Authors, Readers, and the Virtualscapes of Namibian Digital Literature: "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" and other Facebook Serial Fictions

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In a Facebook post concerning the end of their fictional narrative "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl," the anonymous author offered an explanation that encapsulates the precarity of Facebook serial fiction, despite the growing innovation and success of online publishing in African literature. Their post revealed that they had found a publisher eager to print their work as a book: "If I die today," he writes, "this page will end … it will only be said 'there was once a page called *The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl*'." This sense of precarity suggests the author's feeling that their true entry into the literary world depended on the publication of their writing as a physical, tangible book. Nevertheless, pages of Facebook serial fiction like *The Dream* are a popular avenue for writers in Namibia, attracting large followings of engaged and interactive readers. This article discusses anglophone Namibian Facebook serial fiction, and the innovative tactics that the authors employ to generate a readership and eventually publish. Despite *The Dream's* author's concern regarding the true success and value of their narrative as-is, Facebook serial fictions are an important part of Namibian literature, and African literature more broadly. Furthermore, these digital literatures use language in ways that exemplify possible analytic strategies for the emerging field of global anglophone literary studies. They represent a vibrant writing subculture and reveal an interactive reading Namibian public deeply invested in the online literatures they consume. This turn to Facebook as a platform for literary production signals one of the ways in which African literature is reinventing itself in the digital age.

In a Facebook post concerning the end of their fictional digital narrative "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" the anonymous author offered an explanation that encapsulates the precarity of Facebook literature, despite the growing innovation and success of online publishing in African literature.[1] Their posting revealed to their public that they had found a publisher eager to print their work—previously publicized on a Facebook page—as a book: "If I die today" they write, "this page opuwo ngaho … Takutiwa ngo [this page will end … it will only be said] there was once a page called *The Dream of a Kwanyama*

Girl'."[2] Despite the popularity of this Facebook narrative online, the post suggests the author's feeling that their true means of forging a literary career relies on the publication of their writing as a physical, tangible book. Their desire to be read beyond Facebook reveals the transformative possibilities that traditional publishing continues to offer. Indeed, as Jane Katjavivi has described it in her informative discussion of publishing in Namibia, "[w]riters and publishers do not exist without each other and if the business side of publishing does not work, writers have no outlet" (363). Yet, in Namibia, formal, traditional publishing opportunities for literary works are difficult to come by (Krishnamurthy and Vale 5; Harlech-Jones 238). However, as is the case across the continent, publishing online has become a popular outlet for Namibian writers. As Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed points out, "an explosion of new technologies has meant a completely new way of reaching and interacting with an African audience, not only changing the traditional gatekeepers of literature on the continent, but enabling creators and consumers of African literature to reclaim – and then reframe – their own narratives" (387). Thus, despite *The Dream's* author's concern regarding the true success and value of their narrative as-is, this work and other Facebook literatures are significant as they transform the Namibian and African literary landscape.

This article discusses anglophone Facebook serial fiction in the Namibian context, and the relationship between the authors and the reading publics that coalesce around these Facebook pages.[3] I use "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" as my main point of reference because it exemplifies these literatures' dependence on the reader-writer relationship, and their interest in social commentary and consciousness-raising. I consider the innovative tactics that the author of "The Dream" and other Facebook serial fictions employ to generate a readership and eventually publish, even as they simultaneously speak to Namibian society. I furthermore argue that digital literatures use language in ways that exemplify possible analytic strategies for the emerging field of global anglophone literary studies. I hope to show that Facebook serial fictions are an important part of Namibian literature, and African literature more broadly. Importantly, these literatures represent a vibrant writing subculture and reveal an interactive reading Namibian public deeply invested in the online literatures they consume. While the focus is local, this turn to Facebook as a platform for literary production signals one of the ways in which African literature is reinventing itself in the digital age.

Virtualscapes of Namibian Online Fiction: An Overview

Despite the challenges in traditional publishing that literary authors in Namibia face, unconventional publishing in online spaces is thriving. In these digital spaces, writers make their short stories, poetry and

creative non-fiction available to the public and generate an active, engaged following of readers. Here I will provide an overview of some of the sites in Namibia's virtualscape of literary publishing. Of all the examples I will discuss here, I have found that Facebook is the most popular platform for innovative narrativizing and reader-and-writer engagement. Some examples of Namibian blogs are Stephanus Mutileni's humorous illustrated creative non-fiction about the everyday on *Blue Short Pants* and the essays, poetry and short stories on Filemon Iiyambo's blog *Chronicles of Fly*. Mutileni's self-publication of his first novel *1805: A Potter's Bay Thriller* in 2019 is an example of the aspiration to more traditional forms of publishing that many online authors have. *Book Buddy Namibia,* the blogsite of the bookstore Book Buddy located in Windhoek, publishes short stories and poetry by Namibians along with book reviews and features of the books they carry in their store. The most recent addition to Namibia's literary virtualscape is Namibia's first online literary magazine *Doek!*.

Founded by Mutaleni Nadimi and Rémy Ngamije, *Doek!* published its first issue in August 2019. It is because of this rise in online literary publication both in Namibia and across the continent that Shola Adenekan argues against the marginalization of online African literature, pointing out that with the "advent of social media and the surge in the number of young Africans with access to mobile phones … the future of African literature perhaps lies online" (134). It is evident that these new media literary works forge new opportunities and possibilities for both readers and writers, and for literary studies. For instance, in her important and informative essay regarding Facebook and blog fiction in southern Africa, Stephanie Bosch Santana discusses the proliferation of a southern African genre of digital literature, "the fictional online diary," first emerging in South Africa with the publication of Mike Maphoto's *Diary of a Zulu Girl* in 2013 and proliferating to create complex transnational virtual and material networks throughout southern Africa (190). Certainly, Maphoto's Diary inspired the production of fictional online diaries on Namibia's Facebook platforms, and many authors started their pages in the form of such diaries. Pages like Joanna Amweero's *Confessions of a Vambo Girl* and *Monica Pinias'* page titled after her penname *Monica Morocky* follows the conventions of the fictional diary form. Amweero acknowledges her page's transnational affiliations, stating that *Diary of a Zulu Girl* and the page *Confessions of a Xhosa Girl* are what inspired her to write.[4] And Morocky's first serialized story "My Best Friend's Boyfriend" is told in first-person diary form.

Certainly, "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl*"* is a fictional online diary, and affiliation between this and Maphoto's work is evident. But the page is also part of the broader genre of Facebook serial fiction that I will discuss here—pages created for the purpose of telling multiple

stories in serialized form, and covering a range of subjects and narrative perspectives. The Facebook serial fiction writers I discuss also differ from coalitions of writers that publish on Facebook, such as the Tanzanian writers of the page *Kona Ya Riwaya Reloaded* that Lutz Diegner describes (Diegner 2018). While most of these Facebook pages use similar and popular strategies such as rigorous production of serialized chapters and cliffhanger endings, the writers I discuss here are mostly the sole authors on their pages. This kind of writing on Facebook by Namibians predates Maphoto's important and influential *Diary* and is prolific. For example, blogger Festus Abiatar writes on *Festus the Writer* but his initial cite of publication was Facebook Notes, beginning in 2012. He published a two-part short story series named "The Boy" beginning February 8th 2013 on Notes. In 2015 he shifted to publishing his essays exclusively on his blogsite, and in 2017 Abiatar self-published his novel *Patience*. Planny Angala, another popular writer while his page was active, published on Facebook Notes from 2010 to 2014. His first story "Kandina Tate" posted on 29 June 2012, elicited 265 comments and 88 shares. In his 2013 story "Passion Killing," he collaborated with Monica Morocky, who wrote Part 2 of the narrative. Morocky also published serial fiction on her Facebook page, beginning with "My Best Friend's Boyfriend" on 17 April 2013. However, Morocky wrote her first novel *Modern Relationships* in 2012, published by Wordweaver Publishing House. The novel, "a brew of side chicks, bad boys, baby mamas and the newest edition to city slang" was inspired by serialized Facebook fiction and follows the serialized form, using "Parts" instead of "chapters" (Nekomba 2014).[5]

A recent innovative example of Facebook serial fiction is Rex Animation and Film Studio's recent post of a 9-part image-and-text short story on Facebook. Titled "A Love Story in Chaotic Namibia" this Afrofuturist graphic story is about an unnamed katana-wielding female protagonist and her cyborg partner James who go on a mission to rescue children smuggled from all over Namibia by a trafficking ring (Rex 2020). Another new page worth noting is *Stories by Hannah H. Tarindwa*, a page named after its author, who posts serialized stories, poetry and flash fiction. This is by no means a comprehensive overview, but it serves to show how digital literatures in Namibia—and more specifically literatures on Facebook—are increasing, experimenting with different forms, and intersecting with offline publishing.

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

the margins nevertheless allow for independence. As Netta Kornberg notes, "[t]hough it is defined by lack, the margins are also 'a rich space.' These contradictions are instructive. They tell us to be flexible" (245). While marginality is a current feature of Namibian Facebook fiction that brings about its own challenges, this is not a weakness. Rather, these "[b]orn-digital" works also do the work of conscientization resultant of their positions in society as popular art forms (Hockx ix). Karin Barber describes popular art forms as a "fugitive category," and their "very flexibility and elusiveness is a potential strength" (5). They foreground a "new consciousness" that "must be read through the details of local, social, political, and economic experience which is continually undergoing historical change" (53). Stephanie Newell and Onookome Okome furthermore point out that another of their determining characteristics is their use of the technological innovations that mark the age in which they emerge (Newell and Okome13).

Unlike other genres of digital literature, which may require a certain amount of computational expertise or access to software to produce or even to read them, Facebook serial fictions rely on the popular, relatively easy mass-usage of social media platforms and access to smartphones or technology, thus drawing a wider, and perhaps unconventional readership and innovative, unexpected authors (O'Sullivan 13). The form that these literatures take is intertwined with the Facebook platform—as is their dissemination. The Facebook page not only allows the authors to circumvent the mediation of publishers and provide their materials directly to and interact with their readers, but the liking and commenting function of Facebook has the effect of creating literary "communities that enable a transmission of cultural knowledge and literary meanings" (Yeku 2019, 6). This is most evident in the context of "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl"'s emergence. The narrative exemplifies the relationship between these digital literary forms and social critique—even as they serve to entertain.

Namibian Contexts: "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" and Social Critique

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

> "Dirty Kandeshi
> Seduce someone 'cause she want his money

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

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

> The flick is simple: they are strangers who meet in a restaurant; drag each other home to bed; play and the guy leaves for the toilet while she ransacks his drawers and wallet. When he returns from the loo, she asks for money to do her nails and hair; he surrenders his bank card; she hugs the guy and fishes out his wallet from the back pocket. That's Dirty Kandeshi - the hottest and most played music video these days. In the video, PDK portrays the hustle of a wallet miner, who uses her pout and curves to dive into the pockets of most naive men to look in her direction. (Halwoodi)

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

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

asked "What defines a Kandeshi to you and what is your take on them?" He responded, "I don't define who a Kandeshi is, it has already been defined by society as a gold-digger." The interviewer went on to state that "[t]he show will clearly leave the audience with the expression: 'A Sista has got to get paid. By any means necessary!'" (NTN Namibia 2013). The term's entrenchment in Namibian society and its vocabulary was further demonstrated a month after Jacobs' show (a year after the song's release) when a front-page column in *The Namibian* reads, "Perhaps your girlfriend is nothing more than a Kandeshi. Hope she's not a dirty Kandeshi. When kwaito group PDK produced the song 'Dirty Kandeshi' they would never have thought that it would become such an iconic song, about girls just chopping guys' money" ("Pulling a Woody" 2013). Clearly this song speaks to a situation in Namibia that resonates with popular unease concerning women's behavior which deviates from normative societal expectations. PDK's aim at making "something fun with a message and a story of survival" is really only beautifully aestheticized gold-digging. Also clear is that the narrative direction the song set has become the popular one in the Namibian imagination.

Using the Facebook platform, "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" addresses the oversimplified assessment of Kandeshi lives that the music video promotes with a narrative of its own—"all just based on Windhoek experiences, plus a little creativity," as the author explains it—to tell the story of what is really going on in Windhoek (Chapter 14). The Facebook pages of serial fictions, however, are less visible than the dominant offline media forms such as newspapers, radio stations and their accompanying websites and social media platforms. Rather, "The Dream" and other Facebook fiction's dependence on Facebook as a platform for its serialized production and dissemination supports complex interplay between the author and readers, and the narrative's function of social commentary.

On 4 July 2014, when *The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl's* anonymous author posted the first chapter of "The Dream," at the end of this chapter they added: "Comments are welcome," signaling the importance of reader-engagement. What then unfolded was a twenty-nine-chapter narrative posted over a period of fifty-seven days in which the author continually invited commentary and interacted with their readers concerning elements of the story told. "The Dream" tells of the experiences of the protagonist Nangula, who, after graduating from high school, leaves her home village in northern Namibia and moves to Windhoek to attend the University of Namibia and study to become a chartered accountant. There, Nangula, with the help of her cousin Blackberry, adopts the lifestyle of a Kandeshi. The narrative outlines the complications and adventures Nangula experiences as a result of navigating this new identity, and after each chapter, the author used the Facebook comment section to facilitate a dialog concerning

Kandeshi lifestyle and the direction of the narrative. The readers in turn responded to the narrative with critique for the author, advice for the protagonist, and suggestions for the storyline.

PDK's portrayal of Kandeshis and the public discourse around the women serves to highlight their marginal position (an added layer of marginalization to that which black and Coloured women already experience in Namibia). "The Dream"'s narrative, however, portrays them as intelligent, creative and ambitious agents. Nangula and her friends are unapologetic about the unconventional means they use to achieve their aspirations, and the author invites the readers to discuss the girls' journey. Toward the end of the narrative, Nangula finds herself maneuvered into a position of vulnerability by a police officer who sexually assaulted her early in the narrative, a couple of days after her arrival into the city. He is unwittingly helped by Nangula's stern aunt whom Nangula lives with, and who is friends with the officer. As the policeman lets himself into the house—where he is alone with Nangula—under the pretense of wanting a drink of water, Nangula despairs, and at the end of the chapter asks: "Are all the good spirits abandoning me, again? 'What happens now, what must I do'" (Chapter 28).[6] A reader writes in response: "I feel for Nangula, what kind of bad luck is that? one can tell she's really trying to be a good girl but whatever comes up really just ruins everything." Another comments: "I could just feel how hopeless Nangula was feeling how ready she was for whatever outcome comes her way … she's just a [sic] innocent soul dat always find herself into trouble … I know it's just a story people but dis chapter just felt real." Another writes: "Nangula….. shame, learning city life the hard way," to which the author replied: "Truly the hard way." Another reader prayed "oh aaaye please god have mercy on your child." Despite promises to continue, the following chapter was the last chapter of the narrative, and Nangula's situation is left unresolved. This final chapter reads like a teaser, with Nangula merely stating that "As the saying goes you cannot deny a person water, Mr Officer was a hyena and he wanted to prey on little me, 'Shimbungu naye eli pediva okweya kunwa omeva' [the hyena has come to the watering hole to drink]." This chapter concluded the narrative, the author preserving the remaining stories for their book publication. Nevertheless, the situations Nangula and her friends encounter show complicated lives and precarious navigations of societal expectations, gendered inequality and gender-based violence. While melodramatic, the readers are still made aware that in the social entanglements of everyday life there are no easy solutions. Importantly, as a literary work, "The Dream" is constituted of the narrative as well as readers' archived interaction with the author that dictates some of the narrative's direction and function as social commentary.

Facebook Serial Fiction and Consciousness-Raising

Despite a publishing environment in which imaginative work by Namibians—and particularly black Namibians—is marginalized (even though there are organizations working to rectify this outcome of Namibia's colonial history), online "The Dream" and other Facebook narratives thrive and develop large engaged followings. For instance, while it is no longer active, *The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl* page has had wide circulation with over 8000 likes and followers (significant for Namibia's population of 2.5 million) and was read in the diaspora. Angelica Kawana's currently active page *Angie's Comfort Zone* has over 5600 likes and followers. Another active page *Talohole* by Frans Talohole has over 24000 followers, and *Moshiwambo*, Frans Samuel's Oshiwambo-language currently active page has just over 26000 followers.

Operating in the margins of the Namibian publishing world means that these authors are able to tell stories that their readers want to hear. These Facebook narratives are frequently erotic, and their subject matters range to cover the complexities and inequalities in various kinds of relationships, the challenges to getting an education, gender-dynamics and gender-based violence, poverty and life on the streets, baby-dumping, and more. And while many of these stories are melodramatic, many of the pages are also committed to the purpose of consciousness-raising as a key feature of their storytelling. For example, for "The Dream"'s the author uses the hashtag #NamibiasNumberOneEduFuntainmentPage (14 September 2014). And on the page *Asia's Educational Stories,* author Asia Martinho stated that he writes "stories to educate the nation... Everything I write is what I've seen and heard from people and things that are still happening daily" (9 July 2017). Kawana, who writes prolifically, describes her page as "not just a storytelling platform, but a growth and educational platform too" (9 April 2017). These are, however, the stories that resonate with the readers. For instance, in 2017, when Martinho stopped writing chapters to his story "The Betrayal," he explained to his readers that the story "doesn't match with the Page's name … it's too erotic" (25 October 2017). However, the readers disagreed and after a string of comments asking for the narrative to continue, the surprised author assented, writing that "since you guys really want ["The Betrayal" to continue] let's do it" (31 October 2017). And when Morocky received a message criticizing the amount of sexual content in her Facebook stories, she put it to her readers, who disagreed (2 May 2013).

The kinds of stories told on these pages reveal "how closely linked the personal and the political, the private and the public, are becoming in the twenty-first century" (Adenekan 148). While their focus is local, these literatures are postnational in a way that mirrors

globalized African fiction in that rather than a preoccupation with the nation and nationalism, they humanize people in various contexts, and bring to the surface societies' secrets while engaging the social and the intimacies of everyday life (Losambe 2019).

Consciousness-raising happens in the narrative but is developed in discussions that involve the readers in literary analysis. Both Martinho and Kawana frequently posts leading questions between chapter releases, discussing various aspects of the narrative with their readers in the comments (see Martinho, 20 May 2017; see Kawana, 11 February 2018). In 2015, Kawana created a Whatsapp group to function as "a platform to interact after each episode" (July 13th 2015). Success thus is informed by the direct, participatory relationship between author and reader in ways that "gesture back to the representational strategies of oral literature in pre-colonial Africa" (Yeku 2017, 262). This reader/author/text relationship has direct bearing on the way Facebook fictions develop and proliferate and is therefore crucial to this text.[7]

The Facebook Platform and Author/Reader Relationships

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

*The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl'*s author referred to their collaboration with their readers as "The Dream Team." Between chapter releases the author frequently encouraged the readers to stay engaged, admonishing them to "read on" and "watch out" for the following chapters. In responses to readers' comments, the author frequently asked readers to "like" and "share" the page, stating in one response to a reader: "[D]o invite friends to the page though. We have to keep it running" (Chapter 3). To a new reader's comments, the author responds, "[M]y dear we are at Chapter 8 now, please don't get left behind […] Read On … Welcome aboard." This all implies that the writer and the readers were working together to make the page a success. For The Dream Team, success meant helping the protagonist Nangula navigate her precarious world and achieve her dream of becoming a chartered accountant, and assisting the author to realize their publishing aspirations beyond Facebook.

The Dream Team demonstrates not only the labor of circulation and its relevance to the work (the narrative does not circulate freely on its own, nor is it circulated by a publishing house) but also the inherent difficulty such self-published work encounters in order to move. "The Dream"'s readers, while grateful that the narrative is available for free, still desired it in tangible "black and white please," asking the author to "please write a book" or requesting "[a] novel please" (Chapters 24, 6, 8). Readers have also suggested that the author translate the narrative to a far easier-to-read, catalog and archive blogsite. After the first chapter a reader writes: "great book, love the marketing concept … I will advice you to open a blog and get your content copyrighted." The author has in fact published part of the narrative on blogsites without the success the narrative gained on Facebook.[8] A reader's response to one of the requests that the page be transferred to a blog site suggests why this is the case, hinting at the readership's socioeconomic status: "But does it mean if u post the whole story on blog, tse yokofacebook otwakana [we of Facebook are lost]? The problem not all of us have phone which can retrieve things on blog" (Chapter 10). Despite the narrative's popularity and free access, these comments highlight the recognition and protection which mainstream print culture provides for an author and their work, as well as the hold which conventional publishing practices have on the reading public. These comments also reveal that this form of publishing is considered by some as a marketing strategy to enter into the presumed easy circulation that mainstream publishing affords.

This is not to say that the narratives published on Facebook are merely a means to an end. Authors treat their narratives very seriously, objecting to copyright infringement and plagiarism. For instance, *Confessions of a Vambo Girl's* author Joanna Amweero issued an "Announcement" to her readers complaining about plagiarism and discouraging fan fiction emailed to her, stating:

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

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

Angelica Kawana's *Angie's Comfort Zone* is one of the more prolific and innovative Facebook pages in its use of the reader/writer "team" approach to pursue an income and publishing. Kawana is very clear with her readers about her and their role in the success of the page, stating at one point:

> guys we have come along way and yet *our page* is barely growing....that means you guys are not spreading the word … you don't share the posts, you don't invite friends and you don't just put my work out there … I do this because I love it and I am passionate about it … but I also do it to educate and entertain … so please spread the word … I want to reach as many people as possible … *but with your help* … invite your friends, share the posts. That will motivate me to even want to drop some things just to type an episode. You guys are not paying, neither are you being charged for reading this … so help promote … if you really enjoy my stories, then introduce your friends and others to *the family.* (March 7 2016, italics mine)

This is not to say that she does not expect monetary support from her readers. She frequently asks them to send her data so she can post her stories, and her readers do so eagerly. Kawana also makes it clear that she wishes to make money from her stories, and that the readers can help: "I believe with time this talent will create wealth and prosperity to me … also if you do see an opportunity that you might think will benefit me, please do contact me" (7 May 2016). After four years of

posting on her page, in 2018 Kawana began posting her stories on WhatsApp, using her Facebook page to advertise the upcoming stories that readers can access on WhatsApp for a fee. That year, after posting twenty-six chapters of her fifty-nine-chapter story "Shattered" on Facebook, she began releasing the rest of the chapters on WhatsApp (3 April 2018). She now publishes exclusively on WhatsApp, using the Facebook page only to invite readers to her WhatsApp group. In July 2019 she began offering a copy of *Shattered*, a self-published 10-chapter book version of the Facebook story when a reader pays to be added to the WhatsApp group. Like the coalition of Tanzanian writers behind the page *Kona Ya Riwaya Reloaded* who used strategies such as publishing "some ten to twenty parts or pieces of a given novel… and then offer[ing] the whole novel…as a printed book," Kawana's narrative straddles virtual and material forms and complicating how we think about books in the digital age (Diegner 35).[9] Despite garnering a growing readership for her self-published work, Kawana nevertheless faces the challenges of production and distributing books to readers in different parts inside and outside the country (13 May 2018). The work Facebook authors and the reader/author teams they nurture must do to get published shows the complexity of online and self-publishing. Nevertheless these narratives bring local stories to Namibian readers, provide writers with an audience and in some cases, a small income, and circumvent reading material paucity and cost of production that is one of the challenges that traditional publishing in Africa faces (Adejunmobi 2015; Diegner 2018). Rather than replacing conventional books these new forms only enrich the literary environment.

Namibian Facebook Serial Fiction and Their Englishes

The Facebook pages I have discussed here are anglophone, and for some of them, their language-use is productive in helping define the role of digital African literatures in the emerging field of global anglophone literary studies. One of the concerns that Nasia Anam expresses regarding how we define the field of global anglophone is that the term is becoming a "substitute for established disciplinary terms like postcolonial and World Literature" (Anam 2019). While these older disciplines are politically fraught, global anglophone "evades the more politically thorny issues" that translation or area studies address (Anam 2019). Anam is concerned that recent literary works that are global in their scope tend to celebrate "cosmopolitan fluidity" at the expense of the "hallmark postcolonial concerns of decolonization and nation-formation" (Anam 2019). However, she also acknowledges that perhaps "twenty-first century literature, in form and

content, is developing in a manner that stretches beyond what the term 'postcolonial' and even 'World Literature' may be able to encompass as *literary genres"* (Anam 2019, italics belong to Anam). I make the case that English-language digital literatures are uniquely suited to global anglophone, firstly in their use of social media and other digital technologies that allow them to travel beyond the intended local audience, and secondly in the way they use English.

While targeted to a local audience, Namibian Facebook fictions' use of social media and cyberspace to create and circulate literature also positions them in transregional and global circuits. However, their use of everyday language—English mixed with indigenous languages and local slang—belies the idea of an easy, uncomplicated global connection that the term global anglophone has been said to privilege. Rather, as Akshya Saxena points out, the proliferation of everyday English spoken and written across the globe—"the variety of (mis)recognitions, accents and inflections charting desire and (un)belonging across class, ethnic and caste differences"—that cyberspace makes available to us only heightens anglophone heterogeneity (Saxena 320). While narrativized in relatively standard English, in its dialogues, "The Dream of a Kwanyama Girl" uses what Ngugì wa Thiong'o described as "Africanised" English, "without any of the respect for [the language's] ancestry" (299). Ngugì wa Thiong'o, famously advocating for African literature in African languages nevertheless stated that unlike the colonially educated elite, the "peasantry and working class's" use of European languages is not characterized by an anxiety to elevate these languages, but rather they Africanize them "so totally as to have created new…languages …that owed their identities to the syntax and rhythms of African languages" (299). "The Dream" and other Facebook serial fictions display none of the "linguistic anxiety" of early postcolonial African writers (Gikandi 9). While English is the primary linguistic medium, the multilingual interruptions and grammatical disregard—along with the incomprehension expressed by local or global readers unfamiliar with the other languages used—signals a mode of Africanized English-language writing that draws attention to local linguistic, cultural and socio-economic heterogeneity. Along with its hurried style scattered with spelling and punctuation errors, "The Dream" incorporates multilingual slang, Afrikaans and Oshiwambo (a mix of language-use associated with "Namlish" or Namibian English). English here is transformed and carries in it the accents of its Namibian locality.[10]

This productive linguistic amalgamation is foregrounded in the narrative. For example, after Nangula's move from the village to Windhoek where she is drawn into her cousin's circle of friends, Nangula is perplexed by her cousin's use of language in her performance of urban cosmopolitanism: "There was something about my cousin though, when she came for holidays she spoke

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

Conclusion

Namibians' practice of self-publishing popular fiction is gaining traction as seen in the increase in conventional self-published books and materials made available virtually on blogs and websites, Facebook and WhatsApp. Namibians are experimenting with publishing practices and in the process, doing something new, begging the question: What does it mean that Facebook has become a repository of digital, accessible, inexpensive "books" for Namibia's reading public? The emerging form of Facebook serial fiction productively changes the literary land-and-virtualscapes, and highlights the politics of literary production as an inherent feature in the form's narrative structure. Facebook serial fiction presents us with an image far distant from the lonely author who produces her work in isolation, sends it to a publisher who releases the finished product into

the world where it circulates. Instead, we have a serialized interactive form that relies on its active readership to circulate. Readers' comments on the emerging story as well as their act of liking, following and sharing the narrative, and their support for the author in other material ways ensure the narrative's continuation and the author's success. Rather than careful attention to proper linguistic usage and spelling we have a genre that privileges speed, production, vernacular and linguistic fluidity, and melodrama, designed to quickly entertain its local audience, but also traveling into the global sphere thanks to its virtual birth-space. And instead of a single work circulating alone in the rugged and unequal world literary space, we are presented with a work that archives its author's and readers' interactions with it as an embedded part of its narrative and circulation. Facebook serial fiction is a branch of Namibian literature that contributes to our understanding of digital African literature, and that brings with it active participating readers who are delighted by, and invested in the stories told.

Notes

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

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

3. While here my focus is the structure of these texts and their reader-author relationships, elsewhere I have written in detail about the social commentary function of "The Dream" as it speaks to gender-based violence in Namibia and offers a critique of Namibia's own divided approach to women's issues (see Ndakalako-Bannikov 2020).

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

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

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

7. This kind of complexity is not uncommon for digital literatures. Michel Hockx writes of the textual instability of digital literatures and states: "When working with Internet literature, the first question one has to ask oneself again and again is: how do I define the text? Sometimes there is an obvious answer, sometimes there is not" (19).

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

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

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

11."Oshimbwiti" means "uncultured."

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