


Queer African literary communities: The anthology as political genre

**Author:**Christopher W. Koekemoer¹ **Affiliation:**

¹Department of Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg, Soweto, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Christopher Koekemoer,
christopherk@uj.ac.za

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The inaugural Gerald Kraak anthology titled *Pride and Prejudice (The Gerald Kraak Anthology: African Perspectives on Gender, Social Justice and Sexuality)* (2017) is a collection of poetry, fiction, journalism, photography, and scholarly writing that focuses on queer and other marginalised identities in Africa. The individual contributions place the queer cultural outsider at the centre of the text. The power of the anthology's collective voice challenges normative subjectivity and its practices of exclusion by showcasing the subjects' joy and suffering, and, through the collectivisation of individual experience, new possibilities arise for a recentred queer subjectivity that challenges imposed normative boundaries. The process of writing is a relatively private activity to explore and express identity and sexuality. In contrast to the privacy of writing is the act of sharing this writing with an audience that witnesses these private and often hidden identities and sexualities. This article focuses on how this anthologised collection of marginalised cultural 'others' shifts the borders of what is considered deviant by reading the entries through Judith Butler's concepts of 'legibility', where the outsider is placed at the narrative centre.

Contribution: This article contributes to studies on marginality, queer African literature, genre and anthologies.

Keywords: African literature; anthology; citationality; genre; intelligibility; legibility; marginalisation; queer studies.

Introduction

The inaugural Gerald Kraak anthology titled *Pride and Prejudice (The Gerald Kraak Anthology: African Perspectives on Gender, Social Justice and Sexuality)* (2017) features a range of literary genres and photographic works that depict marginal queer identities in various African countries and contexts. It comprises poetry, fiction, journalism, photography and scholarly writing. In this article, I argue that queer anthologies, by virtue of their simultaneously singular and plural narrative form, create literary communities that work to centre queer subjectivities. This article examines the anthology in relation to Judith Butler's work on intelligibility. The focus of the article is on a collection of queer 'others' who redraw the boundaries of what is considered deviant, thereby disrupting the heteronormative status quo in the social contexts depicted in the entries. I argue that the individual contributions in this anthology have the virtue of placing the outsider at the centre of the narrative, creating a community of recentred subjects that become legible. In other words, this article underscores the constitutive power of the collective voice in the anthology, which challenges normative social subjectivity and its practices of exclusion.

My analysis of the anthology deliberately engages in the methodological approach of what Minesh Dass (2018) calls a 'surface reading' of several contributions to the anthology – focusing on 'what is [immediately] evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts' (Best & Marcus 2009:9) – rather than the more common analytical method of close reading in order to highlight the cumulative political power of the anthology as a textual genre. My analysis of the anthology draws on Butler's theory of how legibility functions in the 'reworking of abjection into political agency' (1993:21).

The anthology serves as a space of literary unity of queer 'others'. My contention is that the anthology is a space where queer communities are placed at the centre. This position is advanced by Sisonke Msimang's observation in the anthology's 'Editor's Note' where she observes that the 'anthology walks the line between all that is dissident and everything that is normative' (Msimang 2017:xi). The collection presents various conflicting binaries between 'outside' and 'inside', 'self' and 'other', 'heterosexual' and 'queer', thus blurring these binary oppositions not only through

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the individual contributions but through their textual juxtaposition in the anthology. Msimang remarks on the relevance of the collection that it 'reflects a political moment across this continent, a moment that is defined by space and freedom even as these continue to be constrained'. She notes that 'these stories are queer because they reflect our hybridity' (xiii), moving beyond the 'conventional' binary of 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual'. The anthology's hybridity results in a *queer* understanding of identity rooted in the 'disassembling of common beliefs about gender and sexuality' (Kirsch 2000:33).

The anthology can be classified into the themes reflected in the title: *Pride and Prejudice*. The contributions foreground the marginality of queer individuals and characters, the prejudices they experience, the resilience they show, and the pride they gain from self-expression within oppressive social contexts. The anthology comprises works that emerge from across Africa, which shows how the genre itself works across contexts to capture a plurality of voices. For the purposes of this article, I focus on narrative and photographic essays from South Africa, Nigeria and Uganda. In reading across these geographic contexts, I hope to, as Leila Hall (2023:28) puts it, 'point [...] to cross-cultural networks and transnational flows of ideas, creativity, and solidarity that fundamentally disrupt and subvert queerphobic nationalist narratives'.

I assert that *Pride and Prejudice* utilises 'queerness' as a political, social, and artistic method for disruption. Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas (eds. 2013:3–4), in an earlier queer African anthology, firmly proclaim that '[q]ueer is our dissident stance, but we use it here knowing the limitations of the terminology in relation to our African neocolonial realities'. *Pride and Prejudice* thus probes at a rethinking of 'queer' in an African context. I contend that the anthologising marginal voices that are geographically disparate yet connected creates a 'self-contained' (Msimang 2017:xiii) literary community in which queer subjectivities are situated within the symbolic centre of intelligibility and legitimacy. Msimang makes a similar observation: 'Taken together, the stories in this collection create their own language' (xiii). I maintain that this anthology forms part of an emerging cultural history that articulates queerness and queer African subjectivity in African literature, drawing queer subjects into the symbolic and literary centre. By taking this political position in the use of 'queer', I argue how the anthology offers a reconstructive political agency of distinct yet connected queer African voices to imagine future possibilities for queer Africans.

Legibility and the productive possibilities of queer anthologies

In *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler (1993) examines the concepts of 'legitimacy', 'intelligibility', and 'citationality' to examine how queer bodies might be reconstituted to 'matter' in normative discourses. Butler's concepts point to the 'symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility' of queer texts and

lives (4). Butler (190) observes that the 'production of the *unsymbolizable*, the *unspeakable*, the *illegible* is also always a strategy of social abjection'. The strategy of social abjection, which deploys several social systems of dominance, is to produce an 'object' and not a 'subject', according to Butler. Social abjection aims to produce an individual that is not an individual, one that cannot 'speak', and is unable to be 'symbolised', and is thus 'illegible'. The marginalised 'object' is consequently infantilised, unable to speak, and therefore unable to assert its identity. I maintain that the marginal 'object', through articulation (in this case the queer African anthology), shifts into the symbolic realm and thus transforms into a 'speaking subject', an individual that is 'legitimate', worthy of dignity. Queer subjects thus become 'intelligible'; their lives become readable and thus 'citational'. To put it plainly, recognising queer African individuals as *subjects* and not *objects* humanises them and thus opens up possibilities for social, political, and artistic change and equality.

Butler argues that the 'contentious practices' associated with queerness during the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) epidemic in the United States can be viewed as a form of 'citational politics' that can be understood as a 'reworking of abjection into political agency' in which citationality 'has contemporary political promise' (21). Even though Butler's context is distinctly different from the African context (I discuss elsewhere the tensions between psychoanalysis and African subjectivities; see Wayne & Grogan 2018), I posit that the 'political promise' (21) of a restructuring of queer African subjects *as* subjects and *not* abject serves the function of 'political agency' (21) for social change. Butler further notes that the 'public assertion of "queerness" enacts performativity as citationality for the purposes of resignifying the abjection of homosexuality into defiance and legitimacy' (21). The effect of a queer anthology such as *Pride and Prejudice* is that it resignifies abjection and articulates queer subjects in the symbolic realm. Butler powerfully maintains in this regard that the 'politicization of abjection' is an effort to 'rewrite the history of the term, and to force it into a demanding resignification' (21). Anthologising queer African voices in this text is 'citational' and a political act that offers a 'more possible future to expand the very meaning of what counts as a valued and valuable body in the world' (21). It is a political statement to collect and anthologise these 'queer' texts. It is a statement that seeks to rewrite the conditions of normativity.

In recent decades, Africa has seen a growing number of anthologies that showcase queer voices. Writing about African poetry anthologies, Sunny Awhefeada (2016:7) proposes that there is a 'need for more anthologies to be produced periodically in order to fully represent the African condition as it evolves and engenders new poetic sensibilities'. This article posits that the same idea applies to queer anthologies. For Awhefeada, 'anthologies have provided safe havens for poems that would otherwise have been lost many years ago' (7). Awhefeada underscores the importance

of anthologies that it would be 'almost unimaginable that African poetry could be adequately studied without the anthologies' (7). Barbara Boswell (2017:2) comments that a 'wave of repressive anti-homosexuality legislation has swept the African continent, with several countries introducing or entrenching homophobia through law'. The anthology operates as a force of resistance against the legacies of colonial and neo-colonial homophobia, within the social context of legal and cultural persecution. The need for queer representation in different media is further highlighted because of the often violent and deadly consequences of such laws, which emphasises the importance of normalising queer identities in social life.

In his examination of the role of anthologies in European literature, César Domínguez (2014:9) argues how for 'academia, anthologies represent both an important pedagogical tool and a key instrument for charting un/explored literary territories'. The emergence of queer anthologies from Africa could broaden previously and currently uncharted literary territories and extend discourse on queer African identity (see Hall 2023). Anthologies that focus on the lives of queer individuals serve an important function in creating a space where such lives can be seen and accepted within society. By bringing together the voices and experiences of those who have not been given social and legal recognition, such anthologies lend credibility to the struggles of these individuals in heteronormative and patriarchal societies.

I argue that the decision to include queer African voices in *Pride and Prejudice* relates to Butler's (1993:3) argument that challenging dominant and heteronormative narratives is vital to redefining the terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility. Sociologist Rutledge Dennis (2005:21) describes how the recentring of marginalised subjectivities is possible through breaking down 'barriers of prejudice [which] involves information flows from the stigmatised to the societal center, and often to a wider societal audience that transcends local communities, in an effort to plead their case'. Literature and other modes of representation play a central role in these knowledge flows. Andy Carolin (2015:50) argues that 'traditional archives' have limited historic documentation of queer lives, particularly in oppressive African political contexts. He argues for the 'recognition of fiction as a complementary archive of same-sex subjectivities' (50). Africa, Carolin observes, 'has a long history of exclusionary systems of knowledge production that has resulted in the erasure of experiences, perspectives, and histories of marginalised groups' (50). In most African countries, laws and cultural norms deliberately and forcefully exclude and silence queer voices. This anthology, and others like it, which blend fact and fiction, can serve as a valuable resource that acts as a 'complementary archive' of queer African experiences that challenge the 'erasure' of these voices. *Pride and Prejudice*, and the anthology genre itself, offers a radical reconstruction and centring of queer African identities.

Pride and Prejudice: The Gerald Kraak anthology - African perspectives on gender, social justice and sexuality

The eponymous reference to Jane Austen's novel in the title of the anthology captures, of course, the ordinariness of the stories that it contains. But the stories also advance a much bolder political project. As Neville Gabriel (2017:vii) notes in the foreword to the anthology, *Pride and Prejudice* depicts the 'contradictions of contemporary Africa's progress in struggles for equality, freedom and social inclusion by gender-non-conforming people, yet it also aims to show the deep despair of hidden suffering'. Gabriel comments further that the anthology exposes the 'paradox of new generations yearning for personal freedom and transcendence'. While Austen's novel advances a distinctly heteronormative social milieu, the anthology challenges this normative stance and asserts pride even in the context of heteronormative prejudice. There is also a striking contrast between the authority of the single authorial voice in Austen's novel, and the polyvocality that is a defining feature of the multi-author anthology.

In the anthology, Ayodele Sogunro's essay titled 'One More Nation Bound in Freedom: Themes from the Nigerian Anti-Gay Law' (2017), discusses the ambiguities that drive discrimination against queer Nigerians. The essay contextualises anti-homosexuality attitudes and statutes in Nigeria, highlighting the irony and instability of these prejudiced stances. The essay discusses the passage of the *Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act* signed into law by former president Goodluck Jonathan on 07 January 2014. Sogunro evaluates the religious, cultural, socio-political, and legal ironies and ramifications of the Act. For Sogunro (2017), the anti-gay law lacks a strong basis in religious, cultural or legal reasoning. He argues that the 'religious nature of the country is superficial' (157) and that many Nigerians disapprove of 'public interference in private consenting sexuality' (158). He notes that Nigerian criminal law has not undergone any significant modifications from its Victorian-era British origins, when sexuality was strictly legislated (158–159) and that the 'anti-gay law is merely a political distraction' (162). The essay highlights the contradictions of anti-gay sentiment in Nigeria. Segunro notes that there was 'not anything in particular' (163) that initiated this restrictive law. Owing to the ambiguous nature of the Act, his essay alludes to the possibilities that society might be able to restructure and reconfigure the intelligibility of marginalised sexualities. Segunro's essay emphasises the ambivalence of the 'heterosexual majority' of Nigerians to the passage of the Act, noting that its passage is 'merely a passing newspaper headline, another episode in the everyday affairs' (163). The unvarnished argumentative mode of this essay offers a broad cultural-historical account of homophobia in Nigeria that contrasts with the more individualised narratives elsewhere in the anthology, narratives that add depth and complexity to the 'passing newspaper headline' to which Segunro refers.

Dilman Dila's short story, 'Two Weddings for Amoit', explores how social structures can oppress the individual by forcing them into 'the closet' and thus curtailing their avenues for self-expression. As an Afrofuturistic tale, the story imaginatively explores how sexual identity is viewed in the present. The story's setting can be surmised to take place in Uganda, which has a history of extreme anti-homosexuality legislation (Atuhaire 2023). Commenting on the specific narrative mode of this story, Alena Rettová (2017:158) explains that Afrofuturism explores 'visions of Africa's utopian or dystopian futures and often suggest[s] ways to construct this future or, indeed, reconstruct the present in view of the future'. Dila's dystopian future exposes the conflicts that arise when people are compelled to conceal certain aspects of their identities, leading to interpersonal tensions. The story follows Amoit and her husband Omongo, who reside in a Christian utopia set in East Africa in a post-apocalyptic, futuristic world after a catastrophic event known as 'The Big Burn' that eviscerated half the population. As a result of this cataclysmic event, one in four women is unable to bear children, and it is each citizen's God-directed duty to multiply and procreate.

To address the problem of apocalyptic population decline, the governing 'Christian Council' has permitted polygamy and revived an ancient custom called *Nyumba Nthobu* 'in which a barren woman could marry another woman to bear children on her behalf' (Dila 2017:56–57). Homosexuality remains strictly prohibited and punished, however, signalling to the reader Uganda's present anti-queer legislation. The women's husbands 'had a duty to prevent homosexuality within their marriages' (57). This story plays with Afrofuturist features to emphasise how queer people are 'forced' into heterosexual marriages through religious, familial and political pressures. Amoit marries Aceng under *Nyumba Nthobu*: Aceng 'would be her wife and perform all the normal duties of a wife – except making love' (57). Amoit and Aceng, however, are clandestine lovers and use *Nyumba Nthobu* to be together. This story reveals the harmful effects of state-sanctioned marginalisation on individuals and their communities. This story articulates the queer characters' inner lives in a repressive society that promotes the 'heterosexual imperative' (Butler 1993:3), which depends on the borders between the heterosexual 'self' and the queer 'other'. By disrupting these borders, the story makes the queer characters' inner lives legible and inscribes these characters into a literary community of queer Africans.

Another entry in the anthology showcases the individual's struggle against socially imposed ostracisation. In Beyers de Vos's non-fiction narrative essay, 'A Place of Greater Safety: Homosexuality, Homelessness and HIV in Cape Town', the essay's subject, Peter, is stigmatised because of his sexuality, his HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) status, his experience of poverty and homelessness, and the emotional and physical abuse he suffers from Frans, 'a well-known gangster' (De Vos 2017:14). Central to Peter's story is Pride Shelter in Cape Town, also known as 'The Yellow House', which is a 'beacon for those in need of refuge' (10).

Peter finds solace in this urban liminal space of freedom within the boundaries of the city where he can piece his life together. The shelter is a 'halfway house' for members of the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex) community: 'Most of the residents are people who have suffered abuse or persecution based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and have been left homeless' (De Vos 2017:19). Similar to the anthology, which may be understood as a textual space, Pride Shelter is a physical space that provides marginalised individuals with a space of acceptance where they are placed at the centre of their own lives, allowing them, to an extent, freedom from social pressures and stigma. This opens the possibility of living with pride. The name of the shelter alludes to 'gay pride' and the movement's origins in fighting prejudice. Like the anthology, the shelter is an insulated space that protects its residents from 'torment and fear' yet allows them to 'dream' of possibilities (37). I maintain that the anthology serves as a metaphoric 'shelter' that unites queer subjects in a textual space. This narrative essay, included in this queer anthology, extends this intelligibility into a narrative space where queer African subjects, more broadly, find a shared space in which their stories and lives are articulated. In de Vos's essay, politicising abjection is paramount to creating the kind of community in which, according to Butler (1993:21), 'queer lives become more legible, valuable, worthy of support, in which passion, injury, grief, aspiration become recognized'.

Olakunle Ologunro's short story 'The Conversation' shares themes similar to De Vos's essay about the traumas of domestic and social abuse, even though it engages in a very different narrative mode. Ologunro's story is 'at times shocking but delivers an important insight into issues of domestic violence, family acceptance and the complexity of gender roles in Africa' (The Witness 08 August 2017:10). 'The Conversation' follows the story of a university student, Ahmed, who is Muslim and gay and is involved in an abusive relationship with an older man, Ibrahim, whom he met at a Nigerian university. The erasure of queer identity in the story's context (by Ahmed's parents' obliviousness to his sexuality and his fear of coming out to them) makes him vulnerable to abuse. Ahmed's and Ibrahim's seemingly loving relationship turns violent. Ahmed justifies Ibrahim's abusive behaviour. He says, 'I was feeding myself a false truth I desperately needed to believe' (Ologunro 2017:138). This prosaic short story achieves an affective depth, in a quite different way to De Vos's essay, that, when read together with the accompanying stories, contributes to a multiplicity of queer voices that render themselves legible.

At the end of the story, Ahmed asserts his personhood and rejects the imposed othering by Ibrahim. He proclaims his individuality, subjectivity, and pride in his sexuality and identity when he exclaims that he 'took control of [his] own life' by escaping the abuse (142–143). The story ends with a moment of collective healing between Ahmed and an unnamed woman as they have the titular 'conversation'. They sit together on a park bench and share their experiences

of social and interpersonal trauma: she was forced into an arranged marriage, her fiancé abused her, but she left on the day of her wedding, only to be ostracised by her family and community (143–144). Makhosazana Xaba's and Karen Martin's (2013:vii) insistence on the importance of *artistic* imaginings of queer lives is important here. In imaginative spaces, they argue, 'dominant narratives hold less sway; possibilities we haven't considered suggest themselves. We are confronted with our prejudices and preconceptions. And we may discover in others our own unrecognised selves'. The staged juxtaposition of patriarchy and heteronormativity in Ologunro's scene highlights the moral complexities and political potential that lie within this fictional text.

This moment on the bench is symbolic of the anthology itself as a collective expression of shared trauma. Ahmed says, 'we cried as though we were one person – a soul split into two bodies but a single unit nonetheless' (Ologunro 2017:144). The anthology serves a similar function of sharing collective suffering yet arriving at possible healing. I maintain further that 'the conversation' scene symbolises the interpretation of 'queer' as a revolutionary act against oppressive social structures. Ahmed is described as 'effeminate' which imposes on him a certain 'sexed' identification with 'womanhood' while the unnamed woman is oppressed because of her gender identity. The anthology itself sets up a 'conversation' or dialogic space between queer identities, strengthening their individual voices collectively.

The anthology's various narratives – whether fictional or non-fictional, personal or geopolitical – are juxtaposed in the anthology with photographic series. 'Dean's Bed' by Dean Hutton (2017:41–49) illustrates the intimate space of the photographed bedroom and contributes to the theme of pride. The photographs depict distinct bodies that are drawn together in their nakedness and bare corporeality. In Hutton's series of photographs, the bedroom is read against the prevailing social understanding of the bedroom as a 'traditionally' heteronormative and monogamous space. In the photographs, Hutton uses these 'images to talk about bisexuality, attraction, age and race' (The Witness 08 August 2017:10). The bed's various occupants, with whom the titular Dean is presumably intimate, suggest a subversive queer bedroom that is resistant to normative relationships. The subjects in the photographs are of multiple ages and genders, dressed in a multitude of religious garb, and the photographs depict various body types, often nude, on a bare mattress, inviting the spectator into the most intimate of spaces, the bedroom, specifically 'Dean's Bed', daring them to witness and partake in this privacy. Msimang's (2017:xiii) observation about the anthology as a whole has particular salience for Hutton's visual project: the collection reflects 'how far we have come in creating self-contained universes in which love and hilarity thrive even in the face of pain and suppression and violence'. This is evident in the multiple registers in which the images convey meaning, shifting between the playful and the poignant. The photographs depict queer subjects that are 'outside' the confines of the traditionally

heteronormative bedroom. Butler (1993:3) asserts that the 'heterosexual imperative enables certain sexed identifications and forecloses and/or disavows other identifications'. In a somewhat paradoxical way, 'Dean's Bed' foregrounds that which has been foreclosed by boldly showcasing it. By including Hutton's photographs in the anthology, the viewer is implicated in the scene as Hutton's series draws the queer space away from the periphery – what Butler calls the 'constitutive outside to the domain of the subject' (3) – to the centre where this queer space becomes legible and legitimate.

The last entry that I discuss encapsulates the themes of the anthology. Amatesiro Dore's story 'For Men Who Care' is a triptych that reflects the anthology's call for societal acceptance of queer individuals in the African context. The story 'offers a complex and thoughtful insight into a part of elite Nigerian life and how buying into certain brands of patriarchy can be deeply damaging' (The Witness 08 August 2017:10). Part One, 'I Adey', is narrated in the first person, offering a 'first-hand' experience of the narrator's shame about his sexuality. Part Two, 'II Emeka', is narrated in the second person, addressing a former lover of the first part's narrator, Adey. Part Three is narrated in the third person, and is about a transgender Nigerian retired chief of Army Intelligence named Aisha, who is accepted by her society. The three parts have different focalisers: the first, Adey, is deeply ashamed of his sexuality and in Part Two (in which Emeka is focalised), Adey becomes more accepting of himself. The third focaliser, Aisha, is accepted by society at large, in contrast to the first two parts of the narrative. The polyvocality of this story, which relies on the aesthetically sophisticated shifts in narrative perspective, points to the possibilities of an inclusive social world and one 'in which queer lives become more legible, valuable, worthy of support, in which passion, injury, grief, aspiration become recognized' (Butler 1993:21). This story demonstrates a core aspect of my argument about the legibility of queerness: that Aisha, a retired chief of Army Intelligence, received some short-lived media attention after her public transition adds affective depth to Sogunro's essay about the Nigerian public's ambivalent attitudes towards the anti-gay law as 'merely a passing newspaper headline, another episode in the everyday affairs' (2017:163). While these texts engage in very different narrative modes – contrasting Dore's fictional short story with Sogunro's polemic – they evidence how the plurality of voices that characterise the anthology is central to its political recentring of the abject queer.

Conclusion

Pride and Prejudice 'reflects a political moment', according to its editor (Msimang 2017:xi), through its anthologising of different voices. Each entry in the text scrutinises its subjects' queerness in distinct ways. Each piece probes the prejudices experienced by queer people within their socio-political contexts. The anthology exposes the subject's often hidden suffering. Through collectivising individual pain, new possibilities emerge for a recentred queer subjectivity that

redraws the boundaries of marginality – questioning the very imposition of parameters on normative identity.

Drew Shaw (2005:96) makes an important claim that personal testimonies in the *Sahwira: Being Gay and Lesbian in Zimbabwe* anthology (2000) ‘mark the beginning of an LGBT community attempting to rewrite itself back into the past and assert its presence in the present’, a sentiment echoed by Carolin (2015:50) in his discussion of ‘fiction as a complementary archive of same-sex subjectivities’. The printed word plays a significant role in my reading of *Pride and Prejudice* (and possibly other queer African anthologies) as it is a ‘crucial site to which the LGBT community can stake a claim in the battle against homophobia and heterosexism’ (Shaw 2005:96). Shaw’s contention makes a significant argument for the rearticulative power of a queer anthology that has the potential to subvert both societal and literary conventions. Shaw (2005) proclaims that we have:

witnessed the efforts of a heteronormative establishment to set the limits of individual agency and define sexual identity, but also to demonstrate formidable resistance to this – expressed most effectively through various forms of writing. Writing, it seems, is the obvious site – a relatively private space – to investigate and express sexuality. (p. 96)

The process of writing is a relatively private activity to explore and express identity and sexuality. In contrast to the privacy of writing is the act of this writing being read, becoming ‘legible’, by an audience that witnesses these private and often hidden identities and sexualities. I argue that the queer anthology redefines the production of self and other, inside and outside, normative and marginal. These texts subvert the rationality behind social exclusion and imbue the collective text with a recentred and amplified subjectivity in the communal voice. I argue that *Pride and Prejudice* provides a new perspective on the experience of marginalisation and underscores the power of placing those who exist outside of the realm of normativity at the centre of the text and, as a consequence, legitimises queer African identity. In other words, the anthology, in my view, examines how the ‘other’ becomes the ‘self’ through the simultaneously individualised and collective literary expression of suffering and joy, and thus *creates* a new and transformative subjectivity. This recentring is achieved by anthologising distinct yet similar queer experiences, and it is through this anthologising that ‘abjection [is reworked] into political agency’ (Butler 1993:21). It is through such a literary community that the queer subject, whether real or fictional, is less alone in their suffering because they become legible and legitimate. The representational power of the anthology beyond the text and into the real world of often violent prejudice is that queer lives become legible, less ‘othered’, and can be expressed and read with pride.

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