

# Introducing Amphibious Subjects

We have always been here, Auntie Kwame. Which is why these days when they say we are gay, or homo-what-sexual, I am like whatever happened to what we were, to being Kwadwo Besia, Ntowbea? What matters for us is that we have always been here. It is funny because immediately [after?] we became “gay” and “homosexual,” the homophobia began. These labels, which were supposed to describe us as a whole were understood here in Ghana as having to do with sex, sex, sex. That is my opinion!

—KK (JULY 2014)

The place of theory in gender work refers first to theory as it is currently produced and/or used and second to the place theory ought to occupy in work on gender. In relation to the first, the notion that theory is “abstract” or “uninteresting” appears to be shared not only by participants at training sessions but also by many NGO activists in the survey who do not see its significance in their everyday lives or work. As “practical” persons seeking to deal with life-threatening problems of gender-based violence or other deprivations of rights, many activists find theory “remote” or not readily usable in their situations.

—TAKYIWAA MANUH, “DOING GENDER WORK IN GHANA” (2007, 139)

Following a four-year spell in the United States pursuing a graduate degree in Upstate New York, I returned to Ghana in June 2011 to conduct an anthropological project on the tabooed subject of homosexuality. After disembarking from the plane at Ghana’s Kotoka International Airport, the international gateway for air travel, I strutted quickly across the tarmac to escape the beastly heat rising from the asphalt. Like other travelers, I was greeted in the arrival hall by a poster hanging in a silver frame on the wall behind the immigration booths where arriving passengers underwent entry formalities. The sign reads:

Welcome!! Akwaaba!! Ghana warmly welcomes all visitors of goodwill. Ghana does not welcome paedophiles and other sexual deviants [in red font]. Indeed Ghana imposes extremely harsh penalties on such sexually aberrant behavior. If you are in

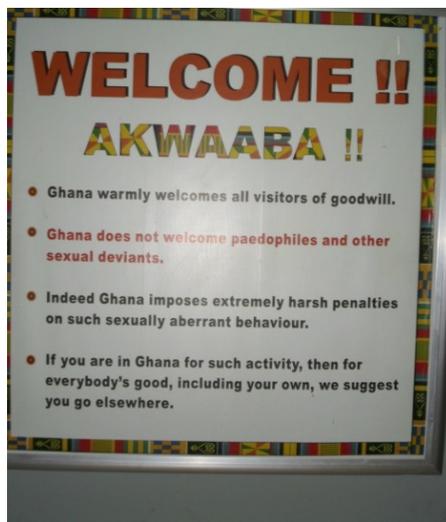


FIGURE 1. I first encountered this image at the Kotoka International Airport in Ghana in 2012, which was when I took this photograph. The image hung on a wall at the section of the airport where arrivals underwent immigration formalities.

Ghana for such activity, then for everybody's good, including your own, we suggest you go elsewhere.

This poster, produced by the Ghana Tourism Authority and presented as an innocuous introduction to the country, not only provides an example of the kinds of language, signs, and gateways that gender nonconforming men, who are the subjects of this ethnographic study, must navigate in Ghana, but also exposes how gender expression is increasingly becoming the “sign” used to prop up presumptions about sexuality. Here, male effeminacy is presumed to correlate with homosexuality, a common observation shared by my interlocutors during fieldwork.<sup>1</sup> Known in local parlance as “sasso” (singular and plural), this community of self-identified effeminate men is part of a constellation of mostly gender nonconforming subjects whose existence in Ghana challenges the signage, which belies their complex lives and experiences. To be clear, in this ethnography, I shine light on how their self-fashioning strategies are not reducible to their effeminacy or the presumption that they engage in homosexuality. Sasso, as a label, then, transcends conventional definitions of gender (and, I would add, sexuality), which, according to the Ghanaian feminist and scholar Takyiwaa Manuh (2007), has a different purchase in Ghana.<sup>2</sup>

Mostly residing in the historic coastal suburb of Jamestown, in the capital city of Accra, they engage in the very “sexually aberrant behavior” the poster condemns.<sup>3</sup> At the same time that they are compelled to navigate within a nation-state that polices their practices, these sasso must also navigate their way through the nettlesome agendas of human rights organizations. These agendas often elide the fact that domains like Jamestown have always been vibrant sites for sasso connections. This historic suburb, while a multiethnic enclave, is mostly Ga.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the majority of the sasso with whom I interacted spoke the Ga language fluently or partially. Animated by edifices of slavery and colonialism like the James

and Usher Forts, which dot the shoreline of Accra, Jamestown is where the Chale Wote Street Festival,<sup>5</sup> a carnival that celebrates Ghanaian and diasporic cultures, is held. Occurring in the middle of August every year, the celebration is a site of unconventional and nonnormative gendered plays and performances, reminiscent of the anthropologist Lyndon Gill's (2018) characterization of the carnival in Trinidad and Tobago as a fertile site of queer possibilities.

The poster is instructive for this project. It impresses upon visitors to Ghana, as well as to Ghanaians reentering the country, that Ghana screens for "sexual deviants," into which category it slots "homosexuals." In a postcolonial nation that retained a colonial-era law criminalizing homosexuality, the sign does not directly announce the criminalization of homosexuality, but nevertheless encodes its illegality.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the welcoming signage conveys the idea that Ghana is a heterosexual nation. Attempting to distinguish between prescribed and proscribed sexual behaviors, the language on the poster conflates unspecified "deviant" sexual practices with pedophilia and other acts of sexual deviancy, but the lack of specificity is telling.

On the one hand, the poster's inscription does not explicitly categorize homosexuality as a deviant sexual practice. On the other hand, its "welcoming" sentiment issues an implicit warning to nonheterosexual individuals whose sexual proclivities do not fall within the boundaries and expectations of the state and the image it seeks to project to the world. While it is noticeable that the poster is silent on gender, the inscription "sexual deviance" arguably indexes "gender deviance." Inevitably, sex and gender are conflated in the warning, implying conformity with the heteronormative gender regime enforced by the heteronational state.<sup>7</sup>

The intentions and effects of the poster are unmistakable, perhaps most especially for a self-identified queer man such as myself. When I first encountered the poster on the morning of my arrival in June 2011, my response was visceral and its effects would be long-lasting. As I continued the course of my fieldwork in the months ahead, I became guarded about my nonheteronormative sexual leanings. Further, I came to understand how this poster echoed the regulating functions of the state. Ghana takes pride in being "the gateway to Africa," a marketing slogan touted by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Creative Arts and the Ghana Tourism Authority, but this poster contradicts the widely held view that Ghanaians are a very hospitable people. Arguably, such hospitality stops at the boundaries enforced by heterosexuality, implicitly underwriting the familiar representation of Africa as "the closeted continent."<sup>8</sup>

Between 2011 and 2012, I conducted intermittent ethnographic visits to Ghana, usually during summer break. These short-term visits were followed by long-term fieldwork in 2013 and 2014. Most of the *sasso* I interacted with resided in, or congregated with other *sasso* in, Jamestown. Their presence in a country that claims to be primarily heterosexual reveals just how fraught the boundaries and inconsistent the country's definitions of sexual citizenship are. The complex lives of *sasso* expose how the coordinates of queer self-making remain contested, questioning

the homogenization of sexual identity and the heterosexualization of sexual citizenship. In this respect, my ethnographic exercise is freeing, not just for the bodies and voices that animate this book, but also for me as a queer Ghanaian man. These bodies challenge those fictions and fantasies of heterosexual Ghana while magnifying the contradictions integral to LGBT+ human rights interventions in Africa.

I employed participant observation and life histories, and conducted archival research at the Missionary Collections at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. There, I undertook literary and documentary analyses while pursuing fieldwork at a local NGO, which for the purposes of this ethnography I will call Bring Us Rights and Justice (BURJ).<sup>9</sup> The methodologies employed in pursuit of this research allowed me to unpack just how LGBT+ human rights organizations and the nation-state were, paradoxically, mirror images of each other. Each produced inflexible identitarian ontologies for sexual minorities such as *sasso*. Indeed, the imposition of the seemingly liberating gay identity on *sasso*, I argue, actually saddled them with an obligatory “gayness” that was, in effect, not too different from the Ghanaian government’s enforcement of obligatory heterosexuality. In spite of the imperial/neocolonial homonormativity undergirding LGBT+ human rights interventions, *sasso* *strategically* draw on the LGBT+ lexicon and its attendant iconography to embed themselves in the transnational universe of LGBT+ human rights activism in a paradoxical manner.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, while it is readily understood that the “criminalization” of homosexuality by the state makes sexual minorities vulnerable, it is perhaps less understood how LGBT+ human rights organizations, in attempting to address such vulnerability, ultimately exacerbate it.<sup>11</sup> They do so by imposing their own equally inflexible language, signage, and sexual ontologies onto *sasso*. I focus, in particular, on how neoliberal LGBT+ human rights organizations such as Aidspan, the Global Fund, and BURJ ignore the sociohistorical and political economic complexities that continue to appear, disappear, and reappear in *sasso* lives. In sum, I discuss how the Ghanaian nation-state and its civil society as well as LGBT+ human rights organizations are complicit in the production and enforcement of labels that neglect the self-making practices of *sasso*. What I describe in this book as *amphibious* is intended to capture how *sasso* navigate the “obligatory gayness” established by LGBT+ human rights organizations and the “obligatory heterosexuality” enforced by the heterosexual nation-state.

#### ENCOUNTERING AMPHIBIOUS PERSONHOOD

The concept of “amphibious personhood,” first used by the Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye, is relevant to *sasso* self-fashioning. A Harvard-trained philosopher who also studied at the University of Ghana, Kwame Gyekye is one of the formative figures in African philosophy as well as a specialist in Greco-Arabic philosophy, bringing his complex philosophical backgrounds to bear on his elucidation of personhood among the Akan, the largest ethnic group in Ghana.

My turn to Gyekye's amphibious personhood does not merely represent my attempt to extend into queer space a discussion of indigenous modes of personhood-making that have queer vitality, but takes up Audre Lorde's call: "As we come more into touch with our own ancient, non-european consciousness of living as a situation to be experienced and interacted with, we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of our power from where true knowledge and, therefore, lasting action comes" (1984, 37).

Invested in a process of self-discovery that disavows the structures of feeling Europeans hold most dear, Lorde invites us to break away from those configurations when she evocatively speaks of the liberatory nature of poetry for Black women. Thus: "The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free" (1984, 38). African philosophical concepts like amphibious personhood as applied to *sasso* lives affirm such freedom.

Etymologically, *amphibian* derives from the Greek words *amphi* and *bios*, the former meaning "both" and the latter meaning "life." In the late seventeenth century, the Latin word *amphibium* described a creature "having two modes of existence" or "possessing a doubtful nature."<sup>12</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the amphibian as a "cold-blooded vertebrate animal of a class that comprises the frogs, toads, newts, and salamanders. They are distinguished by having an aquatic gill-breathing larval stage followed (typically) by a terrestrial lung-breathing adult stage." A further definition defines amphibians as "technological machines [such] as a seaplane, tank, or other vehicle that can operate on land and on water." These technologies are also labeled amphibian especially as they move between multiple spaces, conditions, and temperatures.

Gyekye does not directly reprise these definitions in his discussion on the constitution of a person. Instead, his elucidation of amphibious identification shares some similarity with the general definitions of the amphibian, most of which describe an entity, be it human or animal, animate or inanimate, that moves between two terrains. Embracing the amphibian as a useful heuristic, one which aligns with the processes of self-making expressed in the lives of *sasso*, I interrogate the homogenization of gender and sexuality by institutions that continue to assume that Western experiential frames are universal. To be clear, I emphasize that *sasso* life stories jettison the homogenization of Ghanaian citizens as hetero-gendered and heterosexual as well as the absorption of *sasso* into what Joseph Massad describes as the "gay international" (2007).

In understanding *sasso* as subjects who live "amphibiously," I capture how their complex lives undermine the homogenizing tendencies integral to the heterosexual investments pursued by the nation-state and the anti-homophobic projects undertaken by LGBT+ human rights organizations. As the *sasso* and LGBT+ human rights advocate KK hints in their remark in the first epigraph, *sasso* existed in Ghana before the arrival of LGBT+ human rights political interventions. Implied in that observation is how LGBT+ human rights organizations' attempts

to make visible the victimized “queer” subject violently hypervisibilizes them,<sup>13</sup> as the recent rise in organizations that spew homophobic vitriol in Ghana indicates.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, KK’s endearing reference to me as “auntie” provides a glimpse into the glossary of kinship terms utilized by sasso in their daily conversations in the realm of the mundane.

This book is a queer ethnography not least because it weaves interventions from fields in conversation with each other, that is, African philosophy, anthropological studies on sex and gender, and African and Afro-diasporic/Black feminist and queer ruminations on gender, sexuality, and race. That it attends to the tensions and overlaps yielding from these conversations provides me with the framework to argue that sasso inhabit a distinct queer subjectivity. I describe this subjectivity as at once African and non-African, colonial and anticolonial, nameable and unnamable, heterosexual and nonheterosexual, visible and invisible, known and unknown, Western and non-Western, among other crucial distinctions.

Against this backdrop, I dwell within the geography of this book on the theoretical challenges that sasso lives present to hegemonic queer theory in the West, normative African philosophy, and Eurocentric anthropological approaches to gender and sexuality. Embracing the call by the Ghanaian feminist Takyiwaa Manuh, outlined in the second epigraph, that we engage with the challenges of the place of theory in gender work in Ghana, I ask: how can we make theory useful in understanding the lifeworlds of sasso without diminishing the painful, contradictory realities they navigate daily? Having engaged with sasso, some of whom are activists, and NGO workers, some of whom engage in LGBT+ human rights activism, in this book, I straddle that thin line between theory and practice by interrogating the nation-state and LGBT+ human rights NGOs’ investment in the dichotomy between heterosexual and homosexual as well as gender and sexuality.

I diagram how sasso engage in gender and sexual practices that render messy existing conventions of gender and sexuality. In other words, I examine how sasso embody a gender and sexual subjectivity that circumvents homophobia while navigating the meanings of gender and sexuality circulating under LGBT+ humanitarianism. Thus, this ethnography is comparable to the Dutch-Surinamese anthropologist Gloria Wekker’s ethnography on women’s sexual practices and relationships in postcolonial Suriname, described as “mati work.” Like Wekker, I “insist upon alternatively using ‘indigenous’ terminology” (2006, 68), embracing sasso as a vernacular category that troubles the reduction of sexuality and desire to identity and activity.

Moreover, I demonstrate that sasso is not merely an indigenous label since it hosts a constellation of practices, relationships, and ideas that are at once local, global, and transnational. In fact, it is a site of competing meanings. And, by relying on accounts shared by sasso themselves, I challenge how Western sexual and gender conventions get reproduced as universal even in radical liberatory sexual and gender politics. In doing so, I elaborate on how the entangling nature of sasso

lives and experiences confound the homogenizing impulses of both the Ghanaian state and the LGBT+ human rights organizations who would put the country on a corrective course.

#### DISROBING FICTIONS OF HETEROSEXUAL GHANA

Let us for a moment return to KK, who resists such impulses by refuting the homogenized representation of Ghana as a heterosexual nation, as well as the claim that nonheterosexual subjects are “foreign” to Ghana. Instead, he foregrounds how effeminate men, who are known among the Akan of Ghana as “Kwadwo Besia” or “Ntowbea,” both “man-woman” in English, have been integral to Ghana’s sexual and gender landscapes.<sup>15</sup> Claiming that “they have always been there,” KK poses the question: in what ways do LGBT+ human rights activities in Ghana displace and replace that “they” with LGBT+ nomenclature? His frustration also suggests how the increased visibility of LGBT+ human rights politics has led to the pathologization of Kwadwo Besia and Ntowbea, terms that are now associated with “homosexuality.”

I echo, in part, the work of the Swiss-Ghanaian anthropologist Serena Dankwa to answer that question. In *Knowing Women* (2021), her ethnography on female same-sex intimacies, Dankwa dispels the fiction that Ghana is a primarily heterosexual nation. Exploring same-sex intimacies among women, indigenously known as “supi” relationships, Dankwa outlines a constellation of intimate practices to demonstrate the complexity of Ghana’s erotic cultures. “Friendship marriages” observed among the Nzema people of southwestern Ghana by the Italian ethnologist Italo Signorini, for example, form an intricate part of this complex constellation. Known as “agonwole agyale,”<sup>16</sup> which translates into English as “friendship marriage,” this marriage “is considered on the conscious level as the noblest expression of friendship: the sublimation of a deep feeling which is of considerable value as a factor of social cohesion in Nzema culture and which is recognized by that society and expressed through institutions of growing complexity according to the intensity of the sentiments involved” (1973, 222). Thus, the presence of Kwadwo Besia and Ntowbea, supi relationships, and agonwole agyale among the Nzema exemplifies the wide range of intimacies, identities, and practices in Ghana.

Even as the government considers same-sex intimacies as “foreign” to Ghana, a position underscored by the closure of an LGBT+ office run by the organization LGBT+ Rights Ghana on February 23, 2021, LGBT+ human rights groups have become increasingly visible in the country.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, their presence serves to establish that LGBT+ citizens of Ghana have “rights” that need defending; on the other hand, these human rights groups come with their own homogenizing tendencies and agendas that seek to assimilate sasso in Ghana to the labels—lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, and queer+—that reduce

sasso subjectivity to their sexual orientation. In this book, I refer to these incidents as “heterocolonial” tropes wrapped in “homocolonial” tones precisely because they rehearse colonial and Christian projects that displaced arguably fluid pre-colonial gender formations. Assimilationist labels such as LGBT+ work to suck sasso into the vortex Dennis Altman (1997) frames as “global gay.” The men in my study prefer the term *sasso* largely because, in their view, it does not carry the weight and currency that LGBT+ terms are presumed to carry. Furthermore, *sasso* not only avoids the negative baggage associated with LGBT+ in Ghana, but also makes navigating the homophobia spewed by Christian organizations less challenging.

*Christianity and Constitutionality: Handmaidens  
of Heteronationalism*

Ghana is undoubtedly a nation where Christian precepts are fundamental to the policing of both gender and sexuality. The pronouncement made by former president John Evans Atta Mills in 2011 at the National Convention of the Church of Pentecost is unambiguous: “Christ is the President of Ghana.”<sup>18</sup> This statement, which epitomizes Christianity’s synecdochic and irreducible prominence, boldly reinforces the perception that Ghana is a heterosexual Christian nation. The National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values (NCPH-SRFV), an anti-LGBT+ NGO that wages campaigns against the “growing menace of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT+) Rights activities in the world,”<sup>19</sup> also perpetuates the idea of a heterosexual Ghana.

Established in 2013, the coalition’s membership, which includes religious and civil society organizations such as the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG), Ghana’s oldest and leading Christian organization, has taken the stance that homosexuality is the result of Westernization. Thus, the organization has been unrelenting in its opposition not only to the liberalization of LGBT+ human rights but also to efforts to incorporate comprehensive sexuality education interventions into Ghana’s educational policy. Receiving funding from Western evangelical organizations like Family Watch International, the coalition is intent on preserving heterosexual family values that it believes are being “eroded” by LGBT+ human rights organizations.

Christianity’s overwhelming presence is just one part of the story. Ghana’s Fourth Republican Constitution reinforces Christian teachings by criminalizing what it describes as “unnatural carnal knowledge.”<sup>20</sup> The logical corollary of British colonial legal schemes, the constitution’s proscriptions and prescriptions on unnatural carnal knowledge remain vague (Atuguba 2019). In an interview conducted by the Human Rights Watch, an assistant commissioner of police in Ghana revealed that “the term unnatural carnal knowledge is vague, does not have any clear meaning in law, creates difficulties in consistent interpretation and its application is used to target LGBT+ people” (Human Rights Watch 2017). The

Ghanaian legal scholar Raymond Atuguba underscores this ambiguity when he suggests that

Ghana's criminal statute does not outlaw "homosexuality" or "homosexual expression" in general. Homosexuality could mean the mere sexual attraction to a person of the same gender, and not necessarily unnatural carnal knowledge or sodomy. This implies that a person who identifies as "gay," but does not engage in unnatural carnal knowledge would not be caught by Ghana's criminal laws. Nevertheless, a heterosexual person who engages in "unnatural carnal knowledge" commits an offence, although (s)he is not homosexual. It may, therefore, be reasonably proposed that, a person belonging to the LGBT+ community is permitted by the confines of Ghanaian law, to live openly as a homosexual—with the opportunity at will to publicly show affection to another person of the same-sex, and engage in all acts attendant to such affection, and which fall short of the requisite degree of penetration. (2019, 114)

Despite this lucid observation by Atuguba, which disrobes the fiction that homosexuality is a criminal act, Ghanaians assumed to embody nonheterosexual tendencies are explicitly commanded to tow the lines of heterosexuality. The presence of sasso within Ghana's borders reveals the porosity of the country's supposed *cordon sanitaire*. KK's statement above, Serena Dankwa's study of female same-sex intimacy, and Italo Signorini's exploration of friendship marriages among the Nzema of Ghana bring the permeability of these boundaries to life. How, then, do sasso navigate the shifts induced by formations that have opposing interpretations of sexual citizenship? And does amphibious subjectivity, the analytic I use to make sense of sasso in this ethnography, adequately capture how they embody a distinct queer subjectivity?

#### FROM RELUCTANTLY QUEER TO AMPHIBIOUS SUBJECTS

When I first envisioned this project, I framed sasso responses to homophobia and LGBT+ human rights interventions as a sign of their "reluctance" or hesitation at attempts that reduced their subjectivities to their sexual leanings. Thus, at the time, I concluded that sasso were *reluctantly queer* (Otu 2014). After conducting long-term fieldwork and archival research, and engaging with African philosophy, specifically Akan philosophy and its culturally derived articulations of personhood, I moved away from reluctance as an analytic. My turn to Akan philosophy not only illuminated my understanding of how sasso navigated sexual citizenship but also underscored how they engaged in queer self-making practices contingent on time, space, and relationships. In observing sasso, it became clear to me over time that my reluctance to come out as gay in Ghana informed my own limited analyses of sasso subjectivity. Eventually, I reconciled with the fact that my interlocutors' accounts about their experiences as queer subjects in Ghana did not necessarily have to be mine. Moreover, as an ethnographer, it was important

that I allow ethnography be a site of contestations, even if those tensions erupted between sasso and myself.

The sasso I encountered during my fieldwork ultimately engaged in self-making practices that challenged my global, North-based understandings of sexuality, gender, intimacy, and desire. They led me to ponder not only what gender and sexuality entailed for them but also how they understood desire and intimacy. Did these vocabularies matter at all? Or did they become significant only when they encountered and participated in LGBT+ human rights interventions? These considerations led me to contemplate whether what Judith Butler (1990) famously described as “gender trouble” had meaning in the Ghanaian context, yielding the questions: How do African bodies already trouble gender and sexuality when they exist beyond white-centered characterizations of terms that are not theirs?<sup>21</sup> What do we do with terms, categories, and labels that are not ours? In what ways do we reproduce oppressive apparatuses and practices by entering the labels and terms that are not of our making but the reverberations of a violent past? Although these and other questions and concerns compelled me to leave “reluctance” behind as an analytic in favor of “amphibious subjectivity,” a concept derived from Akan philosophy, they also amplified the cardinal postcolonial paradox that confronts postcolonial citizens: What do we lose when we are forced to neglect what we were supposed to be for what we were forced to become? Have we become the calcified remains of a violent colonial, racist, and heteropatriarchal projects?

#### WHY AMPHIBIOUS SUBJECTIVITY? AFRICAN PHILOSOPHICAL ARTICULATIONS OF PERSONHOOD IN BRIEF

The place of the person and community among African societies and cultures has long been central to discussions and debates within and beyond African philosophy. African thinkers like Leopold Senghor (1995), John Mbiti (1995), Victor Uchendu (1965), Ifi Amadiume (1987b), Kwame Gyekye (1987), Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984), Julius Nyerere (1968), Okot p’Bitek (1998), Kwasi Wiredu (1992), Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992), Nkiru Nzegwu (2006), Oyèrónkẹ Oyèwùmí (1997), and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (1998), among others, have variously dissected Africans’ engagement with the metaphysics of personhood and community. Notable among the aforementioned philosophers are Senghor (1995) and Menkiti (1984), who held the unwavering position that Africans are inherently communitarian.<sup>22</sup> Invoking the maxim “Not one tree does a forest make” as evidence to support their claim, these thinkers emphasized the centrality of the community to self-making in Africa. This proposition did not go uncontested.

Philosophers like Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu, informed by their distinct philosophical persuasions on the making of personhood in Africa, responded to Senghor and Menkiti, arguing that self-making processes in Africa are the

by-product of both individualistic and communitarian dispositions. Both Gyekye (1997, 1987, 1992) and Wiredu and Gyekye (1992) focus on the self-making traditions of the Akan people to arrive at the conclusion that the individual self and the social/collective body play significant roles in the production of personhood. While the various philosophical treatises on personhood and community invoked by these philosophers are significant, for the purposes of the book, I engage, in particular, with Gyekye's notion of "amphibious personhood."

In explaining amphibious personhood, Gyekye turns to the Adinkra symbol known among the Akan as *funtumfunefu denkyemfunefu*, which translates into English as the "Siamese crocodiles." A crocodile with two heads and a conjoined stomach, the symbol epitomizes the uneven and often complex fusion and fission that animate interactions between the individual and the community. Adinkra symbolic representations amplify how pictorial symbols and images are central to the Akan conceptual scheme. They convey values, norms, idioms, and the complexity of the ideas and practices of the Akan people in West Africa. As the Ghanaian philosopher N. K. Dzobo maintains, the term *adinkra* is rooted in "the Twi words *di nkra* meaning 'to say goodbye.' The adinkra cloth is traditionally a mourning cloth and is normally worn 'to say goodbye' to the dead and to express sympathy for the bereaved family, and so is commonly seen at funerals and memorial services. It is usually adorned with symbols that express various views of life and death" (1992, 89).

Adinkra symbology, omnipresent not only in Akan culture but also in Ghanaian and other West African and Afro-diasporic cultures, reinforces Kwasi Wiredu's supposition that "given that Ghanaian life is suffused with speculative thought, it is not surprising that many of our eminent contemporary public leaders have attached the greatest importance to philosophy by both word and work" (1992, 1).

Kwame Gyekye "endogenizes" the word *amphibian* by turning to the symbol *funtumfunefu denkyemfunefu*. In doing so, he reaffirms Dzobo's suggestion that "all over Africa, visual images and ordinary objects are used symbolically to communicate knowledge, feelings and values. As symbols play such an important role in the African conception of reality, a sound understanding of African patterns of thought and feeling requires an appreciation of the nature and function of symbolism as a medium of communication in African culture" (1992, 85).

Evidently, Gyekye's reliance on the Siamese crocodile in his attempts to understand personhood-making among the Akan is exemplary of how Adinkra symbology remains fundamental to the Akan *weltanschauung*. Articulating that the frictions between the two heads illuminate "an enduring *tension* [my emphasis] in the Akan philosophy of the individual," Gyekye underscores how this schism "offers a clear, unambiguous statement on the value of individuality" (1987, 157). The two single heads represent the two separate individuals, and the joint stomach symbolizes community, suggesting that "the uniqueness of the individual and his or her relationship to society" (1987, 159) is never diminished. This implies that

the constitution of the individual is coterminously the constitution of the society precisely because “the will, interests, tastes, and passions of individuals” (1987, 159) occur in the contested space of the community—this is the very domain in which the will, interests, passions, and tastes take shape and get absorbed and redefined by the individual amidst the collective when and how they find suitable. Against this backdrop, Gyekye notes “the value of communality” (1987, 161) to the individual and the individual’s centrality to communality. Through the latter, the individual is furnished with the tools to form associations between emotion and thought in order to identify their place within the collective and the latitude for their own self-formation. The Siamese crocodile embodies how the self emerges out of the entanglement between the individual and the community; conversely, the community’s being is indebted to that entanglement.

Herpetologically, the crocodile is a reptile, not an amphibian. Gyekye, in his examination of amphibious personhood, does not explain why he reclassifies a seemingly reptilian creature as an amphibian. Aware of that slippage, I give two possible reasons for this lack of explication. First, I suggest that, in the Gyekyean sense, the amphibian is probably not in reference to the crocodile as a biological creature, but to the Siamese crocodile as a mythical creature. And second, since there are no records to the effect that biologically Siamese crocodiles exist, in symbolic and poetic realms, they can potentially exist.<sup>23</sup> Arguably, the two-headed crocodile with a conjoined belly can be seen as amphibious not just because the crocodile moves between land and water but because the two heads struggle over food absorbed by a single belly. In philosophizing the amphibian, Gyekye does not disavow the biological fact that the crocodile is a reptile; instead, he offers proof of how in the context of African philosophy, biology and philosophy can productively complement each other in ways that undermine the binary construal of biology as opposed to philosophy.

Hence, *funtumfunefu denyemfunefu*, the symbolic bedrock of this theoretical exposé on *sasso* subjectivity in neoliberal Ghana, is arguably an example of the widespread circulation and usefulness of Adinkra symbols among the Akan people in particular and Ghanaians in general. It has both philosophic and poetic significations that are meaningful for the people who create them and use them as the guiding principles of their lives.

Consuming food absorbed by a single stomach, the two-headed crocodile is primarily invoked to signify the complex, uneven, and sometimes competing interactions between the individual and the community. *Funtumfunefu denyemfunefu*, therefore, signifies how Akan people scrutinize the ways in which human social relationships are marked by a constant vacillation between the individual self and the social self. If the crocodile moves between land and water, then humans move between the selves they inhabit and the social contexts in which those selves are nested. Similarly, the environments in which they are nested are amphibious, since the boundaries between the land and water are not sharply delineated. The



FIGURE 2. The Siamese crocodile. Source: <http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra/funt.htm>.

amphibian thus moves between worlds by engaging in world-making practices that refuse the boundaries established to limit such movement and the potential they stand to yield. There is a queerness to this boundary-breaking trait of the amphibian that makes it appealing both as a creature and an analytic for me in this book.

Gyekye's observation that the "African social order is amphibious" is also telling not merely because it "manifests features of both communality and individuality" (1987, 154) but also because in this order, life is "lived in harmony and cooperation with others, a life of mutual consideration and aid and of interdependence" (1995, 37). For Gyekye, this life "provides a viable framework for the fulfillment of the individual's nature and potentials" (1995, 38), implying that the individual needs the community if they are to wholly develop themselves, and the community needs the individual's contributions to be adequately sustained. For this reason, then, "the African social order is neither purely communalistic nor purely individualistic" (1987, 154). And because the individual is not entirely crushed by the community, they have latitude for the self-assertion required to define their humanity and place in the collective. Despite these insightful readings, we are left with little room within Gyekye's framework to highlight the potentially boundary-breaking characteristic of the amphibian, especially as regards gender and sexuality in personhood-making.

In his essay "Person and Community in African Thought," Gyekye draws closer to an explication of self-making and personhood, especially among the Akan and the coastal ethnic Ga-Dangme, that takes on a "queer" dimension. Accordingly, he foregrounds how these ethnic groups engage in practices of the self that take on gender-neutral dispositions. For example, they use neutral pronouns to apply to both animate and inanimate objects. Gyekye observes: "In Ga-Dangme languages, also in Ghana, the pronoun *e* is used to refer to everything—stones, trees, dogs, and human beings (of both the masculine and feminine genders). The pronoun "*e*" (=it/he/she) is thus gender-neutral, encompassing all the genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter" (1992, 107).

Gyekye's observation echoes arguments on gender formations among the Igbos of Nigeria by the Nigerian anthropologist Ifi Amadiume. In her eloquent expatiation of the flexibility of gender representations and practices among the Igbo, Amadiume underscores that "another example of the looseness of gender

association is the fact that in Igbo grammatical construction of gender, a neuter particle is used in Igbo subject or object pronouns, so that no gender distinction is made in reference to males and females in writing or in speech. There is, therefore, no language or mental adjustment or confusion in references to a woman performing a typical male role” (1987b, 17).

From both Gyekye and Amadiume, we glean the extent to which gender-neutral language complicates the reducibility of being and becoming a person to being male or female. In what ways, then, does Gyekye’s emphasis on the neuter pronouns in Akan and Ga-Dangme conceptual schemes, like Amadiume’s example of gender neutrality among the Igbos, *queer* African philosophical contributions on personhood?

What does queering Gyekye’s evocative intervention on personhood do for me in this book? To queer here indexes my awareness of the limitation in Gyekye’s intervention. While his framework is applicable to sasso subjectivities, it retains a heteronormative leaning that, in my opinion, presumes gender neutrality in name only rather than in action or deed. And here, I mean his invocation that a gender-neutral vocabulary exists does not correlate to the lived experience the terms are supposed to capture. In that respect, my use of *queer* here elicits the Black queer theorist Xavier Livermon’s theorization of “queer(y)ing” freedom among Black queers in South Africa. For Livermon, “Black queers create freedom through forms of what I term cultural labor. The cultural labor of visibility occurs when black queers bring dissident sexualities and gender nonconformity into the public arena. Visibility refers not only to the act of seeing and being seen but also to the process through which individuals make themselves known in the communities as queer subjects” (2012, 300).

In queering freedom, then, Livermon’s exposition divests from freedom the parochial understanding that it is merely a political performance by illuminating how “black queers demonstrate that far from being a Western contaminant, queerness is embedded in black communities” (2012, 300). Through queering freedom, it becomes apparent that the practice and idea of freedom need always be reworked, reframed, and revitalized if freedom’s inherent vitality is to be sustained.

Similarly, the Africanist historian T. J. Tallie, in his historiography on indigeneity in colonial Natal, South Africa, conducts a “*queer* reading” (2019, 7) of indigeneity. Tallie incisively suggests that “a queer theoretical approach has allowed scholars to analyze not only instances in which subjects evince a sexual identification that is not explicitly heterosexual, but also the ways in which actions or positions can challenge larger normative systems” (2019, 7). Rendering a capacious exposition on what it means to engage in a nonnormative examination of normative systems, especially in the context of settler colonialism, Tallie writes: “A queer reading, then, can offer an exploration of how lines of assumed order are skewed by ideas, actions, or formations. If settler colonialism itself is presented as a form of orientation, of making recognizable and inhabitable home space for European

arrivals on indigenous land, then native peoples and their continued resistance can serve to ‘queer’ these attempted forms of order” (2019, 7).

By queering indigeneity, Tallie unsettles the Eurocentric, racist anthropological roots that continue to inform understandings of indigeneity. In light of the above provocations by both Livermon and Tallie, which widen the meaning of what queering does or signifies, I not only queer Gyekye amphibious personhood, but also demonstrate that sasso subjectivities are queer. Their engagements with LGBT+ human rights organizations, their families, ritual celebrations like christenings, weddings, funerals, and birthdays, among other things, underscore their centrality to a heteronormative culture that now publicly objects to their being.

#### WHEN QUEER AFRICAN ETHNOGRAPHY MEETS AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

The queer Kenyan literary theorist Keguro Macharia, in contending with what it means to write about African and Afro-diasporic experiences, suggests we refuse the seduction to make whiteness the point of departure in our analysis of Black experiences. Highlighting the critical interventions made by African and Afro-diasporic scholars, Macharia proposes that we center their contributions while being aware of their essentialist and nationalist limitations. In a vein similar to African philosophers like Kwame Gyekye, Macharia invokes “frottage” as a metaphor to refuse the lingering specter and seduction to summon and analyze Black life through white/Western frames.

As an analytic, frottage conveys how “the black diaspora poses a historical and conceptual challenge to dominant histories and theories in queer studies, which have tended to privilege white Euro-American experience” (2019, 4). Thinking through frottage, Macharia circumvents Eurocentric theoretical models by “moving the centre,” to use Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s (1992) useful terminology. Wa’ Thiong’o gestures at the need to shift the center from its supposed location in the West into multiple orbits and arenas in non-Western cultures. It is important, nevertheless, to consider the intimate presence of Africa in the West, an intimacy that Lisa Lowe has described as undermining “the modern division of knowledge into academic disciplines, focused on discrete areas and objects of interest” (2015, 1). On this premise, if the constitution of Africa relies on the vacillation between the so-called West and itself, then, arguably, Africa is amphibious as it reproduces aspects of the West in its self-formation.

I find the boundary-breaking character of the amphibian to be queer. Similarly, if the crocodile, because it lives in land and water, develops abilities that sustain it in both spaces, then Africa, both as a geography and an idea is amphibious because it shares a complex and nervous intimacy with the West, and vice versa. And in view of Kwame Gyekye’s formulation of the African subject’s self-constitution as the outcome of their vacillation between the community and the individual, I

argue throughout this book that sasso lives, experiences, and existence breathe life into the arguably abstract analytic of amphibious subjectivity.

The poster at the airport, which sets the terrain not only for this ethnography but also for the gender and sexual landscapes of Ghana, then, raises the personal, anthropological, and philosophical questions that structure the contours of this book, namely: How does the presence of sasso in Ghana unsettle the information on the poster? Does the poster demand that one's self-identity be reconstituted because they are gender nonconforming or nonheterosexual? How do sasso navigate the landscape that forms the background of the poster? Ultimately, these questions must transcend the individual, circling back to the nation-state. What does this greeting at the portal of arrival signify about Ghana? How does the country attempt to naturalize heterosexuality as the dominant sexual order for defining citizenship? Do the strong attachments to heterosexualization in the postcolonial context reinforce the colonial project as coterminously a "heterocolonial" process, a point further detailed in chapter 5? If so, in what ways do LGBT+ human rights organizations wittingly and unwittingly engage in "homocolonial" projects that reproduce the very heterocolonial practices they seek to upset?

#### A NOTE ON RACIALIZED NEOLIBERALISM AND DEVELOPMENTAL HUMANITARIANISM

The postcolonial African feminist Patricia McFadden (2011), extending Uma Narayan's (1997) notion of "the politics of rescue," describes how neoliberal regimes and their concomitant logics have the tendency to extinguish particular populations while coterminously producing "new privileged subjects" under the guise of saving them (see also Melamed 2011). In this book I detail how neoliberal queer politics and logics connect former colonial metropolises to postcolonial nations following a developmentalist paradigm that relies on the framework established by Global North/Global South distinctions.

The late seventies and early eighties represented a neoliberal watershed moment in Africa. During this period, Africa was sucked into a Western capitalist project that claimed to resolve the developmental woes of and dire conditions in which Africans lived their lives. The idea and science of neoliberalism ignored how forces like colonialism and slavery had wrecked Africa, which the historian Walter Rodney (1972) captured as the European and neo-European underdevelopment of Africa. The appearance of institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the African political economic scene deregulated state sovereignty with the introduction of practices that upheld the principle of a free market economy.

Projects designed under the auspices of monumental interventions like the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) forced African governments into the vortex of neoliberalism. Hence, as the

Black queer feminist M. Jacqui Alexander avers, these neoliberal projects, instead of eliminating the structures of violence for which they were implemented, merely readjusted them (2006). Saving women under the banner of neoliberal political projects calcified the tenacity of heteropatriarchy. It might be added that the intensified homophobia in postcolonial Africa is a function of gender mainstreaming projects implemented under neoliberal projects.

In an era dominated by Reaganomics and Thatcherite doctrines of the free market, countries in Africa became the recipients of funds distributed through SAP and ERP that came with strings and conditions. This era also witnessed the proliferation of NGOs that worked in concert with governmental organizations to deliver on the promise of development (Manuh 2007; Ferguson 2006; Igoe and Kelsall 2005; Pierre 2013). The proliferation of NGOs in Africa, characteristic of the neoliberal wave, disenfranchised state agencies in Africa the same way that it increasingly disenfranchised Black people, people of color, and poor working-class communities in the so-called Global North. In effect, it was a racialized project that robbed African and Afro-diasporic subjects of their access to citizenship and self-determination (Rodney 1972; Pierre 2013; McFadden 2011; Manuh 2007). These various forces animate the settings in which projects to liberate women, and, eventually, LGBT+ human rights interventions, occurred. The widespread circulation and adoption of these neoliberal projects shifted extant notions of citizenship.

Neoliberal ideologies made way for trafficking in ideas that not only enforced state deregulation but also, to a large degree, the privatization of citizenship. Not surprisingly, these shifts occurred in tandem with attempts to lift African nations from the doldrums of underdevelopment. Inevitably, developmentalism was the new civilization and new colonialism. What the first president of Ghana and ardent pan-Africanist Kwame Nkrumah persuasively captured as “neocolonialism” tilled the political economic soils in which the neoliberal turn was sowed. For Nkrumah, “the result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment under neo-colonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world” (1965, 2).

Any analysis of the manifestation of neoliberalism in Africa requires a critical examination of how it is entwined with neocolonialism, which, to cite Nkrumah again, represented “an attempt to export the social conflicts of the capitalist countries” (1965, 3). Neoliberal political economic regimes and their concomitant ideologies and practices did not occur in a vacuum. In fact, while Africa became a large-scale laboratory for testing and affirming the veracity of neoliberal projects, such experiments had their roots in Black communities, communities of color, and working-class communities in the Global North. Nkrumah’s suggestion that neocolonialism involves the exportation of social conflicts and problems from the developed world to ex-colonies anticipates the emergence and globalization

of neoliberalism (1965). Neoliberalism was therefore a racial project that fundamentally restructured racist formations formerly adjudicated under colonial and imperial apparatuses that orchestrated the colonization of Africa and the enslavement of Africans.

What Patricia McFadden (2011) identifies as the “neoliberal and neocolonial collusion” at the core of the developmentalist paradigm on the continent foregrounds the consequences of structural adjustment on African nations. This collusion reinstated those old violent regimes within new apparatuses of domination. Actors in these collusion schemes include mostly Western NGOs and their non-Western representatives, as well as state and governmental agencies. Where there were Christian missionaries, colonial administrators, and merchants/traders in the era of colonization and slavery, now there are human rights missionaries, neocolonial administrators, and neoliberal corporations that participate in so-called development projects to enhance Africa. Hence, to understand neoliberalism’s manifestation in Africa is to contend with its seamless attachment to neocolonialism and the fact that the neocolonial and neoliberal collusion in the Global South is distinguishable from Global North neoliberalism in a fundamental way.

The Africanist anthropologist James Ferguson, in *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (2006), reexamines the thesis of development in Africa by interrogating conventional discourses on development that neglect the specter of colonization, which inhibits African development. Ferguson magnifies how developmental schemes in Africa execute “re-colonization” projects that racialize Africa by forcibly pigeonholing the continent into a universalist framework. Neoliberalism in Africa, Ferguson asserts, can be described by how nations in Africa are by all accounts intentionally controlled “by transnational organizations that are not in themselves governments but work together with powerful First World states within a global system of nation-states” (2006, 100).

Similarly, the anthropologist Jemima Pierre incisively outlines how neoliberal projects are coterminously scenes of racialization, even if such projects uphold radical Pan-African intentions. Pierre’s reading cogently evinces the ways in which neoliberalism insidiously gets normalized in domains that are critical of the philosophy and praxis of neoliberal projects (2013). In *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*, Pierre dwells on the multiple ways in which neoliberal projects perpetuate white supremacy in their efforts to restore the histories of slavery in Ghana. She argues: “Indeed, the development of heritage tourism within the context of a neoliberal economic order that presents a narrative of slavery decoupled from racial colonization and that is without European perpetrators in fact works to neutralize the impact of the country’s colonial history, silencing the effects of exploitation. At the same time, it decouples White Western power and African subordination, shifting responsibility to Africans, thereby reifying the racial and cultural differences that undergird traditional understandings of Africa’s economic and political predicaments” (2013, 151).

I suggest in this book that the evolution of LGBT+ human rights in Africa, too, is “decoupled” from “racial colonization.” This uncoupling enables the racialization of Africans as homophobic, and thus as solely responsible for the perpetration of the injustices against nonheteronormative subjects. Extending Pierre’s point, I illuminate the coordinates and boundaries of the anti-Blackness inherent within liberalism in general, and queer liberalism in particular. Queer liberal projects, then, like the gender mainstreaming projects undertaken in the eighties and nineties to rescue African women, are sites of racialization. On the one hand, queer Ghanaians qua Africans deserve *rescuing* yet are still embedded in neocolonial networks and structures and, on the other hand, these apparatuses reinforce either covertly or overtly processes of racialization regarded as “progress-making projects.”<sup>24</sup> The recent invasion of the office of LGBT+ Human Rights Ghana exemplifies this paradox.<sup>25</sup> Here, the establishment of an LGBT+ office, considered as a progressive move in Ghana, yielded what some queer Ghanaians and advocates of LGBT+ rights who supported engaging in LGBT+ advocacy expected—heightened homophobia from the nation-state and civil society—by steamrolling years of pathbreaking advocacy work.

#### TRAVERSING THE TERRAINS OF AMPHIBIOUS SUBJECTS: THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE BOOK

This book is divided into three parts. The first part consists of two chapters, the first of which is “Situating Sasso: Mapping Effeminate Subjectivities and Homoerotic Desire in Postcolonial Ghana.” There, I elaborate on how the complex embodiments and practices of sasso can be best understood if situated in their historical and contemporary contexts. Thus, I argue, we approach sasso as a constituency inhabiting a nation that bears the marks of colonial and Christian modernity. Approaching sasso as a convoluted community, I trace the complex genealogy of sasso as a category, its various iterations and constellations.

The second chapter, titled “Contesting Homogeneity: Sasso Complexity in the Face of Neoliberal LGBT+ Politics,” foregrounds the lives of four sasso; two were residents of Jamestown and two lived in other suburbs of the city. Jamestown was their congregation point. The four interludes are windows into sasso lifeworlds, and they highlight sasso heterogeneity and their navigation of homoerotic desire amid the tensions incited by LGBT+ human rights organizations and the nation-state.

The book’s second part, called “Amphibious Subjects in Rival Geographies,” is comprised of two chapters that ethnographically and theoretically demonstrate why sasso embody queer self-making practices that are amphibious. The third chapter, “Amphibious Subjectivity: Queer Self-Making at the Intersection of Colliding Modernities in Neoliberal Ghana,” investigates several questions: How do sasso, as amorphous subjectivities, take advantage of opportunities provided them

by transnational LGBT+ human rights organizations without becoming subject to and subjects of these neoliberal agendas? What are the stakes of publicly asserting LGBT+ identification? In this chapter, I focus on sasso responses to a 2014 video clip produced by Aidspan, an NGO based in Kenya, to foreground the ways in which they navigate landscapes characterized by both the collision and collusion between Christian and queer liberal modernities. In this chapter, I return to Kwame Gyekye's concept of "amphibious personhood" to illuminate how sasso navigate attempts by the nation-state to police their subjectivities and responses to such attempts by LGBT+ human rights organizations.

In chapter 4, "The Paradox of Rituals: Queer Possibilities in Heteronormative Scenes," I provide an ethnographic collage of how sasso lives imbricate with rituals of transition like naming ceremonies (popularly known in Ghana as "outdoor-ing"), weddings, birthdays, and funerals. While rituals may not be sufficient to make sense of sasso existence in uncertain sociocultural, political, and economic terrains, their contributions to the sustenance of particular rites of passage highlight the entanglement of heteroerotic and homoerotic intimacies and desires. From ceremonies ranging from naming the newly born to weddings and birthdays, I explore how ritual, as an interstitial aesthetic, brings amphibious subjectivity-making into full relief. Focusing on an outdoor-ing ceremony and birthday, I suggest that these events created transgressive geographies that ultimately engendered queer selfhoods.

The third and last part of the book is called "Becoming and Unbecoming Amphibious Subjects in Hetero/Homo Colonial Vortices." In the fifth chapter, "Palimpsestic Projects: Heterocolonial Missions in Post-Independent Ghana (1965–1975)," I reread the historiography and excerpts from the archive that contains evidence of projects to normalize monogamy at the dawn of Ghana's formation. I argue that to understand the fiction that Ghana is a heterosexual nation, the official vocabulary employed to dislodge and "un-citizen" LGBT+ presence by organizations like the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values (NCPHSRFV), we need to return to these projects. I specifically reread correspondence, brochures, and conference proceedings exchanged between Christian Aid, a humanitarian organization based in Britain, and the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) to discuss how the campaign for monogamy occurred at the expense of the racialization of polygamy, anticipating the waves of homophobia in Ghana today.

In chapter 6, "Queer Liberal Expeditions: The BBC's *The World's Worst Place to Be Gay?* and the Paradoxes of Homocolonialism," I illuminate the complex entanglements between local NGOs and queer liberalism by suggesting that the screening of the controversial BBC documentary on International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) reinforced "homocolonial" tropes in the same way Christian NGOs in the sixties reinforced "heterocolonial" tropes. I focus on disagreements among BURJ employees preceding the celebration of IDAHO, contentions that amplified

the complexities and anxieties around NGO work that addresses LGBT+ human rights issues in nations that neglect the existence of queer subjects.

In the conclusion to the book, entitled “Queering Queer Africa?,” riffing off of W. E. B. Du Bois’s (1903) widely cited statement that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line,” I ponder whether the problem in Africa in the twenty-first century is the problem of the queer line. Queering queer Africa, a phrase used by Ugandan feminist Stella Nyanzi (2014), underscores the need to avoid rehearsing the mistakes that hindered a radical feminist movement in postcolonial Africa. Thus, I ask what the stakes are for pursuing LGBT+ human rights in a heteronationalist state intent on clamping down on LGBT+ human rights pursuits. Queering queer Africa embodies recognizing that the radical project to dismantle oppression in its various manifestations is unending. It is a process that must be constantly attuned to the machinations of neoliberal and neocolonial regimes.