstrate that Baingana and Samatar both envision friendship as another way of relating to the Earth in the context of slow violence, contemporary ecological disasters, and emergent planetary consciousness. One of the strengths of this chapter is its expansion of the

genres I read in this thesis. While most authors write in the realist mode, Samatar's use of speculative fiction allows her to develop her vision of friendship between human characters and the Earth most fully. Future studies could continue reading African women's writing through the lens of African ecocriticism. With its focus on rethinking human relations with the Earth, Ecocriticism offers exciting and innovative ways to analyse love and friendship in African women's writing. The intersections of ecocriticism and friendship offer ways to rethink our relationship to non-human subjects.

Read alongside each other, the three core chapters of this thesis offer a nuanced understanding of some of the ways in which contemporary African women writers are deploying friendship in their fiction. With each chapter's focus on gender, sexuality, and the environment, it is evident that friendship is a central concern in African women's writing. By depicting friendship, African women writers are able to explore alternative modes of being human, of living on this Earth, and of loving one another in the face of systemic violence, inequality, and global crises.

This thesis focused on short fiction due to the form's capacity for representing marginalised themes and subjectivities. Drawing on the work of Helon Habila, Corrine Sandwith, Maggie Awadalla, Paul March-Russel, and others, I demonstrated that the short story has often been understood as a home for writing and writers who fall outside dominant groups and discourses, such as women and queer writers. Given a history of providing space to African women writers, I argued that the form is an ideal space from which to begin an analysis of friendship in African women's writing. However, future studies might consider friendship in other literary forms. How is friendship represented in African women's novels, for example? Does the longer form offer women writers the same opportunity to consider friendship, or not? Such questions would enrich the study and scope of friendship in African women's literature.

One of the main limitations that this thesis has is its scope. Although the thesis does offer a broad contextualization of African women's writing, the study is necessarily limited to a few authors working from several regions. Therefore, it is difficult to draw broad conclusions about the role of friendship in African women's writing. Rather, each chapter provides a detailed reading of friendship in specific texts and contexts while focusing on certain themes. While such an approach has its strengths in that it can offer a considered and detailed analysis of friendship in a specific work, it is limited in that much more work needs to be done to achieve an overview of friendship as it occurs in African women's writing. Future studies might take up the questions I ask in this thesis in relation to women's writing from other regions. Women writing from North and West Africa, for example, are not represented here. More work is needed to fill these gaps. The second limitation is in relation to language. In this thesis, I study Anglophone texts. How is friendship represented in texts written in the myriad of other languages on the continent? Future studies will need to take up this question in order to give friendship full attention. Third, this study is limited to contemporary authors. Therefore, it is not possible to draw broader chronological and historical conclusions about African women's writing on friendship. How did African women write about friendship in the colonial period, for example? How did they write and talk about friendship in the precolonial period? Lastly, this thesis posits that gender, sexuality, and the environment are important themes that intersect with friendship in African women's writing. Subsequent studies might consider how friendship intersects with other concerns, such as the depiction of masculinity, for example.

Finally, I wrote parts of this thesis during the COVID-19 global pandemic that forced millions of people into varying degrees of isolation. As writers, researchers, and the public were reflecting on what it means to be isolated from society in the ways that the pandemic demanded of us, often cut off physically for long periods of time from family, co-workers, and friends, I was reflecting on what the pandemic meant for a thesis on friendship. In an interview

with Sarah Jaffe, Tithi Bhattacharya comments on the ways in which the pandemic highlighted the importance of social reproduction, or the "activities and institutions that are required for making life, maintaining life, and generationally replacing life" (Jaffe). As Bhattacharya emphasises, these activities and institutions, such as hospitals, schools, sanitation, and food services, have long been grossly undervalued by capitalist systems. In the pandemic, it is these services that have been recognised as essential. What Bhattacharya also highlights is that often it is not the state that organises essential services for communities struck by the pandemic, but individuals. As such, she calls for social solidarity:

> We don't need social isolation. We need physical isolation and social solidarity. We cannot ignore the elderly neighbor who is living across my street; it may not be safe for them to go to the grocery store. We cannot ignore our coworker who comes to work with way too much makeup around their eyes and says that they've hit their head on a door. We need to check in on them regularly. (Jaffe)

In Bhattacharya's call for "physical isolation and social solidarity," in the acts of "solidarity, and love and care" that she describes, I read multiple acts of friendship that literally sustained life in the COVID-19 pandemic. Friendship's effect on our physical and mental health is made obvious by a pandemic. It is the difference between an elderly person receiving food or not. The difference between a child able to cope with their schoolwork, or not. In my own case, as a single mother in a new town, it was friends who ensured I had food and water when I could not queue in long supermarket lines with my young child. In other words, the pandemic strengthened my conviction that friendships are a vital part of our lives. I hope I have done justice to them here.

References

Abdoulaye, Kane, et al. *African Migrations: Patterns and Perspectives*. Indiana University Press, 2013.

Aboh, Romanus. "Indigenous Eco-consciousness in Recent Nigerian Poetry: The Example of Joe Ushie." *Literature, Critique, and Empire Today* (2024): 426-440.

Abrahams, Yvette. "Was Eva Raped? An Exercise in Speculative History." *Kronos: Southern African Histories* (1996): 3-21.

Adda Stories. n.d. 25 01 2024.

Adenekan, Shola. *African Literature in the Digital Age: Class and Sexual Politics in New Writing from Kenya and Nigeria*. African Articulations, 2021.

Adenekan, Shola and Helen Cousins. "African Short Stories and the Online Writing Space." Awadalla, Maggie and Paul March-Russell. *The Postcolonial Short Story: Contemporary Essays*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013. 199-2013.

African Books Collective. 2023. 15 January 2025. <https://www.africanbookscollective.com/publishers/kwani-trust>.

African Books Collective. n.d. 02 11 2025. <https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/queer-africa#:~:text=About%20the%20Editors&text=Karen%20Martin%20is%20a%20fiction,year%20creative%20writing%20MFA%20program.>.

Ahlberg, Sofia. "Women and War in Contemporary Love Stories from Uganda and Nigeria." *Comparative Literature Studies* (2009): 407-424.

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge, 2015.

Aidoo, Ama Ata. "To Be a Woman Writer - an Overview and a Detail." Olaniyan, Tejumola and Ato Quayson. *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007. 513-519.

Akanji, Olajide and Marc Epprecht. "Human Rights Challenge in Africa: Sexual Minority Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights." Nyeck, S.N. and Marc Epprecht. *Sexual Diversity in Africa: Politics, Theory and Citizenship*. McGill Queens University Press, 2013. 19-36.

Akinbola, Bimbola. "African Intimacy and Love with No Pretense: The Erotics of Diaspora in Zina Saro-Wiwa's Eaten by the Heart." *Women's Stuidies Quarterly* (2022): 68-85.

Akingbe, Bibi. "Exploring Ecofeminism, Ecocriticism, Aquapoetics, and Environmental Humanities in Gababa Baderoon's Poetry." *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde* (2024): 90-101.

Ally, Shireen. *From Servants to Workers: South African Domestic Workers and the Democratic State*. London: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Anderson, John. "Conservative Christianity, the Global South and the Battle over Sexual Orientation." *Third World Quarterly* (2011): 1589-1605.

Anderson, Penelope. *Friendship's Shadows : Women's Friendship and the Politics of Betrayal in England, 1640-1705*. Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

—. "The Absent Female Friend: Recent Studies in Early Modern Women's Friendship." *Literature Compass* (2010): 243 - 253.

Andrade, Susan. *The Nation Writ Small: African Fictions and Feminisms, 1958-1988*. Duke University Press, 2011.

Andrews, Grant. "The Emergence of Black queer characters in three post-apartheid novels." *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde* (2019): 1-9.

Arondekar, Anjali and Geeta Patel. "Area Impossible: Notes Toward an Introduction." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2016): 151-171.

Arondekar, Anjali. "Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (2005): 10 - 27.

Awadalla, Maggie and Paul March-Russell. "Introduction: The Short Story and the Postcolonial." Awadalla, Maggie and Paul March-Russell. *The Postcolonial Short Story: Contemporary Essays*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012. 1-14.

Baderoon, Gabeba. ""This is our speech": voice, body and poetic form in recent South African writing." *Social dynamics* (2011): 213-227.

—. "The Ghost in the House: Women, Race and Domesticity in South Africa." *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* (2014): 173-188.

Baingana, Doreen. "A Girl." *Transition* (2020): 2-6.

Baltzly, Dirk and Nick Eliopolous. "The Classical Ideals of Friendship." Caine, Barbara. *Friendship: a history*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2009.

Bannon, Bryan. "Being a Friend to Nature: Environmental Virtues and Ethical Ideals." *Ethics, Policy and Environment* (2017): 44-58.

Barnard, Rita. *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010.

Berlant, Lauren, and Michael Warner. "Sex in Public." *Critical Inquiry* 24.2 (1998): 547-566.

Bernini, Lorenzo. *Queer Theories: An Introduction: From Mario Mieli to the Antisocial Turn*. Taylor and Francis Group, 2020.

Bethlehem, Louise. ""A Primary Need as Strong as Hunger": The Rhetoric of Urgency in South African Literary Culture under Apartheid." *Poetics Today* (2001): 365-389.

Bhagat, Ali. "Forced (Queer) Migration and Everyday Violence: The Geographies of Life, Death and Access in Cape Town." *Geoforum* (2017): 155 - 163.

Bile, Jeffrey. "The Rhetorics of Critical Ecofeminism: Conceptual Connection and Reasoned Response." Vakoch, Douglas A. *Ecofeminism and Rhetoric: Critical Perspectives on Sex, Technology and Discourse*. Berghahn Books, 2011. 1-37.

Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

—. "Tropes of yearning and dissent: the troping of desire in Yvonne Vera and Tsitsi Dangarembga." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (2003): 136.

Boonzaier, Floretta and Maia Zway. "Young Lesbian and Bisexual Women Resisting Discrimination and Negotiating Safety: A Photovoice Study." *African Safety Promotion* (2015): 7-29.

Boswell, Barbara. *"And Wrote My Story Anyway:" Black South African Women's Novels as Feminism*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2020.

—. ""Conjuring Up Her Wholeness": Post-Transitional Black South African Women's Poetry and its Restorative Ethic." *Scrutiny* (2016): 8-26.

—. *And Wrote My Story Anyway: Black South African Women's Novels as Feminism*. Wits University Press, 2020.

Braidotti, Rosi. "Posthuman, All Too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology." *Theory, Culture and Society* (2006): 197-208.

Bray, Alan. *The Friend*. University of Chicago Press, 2003.

—. *The Friend*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Bryce, Jane. ""Half and Half Children": Third-Generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel." *Research in African Literatures* (2008): 49-67.

Burger, Bibi. ""Our respect for water is what you have termed fear": The Ocean in the Poetry of Ronelda S. Kamfer and Koleka Putuma." *Journal of South African Studies* (2020): 23-38.

Butler, Judith. *Antigone's claim: Kinship between Life and Death*. Columbia University Press, 2002.

Bystrom, Kerry and Sarah Nuttall. "Private Lives and Public Cultures in South Africa." *Cultural Studies* (2013): 307-332.

Bystrom, Kerry. *Democracy at Home: Family Fictions and Transitional Culture*. Springer, 2016.

cacedirector. *"Talent is not enough to be a good writer": Anthea Paleo*. 23 March 2017. 10 Feburary 2025. <https://writivism.org/2017/03/23/talent-is-not-enough-to-be-a-good-writer-anthea-paelo/>.

Caine, Barbara. *Friendship: A History*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2009.

Callahan, David. "Closure, Survival and Realism in Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night." Konyana, Siphokazi. *Sindiwe Magona: The First Decade*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004. 83-.

Caminero-Santangelo, Byron and Garth Myers. *Environment at the Margins: Literary and Environmental Studies in Africa*. Ohio University Press, 2011.

Canham, Hugo. "Mapping the Black Queer Geography of Johannesburg's Lesbian Women Through Narrative." *Psychology in Society* (2017): 84-107.

Carbajal, Alberto Fernández. *Compromise and Resistance in Postcolonial Writing: E.M. Forster's Legacy*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Carlse, Janine E. "Black Lesbian Indentities in South Africa." *African Journal of Gender and Religion* (2018): 16-32.

Carnell, Rachel. "It's Not Easy Being GreenL Gender and Friendship in Eliza Haywood's Political Periodicals." *Eighteenth-century studies* (1998): 199-214.

Carroll, Valerie Padilla. "Ecofeminist Dialogues." Vakoch, Douglas A, et al. *Ecofeminism in Dialogue*. Lexington Books, 2017.

Chela, Efemia. "Dancing with Decolonial Praxis: LBQ Women and Non-Binary Peoples Subcultures in Lusaka, Zambia." *Gender & Development* (2023): 557-573.

Chidi, Tsosheletso, Nompumelelo Zondi and Gabi Mkhize. "Comparative Analysis of Black Queer Feminist IsiXhosa and English Poetry." *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* (2024): 81-89.

Chowdhury, Elora and Liz Philipose. *Dissident Friendships: Feminism, Imperialism, and Transnational Solidarity*. University of Illinois Press, 2016.

Cock, Jacklyn. *Maids and Madams: Domestic Workers Under Apartheid*. London: The Woman's Press Limited, 1989.

Cole, Jennifer and Lynn Thomas. *Love in Africa*. The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Cole, Megan. "The Fiction of Amatonormativity: Reactions to Queer Platonic Relashipnships in Eighteenth Century Literature." *Eighteenth-century fiction* (2024): 269-292.

Cole, Timinepre. *We've Been Here: Celebrating the Resilience of Queer Kenyans*. n.d. 16 January 2025. <https://therustintimes.com/2023/12/29/weve-been-here-celebrating-the-resilience-of-queer-kenyans/>.

Cox, Lara. "Decolonial Queer Feminism in Donna Harraway's 'A Cyborg Manifesto' (1985)." *Paragraph* (2018): 317-332.

Crenshaw, Kimberle, Barbara Giovanna Bello and Letizia Mancini. "Talking about intersectionality: Interview with Kimberle Crenshaw." *Sociologia* (2016): 11-21.

Currier, Ashley and Thérèse Migraine-George. " Queer studies/African studies: an (im) possible transaction?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2016): 281-305.

Dai, Yuanfang. "Bridging the Divide in Feminism with Transcultural Feminist Solidarity: Using the Example of Forging Friendship and Solidarity between Chinese and US Women." Chowdhury, Elora Halim and Liz Philipose. *Dissident Friendships: Feminism, Imperialism and Transnational Solidarity*. Oxfordshire: Marston Book Services Ltd, 2016. 71-90.

Darling, Harper-Hugo. *Making Queer History*. n.d. 15 January 2025. <https://www.makingqueerhistory.com/articles/2024/29/binyavanga-wainaina>.

Davies, Carol Boyce. "Private Selves and Public Spaces: Autobiography and the African Woman Writer." *CLA Journal* (1991): 267-289.

Davies, Carol Boyce. *Black Women, Writing and Identity*. Routledge, 1994.

Davies, Carole Boyce. "Some Notes on African Feminism." Olaniyan, Tejumola and Ato Quayson. *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. 561-569.

—. "Writing off Minoring, Marginality and Effacement." *Women's Studies Int. Forum* (1991): 249-263.

Dawood, Q and M Seedat-Khan. "The unforgiving work environment of black African women domestic workers in a post-apartheid South Africa." *Development in Practice* (2023): 168-179.

Daymond, Margaret. "Complementary Oral and Written Conventions: Sindiwe Magona's Autobiography and short story sequence, 'Women at Work'." *Journal of Southern African Studies* (2002): 331-346.

de Nyeko, Monica Arac. "Jambula Tree." Martin, Karen and Makhosazana Xaba. *Queer Africa: new and collected fiction*. Johannesburg: MaThoko's Books, 2013.

De Souza, Ben. "Homosexuality in African Fiction: Characterization in Homophobic Culture, Law and Religion in Selected Short Stories." 2016.

DeCook, Julia. "A [White] Cyborg's Manifesto: the overwhelmingly Western ideology driving technofeminist theory." *Media, Culture and Society* (2021): 1158 - 1167.

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth and George B Handley. *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* . Oxford University Press, 2011.

Denworth, Lydia. *Friendship*. Bloomsbury Sigma, 2020.

Dillard, Cynthia. "To experience joy: musings on endarkened feminisms, friendship and scholarship." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (2019): 112-117.

Doyle, Jennifer. "Between Friends." Haggerty , George E and Molly McGarry. *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Queer Studies*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. 325-340.

Driver, Dorothy. "The Fabulous Fifties: Short Fiction in English." Attwell, David and Derek Attridge. *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

du Preez, Jenny. "'Rediscovering the Erotic as Ordinary' in South African Women's Short Fiction." *Journal of Southern African Studies* (2020): 689-702.

Dunton, Chris. ""Wheyting be Dat?": On the Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature." *Research in African Literatures* (1989): 422-448.

Dunton, Chris and Pius Adesanmi. "Nigeria's Third Generation Writing: Histiography and Preliminary Theoretical Considerations." *English in Africa* (2005).

Dunton, Chris. "Tuning into the Polyphony: The Emergence of LGBTQ+ Writing in Africa." *Research in African Literatures* (2023).

Ekine, Sokari and Hakima Abbas. *Queer African Reader*. Pambazuka Press, 2013.

Ekine, Sokari. "Contesting narratives of queer Africa." Ekine, Sokari and Hakima Abbas. *Queer African Reader*. Pambazuka Press, 2013. 78-91.

Emenyonu, Ernest. "Editorial: 'Once Upon a Time Begins a Story'." *African Literature Today* (2013): 1-7.

Eng, David L. *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Epprecht, Marc. *Heterosexual Africa?: The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of Aids*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008.

Epprecht, Marc. "The Making of "African Sexuality": Early Sources, Current Debates." Nyeck, S.N. and Marc Epprecht. *Sexual Diversity in Africa: Politics, Theory and Citizenship*. McGill Queens University Press, 2013. 54-.

Eze, Chielozona. *Ethics and Human Rights in Anglophone African Women's Literature: Feminist Empathy*. Springer International Publishing, 2016.

Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women From the Renaissance to the Present*. London: Women's Press, 1985.

Fallon, Helen. "In the Shadow of Idi Amin." February 2006. 15 February 2023.

Fasselt, Rebecca, Corinne Sandwith and Khulukazi Soldati-Kahimbaara. "The Short Story in South Africa post-2000: Critical Reflections on a Genre in Transition." *The Journal of Commowealth Literature* (2020): 4-21.

Ferguson, Ann and Margaret Toye. "Feminist Love Studies: Editors Introduction." *Hypatia* (2017): 5-18.

Fetters, Cassandra. "The Continual Search for Sisterhood: Narcissism, Projection and Intersubjective Disruptions in Toni Morrisson's Sula and Feminist Communities." *Meridians* (2016).

Foucault, Michel. "Friendship as a Way of Life." Rabinow, Paul and Michel Foucault. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. The New Press, 1994. 135-156.

Frazier, DuEwa M. *Introduction to Afrofuturism: A MixTape in Black Literature and Arts*. Routledge, 2025.

Freeman, Elizabeth and Tyler Bradway. *Queer Kinship: Race, Sex, Belonging, Form*. Duke University Press, 2022.

Freeman, Elizabeth. "Queer Belongings: Kinship Theory and Queer Theory." Haggerty, George E and Molly McGarry. *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. 295-314.

—. *Queer Kinship: Race, Sex, Belonging, Form*. Duke University Press, 2022.

Frenkel, Ronit and Craig MacKenzie. "Conceptualizing 'Post-Transisional' South African Literature in English." *English Studies in Africa* (2010): 1-10.

Friedman, Marylin. "Feminism and Modern Friendship: Dislocating the Community.” Ethics. 99. 2 (1989): 275-290." *Ethics* (1989): 257-290.

Fulton, Lorie Watkins. ""A Direction of One's Own": Alienation in "Mrs Dalloway" and "Sula"." *African American Review* (2006): 67-77.

Gathara, Patrick. "How an LGBTQ Court Ruling Sent Kenya into a Moral Panic." *Aljazeera* 15 March 2023. Online article.

Gaylard, Rob. "R.R.R. Dhlomo and the Early Black South African Short Story in English." *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* (2005): 52-69.

Ghandi, Leela. *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*. Duke University Press, 2006.

Ghosal, Anindita and Aritra Ghosal. "Imagi(in)ing Afrofuturistic Assemblages: Nurturing Multispecies Entanglement in Nnedi Okorafor's Graphic Narrative LaGuardia." Fraizer, DuEwa M. *Introduction to Afrofuturism: A Mixtape in Black Literature and Arts*. Routledge, 2025. 177.

Gikandi, Simon. "Introduction: East African Literature from 1945 to the Present." Gikandi, Simon and Evan Mwangi. *The Columbia Guide to East African Literature in English Since 1945*. Columbia University Press, 2007. 1-22.

Gopinath, Gayatri. *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Gowing, Laura. Hunter, Michael, Miri Rubin and Laura Gowing. *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe 1300-1800*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005. 131-149.

Gqola, Pumla Dineo. "Forced to think: Innovation and women's traditions in Sindiwe Magona's wor(l)ds." Koyana, Siphokazi. *Sindiwe Magona: The First Decade*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004. 51-66.

—. "How the 'cult of femininity' and violent masculinities support endemic gender based violence in contemporary South Africa." *African identities* (2007): 111-124.

—. "In Search of Female s/Staffriders: Authority, Gender, Audience, 1978-1982." *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* (2001): 31-41.

—. "The Difficult Task of Normalizing Freedom: Spectacular Masculinities, Ndebele's Literary/Cultural Commentary and Post-Apartheid Life." *English in Africa* (2009): 61-76.

Gqola, Pumla Dineo. "Through Zanele Muholi's Eyes: Re/imagining Ways of Seeing Black Lesbians." Tamale, Sylvia. *African Sexualities: A Reader*. Pambazuka Press, 2011. 622-629.

—. *What is slavery to me?: postcolonial slave memory in post-apartheid South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001.

—. "Whirling Worlds: Women's poetry, feminist imagination and contemporary South African publics." *Scrutiny2* (2011): 5-11.

Graham, Lucy Valerie. *State of peril: Race and rape in South African literature*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Green, Lesley. *Rock, Water, Life: Ecology and Humanities for a Decolonial South Africa*. Duke University Press, 2020.

Green-Simms, Lindsey. "The Emergent Queer: Homosexuality and Nigerian Fiction in the 21st Century." *Research in African Literatures* (2016): 139-161.

Guarro, Adriana Romero. "Narrative Friendships in Elisabetta Rasy's Posillipo and Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels." *Italica* (2019): 257-280.

Gumbs, Alexsis. *Heat is Not a Metaphor*. 16 August 2023. 12 March 2025. <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a44819303/climate-crisis-maui/>.

Habila, Helon. "Introduction." Habila, Helon. *The Granta Book of the African Short Story*. Granta Books, 2011. vii - xv.

Halberstam, Jack. "Forgetting Family: Queer Alternatives to Oedipal Relations." Haggerty , George E and Molly McGarry. *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. 315-324.

Hall, Leila, Ronit Frenkel and Andy Carolin. "Intersectional (In)visibility in the 21st Century Queer-Themed South African Short Story." *Research in African Literatures* (2024): np.

Hallemeier, Catherine. "Humanitarianism and the Humanity of Readers in FEMRITE's True Life Stories ." *English Studies in Africa* (2014): 57-68.

Haslett, Moyra. ""All pent up together": Representations of Friendship in Fictions of Girls' Boarding Schools, 1860-1800." *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2018): 81-99.

Hassim, Shireen. "Violent Modernity: Gender, Race and Bodies in Contemporary South African Politics." *Politikon* (2014): 167-182.

—. *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.

Hoad, Neville. "Afterword: Out of Place, Out of Time." *Research in African Literatures* (2016): 186-191.

Hodes, Rebecca. "The Culture of Illegal Abortion in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* (2016): 79-93.

Hofmeyr, Isabel, Sarah Nuttall and Charne Lavery. "Reading for Water." *Interventions* (2022): 303-322.

Holland-Muter, Susan. "Making place, making home: lesbian queer world-making in Cape Town." *Revista Estudos Feministas* (2019).

hooks, bell. *All About love: New Visions*. New York: Harper, 2000.

Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge, 2010.

Hume, Angela and Gillian Osborne. "Ecopoetics as an Expanded Critical Practice." Hume, Angela and Gillian Osborne. *Ecopoetics: Essays in the Field*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2018. 1-16.

Hutson, Lorna. "The Body of the Friend and the Woman Writer: Katherine Phillips's Absence from Alan Bray's "The Friend" (2003)." *Women's Writing* (2007): 196-214.

IAS statement - Upsurge in anti-gay laws accross Africa threatens the HIV response. n.d. 29 January 2025. <https://www.iasociety.org/ias-statement/upsurge-anti-gay-laws-across-africa-threatens-hiv-response#:~:text=In%20Africa%2C%2033%20of%2055,these%20laws%20in%20recent%20years.>.

Igwe, Leo. "Human Flourishing Beyond Religion: Atheism in Kenya." n.d.

Iheka, Cajetan . *Ecological Violence, Agency and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Imma, Z'étoile . "(Re)visualizing Black lesbian lives, (trans)masculinity, and township space in the documentary work of Zanele Muholi." *Journal of Lesbian Stidues* (2017): 219-241.

Jacques, Derrida. *The Politics of Friendship*. Verso, 1997.

Jaffe, Sarah. *Social Reproduction and the Pandemic, with Tithi Bhattacharya*. 2 April 2020. 2 June 2021.

James, Carolyn and Bill Kent. "Renaissance Friendships: Traditional Truths, New and Dissenting Voices." Caine, Barbara. *Friendship: a history*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2009. 111-164.

Jamison, P.K and Donna Haraway. "No Eden Under Glass: A Discussion with Donna Haraway." *Feminist Teacher* (1992): 10-15.

Jansen, Ena. *Like Family: Domestic Workers in South African History and Literature*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019.

Johnstone, Lyn. "Queer Worldmaking in Wanuri Kahiu's Film Rafiki." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* (2021): 39-50.

Jonet, M. Catherine. "At the Interstices of Diaspora: Queering the Long Story Short in Caribbean Literature by Women." Awadalla, Maggie and Paul March-Russell. *The Postcolonial Short Story: Contemporary Essays*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012. 151-166.

Kahiu, Wanuri. *TED Talk: Fun, Fierce and Fantastical African Art*. 12 September 2017. 12 February 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_avBsX60-s>.

Kahui, Wanuri. *Afrofuturism in Popular Culture at TEDX Nairobi*. 12 September 2012. Video. 09 February 2021.

Kane, Abdoulaye and Todd H Leedy. "African Patterns of Migration in a Global Era: New Perspectives." Kane, Abdoulaye, et al. *African Migrations: Patterns and Perspectives*. Indiana University Press, 2013. 1-16.

Kaoma, Kaelyn. ""Friend and Lover": The Erotics of Female Friendship in Christianse's Unconfessed and Ntshingila's Shameless." *Research in African Literatures* (2016): 66-83.

Kenny, Bridget. "Affect and the State: precarious workers, the law and the promise of frinedship." Soske, Jon and Shannon Walsh. *Ties that Bind: Race and the politics of friendship in South Africa*. NYU Press, 2016. 166-191.

Kiguli, Susan Nalugwa. "Voices of Ugandan Women Writers: Positioning FEMRITE since 2006." Schmidt-Haberkamp, Barbara, Marion Gymnich and Klaus P Schneider. *Representing Poverty and Precarity in a Postcolonial World*. BRILL, 2022. 137-155.

Kiguwa, Peace. "Love as Method: Tracing the Contours of Love in Black and African Feminist Imaginations of Liberation." *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* (2023): 1-13.

—. "Phantom Love." *Women's Studies Quarterly* (2022): 34-48.

Knittelfelder, Elisabeth. "Re-enchanted Bodies of Water: Towards a Decolonial Tidalectics in Recent African Fiction and Performance." *Scrutiny2* (2025): 1-18.

Koekemoer, Christopher. "Queer African Literary Communities: The Anthology as Political Genre." *Literator* (2024): 1-7.

Konyana, Siphokazi and Rosemary Gray. "Growing up with Maya Angelou and Sindiwe Magona: a comparison." *English in Africa* (2002): 85-98.

Kruger, Marie. *Women's Literature in Kenya and Uganda: The Trouble with Modernity*. Springer, 2011.

Kulbaga, Theresa A. "Sari Suasion: Magrant Economies of Care in Shailja Patel's Migritude." *Prose Studies* (2016): 74-92.

Laing, Olivia. *The Lonely City*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 2016.

Lamwaka, Beatrice. "Chief of the Home." Martin, Karen and Makhosazana Xaba. *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction*. MaThoko's Books, 2013. 159-163.

Lavender III, Isiah and Lisa Yaszek. *Literary Afrofuturism in the Twenty-First Century*. The Ohio State University Press, 2020.

Lee, Alison. "Feminine Identity and Female Friendships in the 'Neapolitan' Novels of Elana Ferrante." *British journal of psychotherapy* (2016): 491-501.

Leetsch, Jennifer. *Love and Space in Contemporary African Diasporic Women's Writing: Making Love, Making Worlds*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

—. "Playing with Saris: Material and Affective Unfoldings of Violence and Resistance in Shailja Patel's Migritude." *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (2021): 691-711.

Lewis, Desiree. "Representing African Sexualities." Tamale, Sylvia. *African Sexualities: A Reader*. Fahamu/Pambazuka, 2011.

Livermon, Xavier. "Soweto nights: making black queer space in post-apartheid South Africa." *Gender, Place & Culture* (2014): 508 - 525.

Lochrie, Karma and Usha Vishnuvajjala. *Women's Friendship in Medieval Literature*. The Ohio State University, 2022.

Loflin, Christine. ""White Women Can Learn Not to Call Us Girl?" Linked Short Stories by a New South African Writer, Sindiwe Magona." *Journal of Modern Literature* (1996): 109-114.

Lombardi, Bernie. ""Watering the Imagination": Childhood and the Spaces of African Queerness." *College Literature* (2018): 687-694.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Lugones, Maria. "Sisterhood and Friendship as Feminist Models." Weiss, Penny and Marilyn Friedman,. *Feminism and Community*. Templeton University Press, 1995.

Macharia, Keguro. "Love." *Critical Ethnic Studies* (2015).

—. "On Being Area Studied: A Litany of Complaint." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2015): 140-146.

Macheso, Wesley Paul. "Fiction as Prothesis: Reading the Contemporary African Queer Short Story." *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde* (2021): 8-17.

Magadla, Siphokazi. *Guerillas and Combative Mothers: Women and the Armed Struggle in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2023.

Magona, Sindiwe. *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1991.

—. *Mother to Mother*. First Beacon Press, 1999.

Magona, Sindiwe. "Writing South Africa's Yawning Void." Magona, Sindiwe and Renee Schatteman. *I Write the Yawning Void: Selected Essays of Sindiwe Magona*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023. 1-16.

Mahala, Siphiwo. *Can Themba: The Making and Breaking of the Intellectual Ttsotsi*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2022.

Marcus, Shannon. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton University Press, 2007.

Marler, Isabel, Daniela Marin Platero and Felogene Anumo. "Reclaiming Culture, Resisting Co-optation: Young Feminists Confronting the Rising Right." *Gender and Development* (2018): 515-532.

Martin, Karen and Makhosazana Xaba. *Queer Africa: new and collected fiction*. Johannesburg: MaThoko's Books, 2013.

Mashigo, Mohale. *Intruders*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2018.

Matabeni, Zethu. "Death and the Modern Black Lesbian." Ballard, Clare, et al. *New South African Review 4: A Fragile Democracy - Twenty Years On*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2014. 182-196.

Matebeni, Zethu and Jabu Pereira. *Recliaming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities*. Modjaji Books, 2014.

Matebeni, Zethu. "Deconstructing Violence Towards Black Lesbians in South Africa." Ekine, Sokari and Hakima Abbas. *Queer African Reader*. Pambazuka Press, 2013. 343-353.

McElaney-Johnson, Ann. "Epistolary Friendship: "la prise de parole" in Mariama Ba's "Une Si Longue Lettre"." *Research in African Literatures* (1999): 110-121.

McGiffin, Emily. *Of Land, Bones, and Money: Towards a South African Ecopoetics* . University of Virgina Press, 2019.

Mendelson, Sarah. *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720*. Oxford University Press, 1998.

Mews, Constant and Neville Chiavaroli. "Cicero on Friendship." Caine, Barbara. *Friendship: a history*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2009. 65.

Minogue, Sally and Andrew Palmer. "Confronting the abject: Women and dead babies in modern English Fiction." *Journal of Modern Literature* (2006): 103 - 125.

Mirza, Maryam. *Intimate Class Acts: Friendship and Desire in Indian and Pakistani Women's Fiction*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Moji, Polo. "Un/Known bodies: dissecting Sara Baartman in theFrancophone autobiography,53cm(Bessora, 1999)." *Journal of the African Literature Association* (2017): 183-194.

Moolla, Fiona. "Flirtations with Eros from a Black-Eyed Squint: Romantic Love in the Oeuvre of Ama Ata Aidoo." *Indiana University Press* (2024): 91-112.

Moolla, Fiona, et al. *Natures of Africa: Ecocriticism and Animal Studies in Contemporary Cultural Forms*. Wits University Press, 2016.

Moraga, Cherrie and Mirtha Quintanales. "Interview: Loving in the War Years An Interview with Cherrie Moraga." *Off Our Backs* (1985): 12-13.

Morris, Susana. ""Sisters seperated for much too long": Women's Friendship and Power in Toni Morrison's "Recitatif"." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* (2013): 159-180.

Moyer, Eileen and Emmy Igonya. "Queering the Evidence: remaking homosexuality and HIV risk to "end AIDS" in Kenya." *Global Public Health* (2018): 1007-1019.

Mtenje, Asante Lucy. ""Modest Desires and Defiant Gestures": Representing Female Sexualities in Doreen Baingana's Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe and Violet Burungi's Cassandra." *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* (2017): 26-36.

Muchiri, Ng'ang'a. "Depiction of Kenyan Lands and Landscapes by Four Women Writers." Moradewun, Adejunmobi and Carli Coetzee. *Routledge Handbook of African Literature*. Taylor and Francis Group, 2019. 244-257.

Muchiri, Jennifer. "Contesting Public Discourses on Sexuality in Kenya: A Reading of Kevin Mwachiro's Invisible." *Agenda* (2015): 171-176.

Mujugira, Andrew, et al. "Uganda's Anti Homosexuality Act Undermines Public Health." *Journal of the International Aids Society* (2024): 1-2.

Mukami, H W. "Pub 360." Xaba, Makhosazana and Karen Martin. *Queer Africa 2: New Stories*. MaThoko's Books, 2017. 237-243.

Müller, Michael Brian. "The (Un)promised Land: Queer Identity and South Africa's Post-Apartheid Urban Landscape." *Gender, Place and Culture* (2019): 1609 - 1631.

Munro, Brenna M. *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Munro, Brenna. "Pleasure in Queer African Studies: Screenshots of the Present." *College Literature* (2018): 659-666.

—. "States of Emergence: Writing African Female Same-Sexuality." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* (2017): 186-203.

Murray, Jessica. ""And They Never Spoke to Each Other of It": Contemporary Southern African Representations of Silence, Shame and Gender Violence." *English Acadamy Review* (2017): 23-35.

Murray, Jessica. "Human Rights in Spaces of Violence: Explorating the intersections of gender, violence and lesbian sexuality in selected African fiction by women." Nkealah, Naomi and Obioma Nnaemeka. *Gendered Violence and Human Rights in Black Literature and Film*. New York: Routledge, 2021. 93-108.

—. "Violence and the Gendered Shaming of Female Bodies and Women's Sexuality: A Feminist Literary Analysis of Selected Fiction by South African Women Writers." *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* (2019): 2-10.

Murray, Sally Ann. "Gender, Disruption and Reconciliation in the Ugandan Short Fiction of Beatrice Lamwaka." Nkealah, Naomi and Obioma Nnaemeka. *Gendered Violence and Human Rights in Black World Literature and Film*. Routledge, 2021. 109 - 126.

—. "Queerying Examples of Contemporary South African Short Fiction." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (2020): 77-95.

Mwangi, Evan. "Queer Agency in Kenya’s Digital Media Authors." *African Studies Review* (2014): 93-113.

Mwangi, Macharia. "Nexus/Busara and the Rise of Modern Kenyan Literature." *Social Dynamics* (2021): 228-242.

Myers, Sylvia Harcstark. *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*. Oxford University Press, 1990.

Nabutanyi, Edgar . "Ugandan Queer Lives Matter: Humanizing Peacebuilding for the Ugandan Gay Community Through Queer Fiction." 30 June 2022. *Kujenga Amani.* 11 February 2025.

Nabutanyi, Edgar. "Contestations Through Same-sex Desire in Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's Kintu." Adejunmobi, Moradewun and Carli Coetzee. *Routledge Handbook of African Literature*. Taylor and Francis Group, 2019. 369-382.

—. "The Paradox of Same-Sex Representations: The Prescence/Absence of Gays in Ugandan Short Stories." *Unisa Press* (2017): 73-87.

Namaste, Ki. "Genderbashing: Sexuality, Gender and Regulation of Public Space." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (1996): 221-40.

Nandi, Miriam. "The Opacity of the World: Zadie Smith's Swing Time." *Contemporary Women's Writing* (2023): 76-94.

Nash, Jennifer. "Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics and Post-Intersectionality ." *Meridians* (2011): 1-24.

Ncube, Gibson. "Renegotiating the Marginality of the Maghreb in Queer African Studies." *College Literature* (2018): 623-631.

Ndebele, Njabulo. "The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* (1986): 143-157.

Nedaee, Naeem and Ali Salami. "Toward an Affective Problematics: A Deleuze-Guattarian Reading of Morality and Friendship in Toni Morrison's "Sula"." *Atlantis* (2017).

Newell, Stephanie. *West African literatures: Ways of reading*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Nfah-Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi. *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality and Difference*. Indiana University Press, 1997.

Nguyen, Nicole A, et al. "Epistemic Friendships: Collective Knowledge Making through Transnational Feminist Praxis." Chowdhury, Elora and Liz Philipose. *Dissident Friendships: Feminism, Imperialism and Transnational Solidarity*. University of Illinois Press, 2016. 18-42.

Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.

Norridge, Zoe. *Perceiving Pain in African Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Ntshongwana, Phakama, et al. "Lone Motherhood in South Africa: Some Methodological Challenges and Policy Imperatives." *South African Review of Sociology* (2016): 80-99.

Nyanzi, Stella. "Balancing an Unequal Partnership for Studying Ugandan Queer Refugees' Appropriation of Bible Stories." *African Journal of Gender and Religion* (2022): 68-78.

—. "Dismantling Reified African Culture Through Localised Homosexualities in Uganda." *Culture, Health and Sexuality* (2013): 952-967.

Nyanzi, Stella. "Queering Queer Africa." Matebeni, Zethu. *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities*. Modjaji Books, 2014.

Nyeck, S.N. *Routledge Handbook of Queer African Studies*. Routledge, 2020.

Ogundipe-Leslie, Molora. "Stiwanism: Feminism in an African Context." Olaniyan, Tejumola and Ato Quayson. *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. 542-550.

Okall, Dancun O, et al. "Men who have sex with men in Kisumu, Kenya: Comfort in accessing health services and willingness to participate in HIV prevention studies." *Journal of Homosexuality* (2014): 1712-1726.

Okpewho, Isidore and Nkiru Nzegwu. *New African Diaspora: The New African Immigrant Experience*. Indiana University Press, 2009.

Oldfield, Elizabeth. *Transgressing Boundaries: Gender, Identity, Culture and the 'Other' in Postcolonial Women's Narratives in East Africa*. BRILL, 2013.

Oliphant, Andries Walter. "Fictions of Anticipation: Perspectives on Some Recent South African Short Stories in English." *World Literature Today* (1996): 59-62.

Ombagi, Eddie. ""Stories we tell": Queer Narratives in Kenya." *Social Dynamics* (2019): 410-424.

—. "Nairobi is a Shot of Whiskey: Queer (Ob)scence in the city." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* (2019): 106-119.

Osinubi, Taiwo Adetunji. "Queer Prolepsis and the Sexual Commons: An Introduction." *Research in African Literatures* (2016): VII-XXI.

Pavlov, Russel-West. *Eastern African Literatures: Towards and Aesthetics of Proximity*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Pinto, Samantha. *Difficult Diasporas: The Transnational Feminist Aesthetic of the Black Atlantic*. New York University Press, 2013.

Posel, Deborah. "'Getting the Nation Talking About Sex': Reflections on the Discursive Constitution of Sexuality in South Africa since 1994." *Agenda* (2004): 53-63.

Pucherova, Dobrota. ""A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last": Notes on the Caine Prize." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (2011): 13-25.

—. *Feminism and Modernity in Anglophone African Women's Writing: A 21st Century Global Context*. Routledge, 2022.

Rao, Rahul. *Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Reid, Graeme and Teresa Dirsuweit. "Understanding Systemic Violence: Homophobic Attacks in Johannesburg and its Surrounds." *Urban Forum* (2002): 99-126.

Reid, Graeme. "Fragments from the archives II." Hoad, Neville, Karen Martin and Graeme Reid. *Sex and Politics in South Africa*. Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005. 174-177.

Roseneil, Sasha. "Foregrounding Friendship: Feminist Pasts, Feminist Futures." Davis, Kathy, Judith Lorber and Mary Evans. *Handbook of Gender and Women's Studies*. London: Sage Publications, 2006. 322-341.

Roy, Namrata Dey. "Story of a Mother: a Biopolitical Reading of Sindiwe Magona's Mother to Mother." *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* (2021): 162 - 176.

Sadgrove, Joanna, et al. "Constructing the Boundaries of Anglican Orthodoxy: An Analysis of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON)." *Religion* (2010): 193-206.

Samatar, Sofia. *Tender*. 2017.

Samuelson, Meg. *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women? Stories of the South African Transition*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007.

—. *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women? Stories of the South African Transition*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007.

Samuelson, Meg. "Writing Women." Attwell, David and Derek Attridge. *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 757-778.

Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Sandwith, Corinne, Rebecca Fasselt and Khulukazi Soldati-Kahimbaara. "The Short Story in South Africa: New Trends and Perspectives." Fasselt, Rebecca and Corinne Sandwith. *The Short Story in South Africa: Contemporary Trends and Perpectives*. Oxon: Routledge, 2022. 1-27.

Schatteman, Renee . "Foreword." Magona, Sindiwe and Renee Schatteman. *I Write the Yawning Void: Selected Essays of Sindiwe Magona*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023. xi - xxiv.

Schweitzer, Ivy. "Making Equals: Classical Philia and Women's Friendship." *Feminist Studies* (2016).

Sehulster, Patricia. "So Long a Letter: Finding Self and Independance in Africa." *The Western Journal of Black Studies* (2004): 365-371.

Selvick, Stephanie. "Positive Bleeding: Violence and Desire in Works by Mlu Zondi, Zanele Muholi, and Makhosazana Xaba." *Safund* (2015).

Sheik, Ayub. "Sumptuos Lives: Emancipatory narratives in selected stories from Queer Africa (2013) ." *Agenda* (2015): 164-170.

Shober, Dianne. *Sindiwe Magona: Climbing Higher*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2013.

Siundu, Godwin. "Beyond Auto/Biography: Power, Politics and Gender in Kenyan Asian Women's Writing." *Research in African Literatures* (2011): 117-131.

Soske, Jon and Shannon Walsh. "Thinking About Race and Friendship in South Africa." Soske, Jon and Shannon Walsh. *Ties that Bind: Race and the Politics of Friendship in South Africa*. Wits University Press, 2016. 3-30.

Soske, Jon and Shannon Walsh. *Ties that Bind: Race and the politics of friendship in South Africa.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2011.

Spencer, Lynda. "“Phew! The life of a woman”: Examining the politics of love, intimacy and marriage in Goretti Kyomuhendo’s Whispers from Vera." 2024. 1-22. Unpublished article.

Spencer, Lynda Gichanda. "'Abagyenda bareeba. Those who Travel, See": Home, Migration, and the Maternal Bond in Doreen Baingana's Tropical Fish." *African Studies* (2016): 189-201.

—. "'In defence of chick-lit': refashioning feminine subjectivities in Ugandan and South African contemporary women's writing." *Feminist theory* (2019): 155-169.

—. "The House of Mothers: Constructing alternative forms of mothering in Kagiso Molope's The Mending Season." *English Academy Review* (2013): 52-64.

—. "Visible Wars and Invisible Women: Interrogating Women's Roles During Wartime in Goretti Kyomuhendo's Waiting: A Novel of Uganda at War." *English in Africa* (2015): 109-128.

—. *Writing Women in Uganda and South Africa: Emerging Writers from Post-Repressive Regimes*. Stellenbosch University, 2014. PhD dissertation.

—. "Young, black and female in post-apartheid South Africa." *Scrutiny2 Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa* (2009): 66-78.

Spencer, Lynda Gichanda, Dina Ligaga and Grace A Musila. "Gender and Popular Imaginaries in Africa." *Agenda* (2018): 3-9.

Stahl, Neta. "The Female Best - Friend Novel: Narration and Reconsideration of the Political Act." *Comparative Literature and Culture* (2024): 1-15.

Stevens, Marion and Makhosazana Xaba. "The Intimacy of Held Solidarity: A Joint Memoir of Activism." *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* (2024): 1-9.

Stobie, Cheryl. "Postcolonial Pomosexuality: Queer/Alternative Fiction After Disgrace." *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* (2009): 320-341.

—. "Retailoring Can Themba's "The Suit": Queer Temporalities in Two Stories by Makhosazana Xaba ." *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* (2017): 79-88.

Strand, Cecelia. "Kill Bill! Ugandan Human Rights Organizations' Attempts to Influence the Media's Coverage of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill." *Culture, Health and Sexuality* (2011): 917-931.

Tamale, Sylvia. "Researching and Theorising Sexualities in Africa." Tamale, Sylvia. *African Sexualities: A Reader*. Pambazuka Press, 2011. 11-36.

Tamale, Sylvia. "Researching and Theorising Sexualities in Africa." *African Sexualities: A Reader*. Dakar: Pambazuka Press, 2011. 11-36.

Taylor, Fiona. ""Master of the Unsayable": Elena Ferrante's Representation of the Complexities of Female Friendship as a Form of "Truth-Telling"." *English Academy Review* (2023): 97-108.

Taylor, Judith. "Beyond "Obligatory Camaraderie" Girls' Friendship in Zadie Smith's NW and Jillian and Mariko Tamaki's Skim." *Feminist Studies* (2016): 445-468.

The Poetry Archive. n.d. 31 10 2024.

Themba, Can. *The Will To Die*. London: Heinemann, 1972.

"Uganda's President Signs Repressive Anti-LGBT Law." n.d. *Human Rights Watch.* 08 02 2024.

Uwakweh, Pauline Ada. "Exploring African Women and the War Experience - A Critical Update." Uwakweh, Pauline Ada. *African Women Under Fire: Literary Discourses in War and Conflict*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017. 3-22.

—. *Women Writers of the New African Diaspora: Transnational Negotioations and Female Agency*. Routledge, 2023.

van Klinken, Adriaan and Kwame E Otu. "African Studies Keywords: Queer." *African Studies Review* (2023).

van Klinken, Adriaan. "Gay Rights, the Devil, and End Times: Public Religion and the Enchantment of the Homosexuality Debate in Zambia." *Religion* (2013): 519-540.

Vital, Anthony. "Toward an African Ecocriticism: Postcolonialism, Ecology and Life and Times of Michael K." *Research in African Literatures* (2008): 87-106.

Wainaina, Binyavanga. "How to Write about Africa." Wainaina, Binyavanga and Achal Prabhala. *How to Write about Africa*. Penguin Random House, 2024. 334-338.

Wanjala, Alex. "Orality in Rebeka Njau's The Sacred Seed." *The Global South* (2011): 93-106.

Wekesa, Seth Muchuma. *A Constitutional Approach to the Decriminalization of Homosexuality in Africa: A Comparison of Kenya, South Africa and Uganda*. University of Pretoria, 2016. PhD Thesis.

Wenzel, Jennifer. *The Disposition of Nature: Environmental Crisis and World Literature*. Fordham University Press, 2020.

Weston, Kath. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. Columbia University Press, 1997.

Wilentz, Gay. "The Politics of Exile: Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy." *Studies in 20th Century Literature* (1991): 159-173.

Winter, Jerome. "Global Afrofuturist Ecologies." Lavender III, Isiah and Lisa Yaszek. *Literary Afrofuturism in the Twenty-First Century*. The Ohio State University Press, 2020. 189-202.

Womack, Ytasha. *Afrofuturism: The world of black sci-fi and fantasy culture*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013.

Wood, Molara. "Interview with Monica Arac de Nyeko." n.d. *African Writing Online.* 03 02 2024.

Xaba, Makhosazana. *The Art of Waiting for Tales: Found Poetry from Grace - a Novel*. Lukhanyo Publishers, 2022.

Xaba, Makhosazana and Jenny Bozena du Preez. "Tongues of their mothers: the language of writing ." *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* (2017): 136-145.

Xaba, Makhosazana and Karen Martin. *Queer Africa 2: New Stories*. African Books Collective, 2017.

Xaba, Makhosazana. *Like the Untouchable Wind: An Anthology of Poems*. MaThoko's Books, 2016.

Xaba, Makhosazana. *Our Words, Our Worlds: Writing on Black South African Women Poets, 2000-2018*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2019.

Xaba, Makhosazana. "On reading, writing and being read: Journeying with the short story." Fasselt, Rebecca and Corinne Sandwith. *The Short Story in South Africa: Contemporary Trends and Perspectives*. Routledge, 2022. 185-201.

—. *Running and Other Stories*. Johannesburg: African Books Collective, 2013.

—. *The Alkalinity of Bottled Water*. Botsotso Publishing, 2019.

—. *These Hands: Poems*. Timbila Poetry Project, 2005.

—. *Tongues of Their Mothers*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008.

Yana, I. *Women and the Gendering of Space in Narratives of Kenya*. 2023. University of Exeter, Doctoral thesis.

Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. "Diaspora Dialogues: Engagements Between Africa and its Diasporas." Okpewho, Isidore and Nkiru Nzegwu. *New African Diaspora: The New African Immigrant Experience*. Indiana University Press, 2009. 31-58.

—. "The Politics and Poetics of Exile: Edward Said in Africa." *Research in African Literatures* (2005): 1-22.