

PART IV

Religious Discipline and the Gendered
and Sexual Body

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10. Wrestling with Homosexuality: Kinesthesia as Resistance in Ghanaian Pentecostalism

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Their bodies, exhausted and finally worn down by the physical intensity of deliverance, were propped up as the church chairperson took a photograph to memorialize the experience. The three women, two of them still uncertain what had just transpired, sat in the middle, surrounded by a dozen male pastors, all grinning. The deliverers embraced them as bodily trophies after a two-hour deliverance event defined by bodies in contact and in conflict. The clothes of the two women were still disheveled, but most of the flesh that had been revealed during the throes of deliverance was no longer laid bare. Their faces were covered with sweat and tears, wearing looks of bewilderment and pain. The crowd of thousands who had cheered throughout the lengthy ordeal remained. A crush of people continued to push forward, trying to get their own pictures for posterity, each person's movement creating a syncopated wave that rippled through the crowd. The pictures—frozen vignettes and digital tableaux—all failed to capture much of what had transpired, however.

The bodily stillness in the photo taken by the chairperson contrasted starkly with the persistent, frenetic, and unremitting bodily motion of the deliverance experience. Bodies had jolted, punched, danced, spasmed, and screamed. The central claim of this chapter is simply that in deliverance, bodies and bodily movements matter. To illustrate the extent to which this is true, I interpret an act of deliverance from the spirits of “lesbianism” in a Ghanaian Pentecostal church by watching bodies in motion, in contact, and in convulsion.

This chapter does not intervene directly in the discussion about homosexuality and charismatic churches, instead proffering an argument about bodily resistance. In doing so, this chapter transposes arguments about the publicity of sexuality in Pentecostal settings into the register of ritual. Homosexuality is made public not only through discourse but also through the violence of rituals whereby sexuality is wrested from its privacy and thrown onto a public stage. Careful attention to both scripted and nonscripted kinesthetic movements reveals much about persistent and hoary Pentecostal scripts concerning sexuality. While each violent action from the pastorate delineates which bodies are forcibly disciplined—which is a harrowing experience for LGBTQ believers—attention to the variety of kinesthetic movements throughout deliverance by all participants illuminates a crack in those rigid and vicious scripts.¹ In the case explored here, the movement of two lesbian women creates a clamoring resistance to exclusionary Pentecostal sexual mores.

Asserting the moving body as the central analytic requires sweeping descriptions of the way that bodies move in deliverance since the beliefs of the religious do not rest solely or primarily on theological strictures or cognitive understandings. Instead, religious beliefs are assemblages that include affect and motor movement. Pentecostalism in particular is animated by striking bodily experiences and kinesthetic participation. Evidence of the supernatural—good and evil—is felt in the body. Pentecostal convictions may include preexisting beliefs, but these convictions are enforced by “a deeper structure of religious feeling that can tie together disparate, even contradictory, experiences, bodily sensations, feelings and thoughts” (Pellegrini 2007, 918). Thus, the thick description of bodies in motion utilized in this chapter is an argument for taking bodily movements and sensations seriously for the way they structure religious experiences and beliefs about sexuality. Bodies simultaneously succumb to churchly scripts and resist those very norms.

The ritual of deliverance requires that bodies be a primary subject of analysis. Deliverance is defined by bodily movement. The spasming, contorting, excessive body is the undelivered body or, in other words, the possessed body. The ambition of the prophet or pastor—the one doing the delivering—is to turn the frenetic jolts and movements of the undelivered body into bodily stillness. The docile, unmoving, and still body is the delivered body. Docility is the most important embodied message of deliverance choreographed by the prophet, a sign of the prophet’s power over both the ethereal and the material. As such, bodies that refuse docility and continue convulsing resist the religious choreography and its attendant scripts.

The Deliverance of Morowa and Kifah

The deliverance at the center of this chapter was an attempt to deliver two women—Morowa and Kifah—from the spirit of lesbianism. In the act of deliverance, each bodily action by Morowa, Kifah, the prophet, and the pastors revealed a potent story of sexuality and hardened the congregation's assumptions about nonnormative sexuality. Since the spirit involved in this deliverance act was the spirit of lesbianism, the whole performance communicated a plethora of ideas and beliefs not only about women, lesbianism, and women's bodies but also about the church's control of bodies, patriarchal fantasies, and violent denial of nonnormativity.

The church I discuss here—an often-frequented but much-maligned church in Ghanaian popular discourse—was the focus of a significant portion of my participant-observation research on Ghanaian Pentecostalism and sexuality for nine months in 2015 and 2016.² Owing to the sensitivity of my research, I use pseudonyms throughout this chapter. I will call the church, which is located on the outskirts of Accra, God's Global Path Church and will refer to the prophet as Emmanuel. The deliverance service of God's Global Path Church occurs every Wednesday and is attended by more than three thousand people and many more spirits. The deliverance services are attended by church members as well as a diversity of people in desperate need of deliverance, who often come from other churches and occasionally from different religious traditions. The centrality of deliverance at God's Global Path Church is not unique. Among a large swath of charismatic Christians in Ghana, deliverance is the central ritual that forms the climax of the church service. All the other rituals are subsidiary or understood in relation to deliverance. Paul Gifford in his analysis of the role of Pentecostalism in Ghanaian society sees deliverance as “perhaps Ghanaian Christianity's most pressing issue” (1998, 108). What is unique, however, about Emmanuel and God's Global Path Church is the manner in which they push the limits of charismatic Christianity. Accordingly, the church is often scorned by traditional Pentecostal pastors and prophets for a variety of extremes, most notably for its troubling use of violence within deliverance rituals.

Deliverance is a physical ritual that points to the presence of evil spirits in those being delivered. As Adriaan van Klinken (2013) pointed out through his research in Zambia, homosexuality is often portrayed as an enchanted battlefield littered with evil spirits and, at times, the devil. For Emmanuel, homosexuality is always an enchanted battleground that influences and impacts material bodies. The evil spirits of nonnormative sexualities possess human

bodies, a problem solved only after the prophet physically wrests these evil spirits from the body. This is a battleground of problematic power dynamics. The prophet wields spiritual authority, which allows him to reign not only over spirits but also over the bodies that house those spirits.

There were four primary bodies involved in this particular deliverance experience. The first body was that of the prophet Emmanuel, a young man who is controversial and extraordinarily well known among the constellation of charismatic superstars in Ghana. Ghana's popular media are obsessed with Emmanuel and the outrageous nature of his claims, which are often turned into memes. However, the excessive and brutal violence of Emmanuel's deliverance rituals—for example, against a couple who conceived outside the bounds of marriage and in another instance toward a pregnant woman—receives widespread condemnation. While the deliverance discussed here received no such public condemnation, it was, to my eye, more brutal and sustained in its violence.

The three women conscripted in this event—Morowa, Ethel, and Kifah—were all tangentially aware of each other before being thrust together into this religious drama. All three women were in their twenties. Kifah and Morowa lived in a busy industrial community near Accra. Morowa lived alone in a run-down hotel, isolated from her family, who remained in Nigeria. Kifah lived nearby, along with her family. Ethel lived with her family in greater Accra, in a neighborhood that is a thirty-minute *tro tro* (minibus taxi) ride from God's Global Path Church. She was the only family member who regularly attends Emmanuel's services. Ethel, who knew Morowa from a film they were involved in, invited Morowa to the service because Morowa wanted deliverance from something that was bothering her. Kifah came on her own volition but already knew Morowa because they worked at the same club in their community. This would be the only time that Kifah and Morowa attended Emmanuel's church. After the events of this day, they actively, and angrily in Morowa's case, avoided anything to do with Emmanuel, even shunning his televised appearances. Morowa, however, did not give up on Pentecostalism. She still firmly believed in the power of Pentecostal rituals and immediately traveled back to Nigeria to visit her "spiritual father," the famed T. B. Joshua.

On this particular day, my own body watched the violent and sexualized deliverance from a position of privilege. Earlier during this deliverance service, I had been identified as *obroni* and called on by the prophet to account publicly for my presence.³ I awkwardly stumbled through some answers to the prophet's queries, my voice cracking at one point, but was spared bodily contact. Instead of performing deliverance, the prophet prophesied to the congregation's de-

light that I would one day write a book—a prophecy that has yet to materialize. After the prophecy, Emmanuel asked me to watch the remaining deliverance episodes from the comfortable couches on the stage where his acolytes sat. My placement on the stage clearly demarcated my body as subservient to the prophet but also as privileged.

I was admittedly confused by the whole performance, both my own performance and Emmanuel's feigned ignorance. The anxiety I experienced, the immediate and unquestioning capitulation to Emmanuel's instructions, and the comfort I felt when moved to a place of honor each left me distressed to varying degrees. I wondered, why did Emmanuel purport not to know the reason for my presence? Although I had not met the prophet himself until this very public moment, I had spent a considerable amount of time at his house and had, through his intermediaries, received his approval to conduct research among his church and had been attending his services for some months.

My position at the front of the church also implicated my body in a particular way, one that became increasingly uncomfortable after the deliverance began. It would be the only time my body inhabited this particular position, as in quieter moments away from the pandemonium of deliverance I was able to discuss with the church's pastor why I preferred to participate as a congregant. Nonetheless, to my great discomfort, my bodily presence was complicit in what occurred afterward. My quiet, still body among Emmanuel's acolytes—my bodily refusal to intervene—was interpreted as an embodied statement of assent to all that occurred. When the service ended, I eschewed the *tro tros* and walked the entire distance to my apartment. On my walk, I replayed the scene over and over again in my mind, wondering about my participation and even the viability of the entire project. I rehashed these concerns later that week when a condensed version of the event was replayed on the prophet's television station. I concocted all sorts of reasons—many reasonable—about why I had not intervened. Although no amount of hindsight absolved me of my embodied complicity, I concluded that, given the chance to replay the day's events, I would not have done anything differently. It seems to me that ethnographic fieldwork is often marked by these paradoxical tensions.

As Emmanuel prowled around the congregation picking out unsuspecting persons and delivering them from their demons, he eventually became fixated on Morowa. He asked her in the most oblique terms if she wanted deliverance from “that thing.” She answered in the affirmative as if she knew what “that thing” was. From the very beginning, there was unspoken confusion. Morowa later told me that she had a specific issue—not lesbianism—that she thought the prophet was going to solve. She described her thought process in this moment:

“I was like, which of the spirits is that? I was so happy. I was like, my problems are over.” Kifah similarly was not present to be delivered from lesbianism but had hoped for a financial windfall from attending Emmanuel’s church.

The confusion and ambiguity about the deliverance vanished when Emmanuel publicly referred to her issue as “girl-girl.” When the congregation seemed confused by this, he added other examples to make it clear that he was invoking a category of sexuality, girl-on-girl sex. Morowa’s body was discursively made in this moment, in particular by the context of Ghanaian and Pentecostal social attitudes toward lesbianism. It is impossible to extricate the material body—that is, the physical dimensions of being human—from the discursive body, in this case a discursive body of antiqueer animus (Thoreson 2014). However much one wishes to focus on the material body, it is necessary to admit that bodies are never free from the cultural constraints already written onto them. In this deliverance from the spirits of lesbianism, from the moment deliverance commenced, these rigid antiqueer scripts were operative, written into and onto various bodies. Henceforth, each bodily action was read as confirming the congregation’s worst suspicions about homosexuality.

In her work on lesbianism in Ghana, Serena Owusua Dankwa argues that lesbianism in Accra is mostly secretive, hidden, and disguised. Or it was. Dankwa uses the term *discretion* to describe the situation of women who love women. Lesbianism was marked by privacy and secrecy rather than explicit discussion or public displays of affection (Dankwa 2009, 194). Nonnormative sexualities were not necessarily condemned or condoned but existed in “the realm of the unspoken” (194). That silence is being overtaken by a Pentecostal cacophony, however, and Astrid Bochow remarks that Pentecostal churches in Ghana have created “sexuality as a subject of public discourse, if only in its negation” (2008, 353). Charismatic churches spend a great deal of time imagining various sexual demons, placing restrictions on sexual relationships, and condemning nonheteronormative sexualities, which has moved sexuality from the private to the public, from silent acceptance to deafening denuncements. The antiqueer animus of Ghanaian Pentecostal churches has reached deep into the wider society. As one of my interlocutors, a gay man, stated, “I asked a traditional healer about homosexuality. He told me it was wrong. I asked, why? And he said, because the Bible says so.”

Occasionally, Pentecostal discourse refers to this culture of sexual discretion, but any signs of tact are obliterated through ritual. For example, before uttering any details concerning Morowa’s sexuality, Emmanuel apologized profusely for revealing such a private issue. He even tried to shift the blame to the Holy Spirit, arguing that without the spirit’s prompting he would never reveal

such information. Further, before enacting the deliverance ritual, Emmanuel continued to speak of her sexuality obliquely, using phrases like “the issue,” “that thing,” and “girl-girl.” However, once the ritual of deliverance began, the terms *lesbian* and *lesbianism* were thrown around with vitriolic repetition.

Elsewhere I have pointed out the creative use of religious spaces by LGBTQ Christians, whereby some LGBTQ Christians find safety in performing their queerness under the cover of religious heteronormativity (Homewood 2016). Deliverance at God’s Global Path Church is clearly a different case. Despite the tentativeness in Emmanuel’s language, he outed Morowa as a lesbian. Morowa’s sexuality immediately became public and problematic, even though she was never asked whether she considered herself a lesbian or wanted such information to be public. She does in fact identify as a lesbian, but she did not want this to be public. This kind of outing is not uncommon among Pentecostal churches. I spoke with a handful of gay men who have been forced to craft a multitude of ways of avoiding such outing. Oftentimes they purposefully avoid prophets and prophetesses like Emmanuel who traffic in this kind of prophetic outing and sexual deliverance.

Emmanuel did not immediately attempt to deliver Morowa. Instead, he sent four of his pastors to deliver her from this sexual spirit. After the first pastor touched Morowa, she instantly changed from her demure disposition, hands clasped in front of her and eyes cast down, into a much more aggressive posture. No longer intimidated or nervous, she twisted, turned, and moved her arms in an effort to elude the pastors’ grip. The first bodily contact instigated an embodied conflict in a manner that Emmanuel’s rhetoric did not.

It was from the first touch an odd haptic experience for Morowa. Morowa had experienced the laying on of hands by many pastors and prophets in the process of healing and deliverance. In the past, she had experienced the touch in a particular way: “If a good man of God touches me, I will feel cold, and it will go right from my forehead all the way down, cold!” This is not unique; Pentecostal ritual feelings are often described as sensations of warmth and coolness (Csordas 1988, 125). But in this deliverance, unlike in all of her previous experiences, Morowa felt differently: “But in this case, I want to tell you the truth, when he touched me, I didn’t feel anything cold.” Morowa’s thermoception reflexively provided clues that this deliverance might not be like anything else she had experienced. Her body sensed and interpreted cues from this world and beyond. Only in hindsight was she able to articulate this fact consciously, curating it as evidence that the deliverance was not real. Her body, though, felt and engaged in a kind of bodily resistance to the touch of the pastors. While it may have remained unconscious, such deeply embodied sensing set off a whole

host of embodied reactions to the force of the pastorate, as Morowa exhibited throughout the deliverance episode. I term this type of bodily knowledge *embodied perception*. Embodied perception is the acquiring of knowledge through the moving and feeling body. Embodied perception is not about sudden, cognitive bursts but the oftentimes unconscious ways in which bodies communicate. In this case, through embodied perception Morowa felt resistance. She could not immediately identify the bodily meanings but over time reflexively realized that her body had been providing signposts of a narrative far different than the prophetic script.

The area around Morowa was quickly cleared of other congregants and the plastic lawn chairs on which they sat. Two pastors pulled Morowa's arms taut behind her back at an awkward angle while she tried to move forward toward the prophet. As they held her arms and tried to control her body, it became clear that this was an attempt to discipline Morowa's lesbian body. One pastor put a handkerchief between his hand and her flesh as a buffer, a move that another pastor would emulate later as Morowa's convulsions became stronger. It was a very purposeful move for the pastors, as Morowa's flailing made procuring the handkerchief and applying it to her flesh a difficult move to execute. There was something about this particular deliverance body and its flailing limbs that the pastors wanted to communicate; they inculcated fear, disgust, and horror around the lesbian body.

Another pastor held a microphone toward Morowa's face to amplify what she was yelling. Morowa repeated into the microphone, "I am a beautiful Morowa," "I am beautiful," and the like. While Morowa was demanding people pay attention to her beauty, the physical conflict between her and the pastors was ongoing. As they twisted and turned, Morowa yelled that she liked to dance. Emmanuel instructed the pastors to let go of her. He invited her to come to the front and dance. The pastors released her arms, and she sauntered up to the front of the church. As the band struggled to find a tune that suited Morowa's tastes, she paced back and forth. Her body never stopped moving. She would walk in one direction, turn on her heel, and walk back the other way. Eventually the band gave up, and an iPad was secured. Morowa began to dance in a manner that could be described not as provocative but certainly as sensual. She enjoyed her body. Her eyes looked up and down her body, and her hands moved around her body. No longer angrily pulling away from the pastors or yelling into a microphone, Morowa smiled. She recounted later, "I really enjoyed the dancing so much." Morowa shook her backside toward the congregation. They vociferously shouted their disapproval, waved her off with their hands, or turned away in disgust. With a simple hand gesture, Emmanuel had the music cut off.

The whole scene was marked by things that the prophet allowed deliverance bodies to do, things that deliverance bodies must be stopped from doing, and things that the prophet forced deliverance bodies to do. To dance and touch one's own body did not cross the church's limits of modesty, but when Morowa bent over at the waist at a nearly ninety-degree angle, pushing her backside out to emphasize the space it occupied and shaking it with the music, the prophet stopped the deliverance body. These interstices certainly seem to confirm a Foucauldian interpretation of the pastorate's role in disciplining the body. As Michel Foucault writes, "the pastor . . . is in a position to watch over [the flock] and to exercise with respect to them, in any case, a surveillance and continuous control" (quoted in Carrette 1999, 24). Deliverance is an act of both surveillance (the pastorate and entire church inflict their curious, judgmental, and voyeuristic gaze on the moving body) and control (ultimately the body is forced to do or not do exactly as the prophet desires). It is set as a battle between the cosmic forces of good and evil for possession of the body, but deliverance is always an attempt to write churchly and cultural scripts—that is, narratives of power, ecclesiastical and otherwise—onto the material bodies of believers. Deliverance allows for the pastorate to control and discipline the sexual body, as confession did and continues to do in some other Christian traditions.

After stopping the body from dancing, Emmanuel introduced another body to the drama. He summoned Ethel, the friend who had invited Morowa to the church, to join them up front. As soon as Ethel appeared, Morowa spoke about her relationship to Ethel and how "she like[d] her very much." There was a distinct disparity in how Ethel's and Morowa's bodies occupied space. For the entirety of the episode, Ethel offered only one-word answers. Her body was down-trodden, with slumped shoulders, eyes looking downward, and a dour facial expression. Morowa was given most of the front of the church to pace, while Ethel stood still among the pastors. Ethel's inaction contrasted with Morowa's incessant bodily movements. In every bodily way, Ethel made it clear that she did not need deliverance, that her body was not to be treated in the same way as Morowa's body. She wanted her body to be read as straight and free of spirits.

The introduction of Ethel's body was followed by a sonic disruption. The anguished screams of a woman near the back of the sanctuary pierced through the production occurring at the front of church. It quickly became obvious that these were not merely screams but a bodily disruption. From the crush of individuals four ushers emerged carrying Kifah's flailing and shrieking body. Each usher held a limb so that every time she convulsed, her torso bounced up and down, her head hanging dangerously close to the ground. They set her on the ground, and she began rolling around while groaning. Kifah's body remained in

a repetitive loop; her rolling around was punctuated by groans and screams and accompanied by the persistent rubbing of her abdomen. Toward the end of the service, her fingers determinedly and purposefully moved around her genitals, clearly imitating or engaging in an autoerotic act.

The introduction of Kifah's deliverance body was very different from that of Morowa's deliverance body or Ethel's body. The first two women—Morowa and Ethel—were selected by Emmanuel and constructed in a particular way: the insatiable lesbian body that must be delivered and the chaste nonlesbian body. Kifah's deliverance body reacted more spontaneously, responding to the stimuli of the experience and the affective atmosphere, rather than the instructions of the prophet and pastors. The pastors quickly wrote their discursive sexual script onto her, with one pastor informing me privately before exclaiming to the congregation that she was "a lesbian who liked licking others' vaginas." While the crudeness of his description would shock some church congregations, sexualized and explicit rhetoric is relatively standard fare at God's Global Path Church and very much in line with the impetus of evangelical and Pentecostal churches to describe all sins that may befall congregants in as much detail as possible. Each of her bodily actions was interpreted to fit these scripts despite the lack of obvious embodied correlation. In doing so, Emmanuel and his cohorts imposed an affect of disgust on Kifah's body. As she rolled around the floor, she was given a wide berth; nobody came near her body. Her body—like Morowa's body—was to be avoided except for the violent pastoral outbursts intended to reorient the body into a straight and dispossessed one.

Eventually, the two camps—Emmanuel and his pastors on one side and the possessed women on the other—came into bodily conflict. Most of the pastors began delivering Morowa, while Emmanuel focused on Kifah. Kifah repeatedly touched her genitals and moved her fingers as if she was pleasuring herself. Every time she touched herself, Emmanuel hit her hand. This was the first time Emmanuel touched either woman, and it appeared to have little impact. Emmanuel asked his wife to come and hold Kifah's crotch. The role of his wife's hand in the process was not viewed as a delivering touch but as a pragmatic way to stop the autoerotic imitation. Her hand formed a barrier so that Kifah could no longer touch herself. Emmanuel replaced his wife's hand with his foot and repeatedly kicked Kifah. With each kick he made a pfff sound into the microphone. Kifah continued to wiggle and writhe on the ground and never acceded to Emmanuel's desire that she become docile.

While Emmanuel spent all of his time with Kifah, six of his pastors physically tried to rip the demon out of Morowa. As they held her, she managed to drag them around the front of the church. Even amid the violence Morowa

tried to dance, shaking her backside at the pastors who had her in their grasp. Whenever the pastors' bodies came in contact with Morowa's backside, she would determinedly rub her body on theirs. Some of them held her while others punched her in the stomach. One pastor ripped off a bracelet she was wearing. Her face and head were hit repeatedly. One tried stomping on her feet. Another repeatedly pulled her head down toward his crotch, miming a heteronormative oral sex act. She described to me months later that the assault was painfully etched on her body for days: "[I was] feeling headache, pains all over my body, everything. I couldn't even sleep that night because of my headache." While deliverance is always physical and often includes a violent element, this was the most vicious deliverance display I witnessed in my fieldwork. This ritual rending of lesbianism from the body was a bodily beating, yet despite the ferocity Morowa never spoke of her experience in terms of physical or sexual abuse. She understood all of the physical contact within the context of Pentecostal rituals, namely, deliverance. The pastorate may have been wrong in their diagnosis of what plagued her, but in all our conversations she never condemned or objected to their means.

This saga lasted over two hours, and yet it ended inconclusively. Docility, that ever important marker of pastoral victory, never occurred. Morowa and Kifah never stopped moving, though exhaustion overtook everyone involved and the movements slowly became less and less determined. Emmanuel hurriedly herded his pastors and the women together for the photo described at the onset of this essay. The photo finally made still bodies that had been in continual motion throughout the drama. The photo stood in as an act of victory, attempting to articulate a comprehensive deliverance that simply had not occurred, an act of celebration that did not correspond with the many varied bodily movements that had made up the deliverance drama.

Resistance through Embodied Perception

Bodies matter. Bodies tell stories. Bodies in rituals—their emotions, movements, and dynamic bodily interactions—shape the way people perceive the world and act in it. In this case, the movement of bodies was used by Emmanuel to tell a story of lesbianism as a difficult demon to part with, to vilify lesbianism, and to demonize women's bodies, among a host of other patriarchal scripts. The violent movements of ecclesiastical power made the body something to be feared, loathed, and ultimately disciplined. The poignant image here of the pastors using their handkerchiefs illustrates an unwillingness to touch the material body for fear of its disgusting nature. The way touch was used, the way

bodies writhed, and the manner in which violence and intimacy were enacted reinforced Pentecostal norms about sexuality. For the attentive congregation, the brutality imposed on Morowa's and Kifah's bodies added to any prior beliefs about the demonic sinfulness of lesbianism and concretized homosexuality as something to be truly abhorred.

There was, however, something more, something different from these churchly scripts of antiqueer animus, that captured my attention throughout the whole ordeal. I witnessed an alternative way of being through the bodies of Kifah and Morowa. It is vital to look to the body because bodies offer something different from doctrine and rhetoric; they are more capacious in their storytelling. The movement of bodies is opaque. Bodies are inherently ambiguous, pliable, and indeterminate. In her stunning book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Jasbir Puar quotes Amit Rai's argument that the body's indeterminacy "promotes 'affective confusion' that allows for new affects, and thus new politics, to emerge" (2007, 208). The indeterminacy of bodily affects can be read in multiple ways. In those slippages, movements neither completely adhere to nor completely resist religious force, but they do at least offer partial resistance to the religious refusal to recognize LGBTQ persons as human. Bodies can find the gaps in the scripts of antiqueer animus and push against them, literally.

Bodies are resilient against efforts to inscribe them. In spite of Emmanuel's dogged determination to elicit disgust, there were multiple kinesthetic movements that told another story. Morowa, yelling determinedly about her bodily beauty and dancing as a performance of this embodied beauty, resisted the ways in which Emmanuel and the other pastors attempted to impose—by word and physical force—disgust and heteronormativity on her body. Owing to such embodied resilience, I would like to consider the possibility of reading Morowa's and Kifah's bodies as sites of resistance. Bodies may have cultural scripts written onto them, but those same bodies are capable of writing resistance. As Susan Leigh Foster ventures, scholars should "approach the body's involvement in any activity with an assumption of potential agency to participate in or resist whatever forms of cultural production are underway" (1995, 15). I apply these instructions to this story of deliverance: Kifah's and Morowa's bodies resisted crushing cultural and religious impositions.

I want to consider two ways of theorizing this resistance. The first is a Foucauldian approach to exorcism, which regards kinetic activity as always and already constructed by regimes of power. The second, as previously mentioned, is embodied perception. Embodied perception is, in part, an effort to move beyond the Foucauldian paradigm. Embodied perception allows for a certain

bodily agency that is absent in Foucault's reading. It allows for the body—in this case Morowa's and Kifah's bodies—to be read in all of its capacious and polyvalent beauty. In embodied perception, bodies create meaning as they move, inculcating a kind of corporeal learning. The actual bodily movements are not necessarily entirely innovative or new—all movements are to some extent conditioned and acquired—but one can “gain knowledge as a result of performing” these movements (Noland 2009, 7).

A Foucauldian Response to Exorcism

Foucault in his lectures on the abnormal provides fodder for reading bodies as a site of resistance to discipline. I am limiting the discussion to these lectures as they provide the clearest example of Foucault dealing with something akin to deliverance. In his lectures Foucault (2007, 208) discussed *The Possession at Loudun*. The possession and concomitant exorcisms were a popular event at an Ursuline convent in the 1630s. Large crowds watched the nuns as they convulsed, were constrained, and were eventually exorcised. Theologian Mark Jordan describes the exorcisms in terms that could easily apply to the deliverance described here: “At Loudun, large crowds gathered for the exorcisms and measures were taken to ensure a good show. It was an approved pornography: the nuns were mostly young women, constrained and taunted” (2015, 87–88). From the archive of these possessed women and their exorcisms, Foucault extracts a number of lessons but primarily one about bodies and resistance (Jordan 2015, 87–88).

Foucault looked at the convulsing possessed body with its “indefinite multiplicity of movements, jolts, sensations, tremors, pains and pleasures” (2007, 207) and noted that in possession the struggle for and against power is centered in the body. The body becomes the canvas on which power encounters resistance to its attempts to dominate. As we saw in Morowa's and Kifah's deliverance, the body controlled is the unmoving body, but the convulsing body is a site of struggle. The convulsions are the resistance: “the plastic and visible form of the combat within the body of the possessed” (212). Such combat is primarily between the body and the exorcist. When the surveillance and discipline of the exorcist are too extreme, exceed certain limits, the body cries out in convulsions, or as Jordan eloquently describes it, the spasms of convulsive bodies are “a somatic refusal of script” (2015, 89). The role of the exorcist is to ultimately deny this “somatic refusal of script,” that is, to render the women's material bodies docile and in doing so to rescript the convulsion as something ultimately acquiescent to power.

Foucault's theorizing fails to describe the experiences of Morowa and Kifah in a multitude of ways. Two issues in particular are worth noting for the manner in which they silence the radicality of what occurred within that Ghanaian church. First, Foucault's (2007, 213) approach to the nuns' convulsions silences bodily agency. Morowa and Kifah experienced bodily agency, regardless of the intentionality or lack thereof attached to their motor movements. One need not be cognizant of the decision to move for it to have meaning. Movement unto itself creates meaning. That is, so long as one is aware of the body moving—but not necessarily the decision to move—and so long as one feels the corporeal actions, then the body creates meaning. It cultivates meaning that may never be consciously cognized but meaning that is embedded deep within. To claim bodily agency is merely to claim that Kifah and Morowa move and learn, broadly defined, through that movement. Both Morowa's and Kifah's convulsing bodies were not merely the effect of resistance; they were *resistance*.

Second, Foucault's account is really, unsurprisingly, an extended description of the genius of power. Resistance is merely another opportunity for power to reinvent, adapt, or modify. As Jordan writes, "If every extension of power elicits resistance, every resistance incites the rhetorical genius of power" (2015, 90). With the possessions at Loudun, Foucault is dealing with an archive where deliverance was successful, where—as is always the case with Foucault—power ultimately reasserts its control. In the words of Jordan, ecclesiastical power "keeps writing its curious poetry, keeps changing its scripts at any sign of surprising resistance. Power tends not toward true science but toward more cunning poetics" (91).

In many ways, this was also the story of the deliverance bodies of Morowa and Kifah. Their convulsing bodies, their dancing bodies, and their bodies in pain were a sort of material resistance, and yet, at the same time, they were not. Their resistance, their fight, and their out-and-out refusal to become docile startled the prophet, the pastors, and the congregation. And yet, even in resistance, the deliverance bodies were rescripted when Emmanuel quickly and perfunctorily proclaimed victory through verbal exhortations of praise toward his spiritual father, Jesus, without any corroborating bodily evidence. Such a proclamation is a right that ecclesiastical power bestows on his office. The resistance was rescripted as evidence of an extremely powerful prophet who controls even the most resistant bodies. This is what the congregation witnessed in the case of Morowa and Kifah. It was, however, not the entire story, as Morowa, Kifah, and Ethel informed me over time. Indeed, the bodies of Morowa and Kifah revealed something far different from Emmanuel's rushed conclusion.

Ecclesiastical power, even with its polyglot nature, is not necessarily the end of the narrative. Morowa's and Kifah's deliverance worked, yet, at the same time, it did not work. Morowa and Kifah—despite the insistence of these churchly scripts—were not delivered, at least not from their lesbianism. In the story of Morowa and Kifah, there exists at least the possibility that power, though dominant, can be resisted. I argue that this resistance—which took months to be articulated fully in a conscious sense (I interviewed the participants multiple times over three months)—was learned through motor movements. Theirs is a story of embodied perception.

Morowa's and Kifah's responses were slow in coming, as initially they were unsure how to process the pandemonium and madness of the deliverance event, but after three months of conversation with me, the two women explicitly rejected their deliverance. As Morowa stated, "Nothing really happened." Yet it strikes me that unconsciously this conclusion was drawn first from the motor movements during the deliverance encounter. Their bodily movements were a form of resistance that need not necessarily be accompanied by a discourse of assent to be powerful.

Embodied perception is rooted in a particular understanding of embodiment as bodily being-in-the-world. It is an analytic that emphasizes the body as the fleshy entity by and through which the world is encountered. Embodiment must, then, consider the discursive body "generated in connection to power relationships" and the way it is or is not felt immediately within the material, fleshy body (Pinn 2010, 5). Embodiment is neither merely the material body nor only the discursive body but the exploration of those bodies in tension. Taking the visceral, felt movements of the material body seriously challenges the overwhelming discursive or cultural constructivist view of the body as always and already constructed. More eloquently, embodiment is, in the words of Carrie Noland, "that ambiguous phenomenon in which culture both asserts and loses its grip on individual subjects" (2009, 3). Embodiment, thus articulated, allows for resistant possibilities, meaningful even in their smallness. Meanwhile, *perception* refers broadly to a capacity to learn, to develop, to acquire, and to feel. It is not something that necessarily happens immediately in a conscious burst but instead through the perpetual moving of the human body.⁴

Embodied perception is the gaining of knowledge through movement and feeling—knowledge about the cultural pressures that attempt to define the body and the capacity to resist those cultural and churchly impositions. While Emmanuel and others attempted to discipline the bodies of Morowa and Kifah, the women learned of their bodies' capacity to respond to and reject antequer scripts about the inhumanness of nonnormative sexualities.

Embodied perception is affective; that is, it is a preconscious kinesthetic experience, transpersonal and noncognitive. It is an awareness that is rooted in the senses without necessarily having a reflexive, conscious correspondent. In the words of Noland, it is a “somatic affect.” Noland adds that kinesthetic sensations are “a particular kind of affect belonging both to the body that precedes our subjectivity (narrowly construed) and the contingent, cumulative subjectivity our body allows us to build over time” (2009, 4). Likewise, Deidre Sklar refers to the incredible amount of knowledge generated through bodily moving as “not only somatic, but affective” (1994, 11). The power of this intimate connection between the affective and the somatic is helpful in understanding how Morowa’s and Kifah’s kinetic, moving bodies resisted in ways that transcended consciousness. The kinesthetic affect can recursively, experimentally, and unconsciously cultivate new politics. Regardless of the motivation for the movement, or its intentionality, moving bodies can and do resist.

Of the three women we met at the beginning of this chapter, only Ethel continues to attend Emmanuel’s church. The other two avoid it as a mode of rejection. “I am not going there again,” Morowa told me, adding, “I told Ethel, ‘I am not going to your church again.’ . . . [It is] not as if the church is a bad church or a fake church because, no, it’s not fake, it’s good, very good, but me, I don’t like the church.” That ambivalent denunciation is centered solely on rejecting the deliverance event they were part of. Morowa and Kifah do not reject the office of the prophet or even necessarily the efficaciousness of the prophet Emmanuel. Morowa in particular believes that prophets hold the answers to all of her issues in life. She just does not think lesbianism is the issue—or an issue—that Emmanuel should have been worried about. To be clear, she does identify as a lesbian: “Yes, I am a lesbian. I am a lesbian, no doubt. . . . I enjoy making love to a girl.” Note the present tense; part of her rejection of the deliverance is to continue making love to women. She added, “Lesbian spirit is not my problem. I have a bigger problem that is after my life, what is lesbian then? Lesbian is nothing. I have a bigger problem that is after my life. What are we talking about? When there is a bigger thing in front of the prophet? What is lesbian?”

Sometimes when I was talking to her, she became extraordinarily angry, grabbing my recorder and yelling into it in order to communicate better her affective register concerning the event: “I’ve been angry ever since Emmanuel delivered me.” Describing the amount of money she had spent on counseling and prophetic accoutrements such as stickers, oil, and water at Emmanuel’s church, she added, “I am angry so I won’t say anything good. Four hundred Ghana cedis, gone! I am angry. What did I use four hundred Ghana cedis to do? Nothing. What did I use four hundred Ghana cedis to do? I came back from

Emmanuel's church with no money with me. So, what have I used four hundred cedis to do? Is that not nonsense? . . . The more I remember of that morning, I am very angry."

But, most important, she was not delivered. She described it as such: "I cannot see a difference. Because if the Holy Spirit has healed me, what has gone from my life [lesbianism] wouldn't have come back. I am not saying there is no holy spirit in his [Emmanuel's] church. But if the holy spirit was used on me, what left my life [lesbianism] would not have come back." Disappointed, Ethel admitted the deliverance had not worked: "She [Morowa] isn't ready to change. She has made up her mind about that act [lesbianism], she still does it." She added, "Morowa doesn't want to stop it [lesbianism], so she has closed the doors of her heart not to be delivered. You can't force someone to be delivered." This statement is rich, as deliverance is defined by the imposition of force—physically and spiritually. It is the attempt, often violent, to force a body to abide by the prophet's worldview. Nonetheless, Ethel's statement indicates that both Kifah's and Morowa's bodies have cracked open—at least for Ethel—the power of deliverance, revealing a gap in its efficaciousness. Looking back on the deliverance, Ethel wishes she had realized earlier that the deliverance was not taking hold. She said that the extraordinary length of time the deliverance took was not a sign of a stubborn spirit that would eventually be ousted (as it was rescripted by the prophet); instead, "it took hours because she [Morowa] was not ready to be delivered."

Conclusion

Kifah and Morowa ultimately rejected and resisted deliverance consciously by (re)claiming their lesbianism, but the argument here is that the rejection and resistance existed long before Morowa said that "nothing happened" and long before Kifah rejected Emmanuel's church. Instead, that resistance occurred within the experience of deliverance. The motor decisions these women made during deliverance challenged Emmanuel and a variety of power constructs in meaningful ways, and through these motor decisions, the women cultivated resistance.

These bodies resisted by refusing to obey the bodily discipline that was so brutally enacted on them. Kifah refused to stop touching herself despite persistent efforts by the prophet Emmanuel and his wife to detach her hand from her genitals. Kifah refused to stop moving even when the pastors and ushers held her body down. Morowa fought back with immense force, at times dragging four pastors around the front of the stage. She refused to dance in a way deemed

acceptable. She refused to fall down when force was applied, instead applying equal force against the pastors to ensure that she remained standing. Repeatedly, the women resisted with their bodies. Each of their movements, screams, and refusals pushed against the conditioning of the churchly scripts.

Perhaps the most prominent way these bodies resisted those scripts was in their refusal to become docile, rendering Emmanuel's touch, and that of his acolytes, ineffective. The bodily goal of deliverance is to turn a convulsing body into a docile body, and these bodies resisted that effort. Both bodies, in their commitment to move without ceasing, resisted deliverance and, accordingly, all of its attendant cultural scripts. The commitment to move and to fight in the face of extreme force was an act of radical resistance. Repeatedly throughout this particular deliverance service, and many like it, bodies obeyed the demand for docility. Emmanuel often reserved his touch until the end of the deliverance encounter and then with a swift slap watched the bodies fall to the ground. That did not occur in the case of Morowa and Kifah; their bodies refused to accede to the bodily demands of the prophet.

Noland (2009, 1–17) argues that variations in bodily movement can resist by producing behavioral effects, effects that can move from the affective register to conscious decision-making. This is what occurred when, months later, Morowa and Kifah consciously chose to reject their deliverance experiences. This rejection resulted in part from reflection on what their bodies did during the episode; consider Morowa reflecting on how her body felt differently when she was touched in Emmanuel's church compared with how it normally felt when she was touched by a good man of God. They cultivated embodied resistance. I do not, however, want to overextend this claim about the movement from affect to consciousness to imply that such a development is necessary in resistance. Morowa's and Kifah's bodies resisted in meaningful ways without conscious assent: their pushing, punching, denouncing, and unyielding bodily movements were resistance in and of themselves.

The story of Morowa and Kifah is unique and yet common. Many in the LGBTQ community in Ghana shared with me their stories of sexual deliverance that did not alter their sexual identities, practices, or worldviews. They told me of prophets unsuccessfully trying to push them to the ground, prophetesses attempting desperately to deliver them, and prayerful exhortations screamed at them. In the end, they always rejected the deliverance. The ultimate proof of that rejection was almost always participation in nonheteronormative sex. Resistance is deeply and intimately embodied, and I imagine that, as for Morowa and Kifah, careful examination of the ways that these bodies interacted during these deliverance sessions would reveal many stories of embodied percep-

tion. Over and over again, ecclesiastical scripts appear dominant, but in small movements—really any movement—the body of the delivered is “afforded a chance to feel itself moving through space” (Noland 2009, 1) and to experience embodied perception of a resistance politic. Kinesthesia is a powerful force, a somatic way of knowing, that illuminates how the lived, moving body can act as resistance to even the most violent patriarchal and heteronormative regimes.

NOTES

1. Throughout this chapter I, like many others, do not capitalize the acronym *lgbtq* (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) to indicate the fluidity of these categories.
2. Along with being dismissed by other Pentecostal prophets, the church is the frequent target of memes and other critiques through social media, is regularly adjudicated in the media, and is used in many ways as the example par excellence of Pentecostal excesses.
3. *Obroni* is a Twi word for a white person or foreigner.
4. I use *perception* rather than *learning* to avoid being too cognitive or too epistemologically inflected.

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