RICE UNIVERSITY

Pneumoeroticism: An Erotic Hermeneutic of Body and Spirit in Ghanaian Pentecostalism

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Ph.D. Religion

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May 2018
ABSTRACT

Relying on ethnographic data from 8 months of fieldwork in Accra, Ghana, my dissertation examines the centrality of sex and sexuality in Pentecostal deliverance. In particular, turning to the senses, it demonstrates how the ubiquity of sex and sexuality in deliverance is vital to the Pentecostal view of body and spirit and the relationship between those entities. From a masturbating man, to the spirits of lesbianism, to sexual experiences with spirits and spirit animals, sex is used to expand the definition of the body beyond its fleshy boundaries and to make spirits immanent. To capture interpret these sexualized phenomenon, the dissertation concludes by offering a hermeneutic that I call pneumoeroticism.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

“Demon entities use many different forms of control of humans, including having control over all the five senses.” – Kwofie

Sitting with Nikoi in his office the atmosphere was relaxed and jocular after a particularly intense, chaotic and somewhat confusing deliverance session. Our bodies, exhausted, slumped in our chairs in stark contrast to the previous six hours of polyscenic bodies crying out, hands and fingers gesturing, feet stomping and legs propelling people to and fro. But something changed as Nikoi described deliverance, as if his entire body reentered the deliverance milieu.¹ His body tensed up, his face took on the tortured look of spiritual earnestness it carries during deliverance, he clenched his fist and said with all the energy he had left, “The Holy Spirit will take over your senses, your five senses and your whole body.”² It echoed what I had read in Kwofie’s autobiography, only in this case it was the evil corollary, “Demon entities use many different forms of control of humans, including having control over all the five senses.” The senses – whether they actually remained bound by the enlightenment number of five, or not – were central to the whole enterprise of deliverance.

The problem that deliverance tries to solve is the matter of who controls the body and its sensorium. It is a battle for the whole body between the holy spirit and the multitudinous evil spirits, both capable of controlling the senses. In a single sentence Nikoi sent my work spinning with the whirling intensity of a possessed body mid-deliverance. Deliverance is about

¹ Because of the nature of the revelations made throughout this dissertation concerning people’s sexuality I have made the decision to not utilize anybody’s actual name.
² In order to maintain anonymity, I will not provide citations for Kwofie’s autobiography which only makes an appearance here and in chapter 2.
the body, whatever that is bounded within or exceeding its fleshy material boundaries.

Deliverance is a battle for control of the senses, however many they number in indecipherable combinations and permutations. Deliverance is felt, whatever that means.

This embodied reality should have dawned on me well before Nikoi’s words fell on my ears. The evidence was all around me in the pandemonium of bodies moving in natural and unnatural ways. The evidence was in every deliverance text, such as the popular *Pigs in the Parlor* by Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, which observes, “Demon spirits can invade and indwell human bodies. It is their objective to do so.”

Or as Sean McCloud writes, “Demons, of course, have long been part of Christianity, and Pentecostals have been busy banishing demons from human bodies since the movement was born in the first decade of the twentieth century.”

Spirits are embodied, and those bodies tell an important story for Pentecostals.

The following dissertation is an attempt to exorcise the ways of embodied knowledge from the practice of charismatic deliverance – the ritual practice of removing demons from bodies. It is, as exorcism always is, a messy process, but one that takes as its point of departure the human body. It is necessary to read material bodies in motion for meaning, for, as Anthony Pinn states, “material culture points beyond itself to more fundamental modes of meaning and expression.”

The body, as material, is both a source and framework, the form and content of

religious ritual. In order to extract the body from the ritual of deliverance, I will focus on sensation, tactility and feelings. Through the theater of deliverance we will discover the particular senses utilized and emphasized within this unique cultural space. All of this analysis of deliverance and its performance pivots on the assumption, one illustrated again and again throughout, that the sensual body is primary in deliverance rituals.

*Deliverance in Accra*

It would be difficult to overstate just how important deliverance is in Ghanaian Pentecostalism. Amongst a large swath of charismatic Christians in Ghana deliverance is perhaps primary amongst the many embodied, experiential gifts, or charismata. While Pentecostalism historically holds to the belief that the gift of tongues is the gift that stands out as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, deliverance ministries emphasize healing and deliverance as accompanying baptism. Deliverance is the central ritual that occupies the climactic portion of the church service. All other manifestations are subsidiary or understood in relation to deliverance. Deliverance is at the center of pneumatic Christian practice. While West African Pentecostal practices may emphasize deliverance more than other locales, Ghana and Nigeria remain trendsetting places for Pentecostal practice. Not only

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do the practices from West Africa get performed in diaspora but they influence Pentecostal performance generally.

Deliverance is especially prominent in the Ghanaian religious sensescape. Gifford, for example, sees deliverance as “perhaps Ghanaian Christianity’s most pressing issue.”

It makes up part of the ever-audible Pentecostal soundscape that dominates the Ghanaian ear. Late into the nights you can hear the shrieks of those being delivered. In the middle of the day you might find a crowd outside a local church awaiting deliverance to start, slowing traffic to a halt as they congregate outside the churches doors. It does not matter when or where you are, you are likely to be close to the sights and sounds of deliverance. At the very least you will be able to spot a poster or billboard promising miraculous deliverance. It is a centerpiece of many charismatic ministries.

And yet despite its pressing importance, “…the anthropological study of exorcism is a marginal pursuit in the anthropology of religion.” Increasingly, the spectacular growth of deliverance ministries globally has forced attention onto deliverance, an exorcistic phenomenon. Nonetheless, it is important to define deliverance from the beginning. The lengthy definition of deliverance provided below sets the reader up to understand better the

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11 Many authors have articulated the social transformations that accompany the growing Pentecostalism in the Southern hemisphere. For example, Rijk van Dijk has written about social changes that accompany exorcisms and healings in Ghanaian Pentecostalism (See Van Dijk, “Time and Transcultural Technologies”, 216-234). Another example is Birgit Meyer’s work that articulates how in the name of deliverance from demonic bondage, Ghanaian’s often abandon familial ties. (See Birgit Meyer, “Make a Complete Break with the Past: Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse,” Journal of Religion in Africa 27.3 (1988): 316-349.
ethnographic data that follows. This dissertation provides a depth of ethnographic data on deliverance that will certainly propel discussion about the ritual forward.

This study is made up primarily of data from prophets who are experts in deliverance. In 2015-2016, I spent nine months researching deliverance ministries in greater Accra, Ghana. As Quayesi-Amakye notes, “Accra is ...the nerve centre of religious activities with the bustling presence of Pentecostal prophets.”\(^\text{12}\) I engaged in both participant observation of a variety of deliverance services and interviewed those who had experienced deliverance either as deliverer or deliveree. While I visited many different deliverance ministries, the primary data comes from four different sources described here with their leading prophets in parenthesis: one of the progenitors of deliverance ministry in Ghana (Kwofie); a deliverance ministry attached to a mainstream Pentecostal church (Nikoi); a prayer camp (Ofori); and, the deliverance-centric services at a controversial charismatic church (Emmnauel). The prophets dominate in such a way that for the sake of simplicity I will not provide monikers for the ministries and will instead refer to them by the prophet.

The bulk of the over 100 interviews conducted were with people from the last three ministries and followed a similar pattern in which we discussed their own particular experiences of deliverance. With the prophets – Kwofie, Emmanuel, Ofori and Nikoi – I inquired into the subtleties of their learning about demonology and their exorcistic methods to deliver people from spirits, witches and wizards. With the deliverees, I asked them to tell of their experiences of spirits and spirit possession. All the interviews were conducted in English, and all

of the deliverance ministries included were English – though Emmanuel’s occurs simultaneously in English and Twi, a simultaneously translated reality that is common amongst Ghanaian Pentecostal ministries. Most Pentecostal churches in Accra are multilingual, with English being a prominent language of performance.¹³

One of my primary contacts was one of Ghana’s original deliverance ministries. I will refer to him as Kwofie. Kwofie is an imposing figure standing over 6’6” with broad shoulders and a booming voice. His name is synonymous with early deliverance attempts in Ghana but has recently been sullied by a controversy over a donation that led to him spending over a year in a Ghanaian prison. Nonetheless, his knowledge of demonology is expansive and before prison he was regularly visited by those who then went off to start their own deliverance ministries. Philip, a deliverance minister and friend, called Kwofie a “pioneer in demonology and deliverance.” Of the three ministries central herein, two of them learned some of their demonology and deliverance techniques from Kwofie.

The manner in which I met Kwofie was unique, to say the least. Aware of his name as it figures in the works of two prominent Ghanaian scholars, Opoku Onyinah and Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, I set off walking about the community he had previously ministered in Medina, a bustling suburb of Accra. As I walked the streets asking about him, most people were convinced that he was still imprisoned. I had information that he had been released, so I was undeterred. I walked for hours. I finally happened upon someone who could take me to his church, which was in a state of disrepair. It was late on a Saturday afternoon. I was dusty

and dirty from the hours of walking the neighborhoods desperate to find this figure. I walked into the seemingly empty church to find a lone figure sitting in a plastic chair that bent and curled under his weight. I introduced myself and said I was looking for Kwofie. “I am he,” he said, “I have been waiting for you.” His prophetic utterance sent this poor researcher askance worried that perhaps my interest in charismatics was ill-placed, and that I had bit off more than I could chew. But from that moment our relationship flourished and resulted in many hours discussing deliverance and demonology. His knowledge will appear throughout the dissertation.

The prophet who will be most prevalent throughout this dissertation is no less controversial than Kwofie. I will refer to him as Emmanuel. Emmanuel is a young, stylish prophet who has irked the more established stars of the Pentecostal constellation in Ghana. He is infamous for both his deliverance methods and his various scandals, including impregnating and then cursing the wife of one of his junior pastors. His outsized personality with the press is incommensurate with the kind, soft-spoken, almost shy manner he speaks to me as a friend. His church, which is a large congregation, is set in a compound in Ashaley Botwe, a suburb of Accra. He lives on the compound along with his television station, employees and a variety of pastors and prophets. The compound is littered with kitsch figurines of Jesus and Mary amongst live size portraits of Emmanuel and his wife. The church was in the midst of an expansion the first time I was there. It seats a few thousand persons on red plastic lawn furniture and is nearly always full well in advance of the service. People will occasionally camp out inside the building waiting for his miraculous healing and deliverance. The dramatic
experiences of deliverance that I witnessed at this church make up a significant portion of this dissertation.

Much more restrained than either Kwofie or Emmanuel – noted, for example, by the fact that he has never been arrested – Nikoi provides another perspective. Nikoi is the junior pastor of one of Ghana’s most established Pentecostal figures. His position is of some repute but belies his actual passion – deliverance. So, every Saturday for six hours or so Nikoi enacts deliverance for those who seek it in a dilapidated tent at the backside of an opulent church building in Adenta, a district further down the Accra-Aburi highway than Medina.

The service here is part of a concentrated deliverance experience whereby participants must attend five services to guarantee deliverance. The service is primarily deliverance interspersed with occasional corporate prayers and singing. Nikoi and his pastors have the deliverees stand huddled in a group at the front of the tent where they are to be in constant prayer. While the deliverees pray, each pastor grabs – often forcefully – one of the deliverees and attempts to deliver him or her. This can manifest in many forms but includes the spilling of copious amounts of oil and often results in the deliveree vomiting into a garbage-bagged-lined-cardboard-box. Vomiting is considered a primary way in which demons make their exit. The sounds of people vomiting, prayers being exhorted, and screams all punctuate the air and can be heard as you approach the church from the road. These were marathon puke-and-rebuke sessions.

In deliverance centers like Nikoi’s, delivered persons continue coming to sessions for five weeks in order to establish protection from demons who might return. There is a great fear that, if delivered persons are not well established in their deliverance, then the demons
will return, perhaps more viciously than before. Often people mention that Jesus said demons previously cast out return to ruinous effect, citing the evangelist Luke: “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ When it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first.” (Luke 11:24-26, NRSV) The delivered body is described as empty and it needs to be filled with the goodness of the Holy Spirit in order to make it impenetrable. The five weeks of teaching include tricks of self-deliverance, receiving the Holy Spirit’s gifts, and learning things to avoid which might make one especially susceptible to demonic penetration.

The final prophet comes from a prayer camp. This was a much less friendly affair than the others. Prayer camps are perhaps the most intense way of dealing with demons, as they involve a residential period of time. Once a week or more I would take a two hour tro-tro ride (the local mode of transportation which involves cramming as many people as possible in a van) from Accra up the mountain, past the Aburi Gardens, to a prominent prayer camp. I would sidle past the goats and roosters that congregated at the prayer camp toward the center of the compound which was the church building. The outer ring of the camp has housing options that, depending on one’s ability to pay, range from quite comfortable to nothing more than a dilapidated roof.

This particular prayer camp is overseen by the prophet Ofori. He is well known. His prayer camp has been visited by such illustrious characters as the President of Ghana. Thursday mornings are the mornings of deliverance at the prayer camp. The service starts with singing,
testimony and a sermon, but the highlight is when Ofori performs mass deliverance. This is far less individualistic than the other deliverances discussed above. He tends to work the entire congregation into a frenzy so that the entire building is littered with bodies slain in the spirit. It is far more dangerous and less controlled than the other deliverances. On multiple occasions, I saw heads smash against the ground and begin bleeding.

Deliverance with Ofori also happens in a more individual setting, which I watched on occasion. Three times per week people can approach the prophet for counseling, which involves waiting for hours for a mere thirty seconds of the prophet’s time. As people wait, they pray. When they finally meet the prophet, they discuss with the prophet their particular issue. He then counsels them on how to receive deliverance. Most often the counsel is that they should spend twenty-one or forty days at the prayer camp fasting (though porridge and drinks are allowed). He will then pray with them, with the odd person falling out and experiencing deliverance on the spot. Usually, though, this is merely a diagnostic step that leads to a residential period at the camp.

The controversial aspect of this prayer camp – and others – is that they treat people with mental health issues quite poorly. I was only allowed to do my research there on the account that I would not seek out those with mental health issues. I did not. However, midway through my time visiting this prayer camp things changed dramatically. A rather compromising document was published by a prominent non-profit organization concerned with human rights about the horrific conditions of people struggling with mental health issues. At this prayer camp, they admittedly chain these persons up as a way of controlling them. The report dramatically altered my relationship with the prayer camp and made research there
quite difficult. My friend Mary, who has long lived at the camp and runs the store on the compound, helped me navigate the difficult terrain and convinced people to talk to me. This did not alleviate everything, and I was physically threatened by a junior pastor and eventually banned from the site due to the resulting paranoia after the non-profit’s publication. Nonetheless, stories are littered throughout this dissertation from this particular research site.

Defining Deliverance

Before launching into the specific case studies that inform the claims of this dissertation, it is worthwhile to define what deliverance is, as deliverance experiences are central to this entire work. Deliverance is grounded in the belief that human beings are susceptible to the influence of Satan and his numerous demons or evil spirits. It is not merely a propositional belief, but one that is felt in human bodies. The cosmos is filled with these evil spirits who are determined to possess humans and cause all sorts of problems – from sickness to poverty – for those whom they possess. Deliverance is aimed at helping those under such influences break free. Birgit Meyer, the doyen in the study of Ghanaian Pentecostalism, defines deliverance as “invoking the power of Jesus Christ to set a person free.”

Deliverance is incredibly and fantastically embodied. Deliverance is the attempt to separate evil spirits from a possessed body. The theological idea is that the dispossessed body

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14 I will not define Pentecostalism as I am exclusively interested in deliverance, this vital ritual at the heart of many Pentecostal ministries. And when it comes to deliverance I am not trying to come to a pristine theological definition but instead am trying to respect the lived nature of the ritual, as an embodied practice that is implicitly defined as bodies move to and fro.
is whole, while the possessed body is deficient.\textsuperscript{17} In the words of Kwofie, “Whenever a demon is invited in, he must be kicked out!” During deliverance deliverees exhibit embodied manifestations of evil spirits, from running or jumping to shaking or bodily movements resembling that of animals, such as snakes.\textsuperscript{18} As Abamfa Atiemo rightly points out, “A person being prayed for may also vomit or urinate in the process.”\textsuperscript{19} The list of embodied possibilities is endless – as this dissertation will document – and points to the seemingly infinite combinations and permutations of spirits that may possess humans.

William K. Kay and Robin Parry correctly state that, “if we look at the aim of both possession and exorcism and the mediumistic methods used in both phenomena, we should rather see them as mirror images of each other.”\textsuperscript{20} Possession is to experience malevolent spirits in one’s body.\textsuperscript{21} While negative, it is the spiritual expansion of the self into the supernatural. It is to have members of the cosmos broadly conceived enter one’s body.

Demons exercise an incredible influence on the lives of those whose bodies they have entered. To experience deliverance is to experience the removal of those spirits from one’s body and to be brought fully under the control of the Holy Spirit. Bodies then are the site of the spiritual ousting of these spirited members of the cosmos. Deliverance aims at creating a whole new being or self.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{17} Kay and Parry, \textit{Exorcism and Deliverance}, 121.  
\textsuperscript{18} Atiemo, “Deliverance in the Charismatic Churches in Ghana,” 42.  
\textsuperscript{19} Atiemo, 42.  
\textsuperscript{20} Kay and Parry, \textit{Exorcism and Deliverance}, 122.  
\textsuperscript{21} Kay and Parry, \textit{Exorcism and Deliverance}, 122.  
\textsuperscript{22} Kay and Parry, \textit{Exorcism and Deliverance}, 122.
But one should not race too quickly to the end-point of deliverance, for much meaning making occurs in the experience of possession. Though the point of deliverance is eventually to be freed of evil spirits, deliverance ministries spend most of their time discussing and exploring possession by evil spirits. Meyer states, “The important point to be made is that these churches offer their members the opportunity to experience the satanic, i.e. the chance to experience possession which is simultaneously denounced as ‘heathen.’”23 As the case studies unfold, this statement will become increasingly apparent. Repeatedly, prophets mine the depths of that which is disallowed, making it appear that the central point of deliverance is the experience of evil rather than the actual freedom deliverance promises.

Possession does not always involve ecstatic trance-like experiences. Charismatics believe that one of the primary ways that possession is evidenced is through a lack of fortune – either in economics, in health or in marriage. As Birgit Meyer states,

Pentecostalists distinguish between the realm of the physical, that is, the visible world, and the spiritual, that is, the invisible world and contend that the latter determines the former. Consequently, sickness and mishaps are understood to be a result of evil spirits intruding into a person’s spirit and body. In their view, there is a spiritual war going on between God and the Devil, and this is taking place both in the world as a whole and within a person’s individual spirit. Deliverance meetings are regarded as possibilities to have the side of God prevail.24

But most frequently, during deliverance, possession manifests in an ecstatic experience. The ecstatic trance-like outbursts that appear throughout this dissertation often occur only during deliverance. So long as the person seeking deliverance is calm here or she is assumed to be

23 Meyer, Translating the Devil, 172.
filled with the Holy Spirit. But any movement out of the ordinary indicates the presence of evil spirits. In these cases, a person’s behavior is often radically altered due to the interference of the spirit. As Kay and Parry state, “Possession trance, in turn, is a belief that attributes ‘alterations or discontinuity in consciousness’ to the presence of a spirit. Thus, in certain cultural contexts a particular state of being indicates that spirits are present in somebody’s life.” The outbursts are thought to be contingent upon the presence of the Holy Spirit via the prophet. That is to say that the ecstatic trance-like experience is actually due to the dueling forces in the spiritual cosmos. Possession as trance is the last gasp of evil spirits to maintain control over one’s body in light of the incoming presence of the Holy Spirit. Meyer succinctly articulates this breaking up of possession as “In the end, prayers create individuals whose spirits are fully possessed by the Holy Spirit and separated from the complex for which the Devil stands.”

Meyer, as she often does, has poignantly pointed to the publicity of deliverance. “Significantly,” she writes, “demonic possession is not confined to the individuals experiencing it, but rather it is a matter of public interest. The exorcism of demons takes place in front of the congregation and churches offer their members the possibility to listen to testimonies from people who were involved with evil spirits in the past.” While occasionally people find deliverance on their own in the quiet, privacy of their own abodes, most often it is a public performance. Every case study herein is an example of this deliverance publicity. Deliverance

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happens, most frequently, in churches, prayer camps and deliverance ministries with the public performance of evil spirits dueling good spirits in human bodies.

Opinions differ among Ghanaian neo-Pentecostals on whether true Christians can be possessed by demons. The general belief appears to be that a Christian can be oppressed by demons, but that because he or she is converted, this can easily be dealt with by prayer. But that is not the case in deliverance ministries which argue that initial conversion does not respond to a lifetime of possession and that deliverance is necessary for all believers to truly experience the charismata. While self-deliverance is a possibility for the most mature of Christians, most people need an expert. People seek out these experts and often bounce from one to another searching for an answer to their problems.

The manner in which those experts operate vary but all hold the central tenet that at the core of every problem are evil spirits awaiting spiritual discernment or diagnosis and ultimately, to be excavated from the human body. Deliverance “itself tends to involve extremely standard and universal procedures, despite some noteworthy variations. Ironically, while the Charismatic Movement is renowned for its spontaneity and dislike of ritual, deliverance tends to be very legalistic and to employ some traditional sacramental techniques.”

With Kwofie, Ofori, Emmanuel and Nikoi this dissertation will not only illustrate their differences but also primarily their continuities, for despite performative differences they are still very much practicing something that can be collected and analyzed under the categorization of deliverance.

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Each prophet, for example, has his own manner of diagnosing the problems. Some describe audible voices from both the Holy Spirit and evil spirits. Others describe physical impressions such as pains, heat, cold, etc. Some see pictures over people’s heads that substantiate the presence of a demon. Still others associate colors with specific demons. Sometimes people only feel the demonic after laying hands on a person, whereby the demonic feeling is transferred through bodies. Stephen Hunt cites one long-time practitioner who could smell out demons, a smell similar to rotting flesh.\(^{29}\) Finally, there are the ubiquitous descriptions of actually being able to see the demon. These are just a few of the ways in which prophets sense the presence of the demonic in individuals.

But all of these prophets hold one thing absolutely in common, and that is Satan’s primacy. Satan is a dominant figure in charismatic Christianity in Ghana, casting a shadow or pall over every pneumatic ritual. Meyer writes, “I was struck by the fact that these various and competing churches appeared to be united by a common enemy: the Devil. A huge part of the service was focused on his evil manifestations.”\(^{30}\) As we will discover, it is not only Satan but also a whole cosmos made up of demons, witchcraft, sorcery, magic, ancestors and traditional deities that present themselves regularly in the religious lives of Ghanaians. The Devil acts as the boundary marker between what constitutes Christianity and what does not. Anything not

\(^{29}\) Hunt, "Managing the Demonic," 220–221. Obviously, there are a whole host of senses that are untouched by this dissertation. That does not mean they are absent from the deliverance sensorium. For example, occasionally the olfactory sense was invoked. As my interlocutor Phillip told me, “Spirits are even here, if you are open they can enter you as you are walking around the world. Depends on where you pass. I once went to the beach, I sensed a spirit in the form of a smell. I began to cough and I realized the demon was there. So spirits can possess people.”

\(^{30}\) Meyer, Translating the Devil, xvii.
Christian is demonized, which, as Meyer points out, does not mean it disappears but means those demons have very real powers “that have to be dealt with in a concrete way.”\(^{31}\) That concrete response is through deliverance.

These demonic figures cause a number of problems for humans. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, perhaps the foremost expert on Pentecostalism in Ghana, lists the myriad of problems that reoccur in Pentecostal discourse as signs of demonic activity: “gaining or losing possessions mysteriously, delayed promotions at work for no reason, being prone to accidents, premature deaths in a family, being disabled, hearing voices, haunted houses, having nightmares, dreams of sexual intercourse, persistent indebtedness and poverty... gambling, drunkenness, homosexuality and lesbianism, masturbation, nymphomania, kleptomania and other psychosomatic problems.”\(^{32}\) It is worth emphasizing even at this early stage the dominant presence of sexuality – in a variety of forms – as demonic. Sexual deliverance will be the central focus of this dissertation because of its overwhelming presence in the various deliverance ministries I researched. Deliverance is obsessed with sexuality.\(^{33}\) Sexual sins and the corresponding spirits transferred between sexual partners are viewed as some of the most difficult spirits to be delivered from. Demons are legalistic about their right to live in offending genitals and are extraordinarily difficult to excavate from said area of the body.\(^{34}\) And so various sexual sins as identified in this particular cosmos – adultery, fornication, transvestitism,

\(^{33}\) Hunt, “Managing the Demonic,” 226.
\(^{34}\) Hunt, "Managing the Demonic," 226.
masturbation, incest, and bestiality – are all viewed as leading to intense possession. In deliverance the corollary to intense possession is an exaggerated deliverance session.

Deliverance constructs an entire cosmos through negation. I have written elsewhere that the relationship between evil spirits and the Holy Spirit is familiar: “bad is to good as demon is to angel as devil is to god. Knowing one side of the ledger exists is to know that the other exists. In this world, for pneumatic Christians, there may be no better way to know God than to know God through the contrary, through the evil window into what lay beyond material existence.” But even this may underestimate the importance of demons. Demons are not merely a window through which to see the good. Each demon ultimately matters. That is each demon in the material realm has real value to the Pneumatic ontology. Meyer points out that, “In Accra the Devil is omnipresent.” Meyer likewise concludes, after a research among Ewe Christians that without the belief in the existence of the Devil and evil spirit-beings the people’s faith in God “would be devoid of any basis.” That is to say that while the demonic is deemed repulsive, there exists a strong desire or attraction to the whole world of demonology. In their efforts to destroy the demonic, deliverance ministries end up mimicking it. In the most intense, physical attempts to banish evil, Pentecostals invite a certain kind of intimacy with evil. Abamfo Atiemo writes that, “In most cases they are guilty of a terrible dualism. A dualism which creates

a Devil who seems to be equal in power and majesty with God himself.”39 As a believer, Atiemo is deeply concerned that in deliverance ministries the fascination with and attraction to evil have superseded Christian teachings. That is, the obsession with the demonic has obliterated themes such as “salvation, repentance, holiness, consecration, etc.”40

Deliverance ministries state that success, wholeness, and abundance are God’s promises to humanity that are foiled and warded off by these evil sources. Demons deny humanity the complete and full life they are promised. Deliverance responds to such denial. Ghanaian theologian Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu offers the following definition of deliverance:

the deployment of divine resources, that is, power and authority in the Name or Blood of Jesus – perceived in pneumatological terms as the intervention of the Holy Spirit – to provide release for demon-possessed, demon-oppressed, broken, disturbed and troubled persons, in order that victims may be restored to ‘proper functioning order’, that is, to ‘health and wholeness’; and, being thus freed from demonic influence and curses, they may enjoy God’s fullness of life understood to be available in Christ.41

This definition captures the theological underpinning of deliverance. If there is a flaw in this definition though, it is that it fails to account for the prominent presence of bodies in the ritual, Every time success – broadly defined in the many areas of life that fall under “health and wholeness” – appears elusive it is the demonic possession or oppression that is to blame.42 The world beyond continually hampers human efforts and as such deliverance becomes an important means to accomplishing anything in this world.

39 Atiemo, “Deliverance in the Charismatic Churches in Ghana,” 47.
40 Atiemo, "Deliverance in the Charismatic Churches in Ghana," 47.
42 Asamoah-Gyadu, African Charismatics, 164.
What is particularly important to Ghanaian proponents of deliverance is the triad of sin, demonic agency and suffering. It is in emphasizing these three elements that Asamoah-Gyadu draws out an important distinction between deliverance and exorcism, a distinction that will be evident in the case studies presented herein. It is the working together of these three elements that requires deliverance. Deliverance is not only exorcism of the evil spirits or demons but also a fleeing from sin which gave the demons permission to enter the body and it is the doing away with suffering which is caused by demons who were given permission to enter the body via human sin. This is why deliverance is more than merely expelling demons, though that is certainly central to the performance, but is rather “freeing people from ‘bondage’ to sin and Satan.”

Bondage takes a multiplicity of forms from the most extreme – possession – to the least – oppression. In both cases evil spirits are working against the goals and wishes of the human with whom they are interacting. Possession usually refers to an altered state of consciousness. That is, the evil agents take complete control of the person’s body and faculties and the person operates in ways that are seen as unnatural. Oppression is seen as less sinister or complete, but nonetheless demons frustrate human capacities resulting in a variety of failures. Oppressed persons do not necessarily experience possession but possession and oppression are always experienced in tandem.

Onyinah coined the term witchdemonology to try to capture this unique Ghanaian demonological cosmos. It maintains the Western term demonology, because as we will see it

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possesses many Western antecedents. But the introduction of witch to demonology allows for
the synthesis of Ghanaian and Western concepts, with the witch standing in for the traditional
Akan worldview. That the witch is much more than a witch is illustrated by the fact that
amongst his interlocutors Onyinah found no clear definition for terms like witch or witchcraft.
They were instead used synonymously with demons and evil spirits of all sorts, but primarily in
the demonization of Akan traditional deities.\(^{45}\) Demonic possession, on the other hand, was
clearly defined as “entry of a demon into one’s body without one’s consent.”\(^{46}\) Meyer herself
noticed the unique combination of demons and witches noting, “in the video, cinemas, where
people can enjoy a film for next to nothing, they can see, alongside Western movies, horror
films produced in Ghana with the Devil and his consorts – particularly witches – playing the
leading parts.”\(^{47}\) Onyinah writes, “Hence, witchdemonology is used in this study to describe the
beliefs and practices of “deliverance ministry” in Ghana, viewed as a synthesis of the practices
and beliefs of Akan witchcraft and Western Christian concepts of demonology and exorcism.”\(^{48}\)
In witchcraft stories witches attempt to destroy the lives of family members they envy for one
or another reason. Witches are considered to be the principal agents of the Devil and
protection against their attacks can be gained only through prayer.\(^{49}\)

A point of importance for Onyinah and others is the connection between charismatic
Christianity and Akan traditional religion. For Onyinah, deliverance is a synthesis of both
religions. For Onyinah deliverance operates within the framework of Akan traditional religion

\(^{45}\) Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 175.
\(^{46}\) Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 176.
\(^{47}\) Meyer, “‘Delivered from the Powers of Darkness,’” 236.
\(^{48}\) Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 172.
\(^{49}\) Meyer, “‘Delivered from the Powers of Darkness,’” 237.
whereby spirit entities become evil forces still at work.\textsuperscript{50} Deliverance also works within the Christian framework whereby good and evil are locked in a cosmic battle. He adds, “the missing ingredients that bind together the two religions are the prosperity and deliverance proponents, mostly from North America.”\textsuperscript{51} While I would quibble with Onyinah over the agency he ascribes to North American ministries, he is absolutely correct in noting the similarity between Akan traditional religion and deliverance, a point I take up in greater detail in chapter 2.

\textit{Demonology}

Demons are central to deliverance ministries, but the origin stories of these demons are not a major issue for most deliverance ministries. Most prophets I spoke with believe that they are fallen angels who were thrust out of heaven for disobedience. In being expelled from heaven, as disembodied spirits the angels fell into rivers, seas, forests, mountains and humans and made their abodes in those various locales. All types of demons are capable of entering human bodies and participating in human activities, including but not limited to sexual acts. As such, great caution must be taken in sexual endeavors for one is never sure if spirits are in fact involved. This is where deliverance ministries, and Pentecostalism more generally, depart from the Christianity of missionaries which classified these spirits as being harmless and powerless. Pentecostalism views the spirits as intensely powerful and always engaged in cosmic warfare against the human body.\textsuperscript{52} Demons encompass a whole range of spirits, such as old deities,

\textsuperscript{50} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 215.  
\textsuperscript{51} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 221.  
\textsuperscript{52} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 177.
dead people’s ghosts, witches, and modern magical powers who are all considered servants of Satan.\textsuperscript{53}

Most centrally to this dissertation, demons do not have bodies of their own. They can exist outside of embodiment but are primarily expressed and known most effectively through their ability to occupy bodies of humans and animals, with human bodies always being the preferred avenue to invoke their powers. Of course, their taking up residence in a human body is seen as directly contravening God’s purposes for the human body.

While spirits are ever-desiring to enter the human body, they can only do so under certain conditions. Demons are actually legalistic about entering human bodies, as Kwofie adamantly reminded me again and again. Demons follow careful rules, laws, or prescriptions about how they may enter the human body. They enter human bodies at the invitation of the human. This invitation, however, is not some act of conjuring but is through human sin. To sin is to offer one’s body to demons. As Peter Horrobin, a popular deliverance author writes, “For example, no amount of shouting at a demon of lust will effect deliverance, if the person receiving ministry is continuing in an adulterous relationship and unrepentant about his or her sexual sin! That demon has a legal right to stay!”\textsuperscript{54} Demons are said to enter the human body with permission. They thus possess a legal right to invade. That right is gifted to the evil spirits through sin and moral failure, either personal or familial. Every sin invites demons into your body, or, in the common metaphor, invites “strangers into your house.” Those strangers are evil. With permission to enter, the demons enter through nine orifices on the human body.

\textsuperscript{53} Meyer, “Magic, Mermaids and Modernity,” 50.
The orifices are not merely points of entry, but through deliverance act as the points of exit as well. Demons enter and exit through the same orifice. If a demon entered through a person’s mouth, then it will exit much the same way in vomit, screaming, coughing etc. If a demon entered through a person’s anus it will exit through the excretion of feces. If a demon entered through the eyes, extreme crying will occur as a means of exit.

Unsurprisingly, and this will become increasingly obvious throughout the dissertation, the sexual organs are particularly frequent points of demonic entry. Permission to enter is given through a variety of sexual misdeeds including but not limited to adultery, fornication, masturbation, wet dreams, incest, and bestiality. With each sexual experience that falls outside the bounds of heteronormative sex and in wedlock, demons enter the body. For Ghanaian charismatics it is impossible to have sexual relations without fear of the demonic. But even more than that, “in the hermeneutics and praxis of healing and deliverance experts, the devil and demons seem to wield so much power and their influence is so diffuse that it is impossible to be conscious of their presence and live a life devoid of fear and insecurity.”

Throughout this dissertation we will see examples of this fear and insecurity plaguing a great many people. Most deliverance ministries have ways of finding out the personal details of people requiring deliverance which helps them expel the various demons. Sometimes this comes in the form of pastors meeting with possessed/oppressed persons prior to a church service. Emmanuel’s pastors often do this and Ofori does it himself throughout the week. More frequently in

55 Depending on whom you talk to the number is either nine (counting each individual orifice) or seven (counting the eyes and ears as one each).
deliverance ministries it is done through a lengthy questionnaire. My guide through Ghanaian
demonology – Kwofie – was one of the first to utilize the questionnaire. Nikoi uses a similar
questionnaire to diagnose demons. All who seek deliverance from Nikoi must complete all of
the questions that mine personal details, their experiences of the Holy Spirit, their familial
history and their complete sexual history including sexual dreams. It is worth emphasizing just
how all-consuming the worldview is – demons are everywhere! Asamoah-Gyadu agrees,
stating, “In view of the detailed nature of the questions, it is unlikely if all were to answer
truthfully as requested, that anyone could escape being delivered from a demon of some
sort.”

In my experience, however, while questionnaires are frequently disseminated and
collected, they are rarely used. Instead, evidence of demons is read through bodies. This will
be a central argument of this dissertation, that deliverance is embodied and only understood
through reading the body. For example, I never saw Nikoi read a questionnaire before
embarking on deliverance. Ofori met with people throughout the week at his prayer camp but
his deliverance sessions were a kind of mass hysteria that rarely articulated the personal
demons of congregants. And Emmanuel often delivered people who had never had any contact
with him or his pastors. The particular demons of oppression or possession were determined by
their personalities exhibited during deliverance. This might be found in what the spirits said or
how they said things. But more often it was in how the spirits made human bodies move. If a
person slithered on the floor like a snake, then this was a serpentine spirit. If a person tried to

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57 Asamoah-Gyadu, African Charismatics, 185.
58 Asamoah-Gyadu, African Charismatics, 186.
remove imaginary wedding rings, then this was suggestive of a battle with a spiritual marriage. Loud and high-pitched screams were supposed to indicate possession by witchcraft. And wriggling and flopping like a fish out of water indicated that Mami Wata and taken possession of the body.\(^{59}\) This kind of interpretive work was standard across the various research sites. While often it is the experts – the prophets – who diagnose these situations, Kwofie and Nikoi admitted to me that it was not difficult and involved common sense as they led me through the various embodied performances and their corresponding diagnosis.

*The Structure of Deliverance*

The prophets I researched saw the need for deliverance as universal. Kwofie emphasized that all African Christians needed to go through deliverance, while Nikoi was adamant that all Christians needed to be set free.\(^ {60}\) The methods used in healing and exorcism differ from one church to another. However, there are some commonalities in the overall structure, even though the elements are usually intertwined in a chaotic mess of pseudo-spontaneity.\(^ {61}\) In deliverance the goal is to remove the evil spirits through ritual processes. The initial stage is usually one of binding. This binding of the evil spirits is accomplished in part by loud exhortations of authoritative phrases to the effect of “we bind you in the name of Jesus.” The purpose of binding is to hopefully minimize or destroy the influence demons have on the human perception of the event.

\(^{59}\) Mami Wata will be prominent in chapter 5, but for now it is worth noting that she is a spirit that emerges from the sea and is a mermaid, half-human-half-fish.

\(^{60}\) Kwofie often talked about Africa as being especially possessed due to the presence of traditional religions, thus why he references Africa specifically in this quote.

Binding is followed by repentance. While there is an ambiguous relationship between
demonization and agency there is always believed to be some reason for possession that is
within the control of the possessed person. Sin invites demonization. It is a kind of legal
relationship for most deliverance ministers, especially with those who learned from Kwofie. A
demon cannot enter one’s body unless you gave that demon the legal right to enter, though
humans are often unaware of how exactly they provided that legal right. But that legal right
remains until repentance occurs and the blood of Jesus is applied. This kind of legalistic
language is common of Third Wave Pentecostalism. As Kwofie repeatedly said, “demons are
legalistic.” The legal contract occurs in the form of a covenant. Kwofie writes, “Regardless of
the snare that Satan sets for a person, you can be sure of one thing it will be fun in the
beginning but their fun will turn into a nightmare before their eyes. Any covenant that is
entered into with evil spirits has been documented under the sea. It’s there!...it has been
written and will be used against them and their children. It is written!” The contract is only
broken when deliverance is followed correctly with repentance and the driving out of demons.

In the third stage of deliverance, the demons are cast out of the individual. The actually
casting out of the demons is where the unique interstices of each prophet emerge. It is here
where their personality can be displayed. But there are a number of similarities in those
prophets that make up this study. Deliverance ministers command the demons to manifest –
both verbally and physically. This request is made in the name and blood of Jesus. The
prophet will yell repeatedly such phrases as: “spirit of lust – Out! Out! Out!”; “We come against

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63 McCloud, 86–87.

In some formulations naming the demon is an important part of the process. Naming is tantamount to defeating the demon. To name something is to take authority over it. Not all prophets worry about naming; some worry that it is a practice that leads to deception, but it is a fairly ubiquitous practice. Sometimes names are attributes – like those listed above – but sometimes they can be very specific. We will see examples throughout where the name is specific like Mami Wata or even personal like Maggie.

Once named, the person is prayed for or over. This is often accompanied with the laying on of hands or physical reenactment of spiritual warfare. This is the moment when spirits often manifest through cursing, physical manifestations, etc. At times manifestations can be extremely violent bodily shaking, jumping, limbs thrashing or spinning. Audible signs of demonic oppression can include screaming, crying, sobbing, belching, laughing, and screeching. The more sudden outbursts of screaming are usually interpreted as a reaction to the demon being exposed to the light of the Holy Spirit.

As can already be seen, the senses matter a great deal. Not only are human senses

invoked but the spirits are treated as if they have “sensory capacities not unlike humans.”

Spirits, then, control human senses and yet have senses of their very own.

The senses and bodies are central. These are physical attempts to find spirits and not merely symbolic battles. The public performance includes the entire congregation who engage in loud prayers during the deliverance episode. As Joseph Quayesi-Amakye writes, “Even clapping in Pentecostal worship has now assumed a new meaning in so-called prophetic services or meetings. Congregants are asked to clap their hands during warfare prayers. The usual rationale assigned to this is that by this act one’s enemies are supernaturally neutralized, subdued and punished. Ritualistic clapping serves as a supernatural arsenal or missile that discomfits and destroys one’s enemies spiritually.” The body in obvious and subtle ways is always interacting with the spiritual world.

The spirit must then be slayed or removed through a combination of prayers and physical rituals that might involve hitting the person, rubbing the person’s stomach, smearing oil or pouring consecrated water on the person, etc. These physical rituals are often curious and impromptu which will become more evident as the dissertation progresses. This is the frenzied climax, a climax that will occur repeatedly throughout the dissertation, of deliverance. The amount of frenzy correlates to the depth of the demonization. Sometimes deliverance is relatively sedate, but other times it is wild and violent. As previously mentioned, people will often vomit so deliverers often carry with them toilet paper or something to wipe away the detritus.

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66 Hunt, "Managing the Demonic," 221.
67 Quayesi-Amakye, *Prophetism in Ghana Today,* 129.
Ultimately, even amidst the body fluids, the only evidence that the evil spirits have truly departed is the docile body. Until the moving body becomes still and quiet deliverance will continue to be performed. Up until that moment of quiet docility, deliverance is a loud, messy, noisy experience. Deliverance ends when the body falls docile to the ground. This docile ending is the norm in deliverance and is sometimes referred to as resting in the spirit. Resting in the spirit is the experience of falling and lying still on the ground. Thomas J. Csordas calls it a “sacred swoon” as it is supposed to be the moment when the power of the divine completely overwhelms the evil spirits and the body reacts to this overwhelming divine power by ceasing to move. This docility is crucial for without it there are no accompanying signs that the evil spirits have departed. The bodily goal of deliverance is to turn a convulsing body into a docile body. Deliverance is marked by a restrained body, the quieting of the excessive body. The rhetoric of the prophet and of the spirit are far less demonstrative of success than are bodily reactions. Foucault cites docility as a marker of the “subjected, used, transformed and improved” body. In many ways this is how prophets utilize docility as well. Docility, the true marker of deliverance, marks body that is controlled and transformed.

While the authority to remove the evil spirits is understood as coming from the Holy Spirit, it is very much conditioned on the level of anointing of the particular prophet so that often along with the name of Jesus the name of the prophet will be invoked in such phrases “as with the power and authority of the prophet of this house I cast you out.” The level of

anointing is also invoked when a junior pastor struggles to deliver someone and deliverance is only accomplished with the interjection of the prophet. Who is yelling the phrases of adjuration matters greatly, but the ultimate power is attached to the triune God of Christianity in Pentecostal theology. The blood is literally seen as being acidic and powerful, as having the physical qualities to destroy each and every work of Satan.  

After the body falls docile, the evil spirits are said to have departed and the body is now possessed by the Holy Spirit. Meyer writes, “Significantly, someone possessed by the [Holy] Spirit – the ideal born-again Christian – is also conceptualized as being overwhelmed by an external force, rather than as a self-conscious individual devoting herself or himself fully to God.” For good or evil, the person is enchanted with minimal agency. Whether we are discussing good or evil – and this dissertation will primarily be discussing evil – they operate in very similar ways and lead to very similar conclusions about the relationship between spirits and the body.

However, the Holy Spirit is not imagined with nearly the creativity or iconography of the evil spirits. It is in many ways the mirror image of the evil spirits. Meyer points this out stating, The Holy Spirit is a generalized antipode to the differentiated domain of Satan. It is a power separating an individual from any links, thereby isolating them. The Other represented by the Holy Spirit does not stand for itself, but is simply a negation of the Satanic. Therefore, the experience of otherness through possession by the Holy Spirit leaves much less room for individual differentiation and external embodiment, that is, the expression of specific ideas, attitudes or desires than possession by one evil spirit or another. Paradoxically, though the Holy Spirit individualizes by severing links with the satanic, it does not allow for individual specificity. Possession by the Holy Spirit alone is comparatively dull.

and meaningless. It lacks the appeal of the possibility of articulating forbidden ideas, wishes and desires or to express facets of oneself evoking one’s actual life conditions. \textsuperscript{74}

Pentecostalism’s appeal is not necessarily the Holy Spirit but the entire narrative of evil that leads to possession by the Holy Spirit. The appeal is in the enactment of the forbidden. Meyer calls deliverance a kind of circular conversion whereby Pentecostals continuously revisit that which they cast out. \textsuperscript{75}

\textit{Sexual Deliverance}

Deliverance is often a sexual affair. Deliverance presents a cosmos of limitless sexual possibilities. It is this category of deliverance, a category that dominates deliverance performances, that will be central to this dissertation. Each following chapter loosely ascribes to sexual categories that are all too familiar: masturbation, bestiality, homosexuality and heterosexuality. But none of these titles are effective in describing what these chapters explain. In some chapters, the experiences described bear only a passing resemblance to the title ascribed. The first chapter deals with masturbation to be sure, at least the mechanics of it. It is people who are manually arousing their own genitals. But monosexuality and autoeroticism do not apply because they do not act alone. Spirits are implicated in their masturbation. The second chapter deals with homosexuality but again it does so transposed into a supernatural register. The third chapter deals with spiritual marriage – people having very real sexual encounters with various spirits. The fourth chapter deals with sex with animals. But this is not the bestiality that so concerned the Puritans that they ascribed laws and punishments to it. For

\textsuperscript{74} Meyer, "Magic, Mermaids and Modernity," 63.
\textsuperscript{75} Meyer, \textit{Translating the Devil}, 211–212.
the Puritans, it was standard farm animals, acts deemed so repugnant that they made the offending partner watch the slaughter of the animal before hanging him. In this case the animals are spirits visiting from the cosmos broadly defined. These terms are merely placeholders as we seek a language and grammar to describe the sexuality at hand (or in the case of the first chapter, in hand).

The sexual categories are not dichotomous. Often, they bleed into each other. And often they are linked – for example, a deliverance service might shift from masturbation to lesbianism to spiritual marriage. The spirits may shift from homosexuality to masturbation. What is constant is the performative excess of ecstatic fundamentalism with its attendant writhing, flailing, whirling, obstreperous, languid, wanton, hot and bothered bodies.

Jessica Moberg writes that, “Neocharismatic groups are particularly intriguing from a “body perspective” since they combine extensive physical interaction during worship and emphasis on physical (and mental) wellbeing with strict bodily discipline in other areas, including sexuality. Yet, few scholars have taken interest in sexual discipline.” And while this is true to a degree I do not read deliverance ministries as all that interested in sexual discipline. The regularity with which they visit and revisit, cite and recite, iterate and reiterate sexualities leaves me convinced that they are far more interested in sex as a threshold phenomenon, a

phenomenon that allows for radical rethinking of the world in which we live, the bodies that we inhabit and the desires we have.

Another constant is my inability to articulate or represent the intense moments of pain and pleasure in a manner that matches their evocative force and intensity. This is widely true when writing about sex and bodies. Sex remains one of the most intense modes of communication and one around which discourse often fails. The intent here is not to be titillating. The question has haunted this project from the beginning: how to write about sex and bodies in a way that transcends the demotic tangle of body parts? How does one avoid vulgar dishonesty in either direction – either veiling acts and bodies parts or overstating them? I do not care if it is pornographic, whatever that means, but I want it to be artful and honest. But some of the responsibility lies on the reader. The “honesty” of what is written here is only so because of the absolute certainty that sex is a significant part of life. Not only do I believe that to be true, it is true of the rituals observed in these Ghanaian churches. But if the reader refuses this general premise that sex is a significant part of life, flowing over the borders of the bodies in coitus, then the sex scenes will merely be titillating and the conclusions outlandish.

Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

The methodology of this project is one of embodiment, or in the words of Josh Brahinksy “Pentecostal body logics.” It is an effort to take seriously the body in all its permutations during the ritual of deliverance, especially sexual deliverance. As Brahinsky points out, body logics – or portable sensory dynamics – are absolutely central to Pentecostal

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hermeneutics and epistemologies. Everything—from conversion through deliverance through life-long commitment—in the Pentecostal worldview is inflected by sensory aptitudes.\textsuperscript{79} As Michael Wilkinson writes, “Pentecostal worship is characterized by physicality and through the kinesthetic participation of bodies in motion.”\textsuperscript{80} In the context of this dissertation, sex with spirits and acts of deliverance both rely on the body as the space where the supernatural is unveiled, felt, and proven as real. It is through these rituals and experiences that Pentecostals construct the body. That is to say, and this will be repeated, Pentecostalism constructs the body not through theological statements or cognitive propositions but instead through lived experiences such as the dancing body, the delivered body, the singing body or the glossolaliac body.

Discussion of what actually constitutes the body will come later, for it can only be formed in reference to the material presented herein. However, for the purposes of this dissertation I will follow the work of Anthony Pinn, who clarifies the distinction and relationship between two bodies inextricably linked: the discursive body and the material body. Pinn emphasizes the materiality of bodies. Pinn writes, “Meaning is embodied. Human experience, then, involves an array of factors only some of which are discursive in nature. Bodies serve as a nonmaterial text to be read, but they are also material realities that shape information within the context of the world.”\textsuperscript{81} Theoretical consideration of one without the other is insufficient or incomplete but this essay will emphasize the material body, or as Pinn states, “the physical

\textsuperscript{79} Brahinsky, “Pentecostal Body Logics,” 217.
\textsuperscript{81} Pinn, Embodiment, 9.
dimensions of existence, the “stuff” of human beings.” However, the physical body is always and everywhere already limited by the discursive body and so, as will become clear, this emphasis on the materiality of bodies constantly comes up against discursive boundaries. The primary commitment herein is robust consideration of the “stuff” of human beings, material bodies and how hands, vaginas, penises, legs, etc. occupy space. The relationship between material bodies and discursive bodies is a secondary commitment.

To study Pentecostalism from the perspective of embodiment is in many ways to respect the raw materials of Pentecostalism which include a broad emphasis on embodiment. The body is not only primary in deliverance but in most Pentecostal rituals. Pentecostalism is primarily a determined effort to experience interaction between the supernatural and the human subject. Evidence of such an encounter is felt in the body through overt bodily expressions. Wilkinson and Althouse emphasize that embodiment is a revealing lens through which to explore Pentecostal notions of the body.

Birgit Meyer refers to this as the sensational form through her own research in Ghanaian Pentecostalism. The sensational form, effective for discussions around Pentecostalism if not for other religions, bridges the distance between human materiality and the transcendental through sensory engagement between the two realms. She writes:

In particular, I was struck by the specific way in which the spiritual and the physical are related in Pentecostal religiosity. Evil spirits are held to work through bodies, food, gifts, or commodities, and the Holy Spirit is perceived as a force that intervenes and fights evil powers by, for example, making evil spirits

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82 Pinn, Embodiment, 3.
leave the body of a possessed person. Even though faith in God is often invoked, faith is not understood as an inner, spiritual attitude that one can keep to oneself but in a far more material sense.  

This sensational form, or material sense, is perhaps most prominent in deliverance as even Meyer’s examples indicate. The sensational form which is an enchanted materiality is unique from most Protestant approaches to spirituality which privilege rational, disenchanted, disembodiment. The sensational form emphasizes that the Holy Spirit and evil spirits in Pentecostalism are felt in the material dimension, providing a fuller understanding of Pentecostalism. As Meyer writes, “sensation is the personal authoritative index for the presence of the Holy Spirit.” The form is sensational in two ways, as experienced through the senses and as something that transcends the bounds of normal. But it is the former, as experienced through the senses, that ends up privileging the body as highly valued as a vessel for the supernatural, good or bad. Pentecostalism, as such, is a discourse of the feeling body.

Or as one pastor defined deliverance, deliverance is cosmic warfare for the control of bodies. Bodies claimed by demons through sex must be reclaimed for the kingdom of God. In order to do so, the sexually connected bodies of human and spirit must be separated and divorced through physical, embodied rituals. In this way, deliverance re-emphasizes the importance of sensual feelings to pneumatic understandings of the supernatural. The cosmic

battle is sexual and sensual as spirit and matter intermingle. Even though Pentecostalism is in part defined by spontaneity and the unexpected, the senses and the body are a constant that grounds the entire Pentecostal worldview. In deliverance, the senses facilitate a whole host of experiences. So remaining true to the materials of Pentecostalism, bodily feeling and its centrality to religious ritual are, rather than propositional truths, central to this dissertation. Thus, we will attend to bodies as the primary locus of Pentecostal experience and knowledge gathering by watching the various embodied experiences in sexual deliverance from movement, music, dance, and dreams.

This necessarily requires an appreciation of what James K. A. Smith calls “an incipient philosophical anthropology at work in Pentecostal worship – a tacit, assumed model of human persons.” 92 He writes:

The reason why Pentecostal worship is so affective, tactile and emotive is because Pentecostal spirituality rejects “cognitivist” pictures of the human person that would construe as fundamentally “thinking things.” Pentecostal worship is “experiential” because it assumes a holistic understanding of personhood and agency – that the essence of the human animal cannot be reduced to reason or the intellect. Or, to put it otherwise, rather than seeing human action and behavior as entirely driven by conscious, cognitive, deliberative processes, Pentecostal worship implicitly appreciates that our being-in-the-world is significantly shaped and primed by all sorts of precognitive, nondeliberative “modular” operations. In short, we feel our way around the world more than we think about it, before we think about it. 93

For Smith this is an affective anthropological construal in Pentecostal practice. But this is not abstract emotionalism. It is intimately tethered to the body. 94 Pentecostalism is about

93 Smith, Thinking in Tongues, 72.
94 Smith, Thinking in Tongues, 76.
experience and through experience coming to an embodied knowledge about the world – broadly conceived – that surrounds humans. In this way propositions are viewed with suspicion. Simon Coleman importantly points out that not only do Pentecostals prefer the experience of the body over theological or cognitive propositions, but they also actually denigrate the theological as obscuring true experience which is found only in the body.  

Brahinsky refers to these Pentecostal body logics as “somatic theologies” and the “sensory vernacular.” Wilkinson adds his voice to this chorus emphasizing Pentecostal embodiment by articulating how they learn of the body and through the body in kinesthetic and tactile experiences. It is not about belief but about bodies in motion.

Coleman, Meyer, Smith, Wilkinson and others are part of a movement that pays specific attention to the body in Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism is indeed so embodied that definitions of it must wrestle to include both its bodily and experiential characteristics. But attention to the body in Pentecostalism is still an emerging field. Candy Gunther Brown states that, “Pentecostal ontologies and epistemologies of body and spirit have, nevertheless, remained largely opaque to non-Pentecostals.” I think this is an important point and worth emphasizing. The opaqueness stems largely from the radically different perspective of the

97 Wilkinson, “Pentecostalism, the Body and Embodiment,” 22.
body that Pentecostals have from traditional approaches to embodiment with their commitment to the materiality of spirits and the experience of spirits – good and bad – in the body. Wilkinson and Althouse are correct when they state that Pentecostal embodiment “may look different and be particularized in specific ways.” The uniqueness of Pentecostalism embodiment is what opens up this dissertation to the theoretical implications of the body and its sensorium.

Smith poignantly states, “There could be no Pentecostal spirituality without the matter of bodies; in other words, for Pentecostalism, bodies matter.” But it is not merely an embodied materiality. Pentecostal experience is about the body being a site for the inbreaking of spirits, a site of encounter, a site of instability. Smith captures this stating, “We might say that the ontology embedded in Pentecostal practice is material supernaturalism or supernatural materialism.” Spirits influence humanity through bodies. Humans embrace or fight spirits in the body. This is the primary and obvious uniqueness within Pentecostal embodiment; the body and spirits are co-constitutive. Wilkinson writes, “Pentecostals understand the world to be one in which the physical, including bodies, is shaped by the Holy Spirit and other opposing spirits deemed evil or demonic.” And so the Pentecostal body is a polyvalent one, always mediating the material and non-material, the physical and the spiritual; it is “a complex and multifaceted entity that functions in the Pentecostal cosmological system.

102 Smith, Thinking in Tongues, 82.
103 Smith, Thinking in Tongues, 99.
104 Smith, Thinking in Tongues, 76.
as a mediating site for material and non-material domains.”

Any theory of Pentecostal embodiment must take into account this co-constitutive relationship between materiality and supernaturality: “there is much concern with the stuff of the physical – bodies, things, images – which is however, held to be imbued with and operated by either divine or demonic forces.”

This unique approach to embodiment is especially true in deliverance ministries as, “deliverance accounts often include detailed descriptions of bodily sensations and involuntary movements that accompany and evidence the dislodging of unwelcomed spiritual residents.”

In deliverance then we see clearly that “transcendence is co-constitutive with religious immanence’ a complex and overlapping system of otherworldliness and materiality underwrites Pentecostal practice.” In deliverance the body and bodily sensations are used as arbiters of the degree of spirit possession, the identity of the possessing spirit, or the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the body, often the kinetically exuberant body, that is the site of knowledge making about this world and the beyond. It is the body, Andrew Singleton writes, which “becomes the conduit through which an encounter of an otherworldly kind is experienced and manifested – the body is the ‘setting for the drama.’” It is the materiality of the body that is read – often most efficaciously by the spiritually-seasoned prophets – for messages from the beyond. And so, the research that follows on deliverance ministries is an attempt to understand how

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Pentecostals understand and conceptualize their bodies not only materially but as channels for other presences.

Pentecostal embodiment is not only about disinhibited or ecstatic physical manifestations but is primarily about how close attention to the body reveals that spirits – good and bad – exist.\footnote{Gunther Brown, “Spiritual Property Rights,” 56.} For Pentecostals spirits are real entities who impinge on the material world primarily via the body.\footnote{Gunther Brown, "Spiritual Property Rights," 59.} The universe is filled with spirit forces whose attentiveness toward human bodies should be returned with human vigilance toward the many dangers they pose.\footnote{Lamin Sanneh and Joel Carpenter, *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West and the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7–8.} And that vigilance should center on human bodies because spirits prey on the human body, they are in the words of renowned demonologist Derek Prince, “disembodied spirit beings that have an intense craving to occupy physical bodies.”\footnote{Derek Prince, *They Shall Expel Demons: What You Need to Know About Demons - Your Invisible Enemies* (Chosen Books, 1998), 89.} Demons have the agency to act through material bodies. Demons can occupy physical spaces – including but not limited to human bodies – and humans are in a never-ending spiritual war against these body-loving entities.

Considering this supernatural-materialism/material-supernaturalism, or sensational form, the most effective theory of embodiment is presented in Lisa Blackman’s *Immaterial Bodies*. Blackman, in beautiful prose, writes about bodily possibilities that extend far beyond fleshy boundaries. Instead she recasts the body “as process rather than fixed entity, whilst retaining a focus on the more lived or phenomenal dimensions of experience.”\footnote{Lisa Blackman, *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (California: SAGE Publications, 2012), 3.} Bodies as
processes are open and lack stability as they reach out and take in entanglements with “the human and non-human, self and other, material and immaterial.” This sounds much like Bruno Latour’s definition of bodies as the process of learning to be affected, “put into motion by other entities, humans or non-humans”, or, what Vincent Despret articulates as a theory of affected and affecting bodies.

One of the ways in which Blackman extends the body beyond its appearance is through possession. The way that she explores possession is through the body of the medium in nineteenth-century spiritualism. Spiritualism pivoted around rituals that attempted to create channels for communication between the dead and the undead. The body of the medium was then the channel through which manifestations from the world of the dead occurred and could be interrogated. For Blackman, what is important is to take seriously all the senses of the medium. This point that is also central to this dissertation as well. Oftentimes, what was primarily or exclusively emphasized were the words of the medium, words that the medium was not seen to be in control of. As such there was a distinction constructed between “so-called higher and lower senses” whereby the logocentric “approach to occult phenomena literally took the voice out of the body of the medium, which was then subjected to various and increasingly institutionalized forms of scientific inquiry, including various experimental activities formalized through the establishment of the Institute for Psychical Research.”

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119 Blackman, *Immaterial Bodies*, 123.
ignored were the lower senses which should certainly inform understandings about the body and its ability to act as a conduit for spiritual communication. The communication was felt through the body which was opened up to infinite possibilities of communication through its porosity and permeability.\textsuperscript{120} The voices heard from the other, the spirits, were then enacted by moving bodies reaching towards something ineffable and unrepresentable. The potential of this porosity to create new modes of knowledge and even new modes of existence should be readily apparent.

For Blackman, “Possession discloses the porous and permeable nature of embodiment and the coupling of the human with the non-human, including machinic, species and other-worldly entanglements such that distinctions between natural and unnatural are destabilized.”\textsuperscript{121} Bodies are constituted by both human and non-human elements. In this the body is extended. Corporeality is not limited by boundary placement that constrains the body but instead opened up to alternative possibilities. Otherworldly bodies – like spirits – indicate that instead of being bounded the body is defined by coparticipation.\textsuperscript{122} Spirits dissolve boundaries between “self and other, inside and outside, and human and non-human.”\textsuperscript{123} Possession in this way is what Blackman calls a “threshold phenomena” which describes any phenomena that operates “across and between the self and other, material and immaterial, inside and outside.”\textsuperscript{124} Earlier I described sex as a threshold phenomenon and so the kind of sex that this dissertation discusses – possessed sex – is a kind of doubled threshold through the

\textsuperscript{120} Blackman, \textit{Immaterial Bodies}, 61.
\textsuperscript{121} Blackman, \textit{Immaterial Bodies}, 12.
\textsuperscript{122} Blackman, \textit{Immaterial Bodies}, 2.
\textsuperscript{123} Blackman, \textit{Immaterial Bodies}, 57.
\textsuperscript{124} Blackman, \textit{Immaterial Bodies}, 145.
intense and intimate relationality of possession.\textsuperscript{125} The immaterial body with its obsession with non-human actors allows people to experiment with what it means to be human.

Coparticipation is an important point in deliverance ministries. Deliverance is an intense zone of coparticipation. Embodiment is never practiced alone but is public, mediated by interactions with others.\textsuperscript{126} In the performance of deliverance there are multiple participants in this cosmic dance. There are the interactions between deliverer and deliveree, an intensely, almost violent coming together of bodies. And then there are the interactions with non-human bodies, the spirits, who impinge upon the material bodies making them move in a variety of ways.

And so, taking the immaterial body as a methodological starting point, this dissertation focuses on these zones of bodily possibility through the senses. It is an easy transition between the Pentecostal body and its sensorium. As Brahinsky writes, “For Pentecostals, bodies matter. But more, the significant body emerges from a consciously cultivated sensorium, where contested negotiations between doctrine and practice as well as the modern outside invigorate vernacular corporeal logics.”\textsuperscript{127} As he later emphasizes, Pentecostalism defies the Christian disdain for the senses that Nietzsche and others have accused it of.\textsuperscript{128} This dissertation explores the body primarily by taking the “Pentecostal culture of sensation – their sensorium” seriously.\textsuperscript{129} It takes the sensational forms that “governs a sensory engagement of humans

\textsuperscript{125} Blackman, \textit{Immaterial Bodies}, 145.
\textsuperscript{126} Blackman, \textit{Immaterial Bodies}, 13.
\textsuperscript{127} Brahinsky, “Pentecostal Body Logics,” 232.
\textsuperscript{128} Brahinsky, "Pentecostal Body Logics," 234.
\textsuperscript{129} Brahinsky, "Pentecostal Body Logics," 217.
with the divine and each other and generates particular sensibilities.”\textsuperscript{130} This dissertation, above all, respects the Ghanaian deliverance theater as a specific cultural tradition that conveys a culturally conditioned sensorium. Only through deep observation does it unwind the senses and their relationship to bodily modes of knowing. As such, this dissertation looks at four senses gleaned from various sexual deliverance experiences: touch, kinesonic, metakinesis, and perspicience.

While the impetus for such a study was primarily watching and participating in the bodily chaos of deliverance, with bodies moving to and fro, hopping, jumping, dancing, running, spinning, vomiting, fighting etc., the theoretical impetus largely stems from Kathryn Geurts’ stunning ethnographic study of the sensorium in Southeastern Ghana, \textit{Culture and the Senses}. Guerts argues that, “a culture’s sensory order is one of the first and most basic elements of \textit{making ourselves human}.”\textsuperscript{131} Like Geurts, my starting point is exploring the sensorium of a particular cultural community, charismatic or neo-Pentecostal deliverance ministries in and around the Greater Accra area. This is not merely because sensoria are not universal, with longstanding debates even within specific cultures over how many senses there are, but because, “in a cultural community’s sensorium we find refracted some of the values that they hold so dear that they literally make these themes or these motifs into ‘body.’”\textsuperscript{132}

The emphasis on the senses listed above, gleaned from Pentecostal deliverance practice, already develops an alternative understanding of the body than the ocularcentric

\textsuperscript{130} Meyer, “Aesthetics of Persuasion,” 751.
\textsuperscript{132} Geurts, \textit{Culture and the Senses}, 10.
Western body. Marshall McLuhan wrote that culture is constructed in part by its specific ordering of sensory preferences. As such, attention to sensory ordering within different cultural contexts leads to all sorts of alternative possibilities about what constitutes the body and embodied ways of knowing. Other cultural epistemologies, however, offer other sensory profiles. Perceptual testing has shown, for example, that in general African cultures emphasize auditory and proprioceptive values rather than visual ones. If we are to take this sensory ordering seriously then, as Gunther Brown writes, “From such a worldview, the ‘restrictive filter of the five senses’ is inadequate for navigating the universe.” And as evidenced by the list above, this dissertation clearly views the five senses as inadequate for describing the deliverance universe. To be clear from the start, this is a significant move that aims to understand how the deliverance context undoes impositions from the ocularcentric Western context. In many ways, this follows the clarion call from L.H. Stallings that alternative approaches to the senses “leads us to other possibilities and configurations of bodies, psychically and affectively determined by how the senses are ordered.” This is especially poignant as a response to the racism inherent in the West’s ocularcentrism that revolves around what can and cannot be seen. The move to reorder the senses is not value free and that is a possibility enthusiastically embraced by this dissertation.

Without delving too deeply into each sense explored herein, as each chapter will expand upon one of them respectively, let me make a few brief remarks about how each sense was chosen. Touch, for example, is not a unique choice. Marleen De Witte has already explored much about how touch is prominent in the context of Ghanaian charismatic Pentecostalism when she argued that conversion was not necessarily a moment of cognitive assent but instead was “an ongoing bodily process that ‘tunes’ the senses to specific sensory experiences.”\(^{137}\) The immaterial body of deliverance ministries is touched not only by prophets but the divine.\(^{138}\) Even the touch of prophets is designed to make deliverees tactiley feel the presence of God.\(^{139}\) De Witte cites popular preacher Dag Heward-Mills, whose Accra-based church was visited by this author but was not a primary research site, stating that “I see the healing of the Lord moving into your body right now. Some of you may feel it like a warm passing through. Or something you feel, but you don’t know what it is.” De Witte rightly argues that, “such descriptions of ‘being touched by the spirit’ or ‘feeling the power of the Holy Ghost’ should not be understood only metaphorically, but quite literally, as indeed a bodily experience.”\(^{140}\)

The choreosonic is a neologism from Ashon Crawley’s work *Blackpentecostal Breath* which combines the choreographic or kinesthetic with sound and is a vital sensual synesthesia in Pentecostalism.\(^{141}\) I do not invoke kinesonic here to say anything about the kinesonic in particular but to bring to the fore the importance of new senses in Pentecostalism. As Mark


\(^{138}\) De Witte, "Touched by the Spirit," 491.

\(^{139}\) De Witte, "Touched by the Spirit," 493.

\(^{140}\) De Witte, "Touched by the Spirit," 496.

Smith stated, “I also suspect that future work will detail multiple senses. Such scholarship will not necessarily judge the senses in tension or as mutually exclusive and will thus avoid smuggling Enlightenment assumptions concerning the superiority of the eye and the premodernity of the proximate senses into its analysis.” While there are multiple ways to discuss the senses, it seems impractical to discuss them as isolated wholes. Especially in deliverance the senses combine in all sorts of permutations and only make sense when considered in this holistic manner. It is far more useful to consider how senses work in combination or synesthesia. Synesthesia acknowledges that the senses are not isolated or limited to particular parts of the body. Synesthesia erases the distinction between higher and lower senses. In deliverance, the various sounds that surround – music, paralinguistic, non-vocal sounds, and the prayerful exhortations – often result in involuntary bodily reactions and the two cannot be separated. Sounds facilitate deliverance rituals; that is, sounds facilitate embodied movements. But the relationship also works in the other direction. Movements encourage various cheers, prayers, screams of pain, or groans of pleasure. Sounds combined with movements provide surefire evidence of the spiritual realm breaking into the material realm. Through various combinations of senses, in deliverance the visual is displaced as primary and becomes understood through or with various other senses.

Third, I will explore what I rather underwhelmingly refer to as the sixth sense or metakinesis. This naming is problematic in a number of ways; primarily, it insinuates a concrete

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five senses and comes with a host of loaded assumptions. But I use the sixth sense because it is capacious, offering all sorts of possibilities that do not escape the body but expand it. This is similar to what David Howes argues in *The Sixth Sense Reader* when he states that the power of the sixth sense, “lies not in its promotion of this or that faculty, but in its power to open up the boundaries of conventional perceptual paradigms to new possibilities of perception.”

While the first two senses discussed have purposefully displaced ocularcentrism, the fourth and final sense explored aims to actually flip ocularcentrism on its head. As such, I will explore the enhanced sense of sight operative in deliverance which I refer to as perspicience. Sight in deliverance is not the rational dichotomy between what can and cannot be seen. Instead, it is the revealing via the eye that which cannot be seen. The unseen is seen. Various sights stimulate a visuality that explores the boundaries of what constitutes the human.

This move to the body and its sensations should not come as a shock to the reader who has witnessed already throughout this introductory material that my interlocutors explain their experiences in sensory terms. It is through bodily sensations that certainty about the cosmos is obtained. In many ways, as this dissertation will clearly outline, the more extreme and visceral sensations correlate with more certainty within the deliverance cosmos.

Methodologically, my view of the body and its senses comes through intense observation and many interviews. I conducted over one hundred interviews that explored to varying degrees the sensations of deliverance. Interviews lasted between twenty-five minutes

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145 I situate these ethnographic observations in an interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary approach. Central to that methodology is of course is the dual approach of ethnographic research in Ghana and critical analysis and dialogue with texts on religion, deliverance, demonology, and sexuality.
and two hours, depending upon the interest of the interviewees. Most of the interviews were conducted in English and tape-recorded. Where the interviewee did not allow tape recording – a rare occurrence – notes were taken. All of the names of the interviewees have been altered and/or replaced. This was done to protect the identity of such people, since various claims about sexuality are associated with stigmatization. Further, detailed phenomenological data were gathered at deliverance meetings which I attended. At most of these places I was a participant observer who watched carefully as the various deliverance ministries went about their business of defeating the demons. At some of the sites I had access to their recordings of various services and at other sites I was able to capture some of happenings on my own camera. This mass of data from the sites already outlined is well represented in this dissertation.

I mention that I was a participant observer but I must admit that I carry with me a stubborn and cynical body. I found it extremely difficult to participate in all the embodied actions of deliverance. I would swing slightly to the music but without the out and out dancing that the congregation partook in. I would pray prayers that my interlocutors taught me but without the karate chops, fist pumps and sweat-inducing physicality of my informants. I would clap along with the praying congregation but lacked the ferociousness with which my informants brought their hands together. Sometimes when things were particularly intense I would find excuses to step outside of the intensity, pretending to take notes, playing with the camera, or to snack on puff-puffs. Despite these efforts, there were times when my body entered the Pentecostal milieu and acted in ways I did not control. I had bodily encounters in these spaces for which I still have no explanations. I fell. I shook. I vomited. My senses were
seduced by the deliverance sensorium. However rare these experiences were they certainly shook me to the core – literally, shook! – and impressed on me the importance of this expansive deliverance sensorium.

**Conclusion**

Phillip, a deliverance leader amongst the faithful at Adenta, pumped his fist and buried his face into the flapping material of the tent. He yelled, “Demon of fornication that takes my glory, leave my glory, leave my soul. Any sexual relationship I had with my ex, I break. Any soul tie I had with ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend, I break it. Anything transferred through sex into me...I Break! Lust, Fornication, I curse your root. Go!” This common prayer captures the kind of desperate searching within oneself to excavate the sexual spirits that may be possessing oneself. In various ways prayers like this explore sexual possibilities.

Another fundamental question of deliverance, one that is shouted angrily at the manifesting spirits, is “Who are you?” The verbal question in all the chaos and confusion of deliverance rarely elicits a clear answer. The possessed person often appears confused – who is the who? The spirit? The person? Both? Are they the same? But the answer may not be verbal. The answer may lay in the interplay between bodies. The answer may be more fundamental than the various prophets even imagined. This dissertation will probe sexual deliverance with this question, who are you, by exploring the deliverance sensorium. The answers that are returned in this enchanted cosmos may come as a surprise.
Chapter 2 – Sexual Deliverance in Ghana

The combination of spiritual and physical sex broke down my sex horizons – Victoria Eto

Deliverance clearly has its Christian roots in Jesus’ ministry, but the ways in which it has transformed over time are impossible to track. As Stephen Hunt has pointed out, “Tracing the origins of deliverance is rather like embarking upon a subterranean voyage where some very dark crevasses may be encountered. The vast majority of leading advocates are themselves unsure of quite how things developed.” Further, the four prophets explored herein are all enormously popular but would not necessarily be considered mainstream. While most Pentecostals and charismatics believe in the need for deliverance and indeed see it as one of the gifts or charismata, they find some of the practices of my interlocutors to be off-putting, as some of the efforts of these four prophets have caused uproarious discord concerning the viability of deliverance itself amongst Pentecostals. As such, it is extraordinarily difficult to track the history of deliverance from the beginning to these current iterations. However, it is at least worthwhile to articulate some of the contributing factors even if a causal history is impossible.

The history of deliverance in Ghana is long and storied. Keith Warrington observes that for Pentecostals, “their view of the demonic owes as much to medieval art and popular fiction as it does to the New Testament.” Medieval art did not appear as a primary source amongst my interlocutors, nor did the New Testament. However, popular fiction, Sunsum sore churches

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and experiences amongst the wide array of Pentecostal prophets did inform my interlocutors. Deliverance is not a new phenomenon practiced by charismatic churches but is a combination of traditional beliefs, rituals in African Initiated Churches, otherwise known as Sunsum sore, and charismatic demonological literature emanating from the West and Nigeria. This portion of the introduction will bring out some of the more potent sources in deliverance formation, especially with regards to sexual deliverance.

Others, like Paul Gifford, have argued that deliverance is the logical next step in response to the prosperity gospel. In accounting for the shortfall between reality and reward, African neo-Pentecostals have generated a series of healing and deliverance rituals to take care of those demons perceived to be responsible for every lack of progress in life. The basic idea of deliverance is that a person’s prosperity in life can be hampered by demonic powers even though that person is a Christian. Ardent exponent of this idea generally teach that demons gain a foothold in human lives by entering through “demonic doorways” such as adulterous relationships, participation in ancestral rituals, curses from enemies, association with non-Christian religious movements, sin, traditional names, pornographic materials and sin. The array of demonic doorways often means that nobody can be excluded from the possibility of some form of possession or oppression by demons and so problems of life come to be understood principally as the work of demons. Gifford explains why such teaching has gained much currency in Africa: “It is possible to view the rise of deliverance theology as a response to or mutation in the face of the shortfall of faith preaching. Faith preaching in so many cases

cannot be said to have worked. Faith did not bring about all that was promised. Deliverance still allows the emphasis on success, as long as something more than faith is added.”¹⁴⁹ This undoubtedly has contributed to deliverance-hopping as suppliants move from one site to another in search of the proper antidote. While a plausible suggestion, Gifford’s explanation lacks the depth of contributing factors to the popularity of deliverance ministries. This chapter, instead of relying on theological justifications, will seek out the historical antecedents of Ghanaian deliverance with special attention to the sexual component of deliverance.

One of the primary ways that traditional indigenous beliefs inform the contemporary charismatic deliverance milieu is through the dualistic worldview of pneumatic Christians. In that dualism deliverance ministries take indigenous worldviews and history seriously. It reinterprets all the traditional spirits as evil but nonetheless imbues them with considerable power. Meyer writes, “During deliverance session, people (re)enact their possession by non-Christian powers, thereby integrating these entities into Christian worship, albeit in a subordinate sense.”¹⁵⁰ The implantation of this dualism into Christianity in Ghana goes back as far as missionary Christianity of the nineteenth century when missionaries taught that indigenous beliefs in spirit-forces were superstitious. Conflicting with this teaching they also taught that these spirit-forces were real manifestations of the devil and the devil’s corresponding demons. As Onyinah writes, “By the introduction of a personalized devil and the association of the gods with demons, the missionaries had unconsciously strengthened the

¹⁵⁰ Meyer, Translating the Devil, 171.
belief in these gods and witchcraft, yet they had failed to provide for the holistic needs of the people (such as protection, healing, and deliverance). For the Africans, these images were real, life-threatening forces.”¹⁵¹ And so exorcistic activities became a dominant part of the religious landscape, especially in anti-witchcraft shrines. The same exorcistic activities re-emerged in African Initiated Churches and later in a movement within the classical Pentecostal churches. As Onyinah admits, “…at present, almost all churches in Ghana include exorcistic activities, referred to as “deliverance” in their programmes, since failure to do so amounts to losing members to churches that include such activities.”¹⁵² Well this dissertation focuses on exclusively Pentecostal locales, Onyinah is right to point to the widespread appeal of deliverance.

But as Abamfa Atiemo has argued, the act of deliverance from evil spirits preceded missionary activity and is found present within African cosmology. Akan cosmology holds a relationship of cause and effect by blaming misfortune—however broadly defined—as the work of evil supernatural or superhuman agents. Atiemo writes, “Akan philosophical thought differentiates between bone (sin), normally used in reference to ‘ordinary’ moral evils and mbusu (mystical evil), both of which have the potential to the whole community. To remove it is to yi. Mbusuyi therefore means deliverance and is used in relation to the ritual removal of curses, misfortune and sicknesses resulting from sin or breaches of the cosmic order.”¹⁵³ The

¹⁵¹ Onyinah, Pentecostal Exorcism, 2.
¹⁵² Onyinah, Pentecostal Exorcism, 2.
¹⁵³ Asamoah-Gyadu, African Charismatics, 176.
word, therefore, means taking away or warding off evil.\textsuperscript{154} This aspect of African religion appears to share many features in common with what in current popular Christianity is known as deliverance.

Onyinah similarly argued that the Akan idea of \textit{abisa} – “the desire to consult, inquire, divine and know the supernatural causalities of affairs, or what can be termed “divinatory consultation” – can be seen at the root of deliverance.\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Abisa} as a diagnostic stands as a clear antecedent of Pentecostalism. Exactly how \textit{abisa} – just like deliverance – is enacted is largely predicated on the charisma and practices of the leaders.

Akan spirit churches, known as \textit{Sunsum sore}, also influenced deliverance through a variety of rituals which resemble deliverance. In particular there are two rituals from \textit{Sunsum sore} churches that bear a strong resemblance to deliverance and have at their root the exorcistic features we have already outlined. The first is the ritual of water carrying which was adopted by the Twelve Apostles. This ritual, usually practiced on Fridays, involves moving the sick and needy to the front of the congregation. With a cup of water lifted toward the heavens the prophet invokes spirits to possess the water and the sick and needy.\textsuperscript{156} While this occurs the congregation sings and shake gourd rattles. The prophet moves amongst the needy and deals with those who show signs of possession in their bodies. The prophet will use the blessed water by rubbing it on the afflicted which further draws out the possession through physical

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{155} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 3.
\textsuperscript{156} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 117.
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signs. The concept of *abisa* applies here as the cause of possession is discovered and then cast out.\(^\text{157}\)

The other *Sunsum sore* ritual practice that resembles deliverance is exorcistic prayers. Like deliverance this often occurred in concert with fasting. There is a time of repentance, especially whereby witches are to confess to their evil acts and reveal their *ahoboa* (spirit animals). Then all those who are sick, barren, or failing in business are prayed for at the front of the congregation. This is accompanied by singing and drumming. The prophets move to and fro amidst the deliverees and prays – often in tongues – that the evil spirits depart. The evil spirits manifest in bodies that shake, jump, shout, lash out violently, or slither on the floor. These intransient evil spirits are interrogated by the prophet who then casts them out.\(^\text{158}\)

Asamoah-Gyadu has likewise argued that the African Initiated Churches, or *Sunsum sore*, long had practices that resembled healing and deliverance.\(^\text{159}\)

*Derek Prince’s Influence*

Deliverance ministries were, and this should be obvious, also heavily influenced by global Pentecostalism. In America, early deliverance movements were deemed lacking respectability and deliverance thus, for sociological reasons rather than theological pressure, disappeared around the Second World War. This lasted for approximately thirty years before it resurfaced as a popular ritual.\(^\text{160}\) This was, to be clear, a renewal. It was a renewal that looked to the earliest days of Pentecostalism at Azusa Street as an example.\(^\text{161}\) And so in the late

\(^{158}\) Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 120.
\(^{159}\) Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 165.
1970s and early 1980s charismatics hoped that deliverance offered a panacea for their afflictions.\textsuperscript{162} As Cuneo writes,

\begin{quote}
Strange assemblage that it was, the ritual played out seamlessly, like a finished stage performance whose kinks had been ironed out through endless rehearsal. And this, in fact, wasn’t far from the truth. As I would soon discover, deliverance first stumbled onto the charismatic scene during the late sixties, it picked up considerable momentum during the early to mid-seventies, and ever since it has been revised and experimented with and refined into something of an art form.\textsuperscript{163}
\end{quote}

There are a number of elements of this quote that are noteworthy. First, deliverance is a strange assemblage, as I am arguing here that it has been influenced, shaped and molded by a great many forces. Further, deliverance is a performance and will be treated as such throughout this dissertation.

This American timeline is also markedly similar to the development of deliverance in Ghana in part because of the American influence over Ghanaian deliverance. The North American influence began in full with visits from a number of figures from the Latter Rain movement. Members of the Latter Rain held meetings in Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast with reports of deliverance, healing and miracles.\textsuperscript{164} They emphasized deliverance and healing but acted as crusades and were uninterested in forming organizations or churches. It was in response to the Latter Rain meetings that healing and exorcism began to flourish. As Onyinah has pointed out the flourishing was in large part the integration traditional religious theories – \textit{abisa} (consultation) – with the methodologies of \textit{Sunsum Sore} who had been using material items as prescriptions against evil spirits. What the Latter Rain added was the scriptural

\textsuperscript{162} Cuneo, \textit{American Exorcism}, 42.
\textsuperscript{163} Cuneo, \textit{American Exorcism}, 81.
\textsuperscript{164} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 144–145.
exhortations we have already discussed, “in the name of Jesus, Go!” It remained largely a para-church movement throughout the 1970s. But as the para-church movement grew and hosted impactful figures such as Morris Cerullo in 1977 and Benson Idahosa in 1978 new churches began to emerge that were specifically interested in deliverance. This form of Pentecostalism – popular in cities such as Accra and Kumasi – took the Nigerian and American influences and flourished.

It is not possible to talk about the deliverance ministry in Ghana generally, and in the charismatic churches especially, without talking about two events which occurred in Ghana in 1987 and 1988. These are the arrival in Ghana of Derek Prince, a British Bible teacher in 1987, and the appearance of the book *Delivered from the Powers of Darkness*, written by Emmanuel Eni, a Nigerian in 1988. Ghanaian Christians had known about deliverance ministry and spiritual warfare and had taught and practiced them for many years but these two events contributed immensely to the prominence they gained in the circles of the charismatic churches on which this dissertation focuses.

Atiemo states unequivocally that, “Derek Prince’s teaching tour of the country aroused the interest of many pastors and evangelists in the deliverance ministry; and the knowledge he imparted built their confidence. Even now many pastors recommend his book and audio-cassettes to clients.” This was true of the sites that constitute my research where the most

165 Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 151.
166 Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 159.
167 Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 159. Cerullo is an American Pentecostal faith healer who had an extensive international reach through his crusades and corresponding Schools of Ministry. Benson Idahosa founded Church of God Mission International in Nigeria with an enormous influence on Pentecostalism throughout West Africa.
168 Atiemo, “Deliverance in the Charismatic Churches in Ghana,” 43.
impactful figure was the doyen of deliverance globally, Derek Prince. James Collins calls Prince, “the most significant Charismatic practitioner of deliverance ministry.” Prince was a Cambridge-educated Pentecostal minister who established a high-profile deliverance ministry of his own. Prince’s impact on the Ghanaian scene was two-fold: he had a very impactful visit in 1987 and his publications remain to this day widely available in Ghana. Nearly every deliverance proponent I met with cited Derek Prince as an important influence. This kind of reverence for Prince is ubiquitous. In the global context, the teachings and practices of Prince on deliverance have been influential and many pastors who practice deliverance claim that they derived inspiration from the work of Prince. Certainly, the majority of leading exponents today would claim inspiration from Prince.

Kwofie – who influenced the others I researched – called Derek Prince his spiritual father and repeatedly emphasized that Prince himself had prophesied over him. Kwofie was extremely specific that Derek Prince was the only demonologist that he had read, though he could not remember the name(s) of what texts he had read. Though possible, it would seem that Kwofie’s claim about having only read Derek Prince is doubtful considering the closeness with which his personal testimony mirrors Emmanuel Eni’s and his theories on sexual deliverance are to Victoria Eto’s. Nonetheless, the point is still valid: the influence of Derek Prince’s demonology and deliverance instruction looms over all deliverance in Ghana.

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As Onyinah tells it, Derek Prince’s visit to Ghana in 1987 came at an important juncture in deliverance history for the country. The predominance of demons and subjective experiences in deliverance was causing “confusion in the churches.” But after Prince’s visit resistance to deliverance disappeared. Or in Onyinah’s own words, “Undoubtedly, Prince’s contribution to deliverance ministry in Ghana was very great.”173 The Ghana Pentecostal Council hosted the meetings in Accra and Kumasi. But as Onyinah always emphasizes that one cannot understand his success without acknowledging the fertile ground that the traditional worldview provided for deliverance.174

Some of Prince’s most lasting beliefs that influenced deliverance ministries included his demonic ontology. For Prince demons are disembodied spirits who are desperate for human bodies in order to most fully express their evilness. Spirits are always and everywhere traversing the world looking for bodies which they can penetrate. Each demon then is related to a particular sin or affliction that can only be expressed through the inhabitation of bodies. As Onyinah states, the body is always at risk especially through acts that are commonly described as sinful: “For example, while it is held that a single act of adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, sexual abuse, or premeditated lie can open the door for demons, it is also the repeated acts of masturbation, fornication, pornography, and exaggeration in conversation that open the way for demons.”175 Thus, demons such as demons of arthritis, cancer, adultery, masturbation, etc. are constantly traversing the world looking for bodies through which to express themselves.176

As Collins summarizes Prince’s impact, “Prince leaves one with the impression that we are all surrounded by an unseen spiritual ether, which is teeming with evil spirits longing to get inside the bodies of human beings.” This is the deliverance worldview, one where everything is enchanted and one – especially one’s body – is always at serious risk of possession.

Another important influence of Prince was his response to the problem of the possessed Christian. Many in deliverance were troubled that their clientele were primarily, or exclusively, Christians. This was true of Prince’s famous exorcism ministry in Seattle which he established in 1964. Using pastoral evidence, Prince argued that Christians who had the Holy Spirit within them could not be full-on possessed but could be afflicted with demons. The difference being that they were not completely controlled by Satan but could be afflicted in various aspects of their lives and bodies. What is more, Prince argued that Christians were not only susceptible to satanic attack but that such attacks were natural in a dualistic world with Satan greatly unnerved by the spiritual potency of a converted Christian. Further, Prince argued while Christians can experience this type of affliction they cannot always eject the spirit or curse under their own spiritual power. Instead, deliverance requires the work of forceful prayers from powerful leaders.

Another invention of Prince was group deliverance, a practice that every one of the prophets in this dissertation practices. Group deliverance works just like it sounds, on groups of people rather than on individual one-on-one deliverance. It ends up being quite a scene with

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rooms filled with people thrashing around as prophets attempt to deliver them en masse.\textsuperscript{181}

This kind of deliverance is extremely common in Ghana. Onyinah describes the common scene as such:

Following the preaching is the mass deliverance session. Those who have presented their problems to the leaders, as well as others who need deliverance, are asked to move to the front of the congregation to form queues. The congregation sings with much expectancy, accompanied by clapping and musical instruments. The leader may then pray and also give instruction on how to pray. The instructions differ from person to person. As these things are done with gestures they are usually followed by the sound poo, poo, pee, pee...The Blood of Jesus and the name of Jesus are used repeatedly...meanwhile the team members move among the people and lay hands on them. As the prayer goes on the people begin to sob, groan, shout, roar, fall down, and struggle on the ground. The leaders pay special attention to those who show such signs without falling down, by commanding and sometimes pushing them.\textsuperscript{182}

These kinds of scenes will make regular appearances in this dissertation.

Furthermore, Prince was also an early advocate of physical manifestations of demons departing. For example, he encouraged the art of vomiting demons out of the body.\textsuperscript{183} As Onyinah points out, giving credit to Prince for the belief, in Ghana it is very common to see performances where demons exit via the various orifices in the human body.\textsuperscript{184} And so I witnessed, or was told of, demons departing through vomit, urination, defecation, and bleeding. All of this helps to construct the Pentecostal body with its penetrable orifices as sites of possession and dispossession.

\textit{Literary Influence}

\textsuperscript{181} Cuneo, \textit{American Exorcism}, 93–94.
\textsuperscript{182} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 198.
\textsuperscript{183} Cuneo, \textit{American Exorcism}, 100.
\textsuperscript{184} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 199.
When it comes to literary power, perhaps Prince’s equal is the well-known book, perhaps the most well-known book in the deliverance genre, Emmanuel Eni’s *Delivered from the Power of Darkness*. In 1988 this text, published by Scripture Union, became a best seller in Ghana only after being a highly-pirated text. Atiemo claims, “Its influence on the Ghanaian Christian psyche was great. For example, people refused to buy a brand of sardine called “Queen of the Coast” because of allusions in that book to a spirit-being called by that name.” This book has had a lasting influence on the demonology of deliverance.

In the book Eni, a Nigerian evangelist, recounts his deep involvement with the spiritual underworld – especially under the sea – and how he escaped the occult through deliverance. It is vivid and dramatic. His story starts through a relationship with Alice, his love interest who introduces him to the underworld. He first discovers Alice’s illicit powers when he finds human bodies and blood inside of her refrigerators. Feeling trapped, he surrenders his life to whatever and wherever this would lead him.

Once surrendered Eni’s life quickly became one of spiritual power. He met with Mami Wata (or the Queen of the Coast) who will play a prominent role in chapter 5. Mami Wata visited him regularly under the guise of a beautiful woman. He makes the point of emphasizing the relationship as non-sexual because he had been instructed to never touch a woman and as the story goes, he was faithful to this command. This non-sexual Mami Wata is unique, she is

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186 Atiemo, “Deliverance in the Charismatic Churches in Ghana,” 44.
188 Mami Wata, who will appear throughout this dissertation, is a water spirit which may have originated in Nigeria and is believed to be half human, half fish.
usually highly eroticized and sexually charged. Eventually one day she told him that it was time for him to visit her abode.\textsuperscript{189} As he describes the journey into the sea – her abode – he makes sure to emphasize that these were physical experiences. This is a common plea amongst those who experience demons and deliverance. There is a certain ‘realness’ – “these things are real” – attributed to the physical and material. Eni was there confronted with the vastness of Mami Wata’s abode. This city, filled with science labs, design labs and a theatre, was the spirit world. He stayed in this world for some time and then through the power to metamorphose into animals escaped, this time as a crocodile.\textsuperscript{190} Transmogrifying into animals will reappear in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Eni’s text is nearly sexless which makes it unique amongst first-hand stories of demonic interaction. Usually such texts are highly sexual. There are only two places where Eni talks about sex. In the first sexual aspect, he describes one of his roles as seducing pastors. He would send beautiful women to churches who would pretend to convert. After converting they would use the guise of spiritual immaturity to hang around the pastor and “lure him into the sin of fornication or adultery.” The woman would have sex with the pastor until the Holy Spirit is defeated and then leave the pastor’s penis engorged and possessed. The second sexual aspect is that he states that among the most common tools of oppressing Christians is dreams of sexual intercourse. These are demons having sex with humans – and more will be said about this in the chapter on spiritual marriage – and are only dealt with through deliverance. They

\textsuperscript{189} Eni, \textit{Delivered from the Powers of Darkness}, 16.
\textsuperscript{190} Eni, \textit{Delivered from the Powers of Darkness}, 16–17.
are ignored at one’s own peril and will make up a dominant part of chapter 5 of this dissertation.\textsuperscript{191}

Eventually Eni finds salvation and then deliverance. The entire second half of Eni’s text is about the power of Jesus Christ to overcome all the evil that is laid out in the first half. After the evil has been exorcised from Eni’s life, he became an active member of the Assemblies of God.\textsuperscript{192} But in many ways, this is anticlimactic. For deliverance ministries, the interesting parts all occur in the first half of the text as he charts the realm of Satan. As Meyer writes, “The popularity of confession stories stems from the fact that they brighten the dark and make visible what happens therein.”\textsuperscript{193} The most spectacular and important aspect of all texts in the deliverance genre is the fascination with the devil and the devil’s agents.\textsuperscript{194} Deliverance ministries claim their power by stating that they are the only religious groups capable of charting this realm and effectively responding to such evil.

Besides Eni’s text there is a whole host of demonological literature that has undoubtedly shaped the Ghanaian scene significantly. Demonological literature has perhaps had the largest impact with Pentecostals often carrying two books – their Bible and a book about demons and deliverance – to church. Demonological and deliverance literature is always readily available at churches and street stands and there is a seemingly insatiable appetite for the genre. Paul Gifford concludes, “undoubtedly, the U.S. charismatic demonology has traditional African beliefs; but the demonology of Africa’s contemporary charismatic church may well be getting

\textsuperscript{192} Meyer, “\textit{Delivered from the Powers of Darkness},” 242–243.
\textsuperscript{193} Meyer, "\textit{Delivered from the Powers of Darkness}," 243–244.
\textsuperscript{194} Meyer, "\textit{Delivered from the Powers of Darkness}," 237.
its special character through the power of American literature.”  

Gifford is undoubtedly correct that Western literature – especially demonological classics – have formed deliverance thinking and practice in Ghana. But one must be careful not to overstate the influence of the West, for Nigerian classics – especially those by Victoria Eto and Emmanuel Eni – have equal weight in this regard and there are Ghanaian authors who are widely read as well. These two strands – the African and the Western – reinforce one another, feed off one another and in certain circles tend to coalesce. In order to better understand deliverance, I read manuals and testimonials that Onyinah or Asamoah-Gyadu cited as popular in Ghana, be they American, Nigerian or Ghanaian. I will outline a few below with an emphasis on their sexual aspects as a means of showing just how central sexuality was and is from the very beginning of deliverance. In spiritual warfare manuals, sex certainly plays a prominent role in tales of Christian demonization.

Similar to Eni’s text were a series of books by Victoria Eto, a Nigerian who for a time lived and studied in Ghana. Eto’s videos and books were quite popular and more detailed than Eni’s. While Eni was undoubtedly a more popular author, a case can be made that the demonology and ethos of deliverance in Ghana actually resembles the cosmos as painted by Eto in her books where she was intimately – and sexually – involved with Mami Wata. I will discuss two of Eto’s texts, her own story which is found in How I Served Satan Until Jesus Christ Delivered Me, and her demonology that wraps around Mami Wata which is found in Exposition

196 McCloud, American Possessions, 94.
197 Onyinah, Pentecostal Exorcism, 162–163.
on Water Spirits. Eto, importantly, illustrates the sexualization of deliverance rituals where “Almost everything is subjected to a sexual interpretation.”

First published in 1981, Eto’s How I Served Satan Until Jesus Delivered Me follows the standard demonological account whereby the terrible life under Satan is described in great and sometimes bizarre detail, which is followed by the account of deliverance from these demonic forces in the body. As Eto states, the purpose of telling such a tale is to “glorify His Name the Lord” who “opened my eyes to see everything that happened during my deliverance. I saw and understand all the demons that left my body…” As stated earlier, Pentecostalism is seen as unique in its ability to know “all the demons that left my body…” and in its ability to offer succor through deliverance.

Eto spends a lot of time describing how she came into contact with Mammy Water. Her father’s spirit wife was Mammy Water. Eto’s birth was foretold by Mammy Water and Eto herself is said to resemble Mammy Water. These factors contributed to Eto having a very intimate relationship with Mammy Water, “When I was born I was introduced to her through the Ogbanje spirit.” Over the years our friendship grew so strong that we began to exchange our bodies and spirits.” She had an arrangement with Mammy Water such that, “When I

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200 Throughout I use various spellings of Mami Wata as preferred by the various sources used.
201 Eto, How I Served Satan, 1–2.
started astral-travelling she possessed me fully so I could use her spirit as if it were mine and she could use my body as if it were hers.”

This relationship between spirit and body – whereby spirits “use” bodies – is central to the stories found throughout this dissertation.

When Eto was at the very young age of seven, she also entered into a sexual relationship with Asmodee. As Eto slept Asmodee would have sex with her. In a sentence that captures perfectly the paradox of such sexual experiences for people I interviewed and the literature she states, “It was like a dream but it was real demonic contact.” This kind of hazy dream-like experience is extremely common for people married to spirits and will be reiterated multiple times in chapter 5. Eto refers to the experience as a mix of nocturnal pollutions and tactile perversions. Whatever this was, Eto wants to make it clear that it was embodied. The tactile perversions were only enhanced when Eto became a lesbian. As she said, “my eyes, ears, nose and skin had acquired such extra-sensory powers.” Again, the senses matter when talking about possession and deliverance. But this will be fleshed out in due course.

At age eleven the relationship between Asmodee and Eto became a formal marriage. The relationship was a contract of exchange; Eto received academic success and distinction and in exchange became a “sex weapon, used by the powers to drag men into demonic bondage.” This is an idea we have already seen in Eni’s text. This was a significant covenant with both physical and spiritual implications. Eto writes, “The combination of spiritual and

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204 Eto, How I Served Satan, 1–2.
205 Asmodee bears a strong resemblance to Asmodeus who is the spirit of lust and referenced in the Book of Tobit.
206 Eto, How I Served Satan, 3–4.
207 Eto, How I Served Satan, 3–4.
208 Eto, How I Served Satan, 3–4.
physical sex broke down my sex horizons.” She could not and would not settle with one
sexual partner but was nearly insatiable in her sexual appetite. As this progressed Asmodee put
her in command of one thousand demons. Eventually she had sex with Lucifer himself who
then increased the demons under her control. But following sex with Satan her sex life became
unbearable. She became truly insatiable despite creative efforts to satisfy her sexual desires
including more lesbian lovers and complex methods of masturbation. Nothing helped and she
settled into a life of sexual dissatisfaction.

But then she converted, realizing that she was “highly promiscuous...nympho...lesbian,
as well as some-one who masturbated.” After conversion slowly all these sexual identities
began to dissipate. Lesbianism was the first to end, in part on account of one of her lovers
converted and ceased having sex with her mid-coitus. Eto began to question and probe why
someone would end a such a relationship. In a loaded sentence she says, “I was still probing
when Jesus touched me.” From 1976 onward she ceased being a lesbian. Similarly, she was
able to suspend sexual exploits with men. But masturbation posed a serious challenge. She
writes:

I fought it with tears, vows, promises all to no avail. I just had to set my face
against the habit until it became unbearable. One day in 1980 I decided to pack
up Christianity because I taught Christ had failed me in this one thing. Just when
I decided to yield to the three month long temptation, my hand fell on
Watchman Nee’s The Normal Christian Life. I glanced casually through his
exposition of Roman 6. My eyes kept running over Roman 6:6...that was the end
of that habit. I got out of my bed a different person.

210 Eto, How I Served Satan, 3–4.
211 Eto, How I Served Satan, 7.
212 Eto, How I Served Satan, 21.
213 Eto, How I Served Satan, 21–23.
214 Eto, How I Served Satan, 21–23.
It is an incredible passage in her text where she literally inserts the Bible as a foil to masturbation. But this event occurred four years after her conversion and she was still wrestling with the embodied realities of sexual spirit possession. Romans 6:6, the passage she cites, states: “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” Her new self was finally masturbation free, she crucified the one ruled by the spirits of masturbation.

As clearly as she describes possession, Eto describes deliverance. For deliverance is indeed the point of the text: Deliverance is possible for even the most possessed. And make no mistake, Eto wants the reader to think that her body was the most possessed: “Unlike most agemates of darkness I did not have charm, but my flesh was so impregnated that it was a charm by itself. In fact, I was a satanic synagogue on legs. But I give glory to Jesus who has cleaned me and has made me a temple of the living god.” She was delivered – importantly her body was delivered – but, it was not easy.

During deliverance, while pleading the blood of Jesus, Eto felt heat and pain in her vagina. Then something wedged in her vulva. She desperately tried to remove what she identified as the female spirit of prostitution. As she continued to try to cast it out she could not find success. Finally, she was able to bind the spirit of prostitution. As she cast it to the “bottomless pit in the name of Jesus” the spirit injected something into her thighs. She was left pleading with the Blood of Jesus to deliver her from this injection and she eventually experienced deliverance when she urinated a heavy fluid. The spirit that had entered through

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her vagina exited the same way, through the same orifice.\textsuperscript{216} Similarly, she fought off the spirits of lesbianism.\textsuperscript{217}

Finally, Eto had to be delivered from the spirit of Mammy Water, her sensual spirit counterpart. It was like looking in the mirror as Eto saw a woman who looked exactly like her, except “evil and untamed.” Because of her conversion, Eto was now an enemy of Mammy Water. During this violent deliverance Eto convulsed as she prayed for freedom. She foamed at the mouth. And she was “seized by an intense sexual desire.” In a deliverance pattern that will reappear in the dissertation, she pleaded that God send down fire to consume the sexual demons. As she prayed a scorched worm fell into her pelvis. And then more worms fell until a heap had gathered at her feet. She bound them all and in the name of Jesus Christ cast them out. As they were cast out she “underwent a sexual paroxysm.”\textsuperscript{218} The following morning she woke up in heat, distressed because she thought that the battle against demons and Mammy Water was complete. Instead a male demon stalked her pelvis. This demon got stuck in her vulva, “as I pleaded the Blood I saw a distended phallus hanging from me. Frightened I severed it in Jesus’ Name. It was then I understood my remarkable success with masturbation.”\textsuperscript{219}

In her 1983 text \textit{Exposition on Water Spirits}, Eto develops a demonology that wraps itself around Maami Wata. Maami Wata is a deity who has control over the sea, lakes and rivers. She is clear that Maami Wata is a serious issue stating, “the greatest problem in Nigeria today is how to curb the activities of water spirits in her midst.”\textsuperscript{220} And so she provides, from

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{216} Eto, \textit{How I Served Satan}, 39.
\item \textsuperscript{217} Eto, \textit{How I Served Satan}, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{218} Eto, \textit{How I Served Satan}, 46.
\item \textsuperscript{219} Eto, \textit{How I Served Satan}, 46–47.
\item \textsuperscript{220} Eto, \textit{Exposition on Water Spirits}, 1.
\end{itemize}
her own experience, a demonology that describes Maami Wata’s exploits and how to be delivered from her possession. But as Onyinah has correctly identified, her presentations on Maami Wata, or the sensual marine, give play to or serious emphasis on sexual issues.221

Simply, in the manner similar to Eni’s seduction of pastors, Mammi Wata is seen to produce and control a whole host of evil spirits who possess bodies and spread “sexual pollution.”222 This world tidily lines up with the categories explored in this dissertation. For example, one form of spirit fills human dreams with sex and then forces them into masturbatory, lesbian or homosexual activities. Another spirit is Marine Asmodee who is very sensual and sexually weds humans to demons.223 Asmodee is another of the spirits that humans can come into spiritual marriage with. As Eto states, “The victims fall in love with the demons and have sex with them. They know they are demons but they don’t mind.”224 The demons then become incredibly jealous of any physical sexual contact that their spouses have with humans. Another form, named the Marine Jezebel pollutes sexually: “When it possesses it will put dogs in the person. When such a person has sex with another person the person will be possessed by dogs. When the possessed person sees the one who contaminated him or any person like her he will lose all sexual control.”225 This kind of possession leads to an uncontrollable, almost violent, need for sex and can lead to rape. As Eto says, “When the dog bites the person he can become a rapist. When it bits or licks the sex organ the person can

221 Onyinah, Pentecostal Exorcism, 162–163.
222 Eto, Exposition on Water Spirits, 16.
223 Eto, Exposition on Water Spirits, 16.
224 Eto, Exposition on Water Spirits, 18.
225 Eto, Exposition on Water Spirits, 17.
become impotent or barren. These are water dogs called Pepta.”  

We will see all of these types of sexualities play a significant role in deliverance throughout this dissertation. Indeed, we will see spiritual marriages to Mami Wata, masturbation, homosexuality and bestiality.

Eto, however, does not provide all of this information with a pornographic voyeurism but instead with instructions on how to deliver people from these dogged sexual spirits. In the case of the Pepta she says, “When you are praying deliverance prayer for such an agent cast out the dogs; disconnect the dog waist, dog tail and cast out the dog sex organs. It is the dog tail that moves them in search of sexual partners to pollute.”

During deliverance of Marine Jezebels there will be sexual reactions, “Some may roll their bodies as if under strong sexual urge, some will have sexual paroxysms, others will behave as if they are have sex, so will have a discharge and others will have a dry orgasm. It depends on the degree of possession.”

Again and again deliverance appears as a highly embodied, highly sexualized ritual.

More locally, Kwofie recounted his own tales of the underworld in a book with marked similarities to Emmanuel Eni’s and Victoria Eto’s works. He visited the marine spiritual underworld, met with Maami Wata and all sorts of other marine figures. I will spend a considerable amount of time outlining Kwofie’s story not only because he was an important resource for this dissertation but because there is a definable link between his thinking and demonology as a whole in Ghana, certainly in the greater Accra region.

Kwofie was born into a family of witch doctors and wizards. As he tells it, he was dedicated to demons before he was even born, “I remember my Mama told me that she felt

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228 Eto, *Exposition on Water Spirits*, 17.
the demons enter her womb and heard the devil say, ‘he is our son.’” And so his childhood was filled with demons manifesting as shadowy figures of “human-like beings, animals or strange objects.” From the beginning the spirit world felt more real to him than the natural world.

Demons, as he tells it, are unique and range in size and function. They can be microscopic or gargantuan. They can take the bodies of humans, or materialize in the bodies of animals. Sometimes they appear as combinations of animals and people, half humanoid and half animalistic, taking on the appearance of mythical creatures. These bodies matter immensely for demons as each demon is “constantly looking for ways to enter human beings’ bodies.” He constantly felt his body as almost robotic or zombie like, constantly responding to the demons that inhabited his being. The need for bodies is directly linked to demonic goals, in order to accomplish their evil deeds they need access and control of bodies. And part of this embodiment is a close link to “sexual perversion.” There is an intimate connection between access to bodies and sexuality.

Kwofie starts his tale like almost all the other testimonies, by claiming that the story of his visit to the City under the Sea is unbelievable. He suggests that people will dismiss it as another version of *The Little Mermaid* or *The Wizard of Oz*. But he is adamant that the city under the sea exists and he knows this because of his personal experience. At this juncture the tale sounds markedly like Eni’s, though perhaps written with an extra flourish. He tells of visiting the sea and seeing merfolk and mermaids at the beginning of his great adventure as he entered the sea. He tells of many cities under the sea but the particular one which he inhabited was off of the coast of Ghana. There he found institutions and structures that were highly legalistic. He saw the Book of the Dead where every evil deed is recorded about people on
earth. The reason these records are kept is for the legal permission for demons to enslave humans. In the end – and I mean the apocalyptic end – Kwofie believes that it is from the sea that evil will arise. He cites Revelations 13:1: “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns ten crows, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.” The beast will emerge from the sea.

The city is much like Eni’s description. It is filled with scientific inventions. Demons are the ones creating new inventions with the intention to lure humans. As such, no goods in the world can be trusted for they might come from the underworld with evil intentions.229

Like most testimonial works, the second half of his book is about his conversion. But as he tells it, his conversion story is one of salvation and deliverance: “After salvation, it took about six months before I had a human heart because my heart was so demonized. So, I could not feel anything.” But through deliverance he began to feel. What is noteworthy in this text is the way in which the first half is almost entirely absent of bodily descriptions. The only description of bodies is the penetration of his body by demons and it is not descriptive in how that felt, merely that it occurred. As soon as Kwofie begins talking about salvation through deliverance the text becomes rife with embodied descriptions like “my body was tense but I closed my eyes.”

Perhaps the most embodied description occurs when he is forced toward salvation. He bathed – a bodily cleansing that was not available to him as a witchdoctor – and afterwards heard a disembodied voice that instructed him to go to the Assemblies of God church. Before

he could make any movement toward the church he felt a big invisible hand grab his belt and push him across the street to the church. He tried to resist with his body but instead the hand kept pushing him forward. He became increasingly nervous as his body neared the church, his “hands were trembling and then my arms began to shake. What was happening was I could not keep myself still.” The kinesthetics of his bodily movement signaled to him that something different was happening to him. All around him he heard demons shrieking and moaning. The manner in which he describes it is that his senses are awakened during deliverance.

Kwofie made it into the church but not without great intermingling between the spiritual and the physical in his body: “It was like an unusual spiritual force that hit me in the face when I slipped through the door. I wanted to turn and run away but I could not because the invisible hand had a firm hold on me. I felt a strange atmosphere in the building. I had never felt anything like it in my life. Finally, the invisible hand pushed me down in the last pew of the church.” The “atmosphere became even more charged emotionally” – a nod to the affect of Pentecostalism. As the Pastor invoked Jesus he began to sweat. His body trembled. His mouth was dry. His throat was tight. His hands became clammy. His body became stiff. He felt a serpentine spirit moving up and down his spine. He felt. That is the key to this entire retelling of the story.

Kwofie emphasizes that this story is merely the beginning of his deliverance. The depths of his involvement with demons meant that he was a difficult deliverance case. As he says, “My deliverance didn’t take ten minutes or ten days, but more than two long years before I was delivered from manipulating, unclean, tormenting and lying witchcraft spirits.” The Assemblies of God service was the beginning of his deliverance as he found salvation. As the pastor began
praying against demons his body and spirit “were being tormented.” As demons rebelled, shouted, hissed at this deliverance imposition, Kwofie dug his fingernails deep into the skin of his hands. Kwofie’s body shook and trembled. The pastor continued screaming “Jesus, Jesus, I bind every evil spirit in your name.” And Kwofie’s body responded. He began moving toward the front of the church where he repented and received Jesus as his personal savior.

Kwofie loves to tell the story for many of the same reasons that we have already explored: bringing to light the limitless possibilities of the evil cosmos. However, for Kwofie it is also about telling the story of how he inaugurated deliverance in Ghana. He will occasionally claim he was the first to do deliverance in Africa. He is a braggard. He did not start deliverance in Ghana, but he was certainly one of the earliest practitioners in the form that is popular amongst my interlocutors. As such, his testimony plays a role in the development of deliverance in Ghana.

North American Influence

The North American influence on deliverance in Ghana was varied and came from a number of resources that all can be found in the pre-Third Wave or Third Wave Pentecostalism. Sean McCloud has provided an extensive look at the Third Wave in the context of America where, “The Third Wave’s primary focus is spiritual warfare, the purpose of which is to banish demons from human bodies, material objects, local places and whole regions of the globe.”230 Though this idea was confirmed primarily through deliverance manuals it was also found in pop-culture including films like The Exorcist. In the 1970s The Exorcist spoke poignantly to the traditional Ghanaian ideas already discussed above, a world filled with very real evil spirits that

230 McCloud, American Possessions, 21.
can possess and distress the human body and that Christians must, at all costs, fight such evil principalities.\textsuperscript{231} Both Asmoah-Gyadu and Onyinah point out in their discussions of deliverance that \textit{The Exorcist} was very popular in Ghana.\textsuperscript{232} Onyinah bemoans that, “Unfortunately many Christians uncritically accepted the testimonies presented in these books and cassettes.”\textsuperscript{233} The film, based on William Peter Blatty’s \textit{The Exorcist}, was loosely based on the 1949 exorcism of a 14 year old boy in Maryland. Cuneo writes of the similar popularity of the film in America that, “As if by alchemy, the dramatic and seductively grotesque arrival of demons on the screen and the bestselling page resulted in demons rampaging through the bedrooms and workplaces of Middle America.”\textsuperscript{234} And Ghana it turns out.

As with the testimonial literature discussed herein, there are a number of aspects of the film that are well established in Ghanaian deliverance. That is not to spell out a causal relationship but merely to emphasize the similarities that people witnessed when they lined up at theaters to watch Linda Blair play twelve-year-old Regan. For example, in Blatty’s lurid writings, “Regan spewed prodigious volumes of vomit, she violently masturbated with a crucifix, and for particularly ghoulish effect, she occasionally rotated her head 180 degrees.”\textsuperscript{235}

I would like to particularly emphasize the sexual here. As we have seen up to this point, deliverance or exorcism is often sexual in one way or another. In perhaps the most memorable scene of the film Regan masturbates violently with a crucifix while yelling “Let Jesus fuck you!” In another scene, she accosts another character with the rather vulgar phrase, “Your mother

\textsuperscript{231} Asamoah-Gyadu, \textit{African Charismatics}, 169.
\textsuperscript{232} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 163.
\textsuperscript{233} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 163.
\textsuperscript{234} Cuneo, \textit{American Exorcism}, xii–xiii.
\textsuperscript{235} Cuneo, \textit{American Exorcism}, 8.
sucks cock in hell!” This kind of lewd and shocking language is often part of an exorcism or deliverance. It is seen as a sure sign of possession.

But Ghanaians did not rely solely on North American films to shape their understandings of the evil cosmos as they had their own popular film industry that centered around the demonic. Birgit Meyer has effectively outlined a number of these films especially the extraordinarily popular *Diabolo*. The 1991 film directed by William K. Akuffo pivots around the idea of satanic wealth and the efforts of Diabolo – an attractive man – to gain this satanic wealth. But the means of gaining such wealth are highly sexualized. Meyer describes the opening scene as such:

Diabolo approaches a prostitute, offers her some 30,000 cedis and she willingly agrees. They drive to his elegant villa outside town. There he hands her a drink, which almost immediately makes her faint. He carries her up to the bedroom and binds her to the bed. After drinking a strange bubbling concoction he starts trembling and shaking until he is transformed into a python. In that form he enters the prostitute’s vagina. In the next scene he has become a human being again. We see him sitting on the bed by the woman, who is vomiting banknote after banknote. Impatiently Diabolo slaps her cheek whenever things don’t go fast enough. He fills a whole suitcase with neatly stacked 1,000 cedi notes. When the stream of money comes to an end he sends her away. Groaning she stumbles through the streets until she collapses, dead, in her mother’s compound, vomiting a few last coins and red slime. In the shape of the snake Diabolo visits her Christian burial, which is conducted by a catechist. He is discovered and the preacher shouts at the snake to go away. He chases it away as if to cast out an evil spirit.

The film includes multiple scenes like this where Diabolo in his evil moneymaking schemes has sex with women as a snake. He eventually meets his match and as he burns to death his human head emerges illustrating the human-animal combination that Diabolo has become.

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238 Meyer, "Delivered from the Powers of Darkness," 241–242. Meyer is one of the only
Of North American books that were popular perhaps the most notable were Rebecca Brown’s texts, especially her tell-all *He Came to Set the Captive Free*. The book is an account of Elaine, a top witch in the United States, and her deliverance and salvation. Elaine’s story is notable for her status as the Queen of Satan and its intensely sexual implications. As Queen of Satan she was worshipped and had immense power. But she also had sexual roles to fill. She was put on a stone altar, stripped and then Satan, along with other persons and demons, had sex with her. The watching crowd cheered ferociously, the sex whetting their voracious appetites for the orgy that would ensue. Post-conversion Elaine found Genesis 6:1-4 as a description of her experience, and indeed, Genesis 6 stands out as an important biblical passage for those who discuss – or have – sexual relations between humans and demonic figures.

Sex with Satan was not a one-time proposition for Elaine. Indeed, there was ritualized sex on repeated occasions. And after wedding Satan in an elaborate ceremony in the hills of California, Elaine was forced to have “brutal” sexual intercourse with Satan whose previous scholars I know who takes seriously the sexual implications of these deliverance tales and provides the following interpretation (see p. 246): “The story of Diabolo also features such an appropriation of the reproductive organs. In the film, a man misuses the belly of an unsuspecting woman by impregnating her in the form of a snake. Here the snake becomes a phallus...as far as its sex is concerned the snake is thus ambivalent: it can take the place of the male penis as well as of the female belly in order to produce money instead of a child. Diabolo has given away his fertility and is no longer able to beget children. As we have seen from his sexual intercourse with the third woman, even in human form he is able to sire only snakes. In the story of Diabolo the satanic money results from the perversion of human sexuality. The woman is impregnated by the snake, but instead of a child she gives birth to money and dies, whereas Diabolo profits. That the money comes out of her mouth instead of her vagina once again underlines the perversion of nature.”

239 Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*.
240 Rebecca Brown, *He Came To Set the Captives Free* (Whitaker House, 1992), 51.
princely appearance disappeared and he was revealed as a horrid creature. The sex was violent and she was left with a plethora of sexual wounds.241 Other sexual brutalities were common within the intersection of the human and the demonic. Sex occurred regularly, often in the form of sexual orgies. But what really seems to bother Elaine is the sexual intercourse between humans and demons. She describes these sexual demons as “demons that could be seen and heard and felt in a physical manifestation.” Demons are felt through the senses, through the sexual senses. Sometimes these demonic sexual encounters would be between consenting demons and consenting humans. But demons also had sex with non-consenting humans as a form of punishment. Even more humiliating, husbands had to watch while wives were violated or wives watched while husbands were brutally raped.242

In Brown’s 1987 text, *Prepare for War*, Brown revisits the fantastic consequences of fornication, calling demons a “‘venereal disease’ much more devastating than herpes or AIDS!”243 Here she is not talking about the demons of spiritual marriage – whereby the demons and humans are conterminously experiencing sexual satisfaction – but is referring to the demons related to “fornication” or “sexual sin.” This is an important distinction moving forward. Demons are said to be transmitted from one person to another via sexual intercourse. The oft-cited scriptural basis for this claim is 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 which outlines how sexual sins are unique in that they are sins against the body.244 And so participation in sexual sins or

241 Brown, *He Came to Set the Captives Free*, 58–63.
242 Brown, *He Came to Set the Captives Free*, 64–65.
244 Brown, *Prepare for War*, 108.
perversions including but not limited to masturbation, sex with the same sex, or sex with animals leads to a demonic infestation.\textsuperscript{245}

Less narrative and more manual, but almost as important as Derek Prince’s corpus, was a slim volume entitled \textit{Pigs in the Parlor}, written by a charismatic Baptist couple Frank and Ida Mae Hammond. This slim volume was widely popular in Ghana as Gifford cites a Ghanaian interlocutor exclaiming, “Some of those Nigerian books are not well based, but frightening. Some are weird and exaggerated. We don’t take them as true, especially Nigerian books. We just concentrate on Frank Hammond’s Pigs in the Parlor book.”\textsuperscript{246} I saw copies of \textit{Pigs in the Parlor} for sale street side in Accra and on one occasion saw someone carrying a copy to church.

First published in 1973 and now boasting more than a million copies in print, \textit{Pigs in the Parlor} was designed as a practical guide to almost everything anyone could possibly want to know about deliverance – with results ranging from the ludicrously open-ended to the impossibly specific. Sex is one of the seven most common symptoms of demonic possession and issues with sexuality immediately make one a candidate for deliverance. This can include “fantasy sex experiences, masturbation, lust, perversions, homosexuality, fornication, adultery, incest, provocativeness and harlotry.”\textsuperscript{247} Cuneo writes that the Hammonds’ cosmos is “A dangerous world, also, to be sure, with demons lurking in every crevice of daily life, brushing up against every bad habit, every thought and action, but (and here’s the consoling part) the danger was capable of being contained, managed and finally conquered.”\textsuperscript{248}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[245] Brown, \textit{Prepare for War}, 136–137.
\item[248] Cuneo, \textit{American Exorcism}, 108.
\end{footnotes}
The importance of these antecedents will become even more apparent throughout the examples that constitute this dissertation. We will repeatedly see deliverance that resembles these various sources, be they traditional Akan themes, practices from AICs, Western demonological literature or the vast African demonological literature.
Chapter 3 - Deliverance is a Hand Job

“If you are a lesbian, masturbator, or gay, come; for the Lord has spoken.” – Prophet Emmanuel

Amidst the mayhem and frenzy of forty bodies spasming, jumping, falling and punching in desperation for deliverance, Martin’s reaction went almost unnoticed. And for the most part his act was slightly obscured by the stage’s extravagant, shimmering stairway and its accompanying gleaming railing. In fact, Martin’s very physical reaction would go briefly ignored multiple times as it sputtered, died out and then would slowly arouse until it burst into a paroxysm of passion. It followed this pattern multiple times and each and every time Martin’s loins were inflamed a panicked junior pastor – though more than a decade older than the prophet – would come running to extinguish the problematic physical proclamation.

After multiple crude, unconsummated erections of the spirit the congregation was finally made aware of Martin’s act when the prophet yelled a shocked “whoa” at the site of Martin’s act. The prophet, himself unaware until that moment, pointed the congregation’s gaze toward Martin’s genitals with a nod of his head and a rhetorical question uttered quickly and excitedly, “do you see how he does it?” The prophet followed up with another query, this time expecting an answer, “What did I say it is called?” The crowd responded confidently and assuredly in one loud voice, “masturbation!” The prophet agreed by repeating it, “masturbation.”

And indeed, as he had multiple times throughout the deliverance session, there was Martin vigorously masturbating, two hands planted firmly on his bulging erect penis. Thousands of spectators scanned Martin’s body, following his caressing fingers twitch and burrow around his penis. And while the human eyes were slow to recognize what was
occurring, the whole scene invoked multiple unseen viewers and participants. Someone or something was always watching, maybe participating. Martin’s self-touching exceeded the solitariness of the vice. It was an embodied act of mutual pleasure between himself and a spirit. And as the pastor frantically and frenetically tried to curtail the masturbatory manifestation he used his touch to try to reach the engorged spirit. Touch – of self, of other, of spirit – became the frenzy of the invisible, making visible all that was ineffable from pleasure to shame, from spirit to deliverance.

*From Where Did This Spirit Come?*

Prophet Emmanuel may have asked the congregation what he had entitled masturbation as if he had created the name for the sex act, but masturbation, of course, has a long history that at times has relied on religion and religious ideas for consummation. And whilst it has not always been a preoccupation, nor imagined as a spirit, the history is important because of the ways in which it has shaped the experiences of those visited by the spirit of masturbation. It is a complex and powerful cultural phenomenon that Martin and the prophet battled on this sweaty Wednesday afternoon.

The history of masturbation is not always an easy history to follow. Amongst Ghanaian charismatics I was told that, until recently, it “was probably the type of sex least talked about.” But it is also imagined as the most ubiquitous sex act, with many chronic masturbators filtering into church ashamed of their secret, solitary vice, many convinced that it was a pernicious spirit that plagued them. Conservative religious groups – a category which certainly contains Ghanaian Pentecostals – have long condemned and pathologized the masturbator, or “onanist” as sexually deviant. They have devised a plethora of techniques to control and discipline the
masturbating body. But how did masturbation become a spirit from which Christians needed deliverance?

References to masturbation are rare throughout history. For most of history masturbation was not something that concerned people. Even more rare are connections between masturbation and the spirit world. In Ancient Egypt, there were cosmological beliefs that a masturbating god, Atum, created the universe by ejaculating. The Nile was said to flow with the rhythm of his masturbation. In Ancient Greece spirits and masturbation are seen as connected especially through myths of satyrs. The god Pan – his body half goat, half human – was sexually frustrated. All the nymphs, in this case a particular nymph named Echo, were resistant to his advances. Pan’s father, Hermes, took pity on Pan’s lack of sexual satisfaction and taught him how to pleasure himself. Pan was so taken with this sexual release that he also taught it to the lonely shepherds of the field.\(^{249}\) Satyrs were seen as the link in this cosmic circle of masturbation. The Gods taught the Satyrs who then passed masturbation on to humanity.\(^{250}\)

There are vase paintings that clearly illustrate the Satyrs voracious masturbating. Thomas Laqueur in his lengthy cultural history of masturbation shares an image on an aryballos. On the vase are three satyrs “each working his large erect penis with his hands.”\(^{251}\) The names of these satyrs further the connection between spirit and masturbation: Terpekeleos (shaft pleasure), Dophios (to knead oneself) and Psolas (erect).\(^{252}\) Satyrs were seen as particularly

\(^{250}\) Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 103.
\(^{251}\) Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 97.
\(^{252}\) Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 97.
vulnerable to masturbation because of the combination of their large genitals and their insatiable sexual appetites.

In ancient Jewish literature, from which the story of Onan which later takes center stage is taken, there is remarkably little to say about masturbation. Most famous is the well-worn story taken from Genesis 38:8-10 whereby Onan is struck dead by God because he “spilled his seed upon the ground.” But the spilling of the seed followed sex and there “is no hint that he masturbated.” Rabbis have offered a plethora of interpretations on what exactly Onan did to offend God but masturbation was not the focus of their interpretative work.

In the early Christian tradition, explicit treatment of masturbation is also rare. By the twelfth century masturbation was treated as a second order vice amongst sexual sins. Onan was utilized as a text but again, not obviously to inveigh against masturbation. For example, Martin Luther despised Onan because, “it was a most disgraceful crime to produce semen and excite the woman and to frustrate her at that very moment.” For most Christians from the twelfth century until the eighteenth-century masturbation was problematic because it was “ontologically yoked to sodomy.” This is similar to the sexual triad of Pentecostals: gayism, lesbianism and masturbation. But masturbation in and of itself was treated rarely.

On occasion, there was evidence that the Christian imagination included masturbation and spirits. This was the exception not the norm. Late-thirteenth century Dominican Thomas de Canimpre was an exception. His writings included a chapter that clearly outlined the connection between the evil world of spirits and masturbation. Laqueur calls Canimpre’s style

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253 Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 112.
254 Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 126.
255 Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 151.
as having a “confessional kiss-and-tell, can-you-top-this energy,” a phrase that aptly captures Pentecostal testimonies during deliverance. The obscener the tale the more incredible the deliverance promises be. Canimpre shared four stories of masturbators that start to move closer toward masturbation as a spirit. In one a woman regularly masturbates in her bed. She shared that as she masturbated the “devil made loud cries of ‘fi, fi, fi’ and made signs of indiscrete insertion.” This idea of devilish pleasure and involvement in the act of masturbation is prevalent amongst Pentecostals. In another story a man of the cloth, the Bishop of Lausanne, reached down to work his penis instead found himself holding a snake. One prophet told me “masturbation, it is always a snake spirit.” Clearly there are parallels between the Christian imagination that Canimpre provided glimpses of and the Pentecostal imagination. However, there is no way to connect Canimpre’s stories directly to Pentecostal stories. And tales like this that so explicitly connected evil consequences with masturbation were exceptional.

Masturbation, Thomas Laqueur announces in his book, Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation, became a problem “in or around 1712.” It was around this year that masturbation was invented in the best-selling anti-masturbation jeremiad Onania. Similar works denouncing the solitary vice followed. As Laqueur points out, prior to this date masturbation, or “onanisme” was treated with indifference, as a mere triviality. For Laqueur masturbation became a prominent social issue in the eighteenth century, and continued for

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256 Laqueur, Solitary Sex, 158.
257 Laqueur, Solitary Sex, 153.
258 Laqueur, Solitary Sex, 158.
259 Laqueur, Solitary Sex, 13.
two centuries in this way, because it spoke to peculiarly modern concerns and was central in the construction of the modern subject. Masturbation, he argues, “is part of the making of the secular self.” Masturbation is central amongst Pentecostals and is part of their self-making, though they use masturbation in wholly unique ways from those Laqueur studied. And in order to find out how spirits and masturbation became wed in Pentecostal self-making, a significant leap through history is required and still requires the same kind of loose dating that Laqueur utilized: masturbation and spirits in the Pentecostal imagination emerged in the early 1980s.

Despite the occasional reference throughout history to spirits and masturbation, the movement to require deliverance from the spirit of masturbation in Ghana appears to be rooted in the teachings of famed deliverance minister Derek Prince. Prince’s writings and preaching were cited as influential by two of the prophets in this dissertation. Further, Prince was extremely influential in the development of one of Accra’s earliest deliverance ministers. Kwofie is a controversial figure and has largely been sidelined in the charismatic community since he spent time in jail for fraud. Nonetheless, many leaders in the community still recognize him as one of the earliest and most important figures in bringing deliverance to Accra. For Kwofie, Prince is the only author he will read on deliverance and his teaching in Ghana shaped his demonological system. Kwofie, who is not prone to praise anyone other than himself, called Prince the most important teacher on demons.

Prince writes about masturbation in his deliverance text, *They Shall Expel Demons*. Despite the 1998 release date of Prince’s deliverance book, the spirit of masturbation is one that haunted his own ministry due to his slowness in taking seriously masturbation as a spirit.

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260 Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 162.
Prince tells the story of Roger, a young Christian masturbator. Prince was fond of Roger and his religious zeal, and while he believed masturbation to be a sin he did not treat it as a spirit.\textsuperscript{261} Prince describes one late night prayer session in which after hours of prayer Roger pleaded, “It’s leaving me, it’s leaving me! Don’t stop praying; I can feel it. It’s in my fingers; it’s going!”\textsuperscript{262} Nonetheless, victory was elusive and Roger never received release from masturbation. Prince indicts himself over this stating, “I failed to help because I did not deal with their problems as demonic.”\textsuperscript{263}

Sometime after failing Roger and his vexatious fingers, Prince became convinced that masturbation was a spirit. As he tells it, sins like masturbation, “almost inevitably open the way for demons.”\textsuperscript{264} Not only does it open the door, but it is in itself a spirit, one who regularly comes through finger pores.\textsuperscript{265} And it leaves similarly. Roger’s cries stayed with Prince and informed his understanding of deliverance from the spirit of masturbation. He heard in many others the same refrain, “I can feel it in my fingers. They’re tingling. They’re getting stiff!”\textsuperscript{266} But now he was armed with the ability to deliver people from those cries and alleges that he had delivered hundreds by taking Roger’s reverberating cry seriously. “Shake it out of your fingers,” he instructs masturbators, “until you can feel they’re free.”\textsuperscript{267} For Prince the feeling of the fingers is where the moment of deliverance manifests.

One of Thomas Csordas’ informants was delivered by Prince from the spirit of

\textsuperscript{261} Prince, \textit{They Shall Expel Demons}, 41.
\textsuperscript{262} Prince, \textit{They Shall Expel Demons}, 41.
\textsuperscript{263} Prince, \textit{They Shall Expel Demons}, 41.
\textsuperscript{264} Prince, \textit{They Shall Expel Demons}, 108.
\textsuperscript{265} Prince, \textit{They Shall Expel Demons}, 212.
\textsuperscript{266} Prince, \textit{They Shall Expel Demons}, 169–170.
\textsuperscript{267} Prince, \textit{They Shall Expel Demons}, 169–170.
masturbation. The event is referred to as early as 1988 in Csordas’ award winning article “Embodiment As A Paradigm for Anthropology,” illustrating that indeed this spirit was long a part of Prince’s spiritual worldview, certainly well before he published *They Shall Expel Demons*. 268 Csordas’ informant described Prince’s description of spirit acquisition thusly, “[He said] “You’ve known this was a sin, but you did it. You did it deliberately. If you acquired a spirit, it becomes compulsive and you FEEL that compulsion. If you’re Catholic or Lutheran or Episcopal you may have confessed this sin time again, time again. And you fight it and you don’t like it and you hate it and you renounce it and it’s still with you. Those are all signs, that whole package. You almost certainly have a spirit.”269 The emphasis on feel is original. When it comes to masturbation and deliverance from masturbation feeling in a very embodied sense, touch even, is central. But the key is that repentance alone is insufficient to battle the scourge of masturbation – deliverance is absolutely necessary.

The informant stood up with twenty or so others and Prince launched into his deliverance diatribe toward the spirit: “You foul spirit of masturbation. I’m taking control of you in the name of Jesus and by the power of His precious blood. I cast you out in His holy name.”270 In this case, the spirit of masturbation departed by the “spontaneous elevation of the arms, with hands bent way back, farther than a person could normally bend them of his own accord.”271 There was also “sort of an electric feeling, like a mild electric shock.”272

Csordas wants any interpretation of such an event to take the body seriously for it is only by taking the body seriously that the scholar can come to a more complete understanding of the experience. In Csordas’ interpretation he relies on the body – the motion of the hands and the experience of the shock – to point out a number of important aspects of the healing. The first is that spirits are not seen as interior/exterior but rather in a relationship of bondage and release. Relying on the rhetoric of Prince does not reveal the same understanding of spirits and so the body introduces indeterminacy. But even Csordas spends a limited amount of time actually talking about the material body (less than a paragraph). There are many more questions to ask. For example, masturbation involves hands which Csordas uses in his interpretation but also genitals. I have witnessed services like the one Csordas cites and there is often an emphasis on the hands, including a well-meaning youth pastor who closed such a prayer session with the song “Give us clean hands.” But the prophet that will be discussed below, when delivering from the spirit of masturbation focuses on – indeed, touches – the genitals of those plagued by such a spirit. The primary issue in Csordas using this example is that he relies on a textual testimony which inherently obscures the parts of the body that the supplicant wishes to obscure. The whole body must be considered and only then, can the experience be given serious consideration. The somatic mode of attention is, though, at least a starting point from which to consider the movement of material bodies within religious rituals.

Thomas Csordas’ theory of somatic modes of attention is useful here. Csordas, working with Catholic charismatic healing rituals, defined somatic modes of attention as

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273 Csordas, Body, Meaning, Healing, 66.
274 Geraldine Mossierre has also attempted to read Pentecostal rituals by concentrating on the mobilization of bodies. She rightly points out that Pentecostal rituals are “based on the role of
culturally-determined modes to be in the world through one’s body among other embodied subjects. In particular, Csordas concentrated on proprioceptive experiences between healers and their clients. While I encountered some such proprioceptive experiences whereby prophets experienced clients’ pain in their own bodies, that does not apply to this particular deliverance act. But the theory of somatic modes of attention extends beyond the proprioceptive and demands that research be reoriented toward the body as a methodological starting point. A somatic mode of attention is a mode that takes particular notice of the position and movement of others’ bodies. It stands “Against strategies that reinforce mind over body and body as inert, passive and static.”

Despite Derek Prince being one of the early progenitors of masturbation as a spirit, at least in the Pentecostal worldview as a spirit that one could be delivered from, I am not making an argument about linearity or causation. I simply could not find direct evidence of such an easy set of causation. But like Prince, his idol, Kwofie was unequivocal that there is a spirit behind masturbation. He repeated himself multiple times, occasionally stuttering, but always certain, “you may think you are not doing anything with anybody, it is just you acting alone, but it is a spirit.” He had a theory about why so many people are plagued by this particular spirit.

the body and its diverse abilities as a sensorial device, along with being a mode of individual and collective expression.” The bodies referenced in Mossierre’s work are rarely in motion, hardly in contact and seem more abstract than material. The ease with which consideration of the way bodies occupy space in a particular place and time can become solely discursive is why this essay is attempting to emphasize the material body. See: Geraldine Mossierre, “Experience, Subjectivity and Performance: An Anthropological Approach to Pentecostal Rituals based on the body” in Understanding Religious Ritual: Theoretical Approaches and Innovations, ed. John P. Hoffman (London: Routledge, 2012), 54-72.

275 Csordas, Body, Meaning, Healing, 244.
276 Csordas, Body, Meaning, Healing, 243.
Ghanaians are pious and religious people, he intimated, and so they are not prone to the usual sexual chicanery of spirits. If a demon tries to convince them to sleep with a man, a woman or a spirit they will resist. But masturbation seems so harmless, “so if you aren’t a serious Christian you might not even think it is wrong. A-ha! It is solitary, it does not hurt another person.” But, again he repeated himself, “masturbation is a very serious and a very powerful spirit.”

While I am only able to comment on the material that I witnessed or that was shared with me, I am not the first scholar to find masturbation operating as a spirit in Ghanaian Pentecostalism. In his 2004 Ghana’s New Christianity Paul Gifford cites a Prince like sermon preached at a well-known Accra based ministry led by prophet Elisha Salifu Amoako. The preacher stated unequivocally, “there’s a spirit behind masturbation.” Masturbation is one spirit in a world of sexual spirits.

Every prophet I spoke with shared a similar worldview, with their own slight variations and riffs. Nikoi, who could become quite frustrated with my questions when he thought they were self-evident, said “it is a spirit in charge of masturbation.” He then went on a diatribe about how the spirit of masturbation made men to avoid their wives sexually. He also added, as if he were following the material to its logical conclusion, that masturbation “can also lead you to trying to rape people and all that and you can end up in prison.” For Nikoi if you masturbate the spirit takes over your life leading you to either not desire your wife or to desire

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everyone, with horrific and violent consequences. Emmanuel told me that “masturbation is a spirit, actually.” There seemed to be little doubt amongst the prophets that masturbation was a stubborn, sinful, sadistic spirit. This is dramatically different than the South African, Benoni based charismatic pastor, Edisai Mensah, who had members of his church masturbate in church in order to heal and earn eternal life. In Ghanaian deliverance, masturbation is always an evil spirit.

*Martin John:*

On the stuffy Wednesday morning of Martin John’s deliverance, the prophet started deliverance by appealing not to a particular person but for a large group consisting of all those struggling with the spirits of “gayism, lesbianism and masturbation.” This was the first time I witnessed him making a mass appeal though it emerged as a pattern for dealing with the spirit of masturbation. His normal mode of operation was to identify sexual spirits in particular individuals. He would stalk around the congregation and when his spiritual father, Jesus Christ, revealed a case of possession to him he would immediately launch into a deliverance sequence appropriate to the type and strength of the demon. For example, a previous week during the deliverance service as he stood at the back of the congregation and turned to his left he identified a young woman as plagued by masturbation. He instructed a pastor, one of his many acolytes who follow him around during deliverance, to deliver the young woman and “pray and protect her against chronic masturbation. Pray and cast out that bad spirit from her.” The pastor immediately seized upon the woman, grabbing her petite forehead in his large hands and shoving her backwards as he demanded that the spirit of masturbation leave. The woman’s body offered little resistance and in no time she was lying docile on the ground.
But on the day of Martin’s deliverance instead of focusing on individual masturbators, Emmanuel initiated a widespread assault on masturbation. With masturbation, presumably, the ubiquity of such a chronic and widespread spirit made it easier to appeal to the masses. There was also an urgency for the Prophet as masturbation is considered truly vile. If there was a scale of depravity for sexual sins, for Prophet Emmanuel these three – gayism, lesbianism and masturbation – would fall amongst the supremely reprehensible. Perhaps because of his own history which famously involved impregnating the wife of one of his subordinate pastors and then placing a curse on the resulting child, or the ever constant rumors about his notoriously prodigious sexual appetite outside of his marriage, Emmanuel preached that fornication is a sin easily forgiven by God. The three sexual improprieties listed above, though, are not so simply dispensed with.

Masturbation in particular was identified as not merely a sin to be forgiven but as a pernicious spirit. Masturbation is an invitation for spirits of the night to invade the human body. Masturbation is a sin against the body, one’s own body. There is no mitigation of masturbation, no penitence for pleasuring oneself, and engaging in such acts completely subjects the body to evil and shuts one off from the God who abhors masturbators. The masturbating body is slavishly subject to the spirits and as such, forgiveness is not easily granted but only possible through the difficult execution of deliverance. Like most bodily actions that require deliverance, there is a complicated dance between human agency and spiritual force, but whether or not the human has masturbatory agency sometimes, all the time

278 For more on the spirits of “gayism and lesbianism” see Chapter 4 in this dissertation.
or never is mostly irrelevant in the pneumatic worldview. What matters most is that the spirit is dispensed with.

Many, like Marianne a young woman in her late twenties, were extraordinarily anxious about masturbation and the inability to be in relationship with God if one is in relationship with oneself. I met Marianne at a week-long deliverance service for spiritual marriage during which Prophet Baah, Prophet Emmanuel’s second-in-command, delivered her from a spiritual marriage that had been passed down through her family’s matrilineal lineage. More crucially it turned out, Marianne was a masturbator. Early one evening we were talking at her house, *Keeping Up With the Kardashians* was playing quietly on the television in the corner, and she described some of the effects that masturbation had inflicted on her. She said, “After doing it I can’t even pray, I’ll be off. For like three days, like, I’ve committed some big sin. It is a big sin.”

After our interview, Marianne shared with me a prayer that someone had given her to use in her battle against the spirit of masturbation. The prayer clearly outlined that true worship, worship worthy of the divine, was not possible if one stimulates oneself with their hand or objects. In particular, it is the spirit of masturbation that sullies and makes a connection to God impossible. The prayer, itself ambivalent about human agency and spiritual force, read:

God, I ask that I be delivered from the spirit of masturbation. I will not have sex outside marriage. With the help of Jesus, I will die to my selfish fleshy desires. I repent of my sins of masturbation. Sexual immorality is a sin against my own body. I will never get to a place where I don’t need God. I will no longer stimulate myself with objects or my hand. I will not let the spirit of masturbation rob me of true worship. I declare that I will be intimate with God until my mate arrives. I will be sensitive to the touch of God. Only God alone can give me the desires of my heart in Jesus name.
What is particularly interesting in this prayer is how it images the connection between God and Marianne as similar to her experience of masturbation. The pleasurable autoerotic experiences, or “selfish fleshy desires”, robbed her “of true worship.” In its place, she promises to be “intimate with God”, “sensitive to the touch of God” and have her desires satisfied by God. The divine touch, which is an intimate touch, is deemed acceptable while the touching of oneself is policed and outlawed. The correlation seems to indicate that intimacy with God satisfies on a similar register as masturbation.

What the prayer does not answer is what is the touch of God? Is it merely metaphorical? Marleen de Witte argues, “Such descriptions should not be understood only metaphorically. They inform techniques of the body and as such become literally embodied and produce bodily sensations as they tune the believer’s senses to the working of this invisible yet tangible power.” Descriptions of tactile sensations are not metaphors for these Christians but instead are embodied evidence of the supernatural. Pneumatic Christians feel the supernatural not merely in the emotional sense of the term but through sensual touch.

Further, masturbation is imagined as sex act outside the bounds of marriage. This is an uncommon but telling characterization of masturbation for pneumatic Christians. By invoking the bounds of marriage – a heterosexual relationship of orgasmic mutuality in sex – the prayer is pointing to masturbation as something more than autoeroticism. Masturbation is not simply autarky because it is not a solitary vice. Masturbation is an act of sexual consummation with spirits, the spirit of masturbation. Masturbation is a relationship of orgasmic mutuality with the spirit.

279 Witte, “Touch,” 151.
The parallels of Marianne’s prayer are not merely incidental. Every prophet I spoke with confirmed that spirits experience sexual pleasure during human masturbation. Nikoi reacted with incredulity and frustration when I posed the question: if masturbation is a spirit, does the spirit experience pleasure during masturbation? He reacted as if my asking the question meant I did not understand spirits at all. “Yes,” he said firmly, “spirits get sexual pleasure when you masturbate.” Nikoi added, “a spirit will come upon you and will do whatever it wants.” Emmanuel and his assistant Baah, very different prophetic figures than Nikoi, confirmed similarly. Already the relationship between spirit and matter is being upset by the experience of human touch: the human touch that pleasures a spirit stretching the body far beyond its material bounds, and the spirit that experiences masturbation as immanent.

During another interview, a young man wearing a brightly colored tunic and crisp white shorts named Lord shared a group text that was circulating between his pneumatic friends. Lord did not take it seriously in the same way that the prophets did, laughing throughout as he scrolled through the phone giving me the highlights. He was sure it came from a Pentecostal prophet. It started out with the normal heterosexist standard that pneumatic churches glorify: “sex is between two people, a man and a woman.” But it continued, “…if you are somewhere alone masturbating it means you are having sex with a spirit and at long last you have a satisfaction that was because you are having sex with a spirit that you don’t know or you haven’t seen and that, the spirit, is where you are getting satisfaction from…you are doing it with a spirit.” Masturbation is the story of mutual orgasm between the spirit and a human body.
Returning to Martin’s day of autoerotic reckoning, which we are learning may not be ‘auto’ or ‘solitary’ in its eroticism, the prophet made a brief speech as he invited the depraved to the front of his church. He repeatedly admonished them not to be “shy” and promised to “break that spirit for you.” He said,

It has become a spirit in you. Don’t be shy. Maybe you started from school or home. Come if you are a lesbian, gay or involved in masturbation. Do you know where it will land you? It has destroyed many marriages. Some are caught in the bathroom by their husbands doing it. She’ll say that’s why I do not achieve orgasm when we have sex. Then she’ll tell the source. Some men also do masturbate even after sleeping with women. If you have such spirit, don’t be shy and come let’s break it for you.

Emmanuel’s capacious speech on solitary pleasures with its ambiguous twists and turns actually began as an invitation for those identifying with non-heteronormative sexualities. But when he added masturbation to the list the speech pivoted to exclusively address the spirit of masturbation and provide particular illustrations of the severity of the problem. In both the male and female cases, masturbation is a problem to be solved, a spirit to be destroyed.

With the pivot to masturbation he re-entered the heteronormative register imaging masturbation in contrast to heteronormative sex and as closely related to heteronormative sexual relations. To begin with, he revealed his privilege, as the bathroom for many of his congregants is not exactly a place of privacy or pleasure-making. But more importantly, he imagined women finding more pleasure in masturbation, finding out more about their bodies and being able to identify the erogenous zones of their bodies. This knowledge – or at least the impartation that she has such knowledge to the husband – is related to a lack of orgasm in sex and apparently ruins marriages, though exactly how is unclear. The problem for women is orgasming with the spirit before sex with a man. The masturbate spirit visits her before her
assumed wifely duties of orgasming to her husband. The problem is an orgasm with someone – a spirit/oneself – other than a man.

For men, the order is reversed. The problem is masturbating after having sex with a woman, which appears to communicate either an excessive amount of libido or the failure of one’s wife to adequately pleasure her husband. By ordering masturbation in this way – prior to sex for women, after sex for men – Emmanuel is absconding men from any blame for a lack of pleasure in conjugal acts. With his example for men he also calls to mind the story of Onan and indicates sex without ejaculating, with the ejaculation event occurring alone and the “seed” being spilled in places other than the vagina is problematic.

But regardless of the interstices of Emmanuel’s invitation, his core message was clear: if you masturbate, you are possessed of a spirit that I can rid you of. As Emmanuel spoke, men and women responded to this invitation and made the arduous trip from their seats toward the front of the church, navigating the tight quarters of worshippers crammed into the space, young children sleeping on the floor, and the various paraphernalia of pneumatic deliverance that littered the floor including stickers, fans, and bottles of oil and water. By the time he completed his message on masturbation a group of forty had gathered, all eager and assenting to have their “spirits of gayism, lesbianism and masturbation” broken. The gender dynamics of the group closely resembled the ratio of the broader congregation, one-third male and two-thirds female.

With the group assembled – only a few stragglers slowly augmented the fringes of the group – the prophet asked his pastors to ascertain and then enumerate what spirit each person was struggling with. At first the pastors carefully asked each participant what spirit bedeviled
them. A junior pastor dressed atypically in a subdued grey suit with no flashy accoutrements volunteered the first person. Putting his hand on the small of her back and pushing her a step forward toward the prophet he stated she was a lesbian. After the pastor had announced this, the woman grimaced, nodded her head and covered her mouth with her hand in a look that mixed consternation and stupefaction. The pastor lightly guided her out of the way toward the right of the stage.

The pastor in the grey suit then moved on to a young man in a sharp white tunic with turquoise trim and extravagant buttons. In a phlegmatic manner the pastor stated, “masturbation, 10 years.” As he said this he used one hand to hold the microphone to his face and with his left hand he made a slow and small wanking motion, a motion most often associated with the act of masturbating. To each pronouncement the prophet vocalized his sympathy with a simple, if disinterested “uh-huh.”

Lurking over the right shoulder of the young man in the tunic was the man whose experience is central to this chapter. Wearing a bright green collared shirt with a brown print on it, slacks and black leather sandals, Martin John stood contentedly, perhaps abashed, in the back row making no effort, unlike most others, to push forward toward deliverance. His clothes drooped around his large frame. His hands remained still at his side and his vision sunk toward the tiled floor unlike the others who confidently looked the pastors in the eye as their sexual baseness was announced. Nonetheless, the grey-suited pastor reached out his hand and put it on Martin’s shoulder and dispassionately said, “the same thing: masturbation.” Martin John, now marked as possessed of masturbation, shifted to the right with the others whose spiritual
ills had been identified. Nothing in the encounter foreshadowed the unique experience Martin John was about to have.

The microphone was passed to another pastor whose first congregant was “gay”, and then with an exaggerated and melodramatic wanking motion – larger and longer than the first pastor – he identified a few male masturbators. The next pastor also made wanking motions for his masturbating congregants, male and female despite the action making very little sense as a description of female masturbation. Only one pastor dressed in a fire-engine red suit with a large watch that jangled every time he acted out masturbation enacted anything bearing a resemblance to female masturbation, cupping his hand or stroking the air with his fingers as opposed to the ubiquitous wanking action.

Worried that his congregants were unsure about what titles were associated with each act, the prophet interjected his own clarifying piece of definitional sexual education: “If you play with yourself and ejaculate, it is masturbation. But some call it homosexual. Homosexual is meeting of two male partners.” He ended the explanation with an exclamatory “Gay!” as if yelling the word was descriptive. Again, female sexuality – especially the three or four women who had already been identified as possessed with the spirit of “lesbianism” – was roundly ignored in Emmanuel’s sexual-spiritual imagination.

Emmanuel reiterated that “this is not a matter of shyness, there are spirits behind those things.” Ironically, within this sentence he did not name that which he instructed people to be unabashed about. His concealing masturbation behind the phrase “those things” combined with his fear that people might be too shy to come forward indicated a strong current of societal discretion concerning public discussion of masturbation. The unambiguous claim
within the sentence was that spirits are to blame. By transposing the conversation to the realm of the spirit Emmanuel hoped to transcend the societal hesitance around such topics as masturbation.

The prophet completed his interjection by yelling at his pastors to go faster in their naming of each person’s demons. And so, with less care and consultation than before, the pastors just start calling out lesbian, gayism, or masturbation while pointing at various people. The default spirit was masturbation, wildly outnumbering the other two spirits. Only one man was marked as gay, and a handful of women as lesbians but the rest were masturbators who needed to “come; for the Lord has spoken.”

Eventually, with only a few people’s sexual spirits left undisclosed, the prophet tired of the repetition of naming and he moved on to deliverance. He stated, “We have several married women who are being tormented by those things. Some are married, some who have boyfriends are being tormented by those things. If your man finds out, he’ll divorce you; come let’s break it for you.” Whereas much of the religious imagination was phallic, for example the wanking motions, the consequences were associated with women. And the consequences in this case were enacted by men against women. If you masturbate your male partner will leave you. Male masturbation is envisioned as a sin against one’s own body. But female masturbation is to sin against one’s own body and against the male partner.

Emmanuel exhorted those assembled to: “Raise your hands and let’s pray for you.” Like the others, Martin John raised his hands. He bent his arms 90 degrees at the elbow, his forearms fell slightly forward, and he stretched his fingers apart. The pastors and ushers pushed in, encircling and kettling the participants into a small, inescapable space. Before
unleashing the pastors, Emmanuel asserted one last request and a warning to the congregation. The request was a simple and common deliverance instruction, everyone “should all stretch out your hands and pray to deliver them from that spirit.” But he augmented the request with the caution that failure to pray puts one at risk of contracting the exorcized spirits who will gladly enter the unpraying body. Masturbation is contagious. Touching oneself can move amongst people in the form of the spirit. The touch of deliverance can send the spirit shooting out of the masturbating body and have it land on an unsuspecting, unpraying viewer. Unsurprisingly, once deliverance began it was accompanied by the loud, fervent prayers of the faithful trying to ward of the spiritual ejaculations of deliverance.

Warning issued, Emmanuel released the pastors to deliver those assembled. The pastors responded by laying hands on peoples’ heads and praying in loud exhortations: “leave”, “go”, “die.” Deliverance is often the combination of exclamatory prayers and touch. Touch responds to touch, the touch of masturbation warded off by the touch of deliverance. Prophet Baah explained what happened thusly, “the spirit is in that person, dwells in the person so by touching him or laying your hands on him you are touching that person to release god’s power. You are releasing god’s power into that person, into the body of the person.” Often it is the touch of a pastor that causes the manifestation, which Baah explained was merely the spirit becoming annoyed and fighting back, refusing to evacuate the body. And so, the touch of deliverance rained down upon these forty individuals. Sometimes it was merely a momentary slapping of the forehead and sometimes it involved holding onto the person for much longer. But every one of the forty bodies were touched at least once by a deliverance minister.
As the pastors rushed forward the circle broke and quickly the front of the church was littered with bodies. The pastor who marked Martin John as a masturbator came face to face with Martin who stood unmoving. He reached out and again touched Martin’s shoulder with one hand. He put his other hand on Martin’s forehead, the base of his hand firmly planted near Martin’s tightly closed eyes. Another pastor standing off to the side stretched out his arm and placed his hand on the top of Martin’s head, his fingers overlapping with the first pastor. They pushed Martin backward. Martin almost immediately fell to the ground, and the two pastors gently laid him down.

Once on the ground, and out of the piercing gaze and touch of the pastors who had moved on to deliver other people, Martin rolled over onto his right arm and with his right hand began vigorously rubbing his penis. His self-pleasuring went ignored for almost a minute amidst the cacophony of prayers and groans and frenzy of bodies moving to and fro. Eventually, the grey-suited pastor and two ushers, distressed, ran toward Martin. Without hesitation, the pastor straddled Martin and pushed him onto his back. Standing over him with one foot on either side of Martin’s hips, the pastor continually tapped Martin’s forehead, hoping that the staccato rhythm of his touch might release the spirit within Martin. Martin, impervious to the pastor’s head tapping, remained immersed in his own masturbatory rhythm as his hand moved rapidly over his pants but firmly on his penis.

The prophet, exhorting his pastors to break the spirits, was completely ignorant of the struggle going on between Martin and the pastor. Martin shifted again to his side and slid his hand into his pants where he continued the strenuous and robust rubbing action. The pastor hit Martin’s hand and penis with an open-palm multiple times and while he did Martin’s
rubbing slowed and then ceased. Gently and unhurriedly Martin pulled his hand out of his pants. His freed right hand met the ground and continued to move about slowly as if it was searching for something to do, something to touch, unsure of what to do once separated from his penis. Eventually that hand stopped and his body went docile.

Rather, most of his body went docile. His penis betrayed him, his erection clearly evident through his pants pushing the malleable material into a bulge on his left leg. His raging penis stood as a bodily clue that this deliverance was not over, it presaged more touching – both touching himself and being touched by others. Nonetheless, the pastors moved on to some of the other bodies still standing about and the few strewn on the floor, including a woman who was masturbating over her clothes, her fingers quickly stroking her vagina.

Martin remained still for a mere twenty seconds. There was no real transition, he just launched from tranquil and unmoving to exerting himself. He aggressively shoved his right hand back into his pants, his black belt bulged at the movements of his wrist, its silver belt buckle moving up and down to his masturbatory rhythm. For a third time the grey-suited pastor returned, and endeavored once more to deliver Martin of masturbation. He straddled Martin and kept touching his open-palmed hand against Martin’s pants where Martin was stroking his penis. Each touch was deliberate and determined in its attempt to stop Martin from masturbating. And it seemed to work as Martin’s hand slowly emerged from his pants, sliding slowly up his abdomen to his chest, as he did so his shirt was pulled up exposing his stomach. The whole escapade was punctuated by the prophet, still unaware of Martin’s cosmic masturbation occurring to his left, yelling “in the name of Jesus” ad nauseam. The pastor did not abandon Martin despite the cessation of masturbation. This time he continued to straddle
him and hit him all over the body. Martin rolled onto his right side, his right arm extended beyond his head, his hand in a fist with his thumb extended while his left arm bent behind his head and his left hand caressed the back of his own head.

Erica Frueh writes of autoeroticism, “Autoeroticism is important for it affirms the subject’s knowledge of herself.” And this occurs in the masturbation explored in this chapter, but the knowledge of oneself is the unravelling of subjectivity. As Martin reaches for his penis he reaches beyond his own body. He learns his bodily limits and how little control he has over his actions.

Frueh later adds, “Self-exhibition may demonstrate the positive narcissism – self-love – that masculinist eros has all but erased and self-exhibition is a commanding statement, ‘Here I am. See my body.’” There is a certain degree of embodied showing in Martin’s actions. But it is never self-exhibition. It is not narcissism at all but the frightening possibility of being possessed.

As the group thinned and those who had sought deliverance began returning to their seats the prophet finally became aware of the struggle between the pastor in the grey suit and Martin. Emmanuel impatiently yelled “Deliver him.” At this, Martin fell onto his back, his arms stretched out above his head, his erection still visible. Martin was crying, his chest heaving dramatically as the prophet reached his hand out toward him. The heaves of Martin’s chest transitioned into a single thrust, his arms folded underneath his back which propelled his pelvic area, still sporting a spirit-induced bulge, upwards. The prophet yelled “Holy Ghost” but

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281 Frueh, Erotic Faculties, 143.
somehow all of this was not enough to maintain his prophetic attention, his interest had been stolen from Martin and he turned to focus on the first woman in this episode, the woman in the blue shirt with the spirit of lesbianism.

By the time the prophet’s attention returned to Martin he was standing up, though his stability was unsure and he leaned heavily on pastors standing on either side of him. As the two pastors held him up the prophet came at him directly saying “And I deliver this man from that spirit”, screamed “out” loudly into his microphone, and pushed heavily on Martin’s forehead, stomach and penis. Martin’s body went flaccid and was held up by each arm while the prophet continued to push against his stomach and penis. Touch always matters in deliverance but touching of the penis appears to be unique to the spirit of masturbation, a rich response to the allegedly problematic act of touching one’s own penis.

Holding Martin’s stomach, the prophet spoke to the spirit, “I arrest you. Who are you?” At this Martin’s still and flaccid body spasmed and arched, his face contorted and the pastors tightened their grip. The prophet melodramatically grabbed Martin by the collar and yelled in his deepest voice “Who are you? Talk to me!”

Martin responded to this with crying, “I don’t speak English.”

For the prophet this explained everything so he responded with a confident ‘ah-ha’ and firmly stated: “Meaning you’re a non-English speaking witch? You see that I’ve got you? I rebuke you with the blood of Jesus to go out of him.” This attempt to coax a spirit out of masturbating man has obvious parallels to masturbation itself. Masturbation was defined by Emmanuel as touching oneself until you ejaculate. Further, in doing so a spirit entered your body. Deliverance is defined by the laying on of hands until a spirit evacuates the body.
Further, in ejecting the evil spirit from the body the holy spirit is said to then reside within the body.

Emmanuel pushed Martin to the floor. He was made to stand up again by the pastors. Once again, the prophet pushed him to the floor and definitively announced, “It’s gone; it won’t come anymore...The Lord has saved you. You are free forever.” Again, as was the pattern throughout this ordeal, Martin’s body went docile, became unmoving, but his penis remained erect.

With the prophet’s confident statement that the spirit of masturbation was gone, everyone returned to their respective places in the church – congregants to their seats, pastors to the front platform. Everyone moved except Martin. He laid still for a moment as the service continued, the prophet preaching, the band playing in the background. But after a while his legs started moving, stretching, then bending so that the soles of his feet touched each other. He moved his right hand onto his right hip and began rolling around. The prophet noticed the unsanctioned movement. Martin’s movement was problematic because he was supposed to be already delivered and thus, a docile body. The moving body desperate to masturbate was a direct assault on the prophet’s powers.

Emmanuel immediately stretched out his hand toward Martin. Martin responded by removing his right arm from his hip and stretching it in unnatural ways. His hands shook with unbelievable rapidity. His fingers moved speedily, calling to mind Roger’s cry to Derek Prince, “It’s in my fingers!” As they did, his right arm moved like the arms of a clock moving backwards. From a twelve o’clock position above his head his arm slid, hand still shaking, all the way around until it met his leg. There his hand loosely held his quad whilst still shaking
rapidly. His left hand did the same thing, though moving clockwise. Then both shaking hands
crawled up from his quads and mounted his penis, rubbing it vigorously.

The prophet yelled “whoa”, the music stopped and he instructed the congregation to
move their gaze towards Martin’s penis, “do you see how he does it? What did you say it is
called?” The crowd yelled out “masturbation”, which the prophet agreed with by repeating it.
Martin removed his left hand, shaped his right hand into a crescent and masturbated. There
were groans of disgust throughout the congregation.

The prophet described how this episode would end, stating “So he does that and he
ejaculates.” With that comment Emmanuel reoriented the concerns about masturbation to
semen. Masturbation is episodic with a clear beginning, middle and end. To this point Martin
had oscillated back and forth between the beginning – becoming aroused – and the middle –
engaging the engorged penis. But, Emmanuel pointed out, there could be a third phase
happening at the front of the church. Martin could be spilling semen in the vein of Onan.

As the Prophet redirected everyone’s gaze toward Martin, Martin struggled to cease
masturbating on his own. He used his left hand to try to pry and pull his right hand away from
his penis, momentarily succeeding. However, his right hand continued to shake and his left
hand was left fighting a losing battle in its attempt to keep his right hand away from his penis,
suggesting an embodied fight with the spirit. The right hand shook free but instead of shifting
from the side of his leg to his penis, he reversed it, grabbing his butt with his right hand and
shaking it. This butt shaking was short-lived as his right hand moved all the way around to the
front of his pants and he, again, began masturbating.
As Martin masturbated the prophet made a laconic statement that was both descriptive and prescriptive. Looking down toward Martin the prophet said, “Today I break that spirit. He does that and attains orgasm. It is spiritual. The spirit is crying for forceful separation.” The prescription was simple and unsurprising: the prophet could break the spirit through deliverance, the spirit was fearful of Emmanuel and wanted to be separated from the body, to be less immanent.

The description; however, that “Today I break the spirit. He does that and attains orgasm. It is spiritual” was much more complex and polyvalent. Originally, I thought the statement was referentially ambiguous but probably referring to Martin. But upon reflection and several conversations with Prophets Baah and Emmanuel it is clear that every one of the above statements were referring to the spirit. He had already articulated that Martin was masturbating and that he would ejaculate as the problematic climax of masturbation. Here he stated that the spirit would attain orgasm, a possibility confirmed by a handful of prophets including Emmanuel. And when combined with the earlier description of Martin’s orgasming Emmanuel revealed masturbation not as a solitary act but one of mutuality, one of coterminous orgasms between the spirit and Martin. This mutuality has significant implications for how one thinks about the relationship between spirit and body. The body is never just or only human but nonhuman too if we consider that the spirit engages in the very act of masturbation. The body is dynamic and multiple.

Previously we encountered masturbating Marianne who bemoaned the chasm masturbation constructed between her and god. Marianne, though, was equally honest about the pleasure that masturbation brought her. Like most others, Marianne experienced a
dissonance around such sexual experiences. Masturbating with spirits was equally pleasurable and problematic, desired and abhorred, summoned and resisted. This kind of dissonance was present amongst my interlocutors with all the varied sexualities in this dissertation. It was personally pleasurable. The problematic was that the mutuality meant it was also pleasurable for the spirit. And the spirit(s) were insatiable in their sexual desires for Marianne to touch herself. So even if it was not nighttime, when Marianne usually masturbated, the spirits would find more and unique ways for her to encounter naked pictures on whatsapp or pornography. But Marianne took the mutuality further than Prophet Emmanuel, suggesting that not only were spirits experiencing orgasm but they were the ones ensuring human pleasure. As Marianne said, “at that moment you are not the one doing it...you get it?” I did not totally understand so she added “they tend to manipulate you” while mimicking fingering herself. Her actions helped me understand but I still sought more clarity: “So who is doing it?” She replied matter of fact: “Them! You get up and then you go and they do it.” Marianne’s description matches the text message that Lord shared with me. And it matches the statement that Phillip, a deliverance minister under Nikoi, gave me stating that, “Masturbation is disastrous. Masturbation is using yourself to get an orgasm. It is sinful because it is influenced by demons, it is not normal. It is always a spirit that arouses the person to masturbate.” Marianne is having sex with a spirit, which will be covered in chapter five. But in this case, it is an extension of masturbation. Not only is the spirit receiving pleasure but is doing the work of pleasuring Marianne.

Emmanuel’s discourse about the spirit orgasming ended with a seemingly contradictory claim that the spirit was crying out for forceful separation. Why would the orgasming spirit
leave the masturbating body that was so intimately related to its own experience of pleasure? If
Martin’s masturbating was also pleasurable for the spirit what was the evidence that he wanted
to leave that pleasure-inducing body? The evidence appears to be contingent on time and
place. Presumably, if Martin was masturbating at home the spirit would be content in
remaining with Martin’s body. That would be a place where mutual satisfaction could occur
privately. But Martin’s audacious masturbating in the church during a period dedicated to
delivery of such spirits constituted a public plea. A public manifestation set off by the touch
of deliverance ministers.

Why is the spirit pleading for separation that is forceful? Why could the spirit not leave
on his own volition, or at least plead for peaceful passage? The only answer to this is that
forceful separation is the only way that separation can occur. Deliverance, at such, is always a
violent encounter. Spirits do not move on from their human partners easily. In fact, they have
no agency to move on from their partners unless they are forcefully removed. To remain
meant continued encounters with Emmanuel and so the preferential option was to actually be
freed from Martin and potentially to then move on to a new partner, perhaps one of the non-
praying persons in the congregation as Emmanuel had warned. As Marianne and others
reminded me, “spirits never die, they always find someone to dwell in.” The publicity – the
invisible being made visible through touch – appears to be problematic for the spirit.

Martin began to cry. His heaving chest accentuated just how disheveled his clothing
was with his shirt twisted, his black belt no longer done up, the buckle askew and his slacks
collected around his bulging erection. He mumbled something that was not caught by the
microphone. The prophet asked him to repeat it. The words “I’m ashamed” fell out of his
mouth steeped with a sense of deep regret. The prophet did not hear this confession, this frission of shame, as Martin’s but as the confession of a spirit, the spirit of masturbation. He warned the spirit, “You are mad! If you don’t take care I’ll expose you.” Again, Emmanuel’s exhortation was richly symbolic. How could the spirit be exposed more than it already had in Martin’s masturbating? Presumably Emmanuel meant he would name the spirit, but it remained unclear why that might be threatening. It was already determined that he was going to rid the spirit from Martin’s masturbating body.

The prophet, patting Martin’s erection, turned to the congregation and said, “see how erect his thing is.” Again, he directed their gaze to Martin’s penis, though by the cries of some in the audience they did not go completely unscandalized by the request. The request was purposeful though, as the prophet imposed the erection as the barometer of the spirit’s presence. “So the spirit is leaving” he said while tapping the penis and watching the erection dissipate. He tapped it twice more, his touch representing a spiritual turn-off. The whole episode suggested that the offending spirit was located in the penis.

Martin rolled onto his front then rolled onto his back again, the visible bulge was no longer there. The prophet yelled victoriously and broke into an upbeat song. At the conclusion of the song the prophet invited forward those who “see people sleeping with them in their dreams to come and let’s pray for you against spiritual marriage.” At this point, the deliverance moved on to a new subject, to a new issue, to new people and Martin’s docile body was simply carried away.

I cannot emphasize the link between touch and masturbatory deliverance. A couple of months ago one of Emmanuel’s prophets sent me a video of another masturbation testimony.
The man, never giving his name, gave a succinct testimony of Emmanuel’s power over the spirits of masturbation:

It all started around 1992 when I was in school. A friend of mine was discussing masturbation. So when we completed in May 1992 I went to stay with my mother and one day in the night I began to masturbate. It has been going on and on and on and then it came to a point where I tried to stop. I did all that I could but I could not stop. At a point in time I started praying to God that whatever will happen and I will stop doing it, even if I should become impotent. It was going on and on and then finally I could not stop without doing it in a week. Sometimes every day for months, months! So in June this year I came to see the prophet and he gave me direction to do. When I went home I started on the second day in the night I had a dream and the prophet was standing by me and he was praying and then he left. Immediately after you left I felt worms coming out of my manhood. When I saw it I jumped and the worms came out. Ever since I did not masturbate again. It has been four months and that is why I came to testify. I do not even feel the urge to masturbate again.

Emmanuel was impressed with his own prowess and instructed the man to “come I want to touch you again.” It is always touch that concretizes deliverance. The man came forward, the band played a jubilant tune, and Emmanuel touched him on the head.

Here we see the power of touch. To touch is to master, this is the lesson of deliverance. To touch oneself in masturbation is to be mastered by evil spirits. But the deliverance touch, the touch of the prophet masters the body in a completely different manner, a controlled manner, a disciplined manner.

Stephen’s Curse

Early one afternoon as the clouds rolled in over the mountain at Mamfe, Mary – my assistant at the prayer camp – sent me a man named Stephen whom I had never met before. He came to meet me at the terrace where I was leaning up against the balustrade. While there were three plastic chairs laying around, only one was of a sufficient quality to hold up a human being and so I continued to lean against the balustrade throughout the interview while he sat
down. I was exhausted from the early morning tro-tro ride up the mountain and my attention was more preoccupied with the goats and roosters traipsing around the base of the terrace than our introductions but I could not help but notice his hands, held tightly in his lap, making small movements, a sort of tortured or agonizing hand wringing that continued throughout the interview.

I shook his hands, offering a brief respite from his hand wringing, and started with a seemingly benign question about what church he attended. He immediately launched into an answer dissonant with the question stating: “As I was growing up and I got to secondary school I developed an interest in pornographic movies and when I watched pornographic movies then I would masturbate...[eventually] I started feeling pain in my manhood.” The rapidity with which he launched into his masturbatory tales speaks to an anxiety that plagues many surrounding deliverance and sexual spirits. He did not know at that point that my research interest was in sexual spirits but was compelled to speak by the same anxiety that animates much of the discourse around sexual spirits. In many cases, the anxiety of persistent sexual desires and or acts becomes all encompassing, all one can think about and all one talks about. In another example, a man who was suffering from spiritual marriage called me every day for weeks sharing me with the details of his sexual dreams. He was horrified, anxious and perturbed that every evening after sharing such intimate information with me he was revisited by the demons.

Not dissimilar from Emmanuel’s worldview, Stephen’s church, one of Ghana’s oldest Pentecostal denominations, taught him that masturbation was a sin. And masturbation was not merely a sin but a particularly pernicious sin. Participation in the solitary vice would never
be a solitary act but involved possession by a spirit. Despite these dire warnings Stephen “developed a desire so I couldn’t abstain from it.” As Stephen tells it, those stringent warnings came to pass in painful and frightful ways. Through his “chronic masturbation” and “pornography addiction” his nights were plagued by many beautiful women who visited him in his dreams. Every night in his dreams he would indulge in salacious affairs with women. The sex would be brief and torrid, almost unbearably intense and then he would wake up “and realize I’ve discharged and I am wet.” The secretions stood as evidence of an interloping evil spirit and the pleasure she had visited on Stephen.

Stephen’s understanding of these experiences hinged on a dichotomy between the spiritual and the scientific. Stephen was sure that his capitulating to the claims of his science teachers had been crucially detrimental to his spiritual development. Believing that the sperm spilling experiences of masturbation and nocturnal emissions were normal closed “his spiritual ear.” Science had manipulated him into thinking that his groping fingers experimenting with his own body was normal, with damning repercussions. Science is incomplete and “where science cannot operate, where science cannot discover things the supernatural takes control...we are spiritual beings. Science has limits, the spiritual has no limits.” He was convinced that what he experienced, his reliance on masturbation and his enjoyment of pornography were not normal or spontaneous but related to intimate experiences of evil spirits. In secondary school his science teachers taught that “when you have these things [masturbation and wet dreams] they will say its normal if you have too much sperm in your system and you don’t use it, in the night it will come alive.” The language of coming alive is rich in allusions, for in many respects spilled
seed is the opposite of alive. In many ways spilled seed is death. Spiritually, though, spilled seed does make certain things come alive – spirits. 

Onan has already made an appearance in this chapter, his specter haunts almost all religious conversations about masturbation. Even though it was never obvious that this biblical myth was about masturbation, the tale of one man’s withdrawal has since at least 1712 continued to inspire anxiety and fear about masturbation and even more particularly of its seminal climax. Stephen had a particularly interesting and illuminating exegesis of the story of Onan:

Initially I did not know it is a sin but anything you do that is not pleasing unto god is a sin. I’ve come to read in Genesis where a young man died and they gave the wife to the junior brother. Anytime he had an affair with the woman he would spill it on the ground and I realize he was struck dead because of the sin he was committing. Now I know that even if you sleep with a woman and don’t let the sperm in and use the withdrawal system, all of that is a sin. Even if you use a condom it is a sin and I have to be conscious about life because life is precious.

Stephen’s take on Onan is interesting in that he read it as a widespread condemnation of ejaculating anywhere but inside of a woman. Masturbation is a problem but it is not the act itself, not the pulling and tugging on his penis, that is so endangering. The truly frightening and fatal element is semen falling freely. Marianne’s account of masturbation mirrored Stephen’s. When asked what was problematic about the solitary vice she said: “I don’t think you should...for you to cum it should be between you and someone.” She was unsure about where the Bible supported such a claim but she was sure that it did. Birgit Meyer similarly outlines a case of spirits and masturbation whereby the spirit instructed the woman to masturbate and
she did so. Meyer asked the women why this was so bad and her response was that it was “bad because she did it alone, solely for herself and in isolation.”

Further, the manner in which he told the story and applied it to his own sexuality made it clear that he sees semen as the crux of the issue. He said, “semen holds the power over life and death.” But it particularly has the power over one’s own life and death. He continued:

> As for my seed, I don’t know what they [spirits] use it for. But as you do that [ejaculating outside of the vagina] you are contaminating yourself. One thing I’ve come to realize is that the Holy Spirit does not operate in sin. If you are still in that sin the Holy Spirit will get away from you. Because during that time, my manhood, everything could not function, everything became dead over so many years. But as I abstained from those things, as I focused on god its only god who healed me now everything began to revive again. So if you give yourself to those sins you are killing yourself. They somehow take your semen and use it for your death, they start killing you gradually by taking your sperm.

In this addendum to his exegesis, Stephen made it clear that he viewed his habit of nocturnal emissions and masturbation as a contemporary Onan. And like Onan, he died. Or at least, he was dying. For him death was defined by the penis. The more he masturbated he noticed he was becoming less and less virile until eventually his penis could no longer become erect. The spirit of masturbation had destroyed him. Touching himself had ruined his “manhood.” This is not an unusual claim. Kwofie corroborated this viewpoint saying that it was demonic: a spirit “can just weaken your penis and make it to not ejaculate again.”

Not everyone has quite as developed a theology of masturbation’s sinfulness as Stephen. Most people I talked to were much more like Marianne who was convinced that it was wrong but could not point to a theological or biblical precedent as to why. They were convinced that there is some sort of biblical edict against it, but it is not the bible that provides

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the most important evidence. The bible is part of what informs their worldviews but most
important is the manner in which spirits, especially pernicious spirits like masturbation, are
experienced in, threaten and ultimately destroy the human body. As Nikoi shared with me one
day after we had consumed jollof and chicken, “deliverance is more practical than theoretical
or theological. Deliverance is more practical. Because these are the experiences of the people.
Its more about people’s experiences than theology.” And it is about those experiences of touch
in the body – touch that harms, touch that pleasures, and touch that heals.

The strength with which people believe masturbation is a spirit was partly evidenced by
the vociferous reaction by many when one popular Pentecostal figure, Pastor Christ
Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy, preached that masturbation is not a sin but a habit.283 During
the “Pastor Chris Live Show,” a man from Ghana called in to ask how he can overcome his
masturbation habit. Oyakhilome responded by trying to convince the caller that, “God is not
worried at all about persons who masturbate because it has got nothing to do with Him [God].”

Oyakhilome’s pneumatic misstep was stridently communicated to me by my informants
through disapproving apocalyptic statements. Such leniency and permissiveness was seen as a
sign of the last days and a sexual gateway to a plethora of additional sex acts deemed sinful,
including cunnilingus. What was particularly offensive to one person I talked to was Pastor
Oyakhilome’s claim that, “It is your own body, masturbation is about your body and God is not
offended by it. He is only offended by any habit that takes a hold of your mind and if this takes
a hold of your mind and dominates you then, God is offended by the fact that it takes a hold of

Accessed May 1, 2018.
For this person, and almost everyone I spoke with, there is no separation; God is intimately connected to the body – there is a union between being, the body and God.

Stephen found freedom in deliverance. But the destruction of the spirit of masturbation did not come easily for Stephen and it was only through Prophet Ofori’s efficacious effort. Ofori was a sort of spiritual last resort. Stephen had tried many other spiritual options but had never found the succor he sought from the stubborn sexual spirits. He had tried other pastors, prophets, and the Edumfa prayer camp. He even, in what he described as a moment of desperation, visited Juju men who had him sacrifice a fowl and drink a traditional concoction. “I went through all that to no avail,” he described, “because nothing was helping me.”

Upon arriving at the prayer camp, Stephen waited in line by the prophet’s villa for a brief counselling session with Ofori. When eventually called upon he shared with Ofori his addiction and its corresponding physical consequences. Ofori comforted him that he was in the right place. Ofori prescribed 21 days of fasting in residence at the prayer camp and promised that abiding by such a regimen would return his health and more importantly free him from the sexual sins and stubborn spirits. The prescription of fasting and prayers that Stephen received from Prophet Ofori is not unique. Sometimes prayers are prescribed as part of the deliverance and sometimes as a way of maintaining the results of deliverance. For Stephen, they were part of the deliverance rituals that would occur over the course of the 21 days of fasting at the prayer camp.

The prayers prescribed for masturbation all sound markedly similar. One prominent deliverance pastor shared the following prayer with me. I am unsure of its origin and prophets plagiarize, or borrow liberally, from one another frequently. The prayer stated: “You evil spirits
that cause me to be bound to masturbation and pornography – I renounce you and all your works! I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to loose your grip and go from me now!”

Again, the language is rich. Jesus’ name is invoked in order for the spirits to “loose your grip.” This language again brings to mind the sort of mutuality we saw with Prophet Emmanuel and with Marianne. The grip is not merely metaphor but an actual description of the spirits touch on the penis.

The previous week when I had been in Mamfe I had watched Stephen be singled out for deliverance. As Prophet Ofori made his frenetic rounds of the congregation, never letting the deliverance stories develop with quite the same amount of detail as Prophet Emmanuel, he stopped at Stephen. Stephen was standing, his eyes closed, and like most of the congregation he was vigorously praying, pumping his fist to accentuate his supplication. The Prophet paused and then stated that the Holy Spirit was at work delivering Stephen from snakes that had invaded his body. The pain Stephen was experiencing, centered on his “manhood”, was a result of the penetrating serpents. Stephen had no explanation for what the snakes represented, but nor was he altogether concerned about his inability to explain them. He was most assured though that the serpents in his body were a result of masturbating. We will return to sexual relations between humans and animals in chapter 6. Though spirits as snakes are often associated with masturbation. Baah once told me, “masturbation, it is always a snake spirit.”

Ofori began praying for Stephen that he would be delivered from the snakes. The prayer was short and at its conclusion Ofori held his microphone between his face and Stephen’s, so close that it was only the microphone that kept their faces from touching. Ofori then blew into the microphone creating a sonic cyclonic effect. Stephen’s body began to shake
all over, his arms out to his side. Ofori blew again and the shaking became more severe. Ofori blew one more time and pushed on Stephen’s forehead. Stephen took two small hops backwards before falling to the ground, his plunging body expertly caught by the ushers. As Stephen would later describe it, “the holy ghost brought me down.”

The end result was victory for Stephen. The following day he found the physical, embodied evidence that the deliverance had been successful. As he told me, “The following day I realized I was well. Before blood could not flow through my manhood but now blood was flowing. I was getting better and better and better.” And in the 21 days he did not masturbate once nor even feel the titillating temptation to do so. For Stephen this was “freedom.”

Marianne similarly extolled her ability to not masturbate as a sign of successful deliverance. “(Before) once like someone sends me an image of naked people on my whatsapp or something it just arouses me and I start doing it. You get it. But right now you can send me porn and everything and I’ll watch nothing.” She distinguished her past as one of masturbation and her present as masturbation free.

Again, we see more evidence that to touch is to understand deeply. Marleen de Witte calls it a “theosomatic knowledge...a knowledge of God or spirit being(s) gained through and stored in the body.” But through masturbation we can see that touch has a sort of dystopian potential to it. Consider the horror of Stephen’s life prior to the touch of deliverance, it was one of dystopian touch. But even in that dystopia knowledge is gained.

Prophetess Priscilla/Masturbating Maggie

284 De Witte, “Touched by the Spirit,” 507.
285 Frueh, Erotic Faculties, 119.
On a blazing hot Tuesday with the sun perched high over a set of tents assembled in an industrial city close to Accra, Prophet Emmanuel launched into his now familiar ideas about masturbation. While he mentioned lesbianism and gayism in passing, he devoted his time to educating the congregation on the perils of the solitary vice. He began by plainly articulating, as if it was scientific fact, that masturbation causes brain disorders. The fear of “madness”, a psychological excess or loss of control, haunts the pneumatic worldview and by linking masturbation to brain disorders the Prophet made the anxiety palpable.

But more importantly and more frighteningly masturbation was cited as “one of the main tools” available to marine spirits, especially Mami Wata. Mami Wata will be central in our discussion of spiritual marriage, but it is worthwhile noting that these various sexual/spiritual vices (masturbation, spiritual marriage, animality and homosexuality) are quite closely linked. Marine spirits use masturbation to destroy people. As Kwofie said, in a similar theological categorization as Emmanuel, “Masturbation is in the category of marine spirit. Marine spirits cannot be dealt with easily because...they like to have relations with mortals to destroy them fast.” The dire apocalyptic warnings were immediately followed with the promise of a remedy. He was the remedy. Prophet Emmanuel could break everyone’s masturbatory problem. “Just as Jesus gave me many spirits, Satan has given many spirits to the marine gods. I can use mine to overcome theirs” he promised.

Like the day that Martin’s deed was so publically revealed, Emmanuel started by calling everyone forward who masturbates. This time he asked the pastors to listen to the congregants and organize them in groups: lesbians, gays and masturbators. In a rich, ironic statement he said, “If you are a lesbian, masturbator or gay, come; for the Lord has spoken.”
Impatient with his pastors, he motioned to them and asked them, making no effort to hide his being annoyed, “have you already listened to them? You can’t chase out a spirit without knowing who it is.” This is contested ground amongst deliverance circles. Some believe it is worthwhile to know the name of the spirit to add specificity to the deliverance, while others think the name irrelevant and the only thing that matters is that the spirit is removed from the possessed person’s body. Those in the former school of thought accuse the later of spiritual impotence and the later accuse the former of spiritual hubris. But for this particular prophet it matters who the particular spirit is. In this instance, it mattered to him whether the spirit was lesbianism, gayism or masturbation. Each of those are unique spirits or spirit groups and deliverance varies based on which spirit is possessing the body.

The pastors, sensing Emmanuel’s displeasure moved much more efficiently than normal and quickly divided the gathered congregants by their respective spirits. It was rather easy to do as nobody claimed the spirit of gayism and only one woman described being in a relationship with the spirit of lesbianism. The other fifty or so, approximately eighty percent of which were female, were all masturbators. Come, masturbators, for the Lord has spoken.

The woman with the lesbian spirit was sent to the opposite side of the stage. The prophet explained, “some people become queens in lesbianism and begin to train others. In such cases, the small pastors cannot handle it.” With this he signaled to the crowd that he would handle the lesbian spirit, in fact, only he could handle this queen.

Before embarking on the lesbian deliverance, he turned to the gathered masturbators and said, “May the lord touch you all.” His hope for those who touch themselves was that the divine touch would heal and replace the self-touch. This has been a common motif, present in
Marianne’s prayer as well, that the touch of the lord would be healing, that it would replace the
desire to masturbate. Again, de Witte’s comment is salient – the touch here is not
metaphorical but felt in material bodies.\textsuperscript{286}

He then turned toward the non-masturbating congregants – or at least those who had
not come forward during his plea for masturbators – and offered them a stern warning: “If you
joke sitting there, the spirit can impart into you. So, start praying and drag your children closer
to you. Or else you may see your small child masturbating because of impartation.” The idea
of impartation is not unique and has been present in a number of stories throughout this
dissertation. Spirits go somewhere when they exit bodies, usually penetrating another body.
But Emmanuel’s fear of the masturbating child as something particularly grotesque is
interesting. The crowd quieted at this warning against their offspring, parents holding children
held them tighter, children sleeping in the aisles were awoken to be hugged by their parents.

This was the first time I had ever heard Emmanuel reference children outside of the
ubiquitous references to childbirth. Children disappear from the deliverance scene once they
are born. In fact, of the three research sites of this dissertation only Emmanuel’s regularly had
children in the congregation. They were explicitly banned from Nikoi’s deliverance service and
they did not stay around the prayer camp. So, it is worth considering why in the context of
masturbation the child is invoked?

\textsuperscript{286} Witte, “Touched by the Spirit,” 151.
For Foucault, the controls incited against children’s ‘solitary habits’ by doctors and educators “combatted children’s onanism like an epidemic that needed to be eradicated.”\textsuperscript{287}

But eradication was never actually the goal. Foucault writes:

\begin{quote}
The child’s vice was not so much an enemy as a support; it may have been designated as the evil to be eliminated, but the extraordinary effort that went into the task was bound to fail leads one to suspect that what was demanded of it was to persevere, to proliferate to the limits of the visible and the invisible, rather than to disappear for good. Always relying on this support, power advanced, multiplied its relays and its effects, while its target expanded, subdivided, and branched out, penetrating further into reality at the same pace. In appearance, we are dealing with a barrier system; but in fact, all around the child, indefinite \textit{lines of penetration} were disposed.\textsuperscript{288}
\end{quote}

For Foucault, the introduction of the masturbating child is a power-multiplying mechanism.

And that certainly could be the case here. The prophet’s warning can be read as an attempt to “proliferate the limits of the visible and the invisible.” The limitless invisible spirits made visible through masturbation proliferated the power – visible and invisible – of the prophet.

The prophet then unleashed the pastors onto the masturbators, instructing them to “try to deliver them from that spirit” while he moved to commence the deliverance of the woman with the spirit of lesbianism. After completing his deliverance of the lesbian woman, the prophet returned his attention to the masturbators and what he found was the normal frenzy of pastors pushing bodies around, bodies shaking on the floor and a boisterously praying congregation. He immediately restored some order by commanding that everyone who had been touched and prayed for to return to their seats. Everyone came to and began moving toward their seats. As the front of the church cleared of bodies a single body was left lying on


\textsuperscript{288} Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality}, 42.
the floor. The woman was wearing a white and blue dress. With her hand, she effortlessly rubbed her vagina as she raised her hips up and down. Amidst the frenzy of the deliverance it was unclear how she had ended up in this position but what was clear was that she was especially possessed with the spirit of masturbation.

“Baah” Emmanuel called out to his second in command, “try to raise her up.” Baah moved toward her while two ushers dressed in identical blue shirts with white floral print picked her up by her arms. Her name was Priscilla. While the sartorially twinned ushers picked up the woman, Priscilla, another woman came up from the front row and wrapped Priscilla’s lower body in a wrap. They held her with identical form, one hand under Pricilla’s armpit and one holding her wrist so that they could move her with ease and easily combat her feeble attempts to return her hand to her vagina. With Priscilla now unsteadily on her feet the prophet continued to instruct Baah: “I must hand this woman to you, Baah, to discipline the spirit.”

Despite his instructions to Baah, Emmanuel continued the deliverance by turning his attention to the spirit: “Who are you?” The query was unquestioningly addressed to spirit because Emmanuel knew the Priscilla well, she is a prophetess and an acquaintance. It is common in Ghana for prophets and prophetesses to attend the services of well-known or well-established prophets in the hope that they pass on their blessing. Emmanuel knew this woman, so the question of identity was hurled toward the spirit.

Crying, Priscilla responded with, “I won’t let her marry.” She added something that the prophet did not hear clearly. He asked her to repeat it and she obliged, “It has been a long time since she started”. The cover of discreetness was minimal though, everyone knew exactly what
it was: self-defilement of the vagina by the hand or object. She added an even more specific timeline to the statement when she said, “I made her start at Primary 6.”

The prophet feigned shock at this early starting point by repeating “P6” again and again. Each time he repeated “P6” he became louder and shook his head more dramatically. His shock seemed disingenuous considering his earlier warning about the impartation of masturbation to children in the congregation.

Priscilla’s head tilted back and she moaned before adding “I won’t let her to marry, she wants no man.”

Prophet Emmanuel responded by asking “Who are you? What is your name?” This added an extra layer of specificity to his previous statements about needing to know the spirit before being able to destroy it. Not only was he required to know that it was the spirit of masturbation, he wanted to know the personal information of this particular spirit of masturbation.

“Me, ha ha, my name is Maggie” she responded, swallowing the ma- and emphasizing the -ggie. Priscilla was married to a female spirit named Maggie. Gender is an incredibly complicated category when moving back and forth between humans and spirits. Spirits are gender-bending and do not always abide by human categories. That Priscilla was married to the spirit Maggie does not necessarily entail lesbianism, as we know in this case the spirit is one of masturbation. But we also know that the relationship between masturbator (Priscilla) and spirit of masturbation (Maggie) involves a relationship of mutual orgasm, to masturbate is to have sex with a spirit.
The prophet addressed Maggie: “How has the sister wronged you that you ushered her into such an act?”

Maggie did not answer, and instead provided more detail, “I won’t allow such a noble lady attract wealthy men. She masturbates each night before sleeping and also at dawn.” She tried to move her hand toward her vagina but the ushers skillfully redirected her hands away from her body, by clasping her wrists they refused to allow her to touch herself.

The prophet repeated the last sentence showing shock at her masturbatory profligacy, “Each night and at dawn.”

Maggie was angry at this and burst out at the prophet: “How does it concern you? Are you her relative?” She accentuated her questions by apoplectically shouting “Swine!”, hurling the invective toward the prophet.

The prophet deflected the name-calling by dismissing her, “do you understand the word swine?” and then to the cheers of the congregation stated “She’s not my relative, but everyone here is spiritually my relative.” The cheers got louder and Emmanuel added, “Jesus has given all of them to me to save in his name.”

Turning to the congregation Emmanuel repeated Pricilla’s sin: “She masturbates each night before sleeping and also at dawn.” To which Maggie responded with a triad of “yes, yes, yes.” The prophet turned back to Maggie and asked, “Maggie, how has the sister wronged you?”

Maggie transitioned from Twi to English and firmly stated, “don’t worry me.”

The prophet, responding in English, said, “I will worry you.” “I prepare myself” he added while playing with the gold buttons on his suit, “I prepare myself to fight you.”
Maggie laughed maniacally, twisted her body and promised to fight back, “Prepare yourself for a battle today. You want to take her from me just like that? I’m not done with her, she’ll masturbate until she dies.” The phrase, “she’ll masturbate until she dies” is a telling one. In it, the spirit admits that her being, Maggie’s being, is dependent on Priscilla. If Priscilla ceases to masturbate Maggie ceases to exist. She comes into being as herself through masturbation. Maggie hopes that that symbiotic relationship will continue until Priscilla’s death which will also be Maggie’s death, the cessation of Priscilla’s masturbation.

Before the physical battle of deliverance commenced the conversation took a brief detour. As mentioned above, Priscilla is a prophetess. She is not a famous prophetess but is known within the context of her community. Since much of Prophet Emmanuel’s preaching about masturbation made it clear that masturbation is an extreme sin that completely and utterly cuts one off from the divine, he struggled to come to grips with how Priscilla could be possessed with the spirit of masturbation. How could a woman, demonstrated through her ministry as a woman of god, masturbate? If a masturbating prophetess “by God’s grace” could still perform miracles, deliverance and prophecies then his whole enterprise would be troubled. It would leave open the possibility that Emmanuel himself might be a wanker. So he asked, “let me ask you one question. This woman is by God’s grace a woman of God.” Maggie answered loudly in the affirmative. Emmanuel continued “She now has a church where she helps people and you still do this to her?”

Maggie explained: “We have attempted to quench the fire of her anointing but we don’t succeed.”
Emmanuel understood: “You’ve attempted quenching her anointing and yet you don’t succeed, meaning this woman is free when she goes to church but when she comes home she is married to her.” In her church Priscilla does not touch herself. She is able to keep from touching herself in that sacred space. Except, that boundary had just been transgressed. Maggie had manifested in a church; Priscilla had masturbated in a church. The relationship appeared to have cracked.

An agitated Maggie became worked up: “What do you want? Keep deceiving yourself, yeah, yeah.”

The prophet also became agitated: “You abusive demon. Baah, deal with her.”

Baah, who is erstwhile in his support of the prophet standing next to him in trials (literally once while the prophet was handcuffed by police) and triumphs, smiled, looked around sheepishly and then said quietly but assuredly “You are very abusive. You look wretched like gari.”

The prophet jumped back in one last time to ask, “how dare you insult the great prophet?” referring to himself in the third person. “You will leave her to marry and continue her godly work” he instructed Maggie, implying not only a compulsory heterosexuality but a compulsory matrimony.

Maggie shrieked: “You lie; I’ll never leave. She will continue to masturbate forever.” The stakes were higher now, previously she had promised she would masturbate until she died. Now she was promising that Priscilla will masturbate forever. Is that simply the same thing stated differently? Or was Maggie making a promise for eternity?
The prophet then instructed Baah to “cast out her spirit.” Baah walked briskly toward her. He put one hand on her forehead and one on her waist. She was still being held by the sartorially identical ushers. While Baah commenced deliverance, the prophet, confident in Baah’s prophetic abilities, moved on to invite those with spiritual marriages to come forward. The episode was essentially completed as far as the prophet was concerned. Meanwhile, Baah pushed her head back so that her neck strained and her upper body bent backwards. Her arms extended straight out from her shoulders, still expertly negotiated by the ushers. As Baah pushed her backwards, her body resisted and snapped forward, pushing Baah away from her. Baah returned and hit her forcefully with an open palm in the waist. She began snapping back and forth of her own volition completely out of sync with Baah’s force. Baah again hit her, this time in the vaginal area. He grabbed her forehead and pushed her backwards, her body bending dramatically away from her arms which were still held up by the ushers.

The four of them stumbled four steps backwards, she bent ever more dramatically until eventually her feet snapped forward so that her body straightened out parallel to the floor. The ushers lowered her slowly and gently to the floor with Baah never taking his hand off of her forehead and face. The ushers let her arms fall limp beside her body. Meanwhile, Baah yelled “out” but it lacked the earlier demanding tone, no longer a question but now a declaration: the spirit was gone! Her body went docile, Maggie was dead. The prophet mid-plea for those in spiritual marriages yelled out a celebratory ‘heh’ and the band played a song in celebration to which the congregation swayed, most with their hands raised. Priscilla laid docile for the duration of the song and then returned to her seat.

*Touching the Phallus*
Wearing a strawberry red suit and his thick rimmed glasses, the Prophet peered out over the congregation. He started into a sermonette that sounded like a continuation of his recent preoccupation with masturbation. About midway through his public musings on masturbation the script pivoted toward the physiological implications of masturbation. Masturbation – which in a previous example he had linked to madness – leads to impotence and sexual weakness. This must be healed via deliverance. In many ways, this mirrors Stephen’s experience of a soft, bloodless ‘manhood’ through deliverance turning into a strong blood-filled-and-flowing penis. Evil spirits, then, can both make the penis erect or flaccid according to their needs. The erect penis for the purposes of masturbating is problematic. The erect penis as a symbol of male virility is a good thing. The flaccid penis as a symbol of self-control is a good thing. The flaccid penis as a symbol of impotence is problematic.

As he moved to the deliverance portion of the service Emmanuel moved down toward the congregation and paced the front of the church. Sometimes the prophet is quite talkative providing elaborate stories of spirits and their impact on human lives and bodies. But he seemed tired on this day, and since he had already outlined that masturbation had these horrible physiological implications of impotence and flaccidness – again illustrating a rather phallic/patriarchal imagination – perhaps he saw no need to waste many words. “Men” he said. “Men”, he repeated and accompanied it with the wanking motion. He then repeated the phrase “cut off” while ceasing the wanking motions, as if it the combination of bodily motions and short phrases were explanation enough.

There was a low rumble of men chatting throughout the crowd. The prophet took the mumbling as encouragement, a small smile crept across his face. He then forewarned everyone
– both by explaining and acting out – exactly how he would perform this deliverance. He made a loose fist with his right hand, closing the back of it with his left hand and then blew on his hands. Then he rubbed his hands together. He took his right hand, cupped it and thrust it forward. He held his hand still at midriff height for a moment and then retracted his arm. He repeated this action a few times as if he were sliding horizontally down a line of men of various heights, adjusting his touch to their height.

Well-aware of how deliverance would proceed, a large group of at least 75 men moved forward toward the prophet. He immediately started enacting on their genitals exactly what he had acted out in the imaginary air. Each of the men, all of the penises, were touched individually and deliberately with the prophet’s hand. As he touched each one Emmanuel made sure each touch was not merely fleeting but holding his cupped hand around their penises for a moment before moving on to the next person. As he held their penises he would utter the name, “Jesus.” The men’s reactions varied greatly to the prophet’s touch. Some men clearly found the whole enterprise funny, trying to hide their giggles in their shirts, while others could not help sharing a giggling glance with their friends. Others recoiled at Emmanuel’s touch, some had a small bodily reaction, while others were steadfast and unmoving as he grabbed their genitals. Still others, desperate for deliverance, pushed their groins out toward the prophet as if pleading with their penises. A couple of men who looked particularly tortured pulled their shirts up to ensure that the prophet grabbed the correct spot on their body.

I will “make strong your manhood” Emmanuel yelled as he continued to grab genitals. He took a quick break from penis touching and held up his arm as rigidly as he could with a
closed fist to represent the strong penis. It is common in Ghana to refer to one’s penis as their manhood and in many ways, it makes clear what the stakes are in this particular miracle.

Another week, Emmanuel called a middle-aged man forward from the crowd. He started by prophesying: “The Lord tells me that things are not right with you, so I should pray for you...He says you’ve been having heartaches and erectile dysfunction as we speak.” As is sometimes the case with prophecy, Emmanuel looked for immediate confirmation. “Confirm that about your manhood first, before I continue” he demanded. The man replied with a simple, “it is true.” The crowd exploded with cheers at the prophet’s mastery and accuracy. The man remained standing stoically, showing no reaction to unfolding drama. “For how long,” the prophet continued, “have you been impotent?” The man, in a soft but placid voice, responded, “It has been a year now.”

The man’s flaccid penis remained the focus but the prophet was offering a solution: “He (god) says you have lost erections completely. God wants me to help you on it...I stretch my hand to relieve you of all your problems.” Emmanuel started by touching the man’s shoulder, slide his hand down to the hips and then held his penis, hand cupped underneath, and pushed his genitals up into his body. That was all it took, “it is done” Emmanuel promised. The man went and took his seat.

While touching of genitalia is rare in deliverance – at least as compared to the touching of most other body parts, but especially the head, shoulders, stomach and feet – it offers an embodied explanation of how deliverance is imagined. Deliverance is a hand job. The prophet, he with the touch, engages the penis with his hand. The whole goal of the deliverance is to
touch the body until something – in this case sexual spirits – is released. In other words, the prophet fondles the penis until it ejects the evil spirits.

That the prophet is far more comfortable touching penises than vaginas is interesting for a plethora of reasons and entirely unsurprising. There are obvious gendered implications, the total lack of attention to the particulars of female sexuality indicates a strict structure concerning the hierarchy of sexual pleasure – only male sexual pleasure truly matters. But the comfort of the prophet with penis petting also carries symbolic weight in their pneumatic spiritual imaginary, this particular pneumatic worldview that spins around ideas of penetration, passivity and virility. The phallus operates as an important symbol of spirited penetration and so then also an exit.

Conclusion

Deliverance is haptic. Laura Marks writes that, “Haptic perception is usually defined as the combination of tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside our bodies.” Deliverance in many ways is a return to the haptic performance. Without abandoning the optical, deliverance ministries emphasize and privilege touch. Spirits are immanent, felt in the body, instead of ethereal or transcendent. Spirits have a temporary materiality that, along with the other senses explored throughout this dissertation, is felt through touch.

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289 For example, in a deliverance episode in chapter 4 Emmanuel very clearly avoids touching the vagina in a deliverance that seems to call for such action.
290 Laura Marks, Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 2.
As Martin’s body hosted the spirit of masturbation it was overcome by a frenzy of movement, fits and starts, his hands always trying to manifest that with which he struggled. But in this masturbatory display there was much to learn, it had its own rhyme and reason. It was a totally proper display of the sensuous cosmos that deliverance ministries work with. It was, in a way, a sensible and sensuous way to experience the more. And Martin clearly is not unique as this montage of scenarios bound together by a common narrative – of touching oneself but never only oneself – frames.
Chapter 4 – Girl-Girl

“Lesbian spirit is not my problem.” – Queen

Their bodies, exhausted, finally worn down by the physical intensity of deliverance, were propped up as the church chairperson took a photograph to memorialize the experience. Three women, two of them sitting still uncertain of what had just transpired, sat in the middle surrounded by a dozen grinning male pastors and prophets. The deliverers embraced them as bodily trophies, or embodied signposts of a cosmic victory after a two-hour orgasm of bodies in contact and 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. Their hair was upset and the wig so violently ripped off by the deliverers never reappeared. The crowd of thousands who had cheered throughout the lengthy ordeal remained and continued to push forward trying to get their own pictures for posterity. But the pictures, frozen vignettes, digital tableaus, failed to capture much of what had transpired. The bodily stillness of a picture stands in stark contrast to the persistent, frenetic and unremitting motion of the deliverance experience. A picture fails to capture the sounds – the erotic groans, the accompanying music, the angry exhortations, the piercing screams – and its relationship to the mobile body. This deliverance episode was marked by rich, textured soundscapes and corresponding bodily paroxysms of dance, violence, and resistance.

This chapter is an experiment in synesthesia. It is an attempt to interpret acts of deliverance by watching and listening to the entanglement of bodies in motion, in contact and in convulsions and by listening to the sounds and phrases that constitute the affective
atmosphere in which these bodies move. It is in the thick textured sounds of charismatic
deliverance that bodies are made. In order to explore this sensation I am coopting the
neologism, or more appropriately the portmanteau, choreosonic from Ashon Crawley’s
*Blackpentecostal Breath* and transposing it into the realm of the senses. Instead of choreosonic
I use kinesonic in order to transform it into a sense. The kinesonic is a primary way that
Pentecostals feel and know.

For Crawley, who writes in the American context, the Blackpentecostal choreosonic is
the “always attendant and interconnected concept of movement and sound.”\(^{291}\) Importantly,
neither movement nor sound is privileged in this construction.\(^{292}\) Choreography and sonicity
must be thought in tandem because Pentecostals always already practice and ritualize them in
tandem. In doing so the choreosonic has a deep political component as it undoes racist
theologies and philosophies.\(^{293}\) Thinking sound and movement together arranges life, black life,
in such a way that resists racial difference as inscribed in theology and philosophy. Crawley
writes,

But even the question – was this choreographic or sonic – veils the truth of the
choreosonic. Even if these were merely movements, those movements of flesh
would have their attendant sonic registers. And if only merely vocalizing, such
vocalizing would have its necessary choreographic resonances. The knowledge
of shouting is the knowledge of hesitance, the knowledge of the very possibility
of indistinction, the knowledge of indeterminacy. The distinction, the categorical
difference, of choreography and sonicity becomes undone. This is knowledge
that is produced through the materiality of dwelling together with others,
awaiting sounds and movements as the spirit gives utterance.\(^{294}\)

\(^{291}\) Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 93.
\(^{292}\) Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 23.
\(^{293}\) Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 93.
As the spirits give utterance the spirits are experienced in their temporary material form. There is a materiality to the whole enterprise that is felt through sound and movement, the choreosonic.

And so I coopt this term – choreosonic – and transpose it to the realm of sensations calling it the kinesonic, my own portmanteau combining kinesthetic and sonic. The kinesonic is a sensation that undoes some of the stability of the senses. The kinesonic is a sensation that reaches deep into the cosmos. For Pentecostals, the kinesonic is an inward and outward mode of sensing – like the sense of touch, through the kinesonic they feel themselves, they feel others and they feel the transcendent. David Daniels writes of that feeling themselves that, “Through the choreography of sound, meaning is internalized.” D. Schulz states that sound forms “a site of religious experience, for an experience of transcendental immanence.” Through the kinesonic Pentecostals start to imagine the materiality of the immaterial, the possibilities of the impossible. The kinesonic supplements epistemology as a new way of knowing.

Pentecostals are not inert in deliverance or its attendant rituals. They jump and shout. They dance to the music. They step – sometimes high-step – to the repetitious rhythms of drums and clapping. And there is something destabilizing about this melding of choreography and sonicity. Crawley writes, “Such dancing flesh, such shouting, extends outward and reaches for flesh, for feeling, otherwise.” And it is through this otherwise feeling that the

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297 Crawley, Blackpentecostal Breath, 136.
choreosonic/kinesonic holds so much potential. The kinesonic forces onto humans the thick texture of experience. That is to feel the intensities, the energies, the sparks of experience; to feel something unteachable grounded in this entanglement of kinesthesia and sonicity.

And as Crawley correctly illuminates, the choreosonic is erotic, as is the kinesonic. He writes, “Looking at the flesh dance and move and sway prompts otherwise than a sacred possibility. Or, more precisely, sacred possibility is found in what is the categorically distinct and pure zone of eros.”\textsuperscript{298} In this chapter we will be looking at the kinesonics of something that is always already erotic – sexual, sensual experiences between humans. But it is important to note that these senses in and of themselves hold much erotic promise.

 Deliverance is evidenced primarily through a combination of physical or somatic manifestations and sounds. In deliverance, the paroxysmal and aural phenomena are primary and exhibit a cosmic battle between evil and good, or demons and the Holy Spirit. The somatic and sonic manifestations mark both the existence or presence of spirits and also their departure. So, what does deliverance sound like? How do the various sounds of deliverance function in the Pentecostal sensorium? And, how does this soundscape shape deliverance motility and their self-understanding of body and spirit?

\textit{Lesbianism in Ghana}

The deliverance described above, which will be the focus of this chapter, was an attempt to deliver two women from a specific type of demon, the spirit of lesbianism. This spirit is often described as part of a trinity: “gayism, lesbianism and masturbation.” We have already

\textsuperscript{298} Crawley, \textit{Blackpentecostal Breath}, 136.
seen the ubiquity of the spirit of masturbation. In practice, lesbianism is the worst of the triad, with masturbation being monstrous but much less so and gayism falling somewhere in the middle. Lesbianism is treated as worse than gayism, undoubtedly due to a combination of the demographics (charismatic churches are largely populated by female congregants) and patriarchal disdain for sexualities that do not involve a man. Throughout this chapter fidelity will be maintained with these rather awkward markers – gayism and lesbianism – of sexual spirits. In the act of deliverance from sexual spirits, each kinesonic experience in this chapter choreographs a potent story of sexuality and assumptions about non-normative sexuality to the soundtrack of prayers, exhortations, screams, cries and conversation. Each kinesonic performance outlined in this chapter was read as a swirling of embodied affects confirming and creating the congregation’s worst suspicious about homosexuality.

However much one wishes to focus on the material body, and the kinesonic is about the movement of material bodies, it is necessary to admit that bodies are never free from the cultural constraints already written onto them. The discursive body places limitations on what the physical body can do and what the physical body communicates. As such, it is worthwhile to consider lesbianism in Ghana prior to considering this particular deliverance experience. Serena Dankwa is the only academic who has published specifically about lesbianism in Ghana. She argues that homosexuality in Accra is mostly secretive, closeted, hidden, and disguised. Or that it was. Dankwa uses the term discretion to describe the situation of women who love women. Instead of explicit discussion or public displays of affection, lesbianism was marked by
privacy and secrecy. Non-normative sexualities were not necessarily condemned nor condoned but existed in “the realm of the unspoken.” Kathleen O’Mara adds to this argument of discretion stating, “although some interpret this as a strategy of suppression of non-normative sexuality, silence clearly reflects indigenous preferences for discretion and indirect speech about sexual matters.” Or as Derek, a man struggling with his sexuality, told me, “We Ghanaians, it is not in our culture. People do it secretly.”

The silence is being overtaken by a Pentecostal cacophony, according to Dankwa and Astrid Bochow. Bochow states the churches created “sexuality as a subject of public discourse, if only in its negation.” The creation of a sexualized public sphere is, in part, because Charismatic churches spend so much time talking about the various sexual demons, placing restrictions on sexual relationships and damning non-heteronormative sexualities. Or as Derek said, churches “preach against this sodomy thing. Ghanaian churches hate it, they hate it!” This hatred has moved sexuality from the private to the public. Dankwa claims that a word for sex does not even exist in Twi. In condemnation through deliverance, Pentecostal churches have made sex much more public in post-colonial urban Ghana.

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300 Dankwa, "It's a Silent Trade," 194.
303 Dankwa, “It’s a Silent Trade,” 203. Twi is the language primarily used at Emmanuel’s church which is prominent in this chapter.
At times in Charismatic churches there is still a nod toward this notion of discretion. For example, the deliverance session being discussed in this chapter was inaugurated by a lengthy and repetitive soliloquy by the prophet wherein he apologized profusely for having to reveal such a private issue and continually refused to specify what issue he was referring to. When he eventually revealed the issue he spoke of it obliquely, calling it a “girl-girl” issue. When this did not seem to register with the congregation he put it into a sexual context by comparing it with boy-girl, boy-boy etc. It was not until the acts of deliverance began and the spirit emerged that the vitriolic repetition of the term lesbianism occurred.

Discretion – if one can correctly call it that – is invoked in Pentecostal churches in much the same way that Foucault outlines it in his *History of Sexuality*, inaugurating an explosion of obsessive discussion about sexuality, in this case non-heteronormative sexuality. Solomon, a gay man, told me the story of his deliverance which illustrates the uneven application of discretion in Pentecostal churches and the way in which discretion and an explosion of discourse are always held in tension. On the Sunday of Solomon’s deliverance the prophet asked the church to stop praying. Abruptly the soundscape changed from one of clapping, loud prayers and booming microphones to one of silence. The prophet whispered to Solomon without a microphone. In the whispers he used the word gay as he asked numerous questions about Solomon’s sexual practices: did he hang out with gay friends? Did he have anal sex? Discretion bothers Solomon, “In Ghana we don’t talk about sex...we always want to paint it as evil so that it is like” he said and then switched voices to sound like a parent lecturing their child and wagging his finger, “you don’t even want to mention it, if you mention it you even need to go and brush your teeth, don’t even talk about it, if you see it written somewhere don’t even
look at it.” But the prophet was only using the guise of discretion. The prophet returned to the microphone and “told the congregation to pray for me because my friends will lead me to something very bad.” The pastor added, “homosexuals are animals and should be treated as such.” Without ever calling Solomon a homosexual the pastor inaugurated a conversation about homosexuality. The church responded sonically by recommencing vigorous and loud prayers as the pastor laid his hands on Solomon’s head trying to deliver him from the spirit of homosexuality. This strategy of using deliverance to discuss non-normative sexualities is normal, or as Solomon put it, “They don’t teach about it, it only comes out in prayers and deliverance.” This is how discretion and discourse interpenetrate.

_Pentecostal Noisemaking_

Pentecostal churches in Ghana may, as Bochow and Dankwa claim, play a central role in creating public noise about same-sex sexualities and sex in general, but there is also a whole history about Pentecostal churches and noise.304 The sonic history of Pentecostalism in Ghana is a loud and contentious one, especially since 1998. As both Rijk Van Dijk and Marleen De Witte have described, from 1998-2002 there were occasionally violent confrontations between Ga traditionalists and charismatic Christians.305 The conflict stemmed from the annual Ga Homowo festival which demands a ban on drumming, handclapping and noisemaking to appease the Gods.306 Pentecostal churches, especially during worship, are ill-suited for such a

ban and refuse to abide by the ban. The soundscape of Accra at times can feel like an exclusively Pentecostal soundscape. With their sound systems cranked to levels that encourage the squeaks and squeals of feedback, the noise from churches spills out into the streets. Sometimes those sounds mingle with the daytime noise of the city, and sometimes during common all-night services they pierce the silence of the dark night. Cars with large speakers troll the streets, yelling out prayers or blaring gospel music. And even the loud sounds of the tro tro – another central figure in the Accra soundscape – and the chatter within the tro tro become silent when an evangelist launches into a prayer.

De Witte points out that charismatic-Pentecostal churches in Accra are “often accused of public noisemaking.” De Witte, “Accra’s Sounds and Sacred Spaces,” 691. Pentecostal churches as culturally despised noisemakers is not a new phenomenon. David Douglas Daniels argues that sound, and noise, was a primary marker of early Pentecostal identity. In particular, the Pentecostal riot of sound – its sporadic and unpredictable sound – set Pentecostals apart from their Protestant counterparts. And it was not just the types of sounds being made but the decibel level that made it Pentecostal, “volume, a lot of it, was valued.” Daniels, “Gotta Moan Sometime,” 12. This noise regularly confronted neighbors and was a source of complaint by many. But, as Daniels elegantly states, “early Pentecostal sound became a means of constructing an alternative soundscape, social space, and religious culture.”

The alternative soundscape of deliverance is marked by a variety of sounds: weeping, shrieking, screaming, moaning, singing, praying, tongues, clapping, groaning, drumming, microphones squawking and even silence. Sound evokes and invokes the supernatural, the
sacred and the demonic. This is true of the entire service which begins with corporate prayers that are loud and intense, followed by praise and worship that is usually upbeat. The preaching is “passionate, loud, screaming and agitated, it underscores spiritual authority and embodies divine inspiration.” The audience never sits idly by. During prayers, they pace back and forth, punching and chopping at unseen forces. During worship, they dance and clap and sing along. During the sermon, they interject their assent to the preacher’s teaching with loud exhortations and occasionally by jumping to their feet. During deliverance they pray, whoop and scream. The whole service is a kinesonic medley. Regardless of what combination of sounds constitutes the texture of a particular deliverance experience, “what is heard is what is central.”

The kinesonic illustrates that sound physically impacts the human body. Sound is tactile. In his study on Brazilian Pentecostalism, Martijn Oosterbaan observes “sound can touch us and evoke a sense of social boundaries that are not merely symbolic but also physical.” He argues that the cosmic battle between evil and good spirits is an aural battle. But it is never only aural. Sound marks bodies and moves bodies. Marleen De Witte argues that the central importance of tactility in African religions is mediated not only by touch but also by sounds. The sounds of deliverance “penetrates us, fusing the material and nonmaterial, the tangible and intangible, religious sound is a powerful medium for connecting to and accessing the

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310 Daniels, "Gotta Moan Sometime," 6.
311 Daniels, "Gotta Moan Sometime," 6.
314 De Witte, “Accra’s Sounds and Sacred Spaces,” 692.
effective power of spirits."\textsuperscript{315} This is the kinesonic. Again, as Crawley illuminated, it is not about the quality or content of the sound but its tactility that makes the spirits feel material. It is not necessarily what the prophet says but his tone and timbre. It is not the notes of the bass guitar that matter but the deep vibrations that it sends reverberating throughout. It is not the indecipherable tongues but their staccato syllables that create tactility.\textsuperscript{316} The noise of deliverance transfers spirits between bodies which is contiguous with traditional African ideas about the combination of hearing, touch and spiritual power.\textsuperscript{317} Sounds are not merely useful as meanings but as vibrations “of air that physically contact and include the addressee, human as well as spirit.”\textsuperscript{318} This is similar to an argument made by Julian Henriques in his article “The Vibrations of Affect and their Propagation on a Night Out on Kingston’s Dancehall Scene.” Henriques argues that affect is produced and embodied through vibrations. These vibrations are not immaterial but are an example of what he refers to rhythmic materialism. Through the crush of bodies, the vibrating sound system, and the space itself affect is materialized.\textsuperscript{319}

The kinesonic is a primary way through which Pentecostals know. Daniels argues that in early Pentecostalism sound, the unpredictable, loud, and often non-verbal sounds was a way of knowing. Some sounds were identified with the heavenly and other sounds were rejected as demonic.\textsuperscript{320} He writes, “Sound enlarges the scale of expression and allows for broader emotional ranges, more textured vocabulary, tonal diction, affective commitment and fuller

\textsuperscript{315} De Witte, "Accra's Sounds and Sacred Spaces," 700.
\textsuperscript{316} De Witte, "Accra's Sounds and Sacred Spaces," 700-702.
\textsuperscript{317} Geurts, \textit{Culture and the Senses}.
\textsuperscript{318} De Witte, “Accra’s Sounds and Sacred Spaces,” 702.
\textsuperscript{320} Daniels, “Gotta Moan Sometime,” 12.
The kinesonic is a way of feeling the world, of being in the world broadly conceived. Through the kinesonic the body becomes penetrable, loosened, shook. Sound and movement coordinate the body. The kinesonic is an exploration of the way in which sonic and kinesthetic sensibilities are central to knowing, to experiential truth. Sensuality is grounded in the kinesonic. The sonic is not a discrete sense and many authors who explore sound have simultaneously explored its synesthetic qualities, the entanglements of sound, movement, seeing and touching.

As Daniel Albrecht puts it “According to traditional Pentecostal ritual logic, God is expected to move, but so are God’s worshippers.” Movement is a vital component of this kinesonic knowing. Deidre Sklar writes, “Movement exists at the point where the body as source of personal and immediate knowledge meets the body as medium of cultural expression.” Movement makes the body a dual threat – both knower and medium.

Kathryn Guerts’ *Culture and the Senses: Bodily Ways of Knowing in an African Community* brings kinesthesia into the Ghanaian context with her exploration of the sensorium through the lived body. Instead of relying on the Western construction of five senses, Guerts allows lived experience to speak for the Anlo-Ewe sensorium and found that there was a prominent sense of *seselelame*—“feeling in or through the body”—in proverbs, judgements and experiences. Kinesthesia then is as prominent as other senses. While one cannot draw a direct line between Guerts’s findings and the communities that I researched, the implications

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321 Daniels, "Gotta Moan Sometime," 16.
324 Sklar, "Remembering Kinesthesia," 14.
325 Geurts, *Culture and the Senses*. 

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are noteworthy. Kinesthesia is worthy of attention not because it carries truth more effectively than other senses, but because it can carry an equal epistemological weight. Kinesthesia is a sensory tool that allows for knowing of and about the self, the other, and the cosmos.

Movement is more than symbolic, it is experienced, embodied knowing. Carrie Noland poignantly writes, “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.” That is to say that the kinesthetic is an oft overlooked component of embodied knowledge, movement knowledge and all of its somatic subtleties. The kinesonic builds on this epistemology of movement by adding one of the primary movers, the sonic.

Like we saw with touch and sound, kinesthesia allows for awareness of one’s own body, others’ bodies and the transcendent. Susan Leigh Foster argues that there is a link between knowing one’s own body and recognizing others and their bodies. Kinesthesia is not merely feeling in the body but the feeling of having a body which translates into a sensation that can imagine movement in the movement of others. Bodily intimacy with oneself leads to or implies bodily intimacy with the other. And in deliverance that other can and is often the transcendent through spirits.

If sound and kinesthesia allows for an inward and outward reaching towards interiority, others and the transcendent, so does the kinesonic. In deliverance, the kinesonic is especially a

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326 Sklar, "Remembering Kinesthesia," 14.
reaching out toward the transcendent in evil spirits. With each scream and bodily jerking, with each prayer and hitting of the stomach or forehead, with each laugh and throwing back of the head the kinesonic presents spirits.

*Deliverance from Lesbianism*

As we transition to the deliverance episode at the core of this paper, the one briefly described at the beginning of the chapter, I want to continue to emphasize this kinesonic synesthesia. This deliverance episode was clearly not the only deliverance from the spirits of gayism, lesbianism and masturbation during my fieldwork in Ghana. There is a risk of over-determining this particular example by devoting so much space to it. It does not stand out as particularly unique amongst the deliverance rituals of non-normative sexualities. The primary factor in choosing this episode is that it lasted for over two hours, an incredibly lengthy example of deliverance, and as such the performance included many sounds, cries, prayers, exhortations and screams and a plethora of linked bodily movements.

There are four primary bodies that are involved in this particular deliverance experience. I will name each of these persons and all other actors will be described by their role. The prophet, Emmanuel, now familiar to us, is a young man who is controversial and extraordinarily well known amongst the constellation of charismatic superstars in Ghana. He is perhaps the most reviled by the old guard of Pentecostalism but has a large following and leads three congregations that each number in the many thousands. This particular service occurred in Accra and was well attended. Emmanuel is short in stature, impeccably well dressed and wears large-rimmed glasses. He has a large number of exclusively male acolytes, pastors of varied ages, who act as aids in deliverance but to whom he gives a fair amount of agency and
responsibility during deliverance. At times, he watches his pastors while they perform the
deliverance rituals. He, though, is considered to be the most powerful prophet by his followers
and to possess a close and direct relationship of communication with Jesus, his spiritual father,
who gifts him his spiritual powers.

The other three bodies are all female. The first is Queen. Queen is a Nigerian in her late
twenties and has lived in an industrial city close to Accra for only a short period of time. She
occasionally returns to Nigeria to visit family with whom she has a strained relationship. Her
favorite prophet is TB Joshua and she became familiar with Emmanuel through a friend, Ethel,
and by watching him on television. The day of her deliverance was her first (and last) time
visiting Emmanuel’s church. Her visit to Emmanuel’s church was at the invitation of Ethel who is
an Emmanuel enthusiast. Ethel knew that Queen had an issue on which she was seeking
spiritual guidance and so suggested a visit to Emmanuel. In interviews with Ethel and Queen,
they revealed to me that the issue had to do with Queen’ boyfriend.

Ethel is in her late twenties and dreams of running a wine shop. She faithfully attends
Emmanuel’s church every Wednesday and is popular amongst the staff. Ethel and Queen
arrived together and sat together throughout the service up until the moment when Queen’
deliverance began.

The final body belongs to Spendy. Spendy, like Queen, had never visited Emmanuel’s
church. This is not unique. At any given service approximately one-third of the congregation
are first-time attendees seeking some sort of spiritual succor. They are drawn by Emmanuel’s
reputation as well as his ubiquitous television presence and his own television network.
Spendy knows Queen but they did not coordinate their visits nor were they aware of each
other’s presence in church on that Wednesday until they met during deliverance. Also like Queen, this would be the first and last time Spendy attended Emmanuel’s church.

Of course, a number of bodies are absent from this essay. The crowd for the most part fades into the background even though they executed their own kinesonic performance. My own body, which was prominent as it was instructed by the prophet to watch deliverance from the stage, is not described. Earlier in the service the prophet had singled me out among the thousands and quizzed me about my intentions. My voice trembled as I spoke into the microphone telling him I was a researcher from America (though actually Canadian – I always somewhat smugly interject). He already knew all the information he dragged out of me. Nonetheless, he found my public answers sufficient and invited me to sit amongst his acolytes at the front of the church. I watched the deliverance service from stage right amongst the prophet’s subordinate pastors. This perspective allowed me to watch the rituals quite closely but also interjected my body into the frame. Nonetheless, it does not appear in this vignette in large part because my body moved very little, moving only to follow the drama when it moved beyond my immediate view.

On a particularly hot Wednesday morning in March, the deliverance service had a slightly elevated energy. The service usually lasts from 8am until 5pm. The early hours are spent in testimony, song and prayer. The afternoon is marked by the arrival of the Emmanuel who offers guidance, preaches and then performs deliverance for a wide variety of congregants that he picks at random through the advice of his spiritual father, Jesus. On this day, the prophet allowed another pastor to preach and remained home until it was time for deliverance,
storing up his spiritual energy to provide a more enhanced deliverance experience. But for the most part the deliverance session proceeded as it normally did.

Not all of the deliverance was sexual – there were demons cast out who were blocking international travel, monetary gifts, or jobs – but some were. In one example, Emmanuel claimed to deliver a woman from AIDS by making her consume a lime. In another he delivered a woman from spiritual marriage, which is a sexual relationship between a human and a spirit (see chapter 5). The unnamed spirit that was haunting the woman bragged about his prolific virility and how it made the woman unable to marry a human man. The spirit spoke through the woman stating: “I’ve married her; none of her relatives are married. I keep sacking her suitors and no man will ever marry her. I keep putting scary masks on her face to scare away her suitors. So, she has children with different fathers. She is struggling and I always make her cry...I make her suffer. Why are you disturbing my peace?” Already in interactions between the body and spirit emerges the idea of a malleable body, a body that can be changed and distorted in appearance. In this case the spirit claimed to have altered the woman’s face with a variety of masks, making her unknowable and indistinguishable.

Throughout this spirit’s speech the woman’s deliverance body reacted in various ways – she grabbed her face with both hands, stomped, jumped, ran fast and forcefully on the spot. Often, she stuck her head out away from her body and shook it. However, none of her bodily actions moved her from her particular spot within the church. Her motions were confined to the aisle next to her seat. But her body movements indicated possession to all those gathered.

Emmanuel, leaning on his forearm set against the shoulder of his personal assistant, told the spirit: “With the power vested in me by Jesus my father, I dissolve your marriage. I restore
whatever you have destroyed back to her. Do not come back to her again in the name of our Lord Jesus.” Each sentence was punctured by a loud “amen” from Emmanuel’s crew of pastors. Despite all the lyrical back and forth, Emmanuel made these statements while remaining in place leaning on his assistant.

Eventually Emmanuel moved his deliverance body toward the women and came in contact with her deliverance body. Emmanuel then hit her in the forehead with an open palm. He accompanied the physical strike with an onomatopoetic “poof” sound. After striking her once the woman fell onto her back crying. The spirit spoke one last time stating “I’m gone and I’ll come to her no more. You’ve put a blazing fire around her.” With that the woman’s body became docile and silent. An abrupt and resonant silence. The crowd cheered. Eventually, when the prophet had moved on to another person, walking away from this particular episode, the woman would stand and amble to her chair where she would tuck her legs underneath the chair and hold her head in her hands propped up by her elbows anchored on her legs. This is the soundscape of deliverance. There is back and forth between the prophet and the spirit, onomatopoetic sounds, microphones cutting in and out or providing earsplitting feedback. Then silence followed by exuberant and boisterous cheers. And the whole soundscape repeats itself many times during each service. Sometimes the sounds layer over each other as one pastor continues deliverance while the prophet begins another narrative with someone else. But it is not merely sonicity but an example of the kinesonic—a tactile, haptic sound. All of the sounds are embodied in a way that makes deliverance an exemplar of the textured, haptic sound of Pentecostalism. As the spirit discusses masks the woman rubs her face vigorously.
With the sound of poof, Emmanuel hits her. Silence is accompanied by stillness. Sound is felt and this feeling is transposed into embodied movements.

As Emmanuel prowled around the congregation picking out unsuspecting persons and delivering them from their demons, he eventually fixated on Queen. 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 was “that thing” was. This was unique. Usually Emmanuel simply demands, with declarative statements, that people be delivered: “Stand up” or “come here”. While Emmanuel apologized for calling on her and repeatedly asked if she was sure she wanted deliverance he continued to move, walking slowly around the aisles approximately 75 feet from Queen. Queen stood still.

Eventually Emmanuel 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 an almost pornographic vision of sexuality, girl-on-girl-sex. Queen’ body was further discursively made in this moment. Some of that was made by the context of Ghanaian and Pentecostal attitudes toward lesbianism, and some of that was made by the context of Emmanuel who is known to perform deliverance of gayism, lesbianism and masturbation. In fact, he had been televised before this service doing a deliverance of lesbianism ten days earlier in Kumasi. But it was these short phrases that made Queen’ body. She was a body amongst bodies. “Stand up.” Then she was a deliverance body. “Girl-girl.” Then she was a lesbian deliverance body. These brief phrases punctuated the air and her body, informing the congregation of just how to read Queen’ body.
When I asked Prophet Emmanuel about how he chooses people for deliverance, he described something called open vision. With open vision he already knows everything about everyone but he waits for God’s instruction and direction as to who to deliver, “so that day was for those particular people, the lesbians.” “The lesbians” was spat out. Emmanuel made his feelings about homosexuality very clear through deliverance. Nonetheless, I asked him to articulate his beliefs about homosexuality. He answered:

According to the Bible it is against the Lord God. So if the lord whom you are serving is against that you are also against that. The one thing that we experienced apart from what God is saying, with regards to gayism and lesbianism, is that sometimes some gay and lesbian people come and then make confession that they have been in that problem for some years but now they are receiving diseases. One person, some guy, came to [our church in] Kumasi 2 years ago, he was a gay but all the anus was destroyed so when he feel to go to toilet he will see the thing dropped, received a lot of sickness. The end of it is bad. The end of gay and lesbianism is very bad. So anything that ends badly is against God because God said I know the plans I have for you, to prosper you!

It is also fruitless, “any sex that will not bring babies because God’s intentions, God created sex for releasing babies, so any sex that is not the purpose of God is bad. So with gayism and lesbianism they are doing it for nothing.”

The whole conversation between Emmanuel and Queen was slightly stunted by the halting breaks required for translation. Emmanuel prefers to speak in Twi, uncomfortable with his facility in English and Queen speaks English not Twi. One of Emmanuel’s pastors held a microphone for Queen and inconsistently whispered the translation to her. Only once in their entire conversation did Emmanuel use the term lesbianism, though once deliverance started the term was thrown around with little abandon. He apologized profusely for outing her in this
manner but deflected blame from himself to the spirit for revealing these things to him. Queen spoke quietly, appeared intimidated and nervously repeated her answers.

For a brief period, Emmanuel left Queen alone, moving on to other people he deemed needing of deliverance. Queen sat down in her seat. A few minutes later he returned and again offered his apologies before confirming that she wished to be delivered. She again affirmed this. Emmanuel did not, however, attempt to deliver her. Instead he sent four of his pastors to deliver her from this sexual spirit. Immediately after the first pastor touched Queen and shouted “out!” she changed from her demure disposition, hands clasped in front of her and eyes down, into a much more aggressive posture. She twisted and turned and moved her arms in an effort to elude the touch of the pastors. From the first touch, it was a conflict and a struggle.

The area around Queen was immediately cleared of people. The plastic lawn chairs in which congregants sit, and from which they fall both in the spirit and because of the wear and tear on the cheap plastic, crashed into each other and scrapped across the floor. Two pastors held Queen’s arms while she tried to move forward toward Emmanuel. Her arms were pulled taut behind her at an awkward angle but she continued to try to move forward. One pastor put a handkerchief between his hand and her flesh. As they held her arms and tried to control her body, it became clear that Queen’s convulsions made her body excessive and in need of discipline. The other pastor would emulate the handkerchief-buffer later as her convulsions became stronger. It was a very purposeful move as Queen’s flailing made procuring the handkerchief and applying it to her flesh a difficult one to execute.
Another pastor held the microphone toward her face to amplify what she was yelling. Queen repeated into the microphone: “I am a beautiful Queen”, “I am beautiful” and other similar renditions. She also repeatedly yelled that “no man can resist me”. The comment was ignored as its utility for the “girl-girl” narrative is rather limited but should serve as a reminder that nothing about her bodily movements are inherently or naturally “lesbian.” The only cue to read the body as lesbian has been rendered by the prophet’s speech. The speech here from Queen – or the spirit – at the very least complicates that narrative. And the bodies themselves, to this point, have not rendered anything that indicates attraction to either sex.

Emmanuel responded to the statements about beauty and its irresistibility (for men) with “This lady is not for you; she is for Jesus!”, emphasizing “Jesus” with a dramatic flair. Emmanuel’s verbal cues indicated that it was not Queen speaking but a spirit. Emmanuel demanded the name of the spirit. In this case, the spirit once, and only once, invoked the name Creamy with all of the sexual fluids that it implies.

While the bodily struggle occurred, Emmanuel remained approximately 100 feet away. For most of the episode he remained detached bodily. This is not uncommon. Emmanuel rarely engages deliverance bodies, instead he reserves his touch for the end of each performance. He relies on sounds and rhetoric. In the spiritual marriage example I cited above, he did not touch the woman until the very end, but it was his touch and simultaneous “poof” that rendered the woman docile.

But just because he was bodily distant and he relies on discourse before utilizing his own body, does not mean he is not primarily interested in bodies and the way in which they move. He remarked that Queen is very beautiful – a remark about her bodily features. He used his
voice to make and describe bodies. When the audience groaned in discontent, he claimed that it was a strategy to draw the spirit out, a trick. He constantly instructed his pastors on how to engage the deliverance bodies. And he watched the deliverance bodies closely, occasionally offering the congregation translations for what specific bodily movements and motions meant in the spirit world.

Eventually in the course of discussion between Queen and Emmanuel – which was accompanied by the ongoing physical conflict between Queen and the pastors – Queen revealed 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 placated Queen’ tastes, she paced back and forth. Her body never stopped moving. She would walk one direction, turn on her heel and walk back the other way. Everyone remained distant from her, giving her a significant amount of space. Bodies were no longer in contact, and most bodies were no longer moving. Instead, the bodily movements of Queen’ deliverance body were watched intently. Eventually the band gave up and an iPad was procured. Bodies do not just move to any sound as Queen’s body refused to move until the song that moved her, affectively and physically, began. With the ‘right sound’ Queen began to dance. She danced in a manner that could be categorized not as provocative but certainly sensual. She enjoyed her body. Her eyes looked up and down her body. Her hands moved around her body. The crowd watched intently while dancing with small movements in their cramped quarters. No longer angrily pulling away from the pastors or yelling into a microphone, Queen smiled.

At one-point Queen shook her butt toward the congregation. They vociferously shouted
their disapproval, waved her off with their hands or turned away in disgust. Emmanuel indicated with a point toward the band to cut the music. Again, Queen’s body was deemed excessive. The whole dance episode was determined by sound and in its absence Queen ceased dancing. The whole scene was marked by things that the prophet allows deliverance bodies to do, things that deliverance bodies must be stopped from doing and things that the prophet will force deliverance bodies to perform. And all of it was accompanied by sound, the haptic soundtrack. To dance in a way that crossed the church’s limits of modesty, Queen bent over at the waist at a nearly ninety-degree angle, pushing her butt out in such a way to emphasize the space it occupied and shaking it with the music, fell into the category of something that the prophet stopped the deliverance body from doing. It is the interstices of what deliverance bodies can and cannot do, the lines deliverance bodies are not allowed to cross, that are interesting and certainly seem to confirm a Foucauldian interpretation of the pastorate’s role in disciplining the body. As Foucault writes, “the pastor...is in a position to watch over and to exercise with respect to them, in any case, a surveillance and continuous control.” The prophet in this case surveilled and controlled the body both sonically and physically.

It is important that this sonic aspect is not limited to the linguistic. As Robert Deslarajas writes of his work in the Himalayas:

\[\text{It is the music as much as the surface meaning of the shaman’s repertoire that one must engage with the flesh. By incorporating a mantra’s magic within his heart, throat and limbs, a melody echoing others through its sinewy folds and assonant rhymes, an apprentice healer begins to incarnate a sensibility that goes beyond the linguistic. The play of the drum quickens into a kinesthesia of curing,}\]

\[329\text{Jeremy R. Carrette (ed.), } \textit{Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault} (New York: Routledge, 1999), 24.\]
a mumbled mantra summons the presence of the sacred, rhythms of healing
grow more tactile than cerebral; if I had better realized this chemistry while in
the field, I might have expanded my field of awareness. I footnote my oversight
here because for me, it reflects a tendency in contemporary anthropology to
privilege the linguistic, the discursive, and the cognized over the visceral and the
tacit. ³³⁰

As Deslarjais notes, it is the music as much or even more than the lyrical content that moves
bodies. It is the kinesonic power that moved Queen. While she waved off song after song, it
was not a dismissal of their lyrical content. Instead, she did not like the beat. She did not like
the way some of the songs forced her to move. She wanted to move in a particular way and
only a particular soundtrack allowed for that.

After stopping the deliverance body from dancing, Emmanuel introduced another body
to the drama. Emmanuel invited Ethel, the friend who brought Queen, to join them up front.
As soon as Ethel appeared Queen spoke about her relationship to Ethel and how “she likes her
very much.” At this point Queen verbally introduced possible ambiguity to her sexual identity
by making a statement of affiliation with Ethel. However, she never engaged Ethel’s body.

There was a distinct disparity between how Ethel’s body occupied space and how
Queen’ did. For the entirety of the episode Ethel offered only one word answers. Ethel’s body
was downtrodden, slumped shoulders, eyes looking downwards, and a dour facial expression.
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 Queen’ delivery body. Her answers to the prophet’s
questions were whispered and barely audible. Ethel’s inaction was a stark contrast to the
confidence that Queen’ body exuded as she paced back and forth owning the space at the front

³³⁰ Robert Desjarlais, Body and Emotion: The Aesthetics of Illness and Healing in the Nepal
of the church. Queen was given most of the front of the church to pace while Ethel occupied only a small space amongst the pastors.

The introduction of Ethel’s body was followed by a sonic disruption. The screams of a woman near the back of the sanctuary pierced through the drama occurring at the front of church. It quickly became obvious, though, that it was not merely screams but was primarily a kinesonic disruption. From the crush of individuals emerged four ushers carrying Spendy’s flailing and screaming body. Each usher held a limb so that every time she flailed 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, groaning, all the while rubbing her hands against her lower stomach and occasionally her vaginal area. For the most part, this is how Spendy’s body acted—a repetitive kinesonic loop of groans, screams, rolling and the rubbing of her abdomen. Toward the end of the service her fingers determinedly and purposefully moved around her vagina clearly imitating or engaging in an autoerotic act.

The introduction of Spendy’s deliverance body was very different than Queen’s deliverance body or Ethel’s. The first two were introduced by Emmanuel and constructed in a particular way: the insatiable lesbian body that must be delivered and the chaste body. Spendy’s deliverance body reacted more spontaneously, responding to the stimuli of the experience rather than the instructions, rhetoric or touch of the prophet and pastors. Spendy reacted to the sights and sounds, the affective milieu. Exactly what stimuli Spendy’s deliverance body is responding to are unclear. But more than likely she responded to the sounds of Queen’s deliverance. She was sitting at the very back and from that vantage point what one can see is severely limited, even if one stands up.
Queen immediately reacted to Spendy’s presence, shouting out her approval and proclaiming her affection for Spendy and the cleanliness of Spendy’s body. This was ironic because the way their discursive bodies were made was the opposite: they are dirty, sinful bodies. Perhaps it was a phrase of resistance. Thereafter, for a considerable amount of time, the two bodies were left in their loops while the prophet and pastors presented their scripts as to what was being observed. Spendy rolled, her top coming off leaving her breasts covered only by her bra. A lot of effort was made trying to cover her breasts – her unveiled body deemed excessive in this space – but eventually the futile effort was abandoned. Meanwhile Queen paced.

The scripts that the pastors presented focused on Spendy’s vagina. A pastor standing next to me pointed to Spendy’s vagina and stated that the “spirit is in there.” Without touching Spendy’s body he and others began yelling “lesbian spirit out” literally requesting the spirit to exit her vagina. The prophet and lead singer, meanwhile, discussed on microphone that Queen’s love of cleanliness was because lesbians use their tongues to lick vaginas, invoking Queen’s tongue and Spendy’s vagina. The lead singer went to great lengths to describe what was deemed excessive homoerotic sexuality.

There is a certain irony that with these apparently lesbian bodies occupying the space in front of them, the pastors rely on rhetoric to make queerness visible. The crowd reacted in disgust and repulsion as Emmanuel relayed to them the lead singer’s adjudication of the drama as implying “girl-girl” oral sex. Yet, while Spendy eventually did engage her vaginal area and enact masturbatory motions, most of this discussion misidentified Spendy’s bodily actions. To this point her hand was primarily rubbing her lower stomach. Furthermore, despite Queen’
profession of liking Spendy’s cleanliness their two deliverance bodies remained quite distant from each other, never coming close to contacting one another. Queen’s original reaction to the sight of Spendy’s rolling deliverance body created the expectation of contact that remained unfulfilled. The script of Spendy and Queen as lesbian lovers with Queen enjoying going down on Spendy seems discontinuous with the bodily evidence that the deliverance bodies provided. This is problematic primarily in that Emmanuel and the pastors cited the deliverance bodies as evidence for the scripts they provide the congregation.

Following the pastors’ conversation about oral sex the drama shifted back to being primarily a drama of bodies in contact and the cacophony of screams and moans. At this point the two camps – prophet and pastors versus possessed women – came into bodily conflict. All of the talk of bodies and female bodies acting alone had merely been foreplay; the real work of deliverance required bodily interaction and pastoral exhortations. Most of the pastors began to work on delivering Queen while the prophet focused on Spendy. They attacked both women simultaneously. Attacked is in no way hyperbolic, the violence that ensued cannot be described as anything other.

Spendy’s rolls ceased but when the prophet asked them to pick her up she fought back, determinedly rolling across the front of the church. As the touch of the pastors reanimated Spendy, another pastor beside me watched her slither and roll on the floor and interpreted for me that it is the spirit of a snake in her vagina. She repeatedly touched her vagina and moved her fingers as if she was pleasuring herself. This time she actually was touching her vaginal area as opposed to before which was distinctly her stomach. Every time she touched her vagina the prophet hit her hand. This is the first time the prophet touched either woman. It appeared to
have little impact. The prophet would hit Spendy’s hand, momentarily moving it off her vagina where she would immediately return it. The prophet asked his wife to come and hold Spendy’s vagina. The demand for his wife’s hand in the process is not viewed as a delivering touch but as a pragmatic way to stop the autoerotic imitation.

The hand of the prophet’s wife formed a barrier so that Spendy could no longer touch her vagina. She tried to have her digits re-establish contact with her vagina but Emmanuel’s wife held tightly to Spendy’s crotch. Emmanuel’s wife put her fingers on the problem. After Emmanuel’s wife had successfully warded off Spendy’s vaginal touching, she pulled her hand away and the prophet replaced it with his foot. With his foot to Spendy’s vagina, he repeatedly kicked her vagina. With each kick he made a “pfff” sound into the microphone. Spendy continued to wiggle and writhe on the ground. Soft music intensified the drama of the performance. And perhaps most noteworthy, Spendy’s body never became docile.

While Emmanuel spent all of his time with Spendy, six of his pastors tried to physically rip the demon out of Queen. As they held her she managed to drag them around the front of the church. 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 in such a way that mimicked oral sex. Each pastor has a reason for their bodily action but they are not always clear without being expressed with language. For example, the pushing or punching of the stomach is common because it is believed that demons can be exorcized from the body through vomit. But in the fracas the actions become almost indistinguishable so that it very much appeared as a group of men enacting violence, sexualized violence, on a female body.
Queen continued to try to break free, yelling the whole time. In the melee her shirt was ripped open revealing a white bra with black polka dots. Even amidst the violence Queen tried to dance, shaking her butt at the pastors who had her in their grasp. Whenever the pastors’ bodies came in contact with Queen’ backside she would try to grind on them. Her bodily strategy seemed to shift from fighting to seducing and then back to fighting. Over time Queen tired from the ceaseless attacks. While Spendy’s rolling was more frenetic, Queen never stopped moving as well.

In her exhaustion, the seven pastors managed to pull her to the floor and hold her there. Another pastor joined the fray and ripped off her wig. She yelled “my hair, my hair” to no avail as the wig disappeared into the mad orgasm of bodies and was run out of the church. Devastated, Queen cried “my hair, I need my hair” over and over again. She squirmed as much as her tired body allowed. Eventually they let her stand up while she continued to ask for her hair. She never became docile and even when held on the ground her body strained against the weight of the seven pastors pinning her to the floor.

This saga lasted over two hours and the church service that began at 8am had extended until nearly 7:30pm. The service just dissolved with the last act being the capturing of the photo that opened this chapter. The picture finally making quiet and still the deliverance bodies that had been continually moving and screaming throughout the drama.

I asked the prophet how he knew the women were delivered. Without ever referring to Queen or Spendy, he provided a generic answer about what he sees with his open vision or spiritual eyes, “When I see in the spirit that you are having gay, I see that spirit in you. I see that lesbian in you. So when I deliver you I see that it is vanished. It is not by faith that I say ‘I
have delivered you, go.’ I see that it is no longer there.” Perhaps his answer lacked specificity because he knew that his deliverance had failed. When I met with Ethel again months later she dejectedly told me what I already knew, Spendy and Queen never left their previous sexual lives. It appears the deliverance had not taken hold. It would also make sense of why the prophet concluded his statement about deliverance saying, “If you drive that spirit away it will come back so that is why we always ask for strength for our body so that when the spirit comes it might not be able to enter you again.”

Lesbian is Nothing

Out 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,” Queen 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 its not fake, it is good, very good but me I don’t like the church.” That ambivalent rejection is solely centered on rejecting the deliverance event that they were part of. Queen and Spendy do not reject the office of the prophet, or even necessarily the efficaciousness of Prophet Emmanuel. Queen 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.” Notice the present tense, part of her rejection of the deliverance was 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 talking to her she became extraordinarily angry, sometimes grabbing my recorder and yelling into it in order to better communicate her affective register, “I’ve been angry ever since Emmanuel delivered me.” She also described the amount of money she spent on counselling and prophetic accoutrements such as stickers, oil and water at Emmanuel’s church: “I am angry so I won’t say anything good. 400 Ghana Cedi, gone! I am angry. What did I use 400 Ghana Cedis to do? Nothing. What did I use 400 Ghana Cedis to do? I came back from Emmanuel’s church with no money with me. So what I have used 400 Cedis to do? Is that not nonsense...The more I remember of that morning, I am very angry.”

But most importantly, 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 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 did not work: “She isn’t ready to change. She has made up her mind about that act [lesbianism], she still does it.” She added, “Queen 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 to force a body to abide by churchly scripts. Nonetheless, Ethel’s statement indicates that Spendy and Queen’ bodies have cracked open, at least for Ethel, the power of deliverance, revealing a gap in its efficaciousness. Spendy similarly was not present to be delivered from lesbianism but had hoped for a financial windfall from attending Emmanuel’s church. 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) but instead that “it took hours because she was not
ready to be delivered.”

_The Spirit of Gayism_

Gayism is a sin. Or in the graphic words of a pastor at one of Ghana’s most famous
Pentecostal churches as he belittled one of my informants, “It looks like you are gay and you
know if you do fuck asses or they fuck you, you know if you fuck or are being fucked, then it is
time for me to tell you that God doesn’t want this, God hates it!” Not only does God hate it,
but the basic idea consistent across all deliverance services is that non-heteronormative
sexualities are actually demons possessing the human body and using it then to further a
satanic agenda. As Kwofie said to me, plainly, “the natural way is a penis and a vagina, the
unnatural equals gay – unnatural sex can put you in contact with spirits, seriously!” Kwofie
went on to add a description of exactly how the spirit accesses the gay body, “if you lie with a
man, the spirit comes through your anus, a lot of deep, deep demons.” Evil spirits physically
enter the human body. And the spirit is strong. As my friend Solomon told me, “They believe a
normal guy wouldn’t fuck another guy. So, then there must be an additional something that
gives you the interest. Because it is unimaginable, it must be spirits.” Michael, a busy gay
activist, told me, “My church sees it as something barbaric, something very bad and demonic.”
He added, “It is not good to be gay because when you are gay you are possessed by a spirit,”
spirits from the marine world. Solomon, who is gay and has a mother who is a prophetess, told
me that she taught him that “the spirit of gayism is very strong...So strong that it might be from
Satan and you may not be able to be delivered from it.” When I asked why, he said because “homosexuality involves the body.” Here again we see the claim inspired from First Corinthians (6:18-20) that sexual sins are particularly dangerous because sexual sins alone ruin the human body. Those demons are exposed through deliverance.

And while teaching that gayism is a spirit is common, some churches teach that homosexuals are themselves demonic spirits. This is a significant difference; homosexuals are not possessed of the spirit of gayism but are the evil spirit. Johannes, a young man who has largely moved on from religion, shared with me the devastating story of his deliverance experience. He attended an old school Pentecostal church and the pastor regularly preached against men who have sex with men. He was judged to be gay and removed from the choir. “They make men who have sex with men feel like we are not human,” Johannes told me angrily. The reason they are made to feel that way is that the pastor did not think that they were entirely human. Men who have sex with men are not humans but spirits. The devil gives such children to human beings. The child is a kind of “devil incarnate,” an evil spirit. The pastor shouted at him, “You are a spirit! You are from Mami Wata!” The accusation stuck and the pastor initiated a ritual to try to send the spirit back to the sender, back to Mami Wata.

Remember, Johannes is the spirit in this case. The ritual was intended to erase Johannes’ existence. Johannes was taken to the river and left there with eggs and yams. It was believed that Johannes would turn into a snake, eat the eggs and yams and then return to the city under the sea, Mami Wata’s domain. He did not, but the story outlines the lengths that deliverance ministers are willing to go in order to rid the world the spirits of gayism and lesbianism.

Popular West African deliverance writer Anthony O. Akerele blames Satan for the
spread of gayism, “The enemy has done this! Mind you, this enemy has no power to create, he only can transform and pervert what has been created. The enemy took an Adam-and-Eve affair and made it Adam-and-Steve affair in his quest to get worshipped at all costs.” Stock jokes such as the Adam-and-Steve reference are common in deliverance ministries, as is a reliance on the trope of the power of Sodom. The point is that the devil cannot create anything but can pervert everything. In this case, the devil perverted the pure act of heterosexual sex by introducing a spirit of gayism. Adriaan van Klinken writes, “In this discourse, the issue of homosexuality is enchanted, that is, viewed from a deeply religious worldview characterized by a strong eschatological expectation and by the belief in a cosmic struggle between God and the Devil.” And Meyer argues that, “current Pentecostals also endorse a view of the world as a site of war between God and the devil, thus instigating enchantment rather than disenchantment.”

These kind of enchanted and dismissive statements, have an impact on gay men. A young gay man told me, “That is what they use to condemn people who are into this act, God created Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve. But to me, having same sex is a sin, it is a sin, but...it is a sin. Because what will make it a sin, God did not create a guy and a guy, he made a guy and a lady and they multiply.” This kind of heterosexist logic is rampant amongst not only deliverance ministers, but also the LGBTQ community.

331 Anthony O. Akerele, Healing and Deliverance Prayers for Gays and Lesbians @ the Midnight Gate: Homosexuals: People Paying For What They Did Not Buy!, (Self-Published, 2011), 67.
332 van Klinken, “Gay Rights, the Devil and the End Times,” 519–520.
Razak is a prophet and is gay, though he likewise thinks every time he has sex it is a sin. He said plainly, “homosexuality is a spirit.” Like Kwofie, he claimed it was a particularly strong spirit that was spread by homosexuals, “spirits use anything and everything that touches a gay body – a person who is into it – to spread the spirit of gayism. For example, at sports if you touch a person’s towel that has touched the naked gay body, the spirit will enter you.” And Razak believes that only deliverance can save him from the spirit of gayism, it is the only “means to quit.” His senior prophet once tried to lead his church in deliverance for people possessed with the spirit of gayism. He invited all those with that spirit to come forward and be delivered. But nobody came. Even Razak did not move because of the stigma he perceived would come his way. Instead he prayed in his seat and prayed that God would deliver him. He prays similarly at home every day against the spirit of gayism, invoking the blood of Jesus over his entire physical body.

Deliverance from Gayism

The only way to defeat such evil spirits is to invoke the command of God as ultimate authority. It is believed that evil spirits must obey this command, though they may cause both verbal and physical disruptive convulsions during their departure. Akerele instructs his followers to pray, “I charge my body, soul and spirit with the fire of God, to eliminate strangers in my body sponsoring gay/lesbian lifestyle in the name of Jesus.” While homosexuals bear some responsibility and agency in their sexual behavior, for Pentecostals it is primarily the evil spirits that are to blame, the power of something outside the self that moves inside the self.

334 Akerele, Healing and Deliverance Prayers, 9.
Akerele sums up his work, “The summary of everything we have been saying is pollution” – the imposition of strange(r) gay and lesbian spirits in the pure human body.335

Deliverance is the only way to battle homosexuals. Kwofie told me, “You can’t verbally or physically fight homosexuals so the tool is prayer.” Deliverance prayers, however, rely on the verbal and the physical. They are the embodiment of the kinesonic. And so I read Kwofie as stating one cannot only verbally or only physically fight homosexuals. Instead, the only deliverance solution is to rely on the kinesonic. Since homosexuality is a spirit on assignment from the devil you have to attack the spirits at the root of sex. Kwofie, having already described how spirits enter the body – deep, deep through the anus – went on to describe how they exit during deliverance. “If a homosexual spirit comes out, it comes out as vomit, or the person urinates seriously or the person cries,” he went on enumerating the various orifices and fluids that indicated spirits evacuating the body, “and sometimes they ejaculate and discharge in deliverance.” These are the signs of deliverance.

Leslie, a devoted gay activist, taught me much about LGBTQ issues in Ghana. And despite an intimate knowledge of the politics of queerness in Accra, and an ability to quote the legal codes down to the section concerning homosexuality, he blames churches for homophobia in Ghana.336 And not just churches, but deliverance churches particularly. “The problem” he said to me with an air of regret, “is the church. That is it.” He believes through teaching and deliverance, churches have controlled the public discourse on LGBTQ issues. He jokingly told me

335 Akerele, Healing and Deliverance Prayers, 169.
336 Unnatural Carnal Knowledge: Section 104 – intercourse in an unnatural manner or with an animal. Section 99 of criminal code – “whenever...shall be deemed complete upon the least degree of penetration.”
an anecdote that if you go to a fetish priest or traditional healer and ask about gayism, “he will say gayism does not go with your tradition.” If you follow up and ask him why he believes this to be true, he will say “because the Bible is against it.” That is how prevalent and widespread he believes the deliverance churches’ teachings have spread, inculcating society against homosexuality. And deliverance churches are the worst because of the dehumanizing element, they “believe it’s a spirit and won’t tolerate that in their churches.”

Even the most common term for intimate female friendships in Ghana has been shaped by Pentecostal literature and discourse. The colloquial term is supi. Supi emerged in the early 1990s as a term used to discourage same-sex bonding at boarding schools. Boarding schools hold an important place in the imagination of both heterosexual and homosexual Ghanaians as a place where homosexuality runs rampant. Homosexual relations are often construed as an immature sexuality that can merely be experimentation: however, the wily tricks of the devil can turn this sexual existence into something permanent, lesbianism. William Banks cites a newspaper columnist that stated “the supi in girls’s schools and whatever the boys call themselves practiced in our schools is part of the transition to full blown homosexuality like the pupa to butterfly. The reality is that homosexuality is very rife in this country.” It was charismatic churches that appropriated the term and set the narrative of supi relationships as the gateway to the scourge of lesbianism in Ghana. The supi threat is also present in Ghallywood films whereby lesbianism is tied to the spirit world. One film in particular invokes

337 Dankwa, “It’s a Silent Trade,” 195.
339 Dankwa, “It’s a Silent Trade,” 196.
Mami Wata cults where the powerful mermaid spirit corrupts women luring them to lesbianism which poses a threat to society.⁴⁰ These ideas are central to charismatic demonology, and the manner in which it has shaped the public discourse on non-heteronormative sexualities is obvious.

But most Pentecostal churches do not teach about homosexuality. The discourse about homosexuality is largely communicated through deliverance. This means that the discourse is communicated through a sonic combination of speech, sounds, and screams and the embodied reactions that accompany those sounds. Phillip, a gay man in his mid-thirties, told me that in his charismatic church there are no specific teachings on homosexuality. But homosexuality makes a regular appearance through prayers and deliverance. “Prayer, prayer and prayer,” he told me, “because people have characterized people who are engaged in that act as demons, possessed people...they pray against the spirit of homosexual acts.” Sometimes they even pray that the spirit shows discretion, that the Holy Spirit should not expose homosexuals but deliver them quietly so that homosexuals will stop such horrid and lurid acts. At other times the church is more than happy to expose someone possessed of the spirit of gayism or lesbianism.

In one deliverance I witnessed, the prophetess very purposefully invoked discretion around an issue of homosexuality. Late one Thursday night at her deliverance service, the prophetess, Hazel, healed a man’s injured leg. Or at least that was what all of us in the congregation perceived. The soundscape was similar to most deliverance soundscapes. Hazel’s deep voice punctuated the air every five seconds or so with a loud “Pray.” The apostle, Hazel’s

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assistant, used his deep bass voice to anchor all the other sounds. His words were indecipherable and it ended up sounding chant-like, a persistent, monotonous deep droning sound on which all other sounds were added. This sonic constant was punctuated with the clapping of the congregation and the occasional percussive cymbal. Everyone clapped, not exactly in unison but with a noticeable and persistent syncopated rhythm. And everyone prayed. Loudly. Determinedly. Desperately.

Hazel alternated between two voices. The first was a deep, loud, hard, authoritative voice. It boomed throughout the sanctuary and beyond. The side doors of the church opened to allow a breeze to blow through, the same breeze that carried her slowly developing phrases into the dark night. When she was not speaking or praying with her booming, loud, hard voice she intoned with her second voice: a lazy, mocking voice usually reserved for the spirits. As the congregation watched Hazel healed a middle-aged man who had struggled to the front supported by two braces. I did not recognize him as a regular attendee, but deliverance services are often populated by interlopers desperate for spiritual or material succor. She prayed for him. She had the congregation pray for him. And then she confidently set a handkerchief on the floor about ten meters from where the man stood. She took away the man’s crutches and instructed him to go get the hanky. He struggled but sure enough managed to procure the handkerchief.

Hazel then whispered into the man’s ears for a long time, her mouth practically swallowing his ear. All that the audience heard was the familiar “ptsh, ptsh, ptsh” of whispering voices, of obscured messages. Occasionally she pried her mouth away from the man’s ear and looked to him for short responses. Then she yelled, “out”, tapped his forehead and the man
tumbled to the ground. She took his hanky and she hit him with it repeatedly. The ushers helped the man to his feet. And soon as he was standing he took off running toward the very front of the church. When he met the front wall he turned left and then another left and continued running toward the back of the church. “Hal-le-lu-ja” Hazel yelled, emphasizing each syllable and articulating the j. When he slowed she briefly whispered one more message into his ear. The man returned to his seat, without the crutches with which he had arrived.

Early the next morning I sojourned back to the church to ask Hazel a few questions. Only then did she reveal to me that the issue had actually been his sexuality and that he had been delivered from gayism, discretion was deemed important and vital to the whole operation. The prophetess explained:

And also you saw the guy who was holding the stick. I told him in his ears that he has been doing this homosexual thing and that has led him into something else and then he, let me say he had a sense of remorse, I felt it and I prayed for him and immediately he was whole. I spoke to him in his ear not to the whole congregation. When certain things are like that whisper it in your ears to hear to know that God in heaven has been monitoring you and he knows what you do so you have to repent. Because that, doing it public, might not let them open up and come to Christ and if our main purpose is to gather people and take them to heaven. What I want to say is that there are certain things about people that if you whisper it, otherwise they might not come to church again.

Discretion was vital to the whole operation for Hazel, because publicity could scare off a potential convert. This is dramatically different than Emmanuel whose performances are very public.

There are all sorts of symbols in this story that make it rich for the analysis of the body and spirit but I will limit myself to two examples. The first is the lame leg as a marker of a problematic penis. Jack Halberstam in her lecture, “Into the Wild”, made a similar claim about
the film *How to Train Your Dragon*, with the lame leg standing in as a phallic symbol. Here the healing of the lame leg corresponds with the conversion of the problematic homosexual phallus into a sanctioned heterosexual one. Second, not only did Victoria tell the man about his own gayness, but she also told him he was HIV positive, which he apparently confirmed. She described the contamination as “this homosexual thing that he did, the devil entered him and gave him those sicknesses.” But she delivered him, “I prayed and I said he will never see HIV again.”

But beyond the rich symbolism, what is important to note is that even in discretion the kinesonic is at play. In fact, discretion allows us to see the power of the kinesonic because what mattered was not the content of speech but the sound of speech accompanied by all sorts of physical manifestations. For most, it did not matter what Hazel whispered to the man for “ptsh, ptsh, ptsh” was truth and they knew it was truth because of the way that the kinesthetic and sonic melded together as the man picked up the hanky, fell to the ground, and most importantly, as he ran victoriously around the church.

Despite these few case studies in which discretion is applied – albeit unevenly – in most cases Bochow and Dankwa are correct in their assumptions that discretion has been challenged by Pentecostal churches. In Pentecostal churches deliverance ministries revolve around sex, and non-normative sex, a lot. And this has had certain effects on the LGBTQ community. Returning to Phillip, he told me that he was once watching television and saw Emmanuel perform a deliverance much like the one at the beginning of this chapter. Instead of delivering

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341 Halberstam shared this at a lecture at Rice University hosted by the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality.
lesbians, as was the case above, Emmanuel delivered a single man from the spirit of gayism. To hear Philip tell it, Emmanuel pilloried the man, describing in great detail his sexual sins. Phillip wished for discretion and seemed to imply that people like Emmanuel had transgressed social mores. Phillip told me, “I am not sure what made him do that but if you are going to do that deliverance you shouldn’t do it in public which is very, very bad.” Then Phillip paused and put himself in the delivered man’s position, “If I was the guy I would stop attending that church. It is going to create stigma for that person.”

*Hearing the Spirit of Gayism*

Nonetheless, many in the Ghanaian LGBTQ community attend Pentecostal churches that ritualize deliverance of gayism and lesbianism. And because of this they have either encountered deliverance or very purposefully developed strategies to avoid being outed by deliverance. Adjo told me about how in his charismatic church he repeatedly heard admonishments against homosexuality. He recounts “I noticed I had attraction to people of the same-sex but then again I couldn’t practice because I kept hearing in the church, ‘no that’s not the right thing to do, that’s not the right way to go, this is the way to go.’” Words like abomination, punishment, and hell were thrown around in combination with invectives against homosexuals and men with “feminine mannerisms.” One sermon from Adjo’s prophetess glorified the deaths of the Bugandan martyrs of 1885-1887. In a highly contested historical interpretation, the story was cited as evidence that one should embrace death as a martyr rather than the painful, disease-riddled death of gayism. This interpretation stands in stark
contrast to the one offered in Neville Hoad’s *African Intimacies*. However, the prophetess was unequivocal, the spirit of gayism was a horrible abomination.

Adjo remains closeted in many ways but worries that the prophetess at his church outed him. She revealed to him that she had a particular vision about his unconsummated homosexuality, which as Adjo proudly pointed out was wrong because he had been having sex with men since he was fourteen. In the vision, a “person is going to indulge me in a homosexual act and I was going to get sick.”

One particular pastor promised Adjo deliverance from the spirit of gayism. However, it was all just a ruse. Instead they repeatedly met and had sex together. The faux-deliverance-sessions did not stop the pastor from preaching against homosexuality. In fact, he may have preached against it more than before. Every time he preached against homosexuality Adjo would laugh. Perturbed by his laughter, people would question him. “When people asked why I was laughing,” Adjo told me, “I’d say that ‘I find the topic very interesting.’”

The prophetess, though, presents an entirely different situation than the horny pastor. Sometimes if Adjo goes to church the day after having sex she will approach him and say, “I saw you engaging in this act yesterday, you did it here, you did it here, and you did it there and this is what you did!” Adjo claims that she tells him everything with exact detail. “How did she find out?” he wondered. He has adopted a strategy to avoid this. He simply avoids physical proximity to the prophetess, “I don’t go to close to her precisely because I don’t want her to tell me about my sex life.” He does not want to hear it.

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But he also worries that she might hear something. Adjo sings in church. He sings both as a chorister and is often a featured soloist. He is very good. He does not get nervous singing unless he has had sex any time recently. “I get nervous all the time. Even when I do it on Tuesday and sing a song on Friday” he said. He added, “Every single Sunday I get nervous because she could just pick up the microphone and say sit down and reveal things – you indulged in immoral practices yesterday and today you are singing to God. Go sit down I don’t want you to sing again.” If he has had sex recently he will come up with a bevy of unique excuses to avoid singing in church rather than risk sonically communicating his transgressions. Adjo does not want to hear his sex life outed by the prophetess, and he does not want her to hear it in his songs.

This idea of a sexually compromised choir or chorister is prominent in Victoria Eto’s work. She writes that evil spirits spread sexual pollution throughout church choirs. She writes, “For this reason, wherever I go to preach I advise pastors to screen their choirs. The choir attracts them because they are snakes and fishes. Music attracts these creatures. Some of them may be the best singers...Screen your choir and your fellowship occasionally. Hold intensive Bible Study revivals. Above all encourage everyone to be sincere. Any member who runs away from such revivals should be removed from the group. Christian music is very important and it must come from sanctified lips.”

Sanctified lips, for deliverance ministries, are straight lips.

Maintaining distance may have stopped the prophetess from being too specific about Adjo’s sexual comings and goings, but it has not stopped her from making claims about Adjo.

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She told the congregation that she had a very graphic vision in which a group of male friends were pulling into Adjo into a room. The door of the room said plainly and clearly “HOMO” on it. But just before Adjo entered the room angels swooped down and rescued him. The prophetess, in an act of prophetic voyeurism, told the Holy Spirit that she wanted to see inside the room. The door opened and she saw men having sex with men, a gay orgy. She interpreted the vision as stating that Adjo was not gay but at risk of being lured by his friends. Adjo, panicked in his seat, knew this was not true, he had “already indulged in such acts.”

The prophetess continued her assault. Several times at night she would call Adjo’s mother and berate her. The prophetess claimed that homosexuality was a familial problem stemming from a “pagan” God. This “smaller” God had considerable gender bending capabilities to turn “men to women and...women to men and in turn what happens is when the men are walking the streets people approach them and propose to them and then the men want to indulge in activities that women are supposed to be interested in.” This God was represented by a statue of a naked man and the prophetess smashed the naked body. But even that did not stop the battle between Adjo’s family and the prophetess. Adjo’s younger brother, Nicholas, is gay. He too remains closeted, but as Adjo tells it, “more people know he is gay than know about me.” He too has been the target of the Prophetess’ visions and deliverance.

“Today I saw you bleeding,” she viscerally relayed to Nicholas in front of the congregation, “lying in a pool of blood because you decided to indulge in homosexual activities so as a result of that you were fucked several times and you couldn’t handle it so you were bleeding.” The prophecy broke Adjo’s mother who insisted they all be delivered from this spirit.
As for Adjo, he has a more complicated reaction to the prophetess’ assault on his families’ sexuality. “The truth is I don’t know [if I believe her]. She is in a position to see more things than you can” he said. And sometimes she is right, “she has revealed certain things that were really true. So, you are tempted to believe. You want to believe it, but...” The “but” exits his mouth and hangs over the conversation. He added nothing, and did not need to. He simply was not sure of everything that the prophetess said. The “but” largely hinged on what Adjo deemed ineffective deliverance. The prophetess brought his brother to the front of the congregation. When she realized his mother was absent, she sent for her. In her absence, she shared stories of exactly what Nicholas was engaging in with explicit detail. For Adjo this kind of public outing is problematic, he prefers pastors who use discretion. Once Adjo’s mother arrived she launched into deliverance, trying to rid Nicholas of the spirit of homosexuality. Adjo’s understanding of deliverance hinged on the phrases that they shouted. She repeatedly rebuked the spirit of gayism, demanding it exit Nicholas’ body. “She says a lot of things,” Adjo told me, “and then my brother keeps rolling on the floor and jumping around.” Bodies and sounds in their complicated deliverance dance.

Watching the deliverance Adjo was convinced that the spirit of gayism was real and had afflicted his brother but he was unsure that deliverance worked. As his brother moved to and fro he saw “the spirit of homosexuality manifesting.” It happened several times. But, “When they do this deliverance so often and it does not work that is when you begin to ask questions like ‘are they fake prophets?’ Because my brother wasn’t really delivered from anything. He wasn’t rehabilitated. After each deliverance he comes back and it is even more than it was
before.” And because deliverance has not worked, Adjo continues to question his religious leaders and his sexuality.

Others, though, are convinced by deliverance. I met Derek shortly after he had experienced deliverance. The prophetess touched him and said “you are gay, you have the spirit of homosexuality.” From that moment onward he wanted deliverance. He was convinced that his sexuality was “not right.” His prophetess tried to deliver him from the spirit of gayism. It was not the first time he had been delivered of the spirit. He was unsure if it had worked this time but he desperately wanted to be free of the spirit of gayism. He oscillated back and forth, struggling with what it meant for his lover and what it meant for him. For his lover, he could not stand the thought of life apart. But for him, “homosexuality is demonic.” Derek was sure that, “God wants me to stop because God didn’t create me to come and do that, it is just something that came inside of me.” That something was demons and this time, he was hopeful, they were gone.

Most gay men I met simply developed particular strategies for avoiding a prophetic outing of their sexuality. Solomon, a young man in his early twenties with a deep gravelly voice, has his own strategies for avoiding a prophetic public outing. He simply avoids any church where sins are exposed in public by prophets. He is too scared and prefers discretion. But even being careful his demons were exposed. The pastor preached ardently that homosexuality is a bad spirit. Homosexuality is not natural, but demonic, a marine spirit. And Solomon is sympathetic because, “When I was in secondary school I thought it was demonic and I hated gays but after school I understood it better. I hated them because I’d been taught it was demonic.” But now Solomon is on the other side of the ledger. His outing happened when his
mom told his pastor. Solomon recounts that his pastor was shocked, “he was surprised and started weeping and was like are you serious because he can sing so well.” Again, the complicated dance between sound and sexual spirits emerges from behind the curtain. Homosexuality, —or more apt for this pastor, the spirit of homosexuality—was so monstrous, so grotesque that it should make sweet sounds impossible.

Solomon was sent for deliverance. Like Adjo, he simply did not see results in deliverance: “They would tell me you are supposed to fast from this time to this time and when in that state meet some pastors and pray but I didn’t see anything.” If anything, the fasting and prayers had the opposite effect, “After a fast, I always want more sex than I did before. If it was two times per week, it’ll now be four times per week.” And no matter what they tried, he heard nothing that convinced him it was wrong or a spirit, “They prayed for me but I didn’t fall under dramatic powers…I stand there still.” The pastor could not come to terms with what he saw as a contradiction – superlative singing and sinful sex. He kept saying, “If that act is so unclean why should he sing so well and he touches people.” He turned his office into a courtroom, making Solomon swear on a Bible and answer questions such as: Have you had sex with a man before? How many times? Who becomes the female? Who becomes the male? You do both? They removed his sim card and surveilled his phone. Solomon left and attended another church. But in many ways his pastor’s logic goes with him, “If it is wrong, I’ll no longer be able to sing.” Similarly, he knew a prophet who would have sex with men even Sunday mornings and could still deliver people. If the prophet can have sex with men and still have a ministry, then it must not be wrong.
Michael, a gay activist, could not avoid deliverance. He came to church late one Sunday and tried to sneak into the back unnoticed. Unfortunately, he was noticed. A prophetess approached him and shared a dream she had about him. In the dream Michael was gay but kept denying his sexuality. In her dream Michael was adamant, pleading that he was in fact straight. The prophetess went on explaining the dream. She demanded that he be straightforward with the truth and tell her everything. She began asking questions that are all too familiar. Do you have gay friends? Michael answered yes. Are you gay? No.

She used this dream to transition into asking Michael the same questions in the physical reality pressuring Michael to finally admit he was gay. She added, “Do you know it is bad to be a homosexual?” Michael questioned why, to which she responded, “it is barbaric, it is demonic and it is satanic.” Her and another pastor initiated deliverance. And after reading texts from the Bible and providing an animalistic anecdote that animals do not mate with the same sex, the prophetess and pastor laid hands and started shouting for deliverance. Eventually Michael fell down and was convinced that he was delivered, “and I thought that would be okay for me, like, I won’t be gay anymore.” But, the deliverance did not hold, “I realized I am still the same person I used to be and there is nothing they can do about it.” After a deliverance episode Lord, a young gay man, concluded similarly “There was a time I would cry and plead with God to make me change, but I’ve realized it is an orientation, it is not spiritual, it’s a feeling.” Similarly, Michael recently saw another attempted deliverance of a particularly “flamboyant” man. They laid hands on him and started praying loudly. As soon as they started

Animal metaphors – for example, a hen and a cock, not a hen and a hen – are common and were shared by many of my informants.
“it was like he was possessed, he started crawling on the floor.” But it did not work,

“Deliverance is not good. It does not work out because he is gay. There is nothing deliverance
can do about it.”

Conclusion

And so we return through Michael and Adjo to the same conclusion that Spendy and
Queen arrived at: deliverance does not work for gayism and lesbianism. But whether it takes
or not is not the argument of this chapter. Instead, this chapter has argued that a sense called
the kinesonic is central to Pentecostal knowing. And in all the cases herein the kinesonic was a
prominent tool.
Chapter 5 – Spirited Sex

“Spiritual Marriage is real” – various informants

Prophet Ofori, dressed entirely in white, his tunic pulled tightly around his bulging stomach, shouted the invective with more strength than his usual instructions: “Pray against your spiritual husband or wife. The husband or wife that you see in your dream!” As the prophet exhorted his congregation to pray, I noticed that not far from the front of the church sat a woman wearing a sports jersey with the word Pervert printed on top of the number 17. The whole week – and indeed many, many moments throughout my research – combined both spirits and humans in a kind of pneumatic perversity known as spiritual marriage. Sexual relations between demons and humans were merely an essential part of Pentecostal belief and practice. Spiritual marriage, a kind of spectrophilia in which demons have sex with humans, was an ever-present threat that needed to be destroyed. Frequent sermons, prayers, deliverances, and healings were all aimed at breaking spiritual marriages.

According to pneumatic Christians, spiritual marriages effect everyone – every human being – and they believe that it is one of the most pervasive problems haunting humanity. Even prophets are not immune. Prophet Ofori warned the crowd of the threat by appealing to his own experience. It was a testimony he told often as a kind of apocalyptic warning about the severity of the problem of sex with spirits. Before becoming a pneumatic prophet, he had dabbled in other religions. He, like those to whom he was preaching, was married to a demon because of this contact with other religions and needed deliverance. But there is a plethora of ways in which one can become spiritually married, the possibilities so varied that nearly nobody can avoid it: through immorality, dancing, masturbation, or bathing. Or, as my friend Phillip
informed me, spiritual marriage is contracted through physical sex. Phillip was an unpaid assistant to Nikoi, constantly trailing him around but receiving no recompense for his efforts. He was unmarried but hoped to settle down soon. As he described it: “If one person is possessed with a demon, then it will transfer [to the sexual partner]. The same way you get HIV through blood you can transfer spirits and curses, sexually transmitted demons.” Sleeping with a prostitute is even worse as you receive the demons of the last seven men she slept with.

In Ofori’s well-known narrative, this interaction with other religions left him married to a mad spiritual husband. The husband – note that already we are in areas of sexual deviance for this pneumatic church – was a woman with “a man’s organ.” To encounter non-pneumatic religions is not to merely weaken the body’s defenses against demonic intrusion, it is to invite the demonic into a sexual relationship. It should be obvious how such a theology dismisses other religions as sexually deviant, for even the slightest contact can contaminate. In this way, common spirits from several African cosmologies are integrated in Pentecostal demonology as evil spirits, reenacting “the broader historical translation process of African cosmologies into Christian discourses by missionaries.”

Prophet Ofori continued to, in the words of Monique Moultrie, sextify – give sexual testimony – by describing the curse of spiritual marriage. He had sex with his spiritual husband in his dreams and correspondingly the mad husband accompanied him everywhere.

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345 Amy DeRogatis, Saving Sex: Sexuality and Salvation in American Evangelicalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). DeRogatis also finds evidence of this phrase "sexually transmitted demons."


day and night. This kind of sexual encounter is how spiritual marriages are consummated; the truest sign that one has an apparitional paramour is intercourse in dreams, or something like dreams. Spirits consummate the relationships with acts as diverse as fellatio, cunnilingus, and vaginal or anal sex. This is damning because, for pneumatic Christians, spiritual marriage is a covenant, a lifelong promise, between a demon and a human. It extends far beyond the frequent and vociferous sexual encounters but is concretized in those experiences. As Solomon, a published expert on spiritual marriage, told me, “The word married is used to show you are not alone.”

Ofori later returned to add more details to the testimony of his own spiritual marriage. The woman’s penis was abnormally large. He repeatedly emphasized the seemingly supernatural size of the spirit’s member. It was “as big as the prophet’s arm.” This outsized penis stood erect and held a knife. I was never able to receive an explanation for how this erect member held a knife – whether the penis had something akin to hands or if the knife was grafted onto the penis. Nonetheless, we have a template that is in many ways familiar among those with whom I spoke: a sexual experience with a spirit that transcended human sexual norms (as in the monumentally-sized penis with a knife), that was equally pleasurable and problematic, desired and abhorred, summoned and resisted.

A Sixth Sense

Spiritual marriages are experienced as a kind of sixth sense, extending the boundaries and barriers of the body in fantastic ways. As Cimaroake Izugbara notes, “Ethnographic literature on witchcraft and the occult in Africa also regularly makes references to exotic and
pervasive sexual practices and to the sexualization of the paranormal.”\textsuperscript{348} The emphasis here is on the paranormal and its ubiquity in African religion. However one wants to describe it – paranormal, supernatural, spiritual world – humans are believed to have an extraordinary sense that allows them to feel certain forms that transcend the material world. This is especially true in spiritual marriage and deliverance from spiritual marriage where the gap between spiritual and material is bridged by this sixth sense. This sense is the experience of something allegedly immaterial in material ways.

Here I would like to introduce Tanya Luhrmann’s theory of metakinesis.\textsuperscript{349} In her work on Evangelicals in America Luhrmann found that evangelicals desire intense spiritual experiences.\textsuperscript{350} In particular, they valued trance and other “out-of-the-ordinary experiences” in order to “develop a remarkably intimate, personal God.”\textsuperscript{351} These out-of-the-ordinary experiences were felt in “intensely bodily ways.”\textsuperscript{352} That is, intimacy with God is simultaneously experienced through moments of altered consciousness and yet deeply embodied. Luhrmann describes this process as “metakinesis” a term coopted from dance theory. As opposed to linguistic or cognitive states, bodily states are recognized as a way to know and feel. Bodily states are primarily a way to know God intimately, to be in an interpersonal relationship with a deity.\textsuperscript{353} As Luhrmann states, “I use the term metakinesis to refer to mind-body states that are

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item \textsuperscript{349} Tanya Luhrmann, “Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary U.S. Christianity” \textit{American Anthropologist} 106.3 (2004): 518-528.
\item \textsuperscript{350} Luhrmann, "Metakinesis," 518.
\item \textsuperscript{351} Luhrmann, "Metakinesis," 518.
\item \textsuperscript{352} Luhrmann, "Metakinesis," 518.
\item \textsuperscript{353} Luhrmann, "Metakinesis," 519.
\end{thebibliography}
both identified within the group as the way of recognizing God’s personal presence in your life and are subjectively and idiosyncratically experienced.”354 Bodily phenomena are seen as evidence of God’s love for and intimate involvement in believers’ lives, providing a new lens through which to view the cosmos. Or, as Luhrmann writes, “As a result of these phenomena, congregants literally perceive the world differently and they attribute that difference to the presence of God.”355

Luhrmann offers the above riff on metakinesis in light of the musings of John Martin, a dance theorist. John Martin writes that the Webster’s dictionary itself provided him textual evidence of a correlate to physical movement (kinesis) and that the correlate was “a supposed psychic accompaniment called metakinesis, this correlation growing from the theory that the physical and the psychical are merely two aspects of a single underlying reality.”356 Martin is convinced that metakinesis has always existed, in the same way movement has always existed.

I wish to riff on both Luhrmann and Martin in utilizing metakinesis as a kind of sixth sense. If metakinesis is movement with psychical overtones, I want to explore those psychical overtones in the realm of extrasensory perception. David Howes, in The Sixth Sense Reader, points out the traditional five senses all correspond with bodily organs.357 A sixth sense, especially one that looks at extrasensory perception, does not have a corresponding sense

organ. In fact, as a psychic sense it is thought to operate only from a distance.\textsuperscript{358} Metakinesis, then, offers the possibility of closing the gap by making the psychical also intimately embodied.

As with the kinesonic, I want to emphasize that the metakinet is often erotic. Pamela Thurschwell has argued that the Victorian obsession with the séance and investigating mediumship included a sense of the erotic.\textsuperscript{359} The erotics of the séance often revolved around class with upper middle-class men investigating or interrogating working-class women. As Thurschwell writes, “When spirits materialized they were touched, embraced, kissed, in the name of testing the limits of their materiality, and they in turn touched, embraced and kissed their investigators.”\textsuperscript{360} Note that the erotics are not simply class-based, but also reach into the cosmos feeling the materiality of the spirits with bodies. But these erotics went beyond touching, kissing and the search for spirited materiality and also involved an extrasensory erotic. Thurschwell calls this an “erotics of mind melding,” which she goes on to argue is based on the desire for absolute knowledge and melding with another.\textsuperscript{361} There is something erotic about the metakinet, something revealing that immediately renders the experience erotic.

Eventually these erotics were displaced as studies moved to the parapsychological laboratory. But the erotics of the metakinet are always present with the potent combination of the physical and psychical. And so it is with spiritual marriage, the combination of out-of-the-ordinary erotic experiences that are felt in intensely bodily ways. In this combination charismatics begin to feel spirits in intimate and personal ways. As we explore spiritual

\textsuperscript{358} Howes, \textit{The Sixth Sense Reader}, 6.
\textsuperscript{360} Thurschwell, "The Erotics of Telepathy," 198.
\textsuperscript{361} Thurschwell, "The Erotics of Telepathy," 198.
marriage we will keep this sixth sense, a metakinetic sense that entangles the physical and psychical, at the forefront.

_The Basics of Spiritual Marriage_

Ofori’s story of spiritual marriage is not unique. Every deliverance ministry is inundated with people seeking deliverance from spiritual marriage or sextifying about their deliverance from a determined spiritual spouse. The repetition of narratives of sex with demons in this chapter is an acknowledgement of the scope of the issue and signals the obsession with spiritual marriage that consumes Pentecostal spaces in Ghana. The idea of spiritual marriage, however, is not universal for all of pneumatic Christianity. It is most dominant in the West African hotbeds of charismatic Christianity (primarily Nigeria and Ghana) and in Central Africa, and also can be found in many non-African locales, including the United States. For example, not far from where I study in Texas an expert in spiritual marriage offers her services under the name Dr. Intimacy. However, spiritual marriage is largely unfamiliar to non-African-diasporic congregations in Europe and North America.

Phillip, one of Nikoi’s acolytes, was one of my primary guides through the world of spiritual marriage. He had thought a lot about spiritual marriage, prayed a lot about it and delivered a lot of people from it. He claimed that on any Saturday morning at the deliverance service the majority, up to seventy percent, of people were afflicted with spiritual marriage. This fact is no surprise because he also believes that spiritual marriage is the strongest of all the afflictions that plague human beings. He defined spiritual marriage as “a covenant between a

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deity, a spirit, with a human being who have come to an agreement and have sworn an oath that binds them to be lovers.” Consistent among all of the prophets and teachers in this dissertation was the idea that spiritual marriage involves sex with demons and that the sexual act is dreamy yet distinctly felt within the human body. Or as Phillip stated: “When a person sees himself or herself sleeping with somebody like a physical act of sex but in a dream.” Solomon, my friend who writes about spiritual marriage, added that “It is key to note that sexual affairs in your dreams is one of the most poisonous infusions you can ever have in life. Until you stay without sex in your dreams, you will always be a victim of marine slavery.” Finally, spiritual marriage is responsible for a variety of problems from relationship failures to sterility, as Solomon said, “it confuses your whole life and hands you over to destructive devils.” Most problems caused by spiritual marriages are related to relationships. Most commonly the spirits will frustrate people’s relationships and refuse to allow their partners to marry because the spirits are allegedly extremely jealous and wish to ensure that their partners are not physically fulfilled in marriage. As Phillip tells it, “Satan is against God’s commandment to be fruitful and multiply. And he is fighting men to disobey God so he doesn’t go to hell alone.”

The next chapter will more closely explore an enhanced sense of sight, but Phillip made it clear that an enhanced sight is necessary to understand spiritual marriage. He is convinced that everyone has spiritual marriage but that most people are simply unaware of this sexual curse on their lives. But as Solomon told me, “Not all evil spiritual marriages are unconscious. Many are very much aware of the fact that they are married in the spirit. They know when it started! They can tell the perfumery of their spiritual spouse. They have the details of the marriage. They enjoy that relationship more than any form of marriage.” For many involved in
a spiritual marriage, they are tormented, for they know it is considered sinful, but they also enjoy the intense sexual ecstasy the demons create. The pleasure is so intensely enjoyable that it often is described as feeling not normal or not natural. This is an important distinction. The vigor of the physical sexual sensations is not normal because it is supernatural. The sensations bear enough resemblance to the natural world still to be recognizable as sexual. But for the many who are unaware the reason is that “they don’t see it because their spiritual eyes are not open because they are not in tune with God.” If one does not have this “third eye” there is another way to see spiritual marriage: “If you see it in your dream at least God has given you a clue of what you are dealing with. So, when you see it, it means God is really talking to you because Job 33:15 says God speaks to us in our dreams.” Phillip went on to quote part of the verse stating, “For God speaketh in a dream, in a vision of the night, when sound sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings, upon the bed.” This emphasis on dreams is an important aspect of the sixth sense operating in the deliverance sensorium.

For my informants, sex with spirits often appears dreamlike, happening in the hazy, lusty moments between waking and sleeping. In those libidinous moments, spirits often take on the appearance of someone familiar, for example an old lover or a mother, and fulfill human lascivious desires. But true to the metakinetic model, even dreams are accompanied by physical sensations and movement. Those I spoke with described being awakened by various physical sensations from their spirit spouse: hands fondling genitalia, lips caressing breasts, tongues stroking vaginas, or burning hot seminal fluid.

Despite the dreamlike qualities, such encounters are considered real, existential experiences. “Spiritual marriage is real” is an oft-repeated refrain. Solomon took it a step
further and said, “There is nothing as real as spiritual marriage.” And these spiritual marriages are varied. As Ofori pointed out “At times spirits come in human form, in your dreams you see them like normal human beings like a nice lady coming to you. You can even see in that situation that you are in the hotel and you have to do something with the woman and before you realize it you will have done it.” But also, “At times they come as a snake, they come in different forms. Even some people it will come like a wind physically. You are there and then an unusual wind will blow under you meaning the spirit has come and had sex with you.”

The experience – dreamt or otherwise – is defined by all the physical sensations of whatever sex act is occurring. The sensations are embodied, the spirits are felt, and the marriages are permanent. Whether informants were describing sex with a spirit that was an animal (dogs, roosters, and fish being the most common), a human body they recognize, a body they do not recognize, or an invisible being, they always described how it felt in their bodies through a sort of extrasensory perception. Although the experiences may be different, that they were felt in the body was held in common: it was the spirits’ touch in the night; the hazy view of a spiritual being leaving a room; penetrations as pleasurable, painful, or both; or spiritual secretions from the spirit.

Also held in common was that despite being felt in the body, the spirits with whom these sexual liaisons took place belonged to another realm. This is why this chapter focuses on the ambiguous sixth sense. Throughout this work a variety of senses have been enumerated from touch, to movement, to hearing. But there is something more—the “more”. And we need to develop a way in which to talk about the operative sense in experiencing the more. It is hoped that metakinesis with its emphasis on the physical and psychical provides a way to talk
about this “more”. In charismatic Pentecostalism, there is a spiritual sense that is in tune – or not in tune – with the spiritual forces that fill the cosmos. It is not simply some ethereal sense but one that senses both the supernatural and the natural, while erasing any demarcation between those two realms. Physical laws do not apply in this realm, “Snakes, fish, cats and birds talk; birds mutate into old women, humans into walls and materialize and dematerialize at will; a fetus talks from the womb; headless bodies and skeletons walk around; special spectacles reveal the inner lives of others; men menstruate and become pregnant; a woman instantly grows a penis whenever marriage is proposed; a husband discovers on a wedding night that his wife is a hermaphrodite and has the legs of a lion; organs are surreptitiously changed to witchcraft organs; the dead arise” – are all experienced and felt in the physical.  

In many ways, Phillip believes it should be a relief that one receives sexual experiences with spirits because then all that is left is deliverance and counseling. As he says, “So, when you see it in a dream it means about 50% of the problem is solved because God reveals to redeem. So, when God reveals something it means God wants to do something about it.” But revelation only is meaningless without the accompanying deliverance. As Marianne, a woman who spoke very candidly about masturbation and spiritual marriage, said, “Spirits use sex because it is more intimate, there is blood crossing, so once they take that form it is very difficult for you to break. While if you don’t get a very strong spiritual man it will be very difficult to break from that. That is why I think they use sex.” Spiritual marriage does not only require any deliverance, it requires the skillful deliverance of an expert.

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At each deliverance service, Phillip finds it easy to determine who is in a spiritual marriage. Often, the deliveree will admit to sexual dreams. If not, their frustrated life opportunities will indicate spiritual marriage. The most obvious is deduction through manifestation as spiritually married people react in a particular way. Often it will involve screaming statements such as “I won’t leave her”, “I won’t go”, “Who are you to come take her?” or the least subtle, “I’ve been married to her for so many years.” There is a plethora of nonverbal cues as well: “the person might twist at the waist and talk about lust, they might act sexy with dancing so you know it is a spiritual marriage. They might play with the ring their spiritual spouse gave them.” Phillip was quick to point out that such manifestations do not happen by accident but are caused by the anointing of the deliverer. People manifest in spiritual marriages around him because of his high level of anointing. Baah added that he could smell out spiritual marriages, “Because you slept with a spirit, you smell like a spirit.” The various senses are primary in deliverance but clearly there is also a sense that reaches beyond this world at play.

In spiritual marriage, almost every sexual encounter with a spirit induces stimulation. The human actors experience supernaturally caused orgasms that are said to be more pleasurable than humanly initiated orgasms. As one woman who has had sex with a demon for decades stated, when she wakes up wet with vaginal secretions, she knows her spirit spouse has visited her. She believed that through intense orgasm demons induce and extract secretions and that sexual fluids are a sign of demonic sex. Alternatively, if she wakes up from a sex dream and is not wet, she knows that it was merely a sex dream about her human husband, who currently resides on another continent. The distinction is striking. Her spirit spouse, a
demon from whom she has tried for many years to be delivered, is experienced as more real, more physical, in her body and causes greater sexual pleasure than her human husband. At the same time, her spirit spouse cannot materialize in the same way as her husband can. The materiality of the spirit is complicated as it makes humans feel very material experiences while only possessing an ambiguous, temporary materiality of its own.

Linda van de Kamp has written about spirit spouses and ‘marido espiritual’ in Maputo, Mozambique and, similar to the argument here, notes that the spirit spouses have a complicated materiality. She spoke with women in spiritual marriages – women who were regularly visited in bed “by a man at midnight who has sexual intercourse with her.” Of course, it was not a man but a spirit. In fact, the women and pastors made it a point to emphasize that “there was no physical person involved but that women experience real sexual intercourse with their spirit spouse and that this is visible and can be proved, for example, by marks on the body.” One woman she spoke with was divorced by her earthly husband because of nightly visits from her spiritual husband. Her earthly husband was disturbed watching his wife having sexual intercourse with a spirit that he could not see manifest. He was disturbed by the metakinesis – the movement inspired by the psychical. But it was not only in the privacy of her home and the cover of darkness that the spirit spouse satiated its sexual needs, sometimes it was in public such as on public transport. This sexual encounter was caused by the spirit’s jealousy at the desirous way that men looked at her in public.

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366 van de Kamp, "Converting the Spirit Spouse," 517.
367 van de Kamp, "Converting the Spirit Spouse," 518.
The extent to which spirit marriages are common in Ghana is also documented in Onyinah’s *Pentecostal Exorcism*. He cites especially marriages to Maame Wata, the marine entity who dwells in the sea and can marry humans. As part of the covenant with Maame Wata people are rendered impotent and infertile on earth because they instead procreate spiritually with this goddess. He tells the story of Akosua, who he describes as a jilted lover. Akosua had sexual relations with “certain indescribable beings.”368 It did not matter if she was asleep or awake, in public or in private, as these beings repeatedly brought her to orgasm. She had bounced from prayer camp to prayer camp looking for deliverance succor but to no avail. Onyinah states that “She did not know whether or not she was a witch or even a normal human being.”369 This is a powerful statement; metakinesis can make one question one’s very being. It is, however, consistent with the claim in this dissertation that all of these sensual experiences of spirits is an important part of how Pentecostals define themselves.

Onyinah confidently reads Akosua’s story through a psychological lens. He states that:

Aksoua felt insecure as she was telling us her story. She looked very confused and unsure of her life and future. But her problem is one of the commonest problems facing the young women in Pentecostal/Charismatic circles. Being trained in a Christian home, having a perfectionist attitude toward life, but having a passionate nature, Akosua always had a conflict, apparently irreconcilable, between sexuality and Christian ethics. The greatest picture that comes out of Akosua’s images is that of a weak woman being sexually dominated, deceived and forced by a male’s strength to do this palpably dreadful feat, made to perform marvelous forbidden acts repeatedly and then being forsaken. Although she felt it was not right, she had been introduced to it and then rejected. As a woman in an Akan society, she could not force herself on anybody; all she could do was suppress her feelings. From the Freudian perspective, this may be termed as obsessional neurosis. The images that she sees clearly illustrate the sexual passion that almost consumes her. The indescribable figures, always ready to satisfy her, perhaps hit at her wish for

power and authority, where everything that has to do with yes or no is completely her choice.\textsuperscript{370}

This is an interesting reading but seems to ignore the incredibly embodied nature of Akosua’s experiences. These sexual experiences – her obsessional neurosis – extends far beyond her mind and are felt deeply in the body.

From his own fieldwork Onyinah cites another story. Bobby, who among other things practiced astral projection, had sex with a woman who later revealed herself as Mami Wata. He was then spiritually married to Mami Wata. This is a common refrain among Pentecostals. Note here that it is not through a dream but a real, human, fleshy woman who transmogrifies back into the guise of Mami Wata. But Bobby, unlike Akosua, experienced deliverance and used his own experience to become a leader at a prayer camp.\textsuperscript{371} Again, though, Onyinah confidently describes a psychological explanation: “Demonization or self-claimed witchcraft often offers the possibility of bringing out hidden and obsessive sexual desires; often such repressed desires are also reflected in people’s dreams. The personification of alleged witches in deliverance enables people to face and explain their problems and confront their hidden envy, jealousy, anger, or failure in this modern world from a safe distance. Thus, most of the “demons” and “witch spirits” exorcised center on deliberations of family issues, sexual desires and negative human behaviours which are conceptualized in the form of demons and witches.”\textsuperscript{372} Undoubtedly there is some truth to Onyinah’s interpretation, it remains, though, merely one way of understanding the connection between embodied experiences and spirits.

\textsuperscript{370} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 206–207.
\textsuperscript{371} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 204.
\textsuperscript{372} Onyinah, \textit{Pentecostal Exorcism}, 285.
Asmoah-Gyadu also cites a number of cases of spiritual marriage, especially to Mami Water. He states that, Mami Water, who is portrayed as having a female upper body with the tail of a fish, is often referred to in Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal hermeneutics as the “Queen of the Coast.”\(^{373}\) He cites Felicia’s marriage to Mami Water and her occasional orgiastic dreams. But, he adds, “Mami Water spirit not only appeared in her dreams, it also manifested when she was awake.”\(^{374}\) This ambivalence – dream-like and physical – constantly haunts the stories of Mami Wata.

Occasionally, spirits will be described as definitively material. For example, one woman told a prophet I interviewed about how exactly spirits accomplished their sexual goals. The woman’s story begins with her as a human. She was then initiated and lived under the sea as a marine spirit. Mami Wata initiated her and then commissioned her to go out to the churches of Ghana to sleep with pastors. At one particular church she accomplished her goal, having intercourse under the mango tree next to the church. But it was not what the pastor thought it was: “She confessed that the pastor didn’t have sex with her as an individual, but actually as a marine, with a ring as her private parts. You as the human will think that you are having sex with her private parts but actually it’s a ring and that ring pulls the semen. The moment the spirit takes your semen, the spirit controls you.” This is interesting not only because of its specificity but also because it ascribes a very material existence to the spirit. The spirit had a human body. But for the most part, apparitional paramours are described differently, understood to be something other than exactly a human body but something akin to

\(^{373}\) Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 172.
materiality. Sometimes this temporary materiality is witnessed as a ghostly figure but for some lovers nothing at all appears while the demon ravages their body.

Recently, in February 2018 a pastor from Emmanuel’s church sent me a video of a testimony that confirmed a similar story to the one above. A young woman cried, her voice cracking, while she sextified to Emmanuel about the power of his deliverance. As she told her story the crowd repeatedly reacted with disgust, but Emmanuel kept comforting her with the promise to protect her with the blood of Jesus. She admitted to being married to Mami Wata for over fifteen years. This claim received no reaction from the crowd – spiritual marriages to Mami Wata are relatively common. It was what Mami Wata required of her that drew out the gasps and groans of the congregation. Mami Wata requested that the woman bring her men’s semen. She claimed to have fed Mami Wata the semen of more than 45 men. As the story went she would fondle and tug at the men’s penises until ejaculation then collect the sperm in condoms. She would then relay that semen to Mami Wata who would immediately drink it to receive power from the semen. Sometimes, she pointed out through tears, if the semen amounted to too little, Mami Wata would punish her and demand more semen. Paul Gifford cited similar examples. In the testimony he witnessed, male sperm was allegedly “collected in sperm banks under the sea and used to create havoc in a man’s finances.” Poignantly describing what we are terming the metakinetic, Gifford states “The physical aspects of sexuality have especially mystical properties.”

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376 Gifford, ”Evil, Witchcraft, and Deliverance,” 117.
It is noteworthy that sex with spirits is felt in the body because pneumatic Christians believe (based on a reading of 1 Corinthians 6:18) that sex is the only sin that is embodied, and thus it is the most intimate of sins.377 As Phillip stated, “spirits use sex because sex is the most powerful tool in the human body.” Sex is the most effective way for evil spirits to bridge the gap between the supernatural world and the material world. It is how they are felt in the body. Ofori added, “Satan can use anything to covenant with humans but sex is the easiest. Even the great men of God in the Bible – David, Solomon – their weakness is sex, sex, sex! And even the men of God in society fall by that. That is the area that the Devil easily uses to get man into trouble.”

The source of spiritual marriage

The historical Christian lore around these sexual spirits primarily pivots around two sources: the spirit Asmodeus and the story of Genesis 6. Asmodeus is a spirit who appears most prominently in the Book of Tobit. His role as a spirit is to rule over the principality of sexual spirits. He is often considered one of the worst demons. The Malleus Maleficarum calls him the demon of lust, the devil of fornication. Although some Christian traditions consider it as “scripture”, Tobit is a book that pneumatic Christians do not consider as canonical. Despite it not being canonical and not being cited by anyone I interviewed, the story of Asmodeus in Tobit holds obvious parallels to the pneumatic Christian phenomenon of spiritual marriage and acts as a template for deliverance from sexually insatiable spirits. A prominent Ghanaian prophet described Asmodeus as the king of spiritual marriage.

377 “Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself.”
Tobit starts with a character named Tobias who desired to marry Sarah. This was a risky proposition as seven previous potential husbands had been murdered on the scheduled night of the wedding. The jealous lover was not human but a demon named Asmodeus, a kingly demon of lust. Asmodeus loved Sarah and had a vested interest in thwarting these men’s carnal desires. Although the story does not state whether Asmodeus slept with Sarah, he was at the very least invested in her sex life. The angel Raphael aided Tobias in avoiding becoming the eighth dead groom by exorcizing and binding Asmodeus. Asmodeus is not merely a mythical character bound to history by Raphael’s spiritual strength but remains a spirit spouse among charismatic Christians in Ghana, a spouse who refuses to allow human marriages to occur. Stories of Asmodeus get replayed with new inflections in the lives of the faithful. Asmodeus in particular is a helpful guide to how pneumatic Christians imagine and approach the supernatural as a terrifying, ambiguous possibility that can and does impinge on the quotidian elements of being human.  

Humans in spiritual marriages have less success in amorous relationships because their spirit spouses are jealous lovers. Sometimes with heartbreaking details of repeated failures, many people described to me how their spirit spouse was destructive to their loving relationships. In some cases, the spirit spouse would merely make it impossible to enjoy human company and sex. In other cases, the jealous spirit spouse would threaten the human lover with pain and death if they continued to sleep with the spirit spouse’s beloved. In extreme cases, 

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378 Homewood, “The Supersensual Supernatural.” I have written elsewhere at just how common these sexual relationships with demons are throughout Christian history. There is nothing new or exotic about such relationships which have persisted throughout Christianity in many locales.
human lovers disappeared completely at the behest of the spirit spouse. Jeanne Rey tells the story of a Congolese woman who would wake up to her husband lying on the floor. Neither husband nor wife could figure out why he was no longer in bed. It turned out that the woman was in a serious spiritual marriage. The jealous spirit spouse would eject the earthly husband from the bed in order to have intercourse with the wife. The spirit that slept with this woman was headless, but regularly had sex with the woman to the point where she could identify his “sperm on her body while taking a shower.” When deliverance was not receiving the desired results, the pastor went “to the couple’s house and prayed there so that the spirit cannot penetrate the house again.”

Asmodeus continues to work in these stories destroying, threatening, and dispatching human lovers.

If there is some ambiguity in the text about Asmodeus having sex with Sarah, there is no such confusion in the book of Genesis, specifically 6:1-4. A prominent pneumatic demonologist in Ghana told me that “the marriage of sons of God to the daughters of men in Genesis 6 is a pollution agenda. The products are pollution par excellence.” Amongst Ghanaian pneumatic Christians, it remains the primary textual source, and often the only textual source cited, for their theology of sexual spirits. In this text, the sexually insatiable “sons of God”—traditionally associated with some kind of lascivious angels—consorted with human women and produced giants. Early Jewish and Christian interpretations of this story concentrated on the sexual intercourse between fallen angels and humans. First Enoc expands on this story by adding specific details. Most pneumatic Christians would not be familiar with this book, but they do know the outline of the story well. Led by Semjaza and Azazel, a group of lustful angels were

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379 Jeanne Rey, “Mermaids and Spirit Spouses,” 70.
ejected from heaven and traveled to earth to have sex with human women. Solomon summarized it as: “These women were harassed sexually by these fallen angels and by that spiritual marriage was introduced into the human race.” The result of this encounter is the birthing of giants, which eventually led to the emergence of evil spirits, or demons. The demons are characterized by their desire and ability to seduce, promising a long future of demons having sex with humans.

Ofori had an entire biblical genealogy for spiritual marriage that started with Adam and Eve and continued into the present. Genesis 3 may have been the genesis of spiritual marriage: “when the devil came into the Garden of Eden that relationship there when you go deeper, you know in my own conscience, it is about spiritual marriage.” That is to say that Eve had a spiritual marriage – sex – with the serpent which was then passed on to Adam. Ofori confidently called that “the generation of spiritual marriage.” Things then got worse in Genesis 6 and it continued. Ofori continued outlining the genealogy with the intent to illustrate how spiritual marriage had infiltrated Jesus’ family. For example, he cited the story of Judah in Genesis 38. It is unclear exactly how he categorized that story as a spiritual marriage but he was adamant: “When you trace spiritual marriages they come through the generations. Jesus came to break spiritual marriages in his family.”

Nikoi used the New Testament to deliver what he thought was a clear pronouncement on how spiritual marriage works. Citing Romans 8:5 he stated “for they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the spirit.” But like most of the riddles Nikoi used to describe deliverance, I was left considering the ambiguity of spiritual marriage – spirits that simultaneously are after the flesh and the spirit. This begins
to get at the kind of sixth sense that I am referring to. There is no obvious material embodiment and yet despite this fact sex occurs. In fact, sex occurs not merely imaginarily but to the point where human – albeit giants – progeny are created.

While these historical Christian sources help shape the narratives of spiritual marriage, the real star of spiritual marriage is Mami Wata. Ofori clearly stated, “Mami Wata’s function is spiritual marriage. That is the key.” And like the spirits of the biblical stories, Mami Wata is imagined as having a body but is also extremely ethereal. Mami Wata, the most common sexual spirit in Ghana, is a mermaid-like spirit who dwells in the bottom of the ocean. This spirit sometimes is referred to as Mami Water, and shrines to her in Ghana are mostly located in the Volta region. For pneumatic Christians, she is a localized demon or succubus believed to be one of the fallen angels. As Birgit Meyer writes, Mami Water as a Christian Demon, is “Satan’s most seductive demon.”

Chimaraoke Izugbarra writes of Mami Wata’s abode that it is a “fantasy space located at the bottom of the sea, where money and commodities are generated in exchange for sex and sometimes blood.” The erotic Mami Wata uses her wealth and wiles to “bait her adepts into orgiastic sexual encounters.” After sex with Mami Wata or the equally seductive spirits under her control, the human lover can no longer have sex with other humans. It is part of the covenant and the consequences of breaking the covenant are severe and could include a descent into madness.

Mami Wata is usually represented as a woman. Prophets I spoke to described her fair skin, large eyes and fine, long hair. These features – clearly not African – have been interpreted as representing the seduction of modernity. When she manifests to humans her appearance is excessively beautiful, which plays a role in her attempts to seduce men and women. Or as Joseph, Kwofie’s junior pastor, told me, “Mami Wata is a person with details of a fish, the tail of a fish, but from the stomach up to head it is a woman, a very nice, fair in complexion. Normally you see her naked, to attract people she is like a magnet, you can’t even turn your eyes away. Slim, not big. Everything is accurate but you cannot figure out the beauty of her. You’ll begin to think about immoral things, sexual things. That might not even be in your mind but seeing her, because of that charming ability in her you will follow her.” Baah added that Mami Wata has a snake and is in charge of all spiritual aspects of sex.

But she is not just a woman, or even a woman at all, but a demon. Her gender is a mystery as she is able to woo both women and men into sexual intercourse. Sometimes interviewees referred to her as female, sometimes as male and sometimes neither but simply as a demon. She is not perceived as having ordinary genitalia but some sort of genital fluidity. Images of Mami Wata tend to gender bend, wrapping a snake in an erect phallic position around Mami Wata’s waist while also emphasizing her breasts. In this image neither gender is clearly inflected. Mami Wata is first and foremost a demon or a spirit and then bends gender to her whims and goals. The clearest evidence for pneumatic Christians that Mami Wata subverts traditional gender norms is that Mami Wata woos human spouses indiscriminately, gender having no influence over who she claims as a spouse.

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Pneumatic Christians in Ghana are greatly afraid of Mami Wata in large part because they understand or are sympathetic to her charms and seduction. In fact, it is something of an insult as at one church I saw a shirt that said in large block lettering: “Don’t be such a Mermaid!” They simultaneously despise her and are fascinated by her. The fear of Mami Wata can result in real tragedy. Izugbarra tells the story of a bridegroom committing suicide prior to his traditional marriage ceremony. The reason for this dramatic decision was his spiritual spouse, “a ‘mermaid’ contracted inside the water before his birth” had given him a dire warning that he was not to marry a human.³⁸⁵

Joseph was married to Mami Wata, who is the “ultimate perpetrator of spiritual marriage.” As he described it he ended up describing a sixth sense that somehow mediated between dreams and the physical. He told me:

You will do everything with Mami Wata, sleep with her, you will sometimes even see her physical in a body and form you like. It is not just a dream but sometimes it appears physically. I had a spiritual marriage with Mami Wata. So any time I would sleep the spirit would come. When she came sometimes she manifested as a very beautiful woman. I was with her for about two years.

Joseph was not immediately aware that his spiritual marriage was to Mami Wata. But he went to Ofori’s prayer camp and was instructed to do a forty day fast. As he was fasting and praying Mami Wata – or the physical manifestation of Mami Wata – began to behave strangely. The moment of apprehension though could not be any more clear: “I detected that this lady had something with Mami Wata. And lo and behold, I was with this lady on the bed and suddenly the lady changed to a fish from the waist downwards.” Immediately Joseph “sacked her.” I asked how such a thing is possible and he stated that “Though physically you see her as a

³⁸⁵ Izugbarra, 544.
woman but her spirit is from Mami Wata. The spirit cannot live without a body so they use our bodies as a chamber or habitat and dwell in that body.”

Joseph had thought a lot about spiritual marriage in his journey from married to Mami Wata to deliverance minister. He had particularly thought about the sort of lusty, hazy dream state that spirits utilize. He said, “Dreams are a point where they normally manipulate people and control their body. Dreams are a place where spirit and body meet. Dream land is where unclean spirits come in the body.” Joseph, unsurprisingly, sees deliverance as the means to destroy spiritual marriages. In particular, he does deliverance through the laying on of hands; “I put my hand on the person and pray that the body belongs to the Holy Ghost so now leave the body in Jesus’ name. I would make that declaration and the spirit will leave.” Interestingly for Joseph he does not see the spirit with his eyes, contrary to the entirety of chapter six, but “You lay your hand as a point of contact, they will feel like God is there.” And his words have power: “When you speak it is a fire, a fire comes out from your mouth and enters the person’s body. Sometimes you speak and its thunder. Sometimes you speak it’s a fire wind, and it will enter into the person and the unclean spirit in the person will be burnt at once.” Clearly some sort of sixth sense is operative here.

Solomon was my best guide through the world of spiritual marriages. I tracked down Solomon after I noticed a poster heralding a deliverance service by an expert in spiritual marriages. We met at a nice hotel and he brought with him all the books and literature he had written about spiritual marriage. He was an expert. We talked for hours about spiritual marriages. If there was anything he wanted to impress upon me it was the severity of spiritual marriage and the immense powers of Mami Wata. He said, “Mami Wata is like a mermaid.
Mami Wata is real, I want to be emphatic to you. Mermaid spirits are real. What do you mean by real? Real means that they live and are effecting people. I know people who serve tables for their spiritual husbands, they serve them food to come and eat.” This was a point to which he returned frequently. One of the ways he tried to impress upon me the reality of Mami Wata’s existence was scriptural citing Zechariah 9:4 as incontrovertible truth: “But the Lord will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea and she will be consumed by fire.”

Until that day, the power of the Queen of the Coast – the mother and authority of all spiritual marriages – has been released onto the earth. The power of spiritual marriage to Mami Wata is “very, very deep”, the power of seduction, lust and immorality. He added to this fearful warning, “My humble advice to you is that you never doubt the existence of spiritual marriage. You might not be experiencing one. That does not make it unreal.”

Perhaps getting at this capacious sixth sense I am trying to enumerate in this chapter, Solomon said to me, “The gateway to the supernatural is the natural.” For example, the body plays a major role in understanding and experiencing the supernatural. Spirits need bodies because they desire expression. Solomon calls this a sin, the giving out of one’s body to powers that are not God’s powers, “the sin made you exposed, vulnerable, fragile.” Solomon cited 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 to drive home the point that sex with spirits was sinful and defiling, that sex with demons gave demons dominion over one’s body.

Baah wanted to drive home a similar point as he told me about the scourge of spiritual marriage. First, he repeated that spiritual marriage is about sex, or as he said it “Spiritual marriage is about sex, sex, sex, sex!” He asked a spirit why if they want to do anything they accomplish it through sex. The spirit responded that it is because sex is very powerful. Then he
went on what appeared to be a brief tangent about spirits drinking human semen as a
covenant. “Sex,” he said, “is the easiest way to get something from your body to create that
covenant.” And then it became clear what he was trying to communicate, he wanted to make
clear that in sex with spirits there is this ambiguous relationship between the spiritual and the
physical. “Spirits take sperm physically,” he stated, “It happens spiritually but has a physical
component.” This is metakinesis. The sex happens physically with all its attendant fluids but it
is also spiritual, the spirited partner hailing from another realm.

Before describing some spiritual marriages from Ghana, it is worth noting that there is
nothing particularly unique about the idea of spirits and humans having sexual liaisons. Sex
with spirits is not a new phenomenon nor an archaic myth but is an oft-occurring experience.
Elsewhere, I have argued that indeed the precedents for spiritual marriage exist throughout
Christian history – and indeed many other religions. There is nothing exotic about the
relationships described here. For example, sexual experiences with demons have made
appearances on something as common place in the West as The Oprah Winfrey Show.

On April 30, 1987 Malachi Martin, Erwin Prange and Helen Chitwood appeared on The Oprah
Winfrey Show. Martin and Prange were exorcists, but Chitwood’s claim to fame was that she
had sex with demons during her midteens.386 More locally, various African religious traditions
in Ghana include spirits sleeping with humans.

*Deliverance from spiritual marriages*

Spiritual marriage can end only by exorcism or deliverance. Most deliverance services
include questionnaires that require the faithful to detail their and their families’ religious

history, their sexual history and their dream history. In other cases, the spirit does the revealing. For example, the spirit will reveal its religious origins pointing to very specific shrines or symbols of non-pneumatic religions. This is followed by prayers from the pastor. One prominent pastor described such prayers as a way of “penetrating the veil between two worlds.” Prayer is an analog to the sexual act with demons that penetrated the human body, bridging the gap between the supernatural and natural. Prayer attempts to separate both worlds that are sexually entwined.

After prayer, the pastor enacts the very physical rituals of deliverance. Often the pastor will lay their hands on the person being delivered, pushing against their forehead, lightly striking their stomach and sometimes even applying pressure to the genitals. This draws the spirit out, causing the person being exorcized to jump, spin, and spasm. The body moves excessively and is out of control and the cause of this is the demonic spirits associated with non-pneumatic religions. The pastor then physically acts out the divorce and murder of the spirit spouse by removing the spiritual wedding rings and slaying the spouse with imagined swords. The spirit often will speak to the pastor, outlining the lurid details of their sexual liaisons, and refuse to leave their lover. In one case of deliverance that I watched, a female spirit married to a woman defiantly screamed “I love her” again and again. Other common refrains were “she is my wife” or “she is my husband”. The deliverance only ends successfully once the spasming body is rendered docile and silent. The body under control is deemed free of the religio-sexual contamination.

Returning to the spiritual marriage that inaugurated this chapter, that of Prophet Ofori, the manner it closely follows this sequence of events is noteworthy. To begin, Ofori had sexual
dreams from which he would wake up every morning and notice that he had “physically discharged.” He described the sensuous ambiguity, “it happens in the spiritual but it is also physical so my situation was the worst situation. The worst type is when you have the thing in the spirit and then physically you see yourself discharged.” Spiritual marriage develops what Ofori calls a soul tie – a deep, spiritual connection to the body. The idea of a soul tie as tied to sexuality is a common feature of Evangelical and Pentecostal circles. As it developed deeper, spirits manifested physically, and the same spirits he was seeing in his dreams were taking him physically. He described it as, “When you haven’t been able to grow in the spirit of God that means there will be a vacuum in your spiritual system and the Devil will get to that vacuum and stay there. The Devil will compel you to do things that God hates. The Devil will entice you to do things you should not. Then the Holy Spirit will leave.” It was only through deliverance that he was eventually freed from his mad spiritual spouse. Only through deliverance was he able to cease having sex with this mad man with a large penis; “I had to get delivered from spiritual marriage through prayer, fasting and learning the word of God and then living for Christ.”

After he concluded his testimony about his own spiritual marriage he began to preach about the curse. His own testimony was not merely an anecdote but was a form of authentication. What he said about spiritual marriage could be trusted because he had experienced it. And ultimately what he wanted for his congregants was what he had received, deliverance from their wretched spiritual spouses. In a series of short sentences, his normal manner of preaching often punctuated by salutary phrases from the congregation such as “amen,” he stated, “May God release you this morning from any spiritual marriage. God proves

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387 Moultrie, Passionate and Pious, 23.
himself in our midst by demonstration of his power. The power of God can destroy every spirit
married to you.” Beyond his hopes to deliver everyone from their spiritual marriages he also
pointed out a number of interesting characteristics of spirit spouses to help his congregants
identify their own spirit spouses. Unsurprisingly, “the primary way to know spiritual marriages
is through sex in a dream.” But more interestingly, “In spiritual marriage dreams men perform
same as woman and women same as men.” Again, we witness the kind of gender-bending that
was evidenced with Mami Wata.

But, as we have seen elsewhere in the other chapters, the real climax was not this
teaching. Most of the people present already knew exactly what Ofori was sharing about spirits
being married to humans—it is accepted fact amongst pneumatics. Instead, what really
mattered, or what would really prove the prophet’s worth, would be when he delivered people
from the sexual curse. And so, he moved to a time of deliverance. There was nothing
extraordinary about this deliverance session. It was extraordinarily mundane, very similar
deliverance sessions happened at every church I visited. As the prophet began to pray, people
began to react to the power of the spirit. The first woman, dressed in a grey dress, to come up
screaming was immediately wrapped in a sheet, as is the norm, and placed on the large swath
of floor that is reserved for people reacting in the spirit. She screamed and writhed, the
contortions of her body making a zig-zagging pattern across the ceramic floor tiles. The
prophet let her scream for a few moments as three other women joined her creating a
cacophony of high pitched screams.

The prophet then walked down from his platform and addressed the spirit in a now
familiar manner: “Who are you? Who are you?”
Two ushers helped her to her knees, from where she continued screaming. She interrupted her screams to provide some information, but steadfastly refused to answer the prophet’s question. “Leave her alone,” she pleaded.

The prophet continued to implore her, “who are you?”, while lightly hitting her chest.

Again, the woman refused to answer but made it clear what the relationship was between spirit and human: “She is my wife! My Wife! My Wife!”

The other three women at the front of the sanctuary continued to writhe and scream in repetitive loops making it difficult to hear the interactions between the prophet and woman. Because of this the prophet tried repeating what she said, only further confusing who was speaking: the woman, the spirit, the prophet, the prophet repeating the spirit or the prophet repeating the woman.

The woman petitioned the prophet: “You will leave her to me. I am telling you to leave her alone.”

Neither the woman nor the prophet would move on in the script and it became quite repetitive with the prophet demanding the name of the spirit and the spirit responding incongruously with claims about marital status. Eventually the prophet tried to break the loop by tapping her on the head and demanding: “Identify yourself.” She responded: “Leave her alone. She is mine. I love her.” The prophet had seen enough and walked away. As he ambled toward the front row of the congregation he informed everyone in an unaffected manner, “She has a spiritual marriage. It stems from the fact that her mother is a witch.”

His episode with this woman was interrupted by one of the other women, clad in a purple dress, rising to her feet and aggressively trying to confront the prophet. She was
thwarted by the quick and strong movements of the ushers and the prophet’s bodyguard. They did not put the microphone anywhere near her face robbing her of the opportunity to speak. Instead she screamed. Loudly and incessantly she screamed. “Pow” the prophet yelled back as he hit her forehead with some force. Her docile body, no longer trying to fight the prophet, was lowered to the ground by two ushers. The triumphant prophet turned to the congregation and in a matter-of-face tone said, “she was married in the spirit because her mother and father belonged to a shrine for childbirth.” The link between childbirth and spiritual marriage is common. But perhaps most prominent amongst the reasons for demon-cum-human sex is an encounter with non-Pneumatic religions. And the encounter does not necessarily have to be experienced personally but can extend back into one’s family history. A common story is that one’s parents may have visited a shrine to offer up prayers and gifts in order to assure the birth of a healthy child. That child is then contaminated with the religion of the shrine. Or if a family has a priestly history in a non-Christian religion the contamination can be passed through the generations. Many have written about the ways in which Pentecostalism emphasizes a complete break with the past, and this certainly constitutes an example of that.388

He demanded that the congregation raise their hands. “Anticipate. Anticipate. Anticipate!” he yelled slowly and methodically. Having warned the congregation that deliverance was about to start en masse, he began from the front of the congregation. He stretched his hand out toward the congregation and yelled “Power of the Spirit! Power!” The volume of his shouting was overwhelming and the sound system screeched in response. He

388 Meyer, “Make a Complete Break with the Past.”
continued yelling about the power of the Spirit: “The Power is coming to you. Power. Receive Power! Receive Power! The Power to deliver you!”

With Ofori having sent the spirit of the power into the ether people began to react. People started falling out and screaming all over the expansive church building, followed by the mad rush of ushers running to catch those who are falling out. Usually people bounce, jump, or move in a frenetic manner before falling to the floor which gives the ushers just enough time to catch those moved by the spirit(s). However, sometimes they do not always arrive on time and early on this day a woman fell hard to the floor, cracking her head open on the ceramic tiles. There was a brief commotion around her as the puddle of blood pooled on the floor. She was carried out, dripping blood across the sanctuary and mops were procured to quickly clean up the mess. All the while, the prophet continued yelling “receive the power” as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

The number of bodies at the front of the church doubled and then tripled as the prophet blew into the microphone making a tornado-like wind sound that filled the sanctuary. “Power. Receive the power. The Power in Jesus’s name!” People just kept having fantastic experiences. One woman sprinted toward the front, bouncing high off the bodies that lay on the floor. Another tried to run away, sprinting toward the back until ushers could catch up to her and drag her back. The chaos only intensified when the prophet moved down from the platform to begin treating people on a one-on-one basis, moving quickly from person to person. As he moved down the row he yelled in the faces of each person “POWER! You are Delivered!” or “Your marriage is over. You are delivered” or “Your marriage is destroyed. You are Delivered!” He interspersed these deliverance claims with blowing right into people’s faces. As
he did so a woman in a black shawl confronted him. He screamed “power!” and stomped his left foot. He blew on her face which caused her to scream, lean backwards and then forwards at which point the ushers slowly lowered her to the ground. “Your marriage is broken,” Ofori celebrated.

Eventually the number of people at the front of the church dwindled. Ofori yelled a slow, sonorous “A-men” which marked the conclusion of deliverance. The crowd responded by clapping politely. The last few deliverees stood up, wiped themselves off and returned to their seats, their first few steps often unsteady. The whole deliverance event took approximately forty minutes and hundreds of spiritual marriages were broken.

When I spoke with Ofori about this deliverance session from so many spiritual marriages he presented a great amount of material that further elaborates this connection between the physical and psychical. He described in particular one case where he identified a person as being married to an ancestral spirit:

So, when the Holy Spirit is present the Holy Spirit comes to deliver. So, when I stand there to minister he can reveal to me that there is someone here with an ancestral spirit that is worrying him. Immediately, I speak about it you see the person will fall down. That is a struggle between the ancestral spirit and the Holy Spirit that is coming to cast it out, that is why the people fall. There is like two elephants fighting. So, the power of God comes to bring deliverance then Satan will try to resist and then there is a battle and after the battle the person is set free. So that is why you see people screaming and falling.

In this quote, we see some of the metakinetic. There are these spirits sensed in the body fighting like elephants that result in dramatic physical manifestations. Ofori added, “The spirits come and stay in the physical body, so if the spirit is being ejected the body will react. And the body will feel it too. The spirit and the body will feel it.”
Ofori continued to describe why, with a messianic flourish, he could deliver people: “The presence of God is on me because at the day of Pentecost when you read the scripture it says ‘the Spirit came on them and then the Spirit filled them.’ So once the Spirit has come on you and filled you, you are God.” But what was really interesting as Ofori talked about deliverance was when he described his own deliverance techniques. Again, in his description, he points toward a sixth sense, a sense that is able to perceive something more. He said:

> When I blow, use my eyes, touch them, it is the same results but different methods. You understand me. I believe that when I blow air I am blowing fire into the person. And because the presence of God is with me and I believe in the presence of God, the power of God, the fire of God, if I believe what you believe in is what happens. So, if I blow the air the air enters the person as fire and the fire works in the person. The person feels fire in the body.

The metakinetic works on a number of levels. First there are the prophetic metakinetic actions. He blows, he looks, he touches and when he does these things something psychical happens. He sees into peoples’ lives, identifies their problems and then deals with it by applying something supernatural such as blowing fire. But then there is the metakinetic sensations of the deliveree who actually feels this supernatural fire as fire in the body.

*Married to Jesus?*

Having delivered the congregants from evil spiritual spouses, Prophet Ofori Okai instructed the congregation that they needed to “Enter a spiritual marriage with Jesus.” The crowd cheered at this possibility. Ofori told them “Jesus is going to be your spiritual marriage. You will enter a soul tie with Jesus.” This is interesting language in the context of spiritual marriage. In the context of Christianity, Jesus frequently makes an appearance as the bridegroom for whom Christians should wait. Phillip, with Matthew 25 in mind, said “we are married to Jesus Christ only.” Likewise, Nikoi, in the middle of delivering a woman from a
spiritual marriage, yelled “Jesus, come and marry her” before launching into a sermonette about Matthew 25. Ofori told me, “God loves us so He married us. Spiritual marriage is not all evil. The original spiritual marriage is what we have as Christians to enjoy.” In conversations with Ghanaian pneumatic Christians, this relationship was often referred to as a positive spiritual marriage, the ideal supernatural human exchange. I frequently asked how one differentiates between good and bad spiritual marriages, and the most common response was that betrothal to Jesus does not involve sexual intercourse; it is an asexual relationship. Or as Ofori stated, “The Bible says Isaiah 54:6 Your creator is your husband, that is why they say we are Christ’s bride. As a Christian we are married to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not have sex with us, it marries us to help us.” This is the opposite from spiritual marriage to evil spirits which is always explicitly sexual.

This sexual demarcation between good and evil spiritual marriages has not always been the case for pneumatic Christians. Sean McCloud has curated a number of occasions in which people explicitly articulated a sexual connection to the Messianic bridegroom. One woman shared about being aroused by Jesus and taken to the bridal chamber of love. The beauty of the experience convinced said woman that it was God loving her in a unique manner. Another group of intercessors all had the same dream “in which Jesus appears and begins to touch them physically and sexually.” Of course, each of these examples had their naysayers who believed that such sexual interactions must necessarily be from demon lovers and subjected the women to deliverance. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that some find the experience too

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beautiful to be imagined as demonic. While I found nobody in Ghana who articulated marriage to Jesus in sexual terms, almost everyone I interviewed was adamant about the pleasure—extreme pleasure—that resulted from the sexual encounters with demons.

_No More Sheets_

One of the women who was delivered in Ofori’s crush of bodies was Dorcas. In her own sextifying to me she brought up one of the most popular preachers on sexuality, Juanita Bynum. The African American preacher has global appeal and her works can be found throughout Accra. Dorcas, in particular, found great appeal in Bynum’s message. This attraction to Bynum extends Marla Frederick’s finding, that black women are influenced by televised messages in making sexual decisions, to Africa. Dorcas told me that she had an insatiable appetite for fornication. She simply could not stop. But one day with a friend they listened to Juanita Bynum’s famous 1997 “No More Sheets” sermon given at a packed Dallas Convention Center. Of the famed sermon Dorcas said, “what she was talking about was what I was experiencing.” But not exactly. Bynum’s sermon is about her licentious sexuality before finding God. Dorcas was talking about spiritual marriage. It was sex with spirits that she could not stop, sex with spirits that she used to try to fill her longings, sex with spirits in which she tried to find a partner. But she found in Bynum’s oft-repeated refrain “No more sheets” a freedom that she desired. About that same time, she heard a voice directing her to Ofori’s prayer camp. She immediately went to the camp and started a fast. During deliverance, she realized that her

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392 Moultrie, _Passionate and Pious_, 34.
393 Moultrie, _Passionate and Pious_, 27.
family was cursed and that though she was a virgin physically “even a virgin can have a spiritual marriage.”

Another woman delivered in this dramatic service was Abigail. She came to Ofori’s prayer camp because of her spiritual marriage to a woman whose face was concealed. This woman, an old woman with a man’s penis who Abigail did not recognize repeatedly visited Abigail’s dreams and had sex with her. Abigail said, “The only way spirits can get me is through sex. I don’t know why they use sex. I don’t know why.” She did not wait long before racing up the mountain from Accra to Ofori’s camp, desperate for these experiences to stop. Upon arrival, she met with Prophet Ofori and he instructed her to partake in a twenty day fast. As he does with every visitor, he provided her with a sheet filled with deliverance prayers. One of the instructions reads: “pray against your spiritual husband or wife and destroy the strange children or babies you’ve seen in your dreams.” She did so. But it was the prophet’s prayers during the deliverance service that finally broke the marriage, “And now when she tries to come to sleep with me the angel of the Lord hits her and she goes back and is not able to have sex with me.”

Gifty too had been under spiritual attack through a spiritual marriage and had spent years at Ofori’s camp. She was adamant that “it was not normal. As I am saying it somebody might think it is just a dream or a nightmare but I am talking about reality, what I experienced personally.” She spent such a long time at Ofori’s camp because all she wanted was deliverance. She knew she was in a spiritual marriage even though she could not see the spirit sleeping with her. She could not see the spirit, “but you’ll feel something.” Most especially she said “I felt something going on in this thing” while pointing to her vagina. The spirit taunted her by reminding her how much she enjoyed it, but she could not even describe what she was
enjoying. Anxious about the repeated experience of sleeping with this bodiless spirit she prayed that God would reveal the spirit. She dreamed that she was in a car with a driver who “was not a normal human being.” Eventually this being told her that she was his wife. That was when she realized that this was her spiritual husband from whom she needed to be delivered. She was delivered when Ofori tapped her on the head and told her she was delivered. When we spoke, she had not had sex in her dreams since Ofori touched her. When I asked her why spirits use sex to access humans she said, “I think spirits use sex because when a man and a woman have sex spiritually they are connected. So, they use sex so that they become one with you because as you have sex something goes out of you and enters the person. So, they use that to pollute you so they can delay you in life.”

That is Deliverance

A couple of deliverance episodes from Emmanuel’s church are noteworthy not because of their uniqueness but because of their ubiquity and commonness. In many ways, they mirror some of the elements we have already seen from Ofori’s deliverance service. Emmanuel’s episodes, though, tend to provide more narrative than some of the other prophets and for that reason I will include a couple exemplary deliverances for analysis.

About sixteen minutes into his deliverance session Emmanuel identified a woman as having a relentless spiritual marriage. Immediately after Emmanuel identified the problem, the spirit began to speak through the woman: “I made her have children with different fathers and she worries. She keeps crying and I’m the one who enters her when she cries. She has been running around for solutions and here she’s got it...You are unburdening her and why do you do that to me? Bishop, why are you disturbing my peace? She is married to me.”
As is common, Emmanuel demanded the spirits identity: “Who are you?”

She replied: “I’m an idol spirit from Akuapem; her hometown.”

Emmanuel continued his line of questioning: “what have you done?”

She responded with a fine description of how spiritual marriage works: “I’ve married her...I keep sacking her suitors and no man will ever marry here. I keep putting scary masks on her face to scare away her suitors...I make her suffer. Why are you disturbing my peace? Leave me to see clearly! Ah. Why? I am getting tired. Just leave me alone.” The statement was followed by extremely labored breathing.

Emmanuel was unimpressed by the speech. “Are you done talking?” he asked while leaning against his second-in-command, his forearm resting heavily on Prophet Baah’s shoulder.

The spirit was not done talking, “I’ve really destroyed her. All her sisters are beautiful, yet not married. No one marries in the family.”

Emmanuel asked again, “Who are you?” The question must be asked repeatedly because of the spirits’ unwillingness to give up their identity as such a revelation leads to their death.

She responded with a lengthy diatribe: “I do not mention my name. She’s been to many prophets but yet I do not mention my name to them. I’m from her hometown. No one marries in the family, yet she wants to. When she marries, she’ll travel abroad and I do not want her to go. I want her to stay back here and struggle to death.” To which the crowd gasped audibly.

“I’ve vowed not to allow her to marry and she’s been going around until now. She comes from a family of idols and no one is to marry from there. She’s more glorious than all others in the
family, so she can’t marry. She’s a hard worker and ought to have made it in life but I drag her behind. I keep putting scary masks on her face to scare away her helpers. Leave me and let me sit. Why are you bothering me like this? Leave me. Why are you disturbing me like this? Why have you surrounded me as if I’m in some fire? Allow me some space to think.”

Emmanuel and the women went back and forth until Emmanuel asserted himself, “Listen to me. With the power vested in me by Jesus, my father, I dissolve your marriage.” The pastors around him chimed in with an “Amen.” Emmanuel continued, “I restore whatever you have destroyed back to her.” Again, followed by a chorus of “amen.” Finally, Emmanuel warned her “Do not come back to her again in the name of our Lord Jesus.” Following this he moved toward her, hit her and made a “Poof” sound into the microphone. She immediately fell down crying, claiming “I am gone and I will come to her no more. You have put a blazing fire around her!” Out of fear the woman sitting next to the delivered woman jumped up. Emmanuel again pushed her face and said “Poof! Do not come again.” She was left lying on the ground in tears.

Another day, eschewing his normal suit and opting instead for a white shirt and bowtie combination, the prophet stared over the center section of the congregation and then to the back. Pointing at a mass of people assembled at the back he said, “that beautiful sister at the back; the fat one with the round earrings.” From the throng emerged a woman wearing green pants, a white t-shirt and large hoop earrings. She walked toward Emmanuel.

“Your time has come.” Emmanuel said repeating an oft-used phrase. She reacted by clenching her eyes and teeth, scrunching up her face and raising her right hand. “Your time has come,” Emmanuel repeated himself. “I am praying to God to help you, so you can abandon
certain things you do, for your family to know that you serve a living God,” he added in Twi before realizing a confused look on her face. “Do you understand Twi?” he asked. After ascertaining that she spoke English he had another prophet translate his Twi phrases to her.

“Tell her there is a beast before her and also another behind her. If she wants to quit her spiritual marriage, the beasts are there to stop her so she’ll never quit. So, I’m going to take off the beasts for God’s purpose for her to work!” he declared. “Lift up you two hands.” he instructed her. She lifted up her two hands and as soon as they were raised to the height of her face, Emmanuel moved toward her, yelled “Pooof!” into the microphone while hitting her on the forehead. Her neck snapped back dramatically. Her body followed the trajectory of her neck, falling toward the ground where it was caught at the last second by the ushers and gently placed on the ground. This was not the end though. Emmanuel continued: “Today, fire must eat up this body and free it from Satan and his spirits.” “Out of this body!” he demanded of the spirits.

As Emmanuel spoke the woman sat up with a pained expression on her face. Emmanuel appeared perturbed, “You should move away from her. Her claws are beastly and can hurt you.” She stood to her feet and Emmanuel panicked yelling “Move, Move, Move!” Quickly the ushers sprung into action, pushing people up and out of their seats and away from the threatening claws of the woman. She dramatically shook her head at the commotion.

“Who are you?” Emmanuel queried – a question that is now a familiar tactic at drawing the spirit out.

“Ah! You are asking me, why?” she responded

“Who are you?” Emmanuel repeated.
“No.” she responded defiantly. “I am not in the mood. Asking me who I am, for what? You know what, this girl...okay...okay...let me explain something. As you can see her, she is my wife.”

“She is your wife?” Emmanuel asked.

“Yeah. I love her.” she confirmed.

Emmanuel, as is his custom, sought more information, “How many years have you been married?”

“Oh, I’ve been married to her since she was a baby. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.” she said.

“What is your name?”

She refused to answer: “I am a giant man.”

Emmanuel, with an extraordinary politeness, implored her, “Can you please mention your name.”

She remained steadfast in her refusal: “My name. Why? You people like to disturb.”

She laughed deeply, pivoted toward the back of the sanctuary and began walking away from the prophet.

“Look at me!” Emmanuel yelled, retracting the previous civility. She continued to try to walk away but the ushers turned her around and dragged her back to Emmanuel. As they did, Emmanuel continued to warn: “Be careful of her claws because she’s turned into a beast.” This narrative quickly disappeared, the beasts having been around her, then being her and then not present.

Emmanuel turned to the woman and with a prophetic arrogance asked, “Do you know the person you are talking to?”
She summarily dismissed him: “Who are you? Hmmm. Ha! Now I am looking at you. What? You can’t do anything to me!” Again, she laughed derisively.

Emmanuel turned to the congregation and said: “I don’t want to give you details of what the spirit uses her for.” As he often does, Emmanuel skilfully used the guise of discretion to titillate. Even though Emmanuel would not be specific, one could begin to imagine the lurid sexual depths of this woman’s interaction with her spirit spouse. If most sexual acts are easily shared in deliverance and testimony, how base must this woman’s marriage to the demon be?

The woman responded by saying, “She has been my own for a long time. Can you deliver her?”

Emmanuel, always confident, said, “I can deliver her.” He did not waver.

“No!” she shouted. “The last time your junior pastor tried and then I entered her. For like two weeks she was delivered and then I entered her” she said, pointing her thumb at her vagina and gyrating. Despite the discretion in the discourse, there was no doubt that this woman was involved sexually with this demon. She continued, “She is my wife. She likes to bath outside in the night and then I enter her. You don’t know if you’ve delivered these people sometimes because they like to bath outside in the night and then we will enter them. You don’t know, we always possess them at night!”

Emmanuel took her soliloquy as an opportunity to jump in and lecture the congregation, “You cannot bath in the open because when you do so, any passing spirit can marry you by lust.” He returned to the woman in need of deliverance: “Listen to me.”

“Listen? What? I don’t have time for you. Please, please, please,” she responded.
“The Lord has said; her time has come.” Emmanuel repeated the promise that inaugurated the whole episode.

The spirit spit out a sexual threat, “When this girl gets back to her place she has no idea what I will do to her. She will never forget me. Stupid girl.” The spirit added, “I possess her to destroy her.”

Emmanuel was ready for this to be over, tired of the threats and dismissals of the spirit. “Leave her” he instructed the ushers. She immediately ran toward the front of the sanctuary. Near the front she fell backwards screaming. On the ground, her legs and arms were outstretched creating a star shape. “It is done,” Emmanuel announced confidently with a smirk.

When she stood up and continued to manifest Emmanuel continued the deliverance. “She is delivered by Jesus. Buh-bye. You will go. You will go! I send Holy Ghost fire to burn you. I will send Holy Ghost fire to burn you. Leave this body! Out!”

“I will not go. I married her,” she said, with less conviction and force than she had previously.

“Out of this body! Out of this body! Jesus!”

She began spinning. “I will go,” she repeated four times. She spun faster and faster and then fell to the ground, unmoving, delivered.

As she slowly got to her feet, Emmanuel asked her, “what happened to you?”

She could only recall part of the story, stating that, “I was sitting there and you asked me out.”

“Then what?” Emmanuel pressed.
Flummoxed, she replied with “I can’t remember.”

Proudly and yet casually Emmanuel announced, “That is deliverance.”

This inability to remember what happened in deliverance is further evidence that there is some sort of sixth sense involved. In another example, I spoke with Richard. Richard received deliverance from Emmanuel one Wednesday morning, but we actually met at Ofori’s prayer camp since he lived nearby. Talking over the din of the prayer camp – people going about their daily rituals – we discussed his spiritual marriage. His sex dreams were varied. Sometimes he would be making love to a person without seeing the person’s face. Sometimes he would be visited sexually by a “small boy, sometimes an old man.” Sometimes it was an old woman with male genitals. And sometimes it is Mami Wata, “I don’t know the lady but I’ll have sex with that spiritual marine.” Sometimes it was a dream, but sometimes “the dream became real.” As he described it, it was “normal sex, they ejaculate and it’s pleasurable...more pleasurable than physical sex and then they leave.” Marianne said something similar about the sex with spirits that she had, and enjoyed: “Mine was always normal with ejaculations and everything. Just like having sex with your boyfriend.”

And while the spirits manifest in different forms he always wakes up “all wet.” He was confused as to why spirits use sex to access humans saying, “Why do spirits use sex? I don’t know, only God knows.”

On this particular Wednesday Emmanuel chose Richard from the crowd. He was sitting near the front on the right-hand side. That is all that he remembered of deliverance. He was only aware of his own deliverance because he had watched the service replayed on Emmanuel’s TV station. It was not a particularly dramatic deliverance moment. Emmanuel
asked him “How many times have you slept with women spiritually?” Richard answered, “many, oh, many.” Emmanuel quickly touched him and Richard fell to the ground. As Richard lay on the ground Emmanuel prayed that “Every fetish priest who is married to him, get out.” Emmanuel turned to the audience and said, “Thank you Jesus.” However, Richard did not remember any of these happenings, he had only become aware by replaying the scene many times on his television. That is deliverance, though. The metakinetic sense does not necessarily reveal everything, but is always operative, for example, as Richard’s body fell to the floor in this deep spiritual haze.

**Conclusion**

This is how a carnal idea dramatically unfolds in deliverance ministries, by reaching deep into the cosmos and connecting that spiritual depth to the body in intimate ways. We have called this metakinesis, or a sixth sense. As I have with each of the other ethnographic chapters, I end with a prayer shouted by Nikoi: “Any spirit that claims me as wife and makes love to me from the marine world, your stronghold catch fire! Any seed they’ve deposited in me, I take it out! Any spirit that sleeps with me for sex. Die! Die! Perish!” He immediately followed this up with a related thought: “Anything that gives you orgasm outside of god’s plan for sex is a spirit.” This is what spiritual marriage is, sexual spirits using human bodies to satiate their sexual needs. We have seen throughout this chapter, and we will also in the next, the manifold ways that spiritual marriage manifests. But this metakinetic sense remains. A sense that is at once embodied and yet reaches into the more providing a pleasure that is at once recognizable as human and yet transcends those parameters.
Chapter 6 – Seeing Animal Sexuality

“We have eyes that we work with here.” – Prophet Baah

A woman slithered this way. There was a mini-stampede as people rushed to get out of her way. She then slithered the other way, sending a whole new group of congregants spilling out of their seats. “Look at the snake in motion” Emmanuel instructed the congregation. Everyone watched, staring intently, terrified by the women’s movements. But what were they watching? What were they seeing? As we will learn throughout this chapter, Emmanuel was not speaking metaphorically. He did not instruct the congregation to look at the woman moving like a snake. He instructed them to look at the snake. He redoubled his efforts when he rhetorically asked, “have you seen the snake?”

Emmanuel followed this by detailing the simple plan for his pastors to defeat this spirit: “Cut of her head.” The pastors sprang into action, swinging wildly at the throat and neck of the woman. Again, what did they see? They saw a snake, they held machetes as they enacted this violence against the serpentine spirit. I was not seeing what they were seeing, as their eyes bulged with intent, never straying from the slithering spirit.

Emmanuel later that week described to me the events of the day in very literal terms. Snake spirits always want to appear physically. On that day when he delivered the woman, “a snake appeared physical.” But what does that mean when all I saw was a woman acting as a snake? He explained, “You will see the deliverer as a human person there but as prophet or pastor the Lord God will open your eyes so that you will see that the one lying there is not human, you will see the snake. I see it in a snake form. That is why when I say I’ll cut off your head I see the head cut off.” The difference is apparently in my lack of faith.
The sense of sight is central to deliverance. It is so entwined that all the preceding chapters have, to varying degrees, been unable to describe the primacy of other senses without significant reliance on sight. But the sense of sight in deliverance is not the same as the detached enlightenment gaze, in deliverance the sense of sight is an enchanted one that is able to make people see and feel fantastic things, even change the way their body moves and occupies space. This enhanced sight not only alters how bodies occupy space, but in fact what those bodies appear as.

*Why Spirit Animals?*

There are a variety of explanations for the appearance of spirits as animals. Kwofie explained to me that demons struggle to maintain the human form for very long. When Satan and the angels were cast out of heaven they lost the ability to maintain the human form. The animal form is much easier to maintain. He went on to explain that the animals also have an ancestral element. He pointed out that, “In Ghana, some believe that the dog is their ancestor, so they [the spirits] come as a dog. Some believe that a bird is their ancestor so they come as a bird.” The spirits are attendant to one’s personal beliefs and use that to their advantage. Snakes in particular are common because in Kwofie’s estimation “90% of the deities in Africa are represented by serpents.” He went on to explain why snakes appeared to himself and the reasons were even more varied. First, his family believed that the snake was their ancestor. Accordingly, when he was born a large snake appeared and placed saliva in his mouth. But it is not traditional beliefs that exclusively make sense of the commonality of the serpent, he always returned to the snake as a part of Christian history: “Satan is a serpent, he appeared in the Garden of Eden as a serpent so that is how it is.” Nikoi agreed with Kwofie, “the snake is right
from the Garden of Eden.” But also, “most of the time if the family worships snake – as a symbol of their god – any time the spirits come it can come in that appearance of a snake.” Furthermore, witches and wizards turn into animal forms temporarily to carry out diabolical acts. And finally, Nikoi added, “the snake is a very carnal animal.” For Baah the snake is a deceiving animal that particularly torments fornicators: “Gayism, lesbianism, masturbation, it is always a snake spirit.” But also, every person has a spirit animal, “so, if the person, if the evil spirit wants to get connected to you he will look at you and see the kind of your spiritual animal that it will be easier to get connected to you. Then he will turn into that animal.” The spirit will turn into that animal and pursue you sexually. Meyer captures this ambivalence of the snake symbolism:

Traditionally, at least for the Ewe, the snake symbolizes fertility. A woman who dreams that she has been bitten by a snake is said to soon become pregnant...Alongside these positive associations the snake has also been imagined as one of the animal shapes a witch might take. This negative image has been strengthened with the introduction of the Christian account of the Fall, which depicts the reptile as a representation of the Devil. Hence the snake has developed into a highly ambivalent creature linked alike with the positive value of the continuity of life and the destructiveness of witchcraft and the Devil.394

As such, Kwofie’s and Nikoi’s descriptions of the snake as coming from the Garden of Eden and tradition are perfectly emblematic of the symbolic power the snake now possesses in Ghana.

In Akan traditional beliefs, there are some beliefs that relate to animals but not all of them apply to the fantastic deliverance cosmos. Madeline Manoukian writes of one particular phenomenon:

Animals, plants and trees are believed to have spirits but many are considered of little account because they have no power for evil. Those animals which have a powerful ṣasa (the bad, revengeful, hurtful element in a spirit; that part which

must be ‘laid’ or rendered innocuous) are designated as *sasa mmoa* (beasts with sasa): they include the elephant, the bongo, the duiker, the roan, the waterbuck and certain others. When a hunter kills any of these, special funeral rites are held for the animal.  

Due to *sasa* these animals are not to be treated carelessly. Clearly this phenomenon does not apply in this case as we are not dealing with material animals. But the belief that animals or *sasammoa* could have a bad, revengeful, hurtful spirit persists.  

Another belief that deals with the threat of supernatural animal forces amongst the Akan is that Northerners are able to transmogrify into hyenas and werewolves. The Akan were quite afraid of this power of shapeshifting, which they linked to witchcraft and the practice of *bayi*, or soul-eating. While I did not encounter this particular belief or any hyenas or werewolves, John Parker correctly notes that in Ghana and greater West Africa “the ontological boundary between people and animals was highly porous.” This point is useful moving forward. The boundary between animal and human is ambiguous, unstable, and volatile. This necessarily shapes notions of the body and spirit. As we interrogate the boundary between animal and human we must keep this kind of fluidity in mind and discard bounded concepts of human bodies.

More appropriate to the cases in this chapter is the widespread belief that witches can turn into any animal that suits their environment and desires, including but not limited to

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396 Atiemo, “Mmusuyi and Deliverance” 5–9.
398 Parker, "Northern Gothic," 358.
399 Parker, "Northern Gothic," 366.
400 Parker, "Northern Gothic," 367.
poisonous snakes, fish, lizards, cocks, dogs, soldier ants, antelopes, tigers and lions. Onyinah refers to these witch-spirit animals as *nahomoa*. For example Hans Debrunner cites a Ga story in which a witch transmogrifies from owl to a snake and then was defeated by a medicine man and changed back into a naked woman. The snake is the most frequent choice and is intimately involved in the witch’s initiation. According to Debrunner to become a witch you “go into the bush together with a witch who has become tired of her witchcraft. You both strip yourselves naked, bow down and let anus touch anus. Then a snake will leave her body and enter yours, and you have become a witch.”

Deliverance manuals tend to emphasize biblical precedents. Peter Horrobin cites both Genesis 3 and Luke 10 as exemplars of demonic manifestations in the form of animals. But there is no biblical precedent for the scope of animals represented in deliverance:

Certainly we have seen many demons manifest during deliverance as snakes or scorpions. People have finished up slithering across the floor in an incredibly snake like manner, or with their backs bent so far over that the tail of their spine resembled the sting of a scorpion. It seems as though these are the commonest animalistic manifestations, being part of the basic character of the demonic. In addition to these we have experienced almost every possible animalistic manifestation you can think of. Innocent looking girls have suddenly become fierce tigers as the Holy Spirit has exposed hidden demonic power. Demonic lions, bulls, dogs, rams, goats, cockerels and many, many more have surfaced and been dispatched in the name of Jesus.

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402 Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 204.
404 Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana*, 60.
As always, the difference between manuals of deliverance and the practices outlined in this dissertation is that in practice exegesis is deemed superfluous and experience is the ultimate arbiter. To be clear, this requires an interesting theological elasticity for Pentecostals. In most Christian traditions animals are presumed to possess a prelapsarian innocence through creation. This innocence is not presumed in Pentecostalism.

*The Serpent at the Back*

Returning to the scene that inaugurated this chapter, Emmanuel called all those struggling with spiritual marriage to the front of the church. There was a dramatic and immediate crush of people rushing toward the stage. Hundreds of people filled the area in front of the stage and spilled into the aisles like overflowing tributaries. That this is unremarkable is actually remarkable. Hundreds of people, a significant portion of the congregation, by moving forward were marking themselves as sexually involved with a spirit or spirits. As people continued to spill into the aisles, eager to confess their sexual liaisons with spirits, the prophet asked them to raise their hands. With everyone’s hands raised, swaying to the music, the worship band belted out a heartfelt worship song. Before the pastors were set loose to do battle with these sexual spirits Emmanuel engaged in a repeat-after-me prayer. Prophet Emmanuel stalked back and forth along the top stair of the stage scanning out over the crowd, his eyes darting back and forth. It appeared as if he was looking for something or someone in particular. In stunted sentences, short enough to be copied, the prophet led the congregation through a prayer of deliverance. Those possessed of the sexual spirits through spiritual marriage responded by repeating every sentence, creating the kind of droning buzz of a crowd trying but failing to speak in unison.
“Raise your hands and say Jesus.”

“Jesus” the crowd yelled.

“Say Jesus” he repeated.

“Jesus!” the crowd yelled louder than their first effort.

The rest of the prayer followed that pattern, the possessed repeating everything the Prophet said: “Spiritual sex and marriage. Has tormented me for a long time. It has brought to me much evil. And blocked my fortunes. Today. If Prophet Emmanuel. And his pastors. Touch me. Let that spirit. Vanish! Vanish! In Jesus’ name.” The prophet’s final instruction to those in sexual relationships with demons was, “tell Jesus to touch you as we pray.” He promised, “You’ll be free”. Again, we see the primacy of the tactile touch as freeing.

With the prayer-filled niceties over the pastors sprung upon the crowd, starting from the front. As the pastors pushed on foreheads, struck stomachs and engaged in all sorts of other physical exchanges for the sake of deliverance the prophet stood abeyant on the stage. From time to time he would engage, but only ever from a distance releasing a piercing scream of *apue* – come out or release – or imitating throwing something with his left hand. His eyes continued to scan the proceedings, watching carefully the reactions as they occurred.

As some in the front row started to spin out of control, knocking around those near them and causing the crowd to sway and swell in various directions the prophet pleaded for “strong men sitting idle” to help restrain the excessive and exuberant bodies because “some of the manifesting spirits are very strong.” And while bodies continued to spill out, fall and swing wildly, nothing matched the chaos of the first few minutes when people manifested amongst the crush of people. Most people were touched by a pastor and returned to their seats without
an extreme reaction, though returning to their seats was an arduous journey through hundreds of bodies. As the crowd thinned, the excessive bodies were left with more room to spin, jump and run. Some reacted quite violently.

The prophet, still observing the commotion from his perch, exhorted the crowd to join in with clapping and prayers. The clapping added a sort of syncopation to the complex deliverance dance happening at the front. On top of the disjointed beats of the congregation the prophet repeatedly whispered “spiritual marriage, spiritual sex” in such a way that it took on the sonic hook of a mantra, the nine syllables taking on their own rhythm: “Spiritual marriage-spiritual sex, spiritual marriage-spiritual sex, spiritual marriage-spiritual sex.”

The persistence of the chaos and refusal of so many bodies to respond with docility, the excess of spasming, spinning, swarming bodies, and the continued commotion of the spirits all appeared disconcerting to the Prophet who repeatedly emphasized the stubbornness of these spirits. When the deliverance clearly extended beyond what Emmanuel had imagined he exhorted his pastors to discipline and punish the spirits, “Pastors, try and punish the stronger spirits that are manifesting. Such spirits are stubborn and deserve to be punished.” The punishment of the spirits manifested in the punishment of human bodies as the pastors responded with more violent means pulling wildly at congregants’ hair, open palm slapping and closed fist punching.

The violence did not necessarily procure the results he wanted so Emmanuel became more explicit in his instructions: “Torment them with fire, spiritual sex out!” Fire, an obvious symbol of the Holy Spirit, torments the spirits without tormenting the body. Baah described to me that, “the moment you throw fire on it, the spirit will identify itself. Sometimes so far as
you are throwing fire on him, the moment you mention the fire the spirit wants to run away to avoid the fire.” But again, fire is not merely a metaphor for Prophet Baah, Emmanuel or any other deliverance minister. Baah told me, “You yell ‘Holy Ghost FIRE!’ Spiritually the moment you open your mouth to throw the fire the fire goes straight to the spirit...you will see the fire. You yourself, you will see the fire from your mouth.” Already it should be clear that we are dealing with a heightened or peculiar sense of sight. This sense of sight, this seeing, detects things thought impossible. In this case the enhanced sense of sight identifies an exchange differently than the one witnessed by merely watching the bodies as they occupy space and time. This enhanced sense of site included seeing: the spirit, the fire leaving the mouth and the fire burning the spirit. This is an enchanted deliverance sight.

This enchanted sense of sight sees things thought invisible. Gregory Delaplace writes that Mongolians refer to a wide variety of entities as “invisible things.” However, invisibility “does not mean that nobody can ever see them – otherwise they would cause little trouble – but that their encounter is subject to specific perceptual modality.”407 These entities, spirits in the case of deliverance ministries, are not experienced in exactly the same way that living people or cattle are experienced for they are only perceivable by those with this enhanced, enchanted sense of sight – seen only “by some people, in certain contexts, and in a particular way.”408

408 Delaplace, "What the Invisible Looks Like," 54.
I want to introduce a term for this enhanced, enchanted sense of sight: perspicience. In contemporary usage, the term connotes keen or clear perception and insight. However, it previously described in a now obsolete definition the ability to see all things, or infinite vision. This archaic definition is incredibly useful and no English word I can think of carries with it the weight of this definition. Kristina Wirtz has used the term in her chapter “Spirit Materialities in Cuban Folk Religion.” She refers to perspicience as “knowing awareness of the spirits.”

Perspicience is, for Wirtz, the special sensory orientation that recognizes spirits in the material world. It is the ability to know through the senses, to see and sense that which others cannot see. As Wirtz adds, “perspicience also conveys the role of knowledge in sensory awareness: to discern spirits requires being inculcated in a culturally specific phenomenology in which the material effects of immaterial agencies become sensible experiences.” But perspicience is also ontological as it entangles the senses, perspicience is very much part of the deliveree’s ontological orientation toward experience. Like all of the senses already explored in this dissertation, perspicience is yet another way that the faithful confirm the veracity and potency of spirits. Wirtz writes, “As a personal characteristic that can be developed, perspicience also points to the self-making work of developing one’s spiritual knowledge.”

Meanwhile, as his pastors swung wildly with the madness of a street fight Emmanuel moved calmly and controlled. He touched outstretched hand after outstretched hand – open-

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410 Wirtz, "Spirit Materialities," 152.
411 Wirtz, "Spirit Materialities," 152.
palm-on-open-palm high fives – and with each touch the congregant turned, and moved deliberately back to their seats. There were no excessive reactions or no extravagant spirits, just a gentle high five, the combination of his touch with the promise that, “that spiritual marriage is broken, in Jesus’ name. As I’ve touched you, I’ve set the spirit ablaze. It is broken from you.” But most of his time was spent watching, observing the goings on.

As all of this happened a woman slithered across the back of the assembled masses of people. Lying on her stomach she slowly made her way across the width of the church. Obscured by the many people still seeking deliverance from their own sexual demons – demons with which they had sex – she went unnoticed. Sandra, the woman’s name, just moved slowly, deliberately, unconcerned and unresponsive to all the bodies moving around her, stepping over her and jumping out of her way. Only the prophet, from his elevated vantage point, noticed. “Which spirit is behaving so poorly?” he asked of one of his pastors. “Apostle,” he continued to implore, “which spirit is that? Which spirit is being that stubborn.”

The angriest of Emmanuel’s acolytes, ‘Apostle’, moved toward Sandra who was still lazily slithering across the dusty floor. Apostle moved indignantly toward Sandra. He adjusted his plaid suit jacket in its purple, white and pink sartorial splendor and tugged at his pink bowtie before commencing to deliver her. Four ushers met him at the site of Sandra’s slithering body. They stood her up, ending her snake re-enactment. Two ushers pulled at her arms but were clearly out of their element lacking the control and unison that more skilled ushers execute. As the ushers tugged her arms, Sandra’s body correspondingly flailed and jerked everywhere. Apostle, with his characteristic rage, buried his hands in Sandra’s short afro. As he yanked her hair up he rotated his wrists painting vicious circles in the air with her head. Around and
around her head rotated, her neck bending so that her head fell behind her shoulder blades
and back around so her chin met her chest.

Apostle removed one hand from her hair and used it to repeatedly hit Sandra on the top
of her head. She began to fall to the floor and Apostle grabbed her hair, holding it tightly until
she hit the ground. Back on the ground she started to try to wriggle and the ushers
immediately restrained her, pinning her to the ground on her right side before she could
recommence snaking across the floor. Apostle changed his course of action but not his violent
means, swinging his arms like a rapid pendulum so that his left arm hit her back and his right
arm hit her stomach in rapid succession. As she tried to slither away from the rapacious and
repetitious blows to her body another pastor grabbed her hair and pinned her head to the
ground. All of her body parts that she had used to propel herself along the ground were
pinned. The attention of all the pastors, the prophet and the congregation now concentrated
on the pile of bodies immobilizing Sandra, fastening her to the chalky ground. The last woman
besides Sandra to be delivered got up from the ground wearing only one sandal. Realizing that
the other shoe was next to Sandra she deftly stuck her foot amidst the pile of bodies and
retrieved her footwear, returning to her seat. It was now everyone against Sandra, or against
the spirit that was making her slink around in such a serpentine manner – depending on what
kind of vision one enacted.

For a few moments, this played itself on loop, the group of bodies pinning Sandra to the
ground heaving with Apostle’s deliverance movements. Everyone else watched, transfixed.
Without any warning, everyone left the body alone as if it had been successfully rendered
docile. But as everyone backed away from the body giving Sandra a wide berth she
immediately rolled onto her front and redoubled her slithering. As she wriggled and writhed, inching her way along, people started jumping out of her way.

The Prophet confirmed the embodied fears of everyone by describing what was happening. He yelled, “heh, heh, that is a snake creeping. If you put your leg in her way she’ll bite you.” The warning insured that everyone else she encountered would continue the pattern of leaping out of her way. The prophets and pastors parted as she moved. As they leaped they leaped not out of Sandra’s way, but out of the way of the snake. Everyone, either on their own or at the instruction of the prophet, saw a snake. They saw a snake, not a human body moving like a snake, but actually saw a snake slithering across the floor.

At this point it is perhaps unclear why this woman sliding across the floor is part of this dissertation. In many ways, this account reads like most of the other deliverance episodes already discussed with a similar soundscape, similar kinesthetics, and the ever-familiar centrality of touch. And most especially it lacks the explicit sexual content of the others. But indeed, this woman sliding across the floor emulating a snake is another example of sexual deliverance. Animalistic manifestations are often associated with spiritual marriage, or spiritual sex. As Emmanuel told me, “If they manifest as an animal it means they were spiritually married to that animal. In the supernatural realm, the easiest way to contact you is sexual. They have to marry that person.” The first claim is a potent one, indicating that spirit animals and humans have sexual liaisons. However, the second claim—that the easiest link between the human and supernatural is sexual—is worth emphasizing; in fact, it is the central premise of this whole dissertation, sex is used to make spirits immanent and bodies immaterial.

Kwofie confirmed that he had long taught this basic tenet of deliverance. If someone is
being delivered and an animal manifests – it could be moving like a fish, barking like a dog or slithering like a snake – then that person is married to an animalistic spirit. The animal that appears is to whom they are spiritually married, which is to say that the person is sexually involved with that particular type of animalistic spirit. When an animal manifests, as it did in the case of Sandra, it means that a spirit animal has had sex with the human body. In this way, the spirit takes control of the human. The invocation of the snake by Emmanuel is not insignificant. As Baah said, “when the animal is in the person it is in the whole body.” The manifestation, in Kwofie’s words, “allows you to know who is there, manifestation aids you to know what is happening in that person’s life.” To see, in this enchanted sense of seeing, is to know.

_Sleeping With Snakes?

In the world of sexual spirits snakes make frequent appearances. To see a snake manifest – that is to either see the transmogrification of a body into a snake or to see a body slither like a snake – is to know that this body had sexual liaisons with a spirit in the form of a snake. Victoria Eto wrote extensively about the presence of sexual snakes and the need to treat them seriously in the deliverance cosmos. Of the many people who are possessed by spirits disguised as snakes she writes,

> Some of the snakes are for sex. These girls tie the snakes round their waist. Then when they want to sleep with anybody they will put the head of the snake in their private part while the boys will use the tails of the snake. The extra sensual nature of the snake tongue and snake skin will make people think these are wonderful bedmates. When you have sexual affairs with such a person different kinds of problems start coming into your life. This is because anybody who sleeps with them is possessed by evil spirits. Some possessed people can turn into snakes.⁴¹³

⁴¹³ Eto, _Exposition on Water Spirits_, 38–39.
In another example, she wrote of a specific young man, a Christian young man, whose faith was threatened by spiritual marriage to marine spirits who provided snakes and dogs to satisfy him sexually. He entered into a marriage contract with these marine spirits by drinking water and while he drank, “they rubbed every part of his body to evoke sensual feelings – thus soaking his blood and skin with sensuality.” 414 There should be no doubt by now that the senses and sensuality are primary in human-cum-spirit relationships. This young man then he washed his eyes and face. It was the eyes that gave away possession as they carried “a decidedly unchristian look.” As we have seen in all spiritual marriages the term of the contract was fidelity to the spirits and no human marriage. In exchange, the young man was provided with a “dog which comes to lick him and satisfy his sexual cravings. They also gave him a snake which resided in his penis. They taught various sexual arts including painful and advanced forms of masturbation.” 415 The sexual spirits are often animalistic.

Snakes, which are certainly loaded with religious imagery, are ubiquitous in cases like this. In 2004 Paul Gifford cited a number of animal based sexual experiences from Prophet Salifu Amoako whom I visited many times but who does not make an appearance elsewhere in this dissertation. In the first case, there was a rat. The prophet said you can be certain that “not everyone in a skirt or blouse in the street is a human being.” 416 A man met a woman, had sex with her and awakened the following morning to find “a very big white rat wearing a skirt and a blouse.” 417

414 Eto, Exposition on Water Spirits, 18–19.
415 Eto, Exposition on Water Spirits, 18–19.
416 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 100.
417 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 100.
The prophet blamed impotence and infertility on these human-cum-animal-spirit encounters. The most graphic tales were serpentine. A man alleged to be a witch – a rare but not unique accusation – was accused of impregnating eight spirit wives. Amongst these were crocodile spirits and rat spirits – the pantheon of animal spirits having sex with humans is already expanding. The animals – crocodiles and rats – with which the man had been sexually married to were cast out. The rats immediately possessed a woman in the front row. Returning to the man, the prophet – perhaps the most confident prophet I have ever encountered, which is impressive considering prophets are already a rather confident people group – declared that the man’s penis was a snake. The snake was threatening not only to the man but especially to the women with whom he had sex. The snake penis would bite any and all women that it touched. For deliverance, Gifford writes, his penis “had to be treated, and while he lay on the stage his trousers were loosened and oil was poured on his penis.”

The penis is often imagined in various ways during deliverance. Recall the Prophet Ofori’s own description of his spiritual marriage in chapter 5. His spiritual husband was a woman with “a man’s organ.” This penis, however, was abnormally large, as big and firm as the prophet’s arm. This penis was also anthropomorphized as it held a knife. The spirit was a penis, a being in and of itself. In another deliverance one of my informants blamed a Mallam – an honorific title for Islamic scholars and often associated with miracle workers – for shrinking his penis until the point of disappearing. By acceding to the magic of the mallam, my informant believed that he had sacrificed his “manhood.” It was only the deliverance power of a particular pneumatic prophet who was able to restore his penis.

418 Gifford, 97.
But snakes are not merely imagined in reference to deviant penises; they also encounter vaginas. At another service Gifford heard a woman describe her spiritual marriage to a snake. The liaison was marked by the spirit under the guise of a snake entering her vagina. Like most spiritual marriages, the spirit spouse blocked her ability to marry a human man. By having sex with the woman, by penetrating her vagina, the snake literally blocked further access to her vagina.419

Phillip, a deliverance minister with Nikoi who was always very forthcoming, described to me that spiritually marrying an animal was a particularly evil experience. Mami Wata will use any “vessel” she can be it human, animal, or even something immaterial like the wind. Phillip was able to enumerate a sort of ranking system about the attendant evil with each different form. Sleeping with a spirit disguised as a human was the least serious. Sleeping with a spirit disguised as an animal was much worse. “Animal means serious” Phillip said. A hermaphrodite was somewhere in between those two options. The zenith – or nadir – was sleeping with something invisible.

Animacies

Theoretically the predominance of animals – as both sexual partners and that into which humans trans-mogrify – allows us to imagine the human entirely differently. In order to consider this possibility, I turn to Mel Y. Chen’s Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering and Queer Affect.420 Chen explores how matter is animated. The “animacy hierarchy” – which

419 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 98.
420 Mel Y. Chen, Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering and Queer Affect (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012). I utilize here the hypen in the same way that Chen does: “Hence, trans- is not a linear space of mediation between two monolithic, autonomous poles, as, for example, “female” and “male” are, not least because the norms by which these poles are often
defines human life over and against the animal or the object – flows from white able-bodied humans down through animals to inanimate objects. Chen wants to disrupt this hierarchy by exploring encounters between bodies of varying levels of animacy, including a reconsideration of the relationship between humans and animals; “for it is animality that has been treated as a primary mediator, or crux (though not the only one), for the definition of ‘human,’ and, at the same moment, of ‘animal.’” The relationship between humans and animals constitutes the entire second part of her text and illustrates that the trans-species boundaries between humans and animals are quite porous, and indeed are connected by “animate affinities” that bring bodies into contact. That is to say that “the ‘stuff’ of animal nature...sometimes bleeds back onto textures of humanness.” This bleeding into one another – something that is clearly occurring in the spiritual marriages examined in this chapter – should be less surprising than it is, the boundedness of the human being so artificial and arbitrary.

As Chen notes, “The stakes of revisiting animacy are real and immediate, particularly as the coherence of “the body” is continually contested.” That is, the body is no longer viewed as autonomous, bounded and contained. As difference disappears when the human animals and nonhuman animals bleed into each other, the body becomes quite dynamic. In

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defined by too easily conceal, or forget, their interests and contingencies....I wish to highlight a prefixal “trans- not preliminarily limited to gender. As Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore write, the hyphen “marks the difference between the implied nominalism of ‘trans’ and the explicit relationality of ‘trans-‘ which remains open-ended and resists premature foreclosure by attachment to any single suffix [including gender].”

deliverance, the body is seen as unstable, always at risk of becoming something other, something animalistic.

In her work on animals, Chen argues that the nonhuman animal “transubstantiates beyond the borders of our insistent human ontologies.”\(^4\) In order to illustrate this Chen explores the figure of the monkey as a legitimate marrying subject. She does so by taking apart J.L. Austin’s simile that “it is a mockery, like a marriage with a monkey.”\(^5\) In this statement the nonhuman animal, the monkey, symbolizes an excess, an extreme, or something unthinkable: a presumably “language-less, cognitively reduced beast.”\(^6\) Again we see the nonhuman animal against which human subjectivity is defined, that is the nonhuman animal as a useful figure between human and nonhuman.\(^7\) But what about the unthinkable, such as sex with spirit animals? Perhaps then, as Chen writes, focusing on animality would trouble “the ontological cohesion of “the human,” stretching it out and revealing the contingent striations in its springy taffy.”\(^8\) Furthermore, the combination of human animal and nonhuman animal in the realm of sexuality is not that unique. As Chen points out, analogies have often been made between nonhuman animal and human animal sexualities. She observes, “humans and nonhuman animals recombine sexually within the same ontological fold in which they are sometimes admitted to belong.”\(^9\) This is a helpful point, especially as this project aims to de-exoticize deliverance sexual practices.

\(^4\) Chen, Animacies, 13.
\(^5\) Chen, Animacies, 94.
\(^6\) Chen, Animacies, 95.
\(^7\) Chen, Animacies, 95.
\(^8\) Chen, Animacies, 98.
\(^9\) Chen, Animacies, 104.
Myra Hird writes that “non-human animals have for some time been overburdened with the task of making sense of human social relations.”\(^431\) The nonhuman animal, however, is an open symbol:

Perhaps because it has served for the human as such a rich comparative repository – because it is kept significatorily empty – there is play in the animal: what the animal means, what it does, what kind of sex it has, what it wants. Such play yields a vast range of imagistic, affective and economic projections...they are also sources of reference for frighteningly indefinable or disallowable sexual practices (such as “beastly” rape or unctuous, multilimbed octopus sex), and they are registers of the very disposability of life, where animal status yields death, such as when war legitimates dehumanizations or animalizations of state enemies.\(^432\)

In these spiritual marriages and intense manifestations we see the animal as a “reference for frighteningly indefinable or disallowable sexual practices.” As with all of the practices herein, deliverance technically disallows the sexual practices while actually allowing for their flourishing. Deliverance creates space for sexualities thought impossible.

Returning to Sandra’s snake, in which Sandra had become the snake, we can now assume that the snake is Sandra’s spiritual spouse. Sandra was manifesting as a snake because Sandra had sex with a spirit in the guise of a snake.\(^433\) With Emmanuel’s warning about Sandra’s ability to bite, her unimpeded movement turned toward the congregation. She skulked toward the center aisle and then turned down it. She slithered slightly to the left, then slightly to the right as she slowly made her way toward the congregation. By using the word slither I accept the sense of sight described by Emmanuel and others. Sandra performed as

\(^{433}\) Sandra – like some others in this dissertation – was not interviewed. The incredible crush of people at Emmanuel’s deliverance services and the speed with which he moved from person to person made contact with many people utterly impossible.
close to a snake as I can imagine. Her head rolled gently from side to side, her face so close to the ground that the sides of her afro became tinged with a light tan color from picking up the dirt and dust that layered the concrete slabs on which the church’s tents were erected. Her legs dragged, a shoulder-width apart. Without lifting her body, clad in a blue and white dress, off of the ground she used her forearms to propel herself forward. Her front was only visible from the top of her breasts up through her face, beads of sweat visibly rolling down her face and chest. Sweat also covered her shoulder blades that were uncovered by the dress fabric. The more she moved the less her dress covered; more and more with each movement, her breasts slowly came out of her dress. Her face contorted, her eyes stayed rolled back and her mouth never closed, staying slightly ajar.

Emmanuel announced that Sandra was a “snake in motion” and asked the congregation – who were already looking – to “look at the snake in motion.” This is actually an unsurprising request. The command to look – invoking the sense of sight – is at the crux of this chapter. What is this sense that looks and sees something materially different than the human body? Emmanuel asked again, rhetorically this time, “have you seen the snake?” The assumption was that those present were witnessing something similar to what Emmanuel saw: a snake in the middle of the church.

Sandra squirmed down the center aisle for about ten meters and then veered into the chairs to her right. People bolted from their plastic chairs and cleared everything from her path. Chairs, bags, children, adults all split left and right clearing a route for Sandra. Sandra’s slow deliberate movements ensured that everyone had ample time to scatter. She slid slowly which was further dramatized by a slow, plodding song from the worship musicians. It was as if
the whole scene was unfolding in slow motion.

Unsurprisingly, the only way to end this animal-spirit cum human affair is through deliverance. Kwofie noted that with the mention of the blood of Jesus – with its acidic material (im)materiality – any foreign body in one’s life will emerge. But the manifestation of an animal lover is a step toward deliverance but the prophet still must set the person free. Kwofie has seen a variety of animals – snakes, dogs, cows, bulls, lizards, birds – but after their appearance he sends those spirits back to the bottomless pit of hell.

Kwofie proudly told me the stories of the two most obstinate animal spirits he had successfully delivered. The first was a kangaroo, which is notable for its distinctly un-Ghanaian character. This kangaroo was embodied to perfection with the person disguising their limbs to match the short limbs of a kangaroo. As the kangaroo hopped around he kept gyrating at the waist and loudly proclaiming how pleasurable his sexual experiences with this human had been. In fact, the way he articulated the pleasure it seemed that the human and kangaroo were in the throes of sex: “Oh, Oh, this is so pleasant. Oh, Oh, this is so wonderful. Oh, Oh, my love!”

In another deliverance Kwofie struggled against a gorilla. It had a large voice and kept shouting out claims of sexual pleasure: “Oh, my husband, you are so good, don’t take anybody else.” Kwofie sees this as a normal progression in the deliverance of animal lovers, the spiritual marriages start with foul language, move to lust and then manifest as sex.

One cannot note this gorilla imagery without mentioning the “long history of British and European associations of apes and monkeys with African subjects, fed and conditioned by the imperialist culture of colonial relations.” 434 These horrid tropes were temporally based on the

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434 Chen, Animacies, 97.
idea that non-European peoples, and Africans in particular, represented early stages of human evolution. One cannot explore the animal sign without consideration of this dreadful history.

What is noteworthy in Kwofie’s account is that the spirits are very clearly receiving sexual pleasure as they manifest as animals, a pleasure that was more subtle in the deliverance of Sandra. With deliverance the only option to stop Sandra from slithering, Emmanuel encouraged his pastors to deliver her. The silence was abruptly disrupted when from the stage Emmanuel yelled, “Pastors, behead the snake.” He repeated the last part three times as if there were an echo or reverberation throughout the church: “Behead the snake. Behead the snake. Behead the snake.” As the first pastor reached Sandra and touched her shoulder she spun 180 degrees, rising to her knees. As the second pastor arrived Sandra exploded from her knees and leapt at him, her arms flailed in an attempt to grab him. He jumped backwards to avoid her grasp. At the same time a third pastor tackled her from behind, toppling to the ground with her. Sandra tried to get up but was forcefully pushed back to the ground.

A fourth pastor started to enact the slicing off of Sandra’s head, running his hand across her neck as if it were a knife. This cutting of the head motion is a ubiquitous action in deliverance. To the uninitiated eye it looks absurd. But Emmanuel made a clear distinction to me, “You will see the deliverer as a human person there but as prophet or pastor the Lord God will open your eyes so that you will see that the one lying there is not human, you will see the snake. I see it in a snake form. That is why when I say I’ll cut off your head I see the head cut off.” Deliverance is about sight, but the sense moves far beyond seeing material items. This deliverance sight sees not the human arm and hand slicing through the air but a machete slicing through the head of a stubborn snake that refuses to die.
But this pastor only sliced a couple times before the prophet halted the effort.

Emmanuel yelled, the concern in his voice palpable, “leave her, or else she’ll bite you!”

Emmanuel seemed more excited than usual, his voice went higher in pitch as he added, “Even if she bites you physically the venom will make your hand swell. It will swell until it becomes a sore and needs to get amputated.” The pastors backed off and left Sandra on all fours, the front of her dress filthy from all the dust it had accumulated during her lengthy serpentine journey. As she started to crawl away some pastors cleared a path while others continued the slicing motion with their hands to perform the beheading, all while keeping their distance from her for fear of her venom. These slicing motions did not touch Sandra like the first two did, instead they were cutting through the air. Or they appeared to be cutting through the air, but with spiritual eyes they were cutting at her head.

Without waiting for Emmanuel’s sanction, a group of three pastors took it upon themselves to end this charade. Each of them put their hands near Sandra’s neck and sawed away. When one of the pastors grabbed her shoulders from behind, her arms outstretched, the other two transitioned from sawing to large, dramatic slicing motions. They took turns, one after another, perfectly choreographed with each slice appearing to come closer and closer to her neck. Eventually one of the exaggerated slicing motions made contact with her neck. As soon as contact was made, Sandra bolted up into a standing position by using her outstretched arms in a propeller motion to push the pastors out of the way and push herself forward toward the stage. Touch had animated Sandra.

She walked briskly toward the stage, her eyes still rolling backwards. On the stage, watching everything transpire, the prophet waited for her. Before she reached Emmanuel, a
pastor known as Doc interrupted her movement and began throwing imaginary things at her, one hand after another. She responded by doing the same so that they were engaged in a dramatic battle. He threw left, her body bended backwards avoiding whatever it was being hurled at her. Then she snapped forward throwing with her right hand. His body responded by bending backwards and then likewise, snapped forward as he threw with his right hand. She bended and then threw with her left hand. It all happened quickly. They went back and forth, stopping only when the prophet told Doc to cease.

Throwing imaginary objects with her appendages and standing on her two legs with her own volition seemed to move her out of the realm of performing a serpent. But what was deliverance-sight seeing now? What did perspicience reveal? She put her hand on her waist and stalked the stage while the prophet described a further trans-mogrification: “she has turned into a hippopotamus.” While there was continuity between her material performance and the Prophet’s narrative about the serpent, the hippopotamus required a more liberal imagination. Or perhaps, it merely required a different type of vision. She responded to his announcement of her new identify by patting her chest and walking backwards, never taking her eyes off of the prophet.

Emmanuel moved toward Sandra. His movement caused her to speak but nobody put a microphone to her mouth and so her verbal responses and outbursts remained inaudible. “Look at me,” demanded the prophet, “Hey, look at my face.” Look at me is a now familiar refrain. In this case the prophet demanded that she return his deliverance look, that she see exactly what he was in the spirit realm. She averted her attention to Pastor Leo, the prophet’s personal assistant who quickly pointed back to the prophet trying to divert her gaze.
Emmanuel grew impatient and continued to demand her sight, her vision: “Hey. Look at the prophet...Look at me!” Look at me, the command seemed filled with promise. The promise of sight that can deliver from something both unseen and seen.

Sandra walked away, refusing to abide by Emmanuel’s commands. Emmanuel took two steps and grabbed Sandra’s afro, which jerked her head backwards toward himself and stopped her forward momentum. Emmanuel pulled her toward himself, she stumbled and ended up bent over at the waist. Emmanuel, still holding tightly to her hair, pulled her head up so that they were facing each other separated only by his arms-length. He had physically forced her to come face to face with his eyes, his piercing gaze, which elicited a piercing ‘aaahhhhh’ from Sandra. Emmanuel responded with “Poof.”

Emmanuel does not employ the airy “poofs” with the same ubiquity as Prophet Ofori who uses them in nearly every deliverance scenario, but when he utilizes them he does so generously. The only sound he made for the rest of the deliverance was “poof” and “Jesus.” “Poof.” He grabbed Sandra’s hair. “Poof. Jesus.” He swung her around in a circle. “Poof.” He again swung her in a circle. “Poof. Jesus.” She slipped to her knees. “Poof.” He pulled her hair until she was lying prone on the ground. “Poof. Jesus.” She rolled over but he continued to pin her head to the ground.

With his hand on her face covering her eyes he uttered instructions to the spirit: “I crush your head, do not come again. In Jesus’ name do not come out of again. Out of this body in the name of Jesus, out of this body! Out of this body in the name of Jesus. Amen.” The whole time he was uttering his instructions to the spirit Sandra was muttering and mumbling but he pretended not to notice. At the completion of his prayer the prophet left his hand pushing
down on her face, his fingers extending down her chin onto her throat. He quietly made one final sound, a sort of “chewwww.” He took his hand off, stood up and told her “Go and sit.”

There was a moment of silence, the congregation uncertain if the deliverance was complete or not. When the prophet strode confidently for a few more steps the still, quiet and rapt attention of the congregation exploded into celebratory commotion. An upbeat song was launched by the musicians. Frozen and quiet viewers were transformed into participants. Over the lively song Emmanuel implored the congregation, “if you believe what you saw, clap” which was met with raucous clapping, assent to a sense of sight that captures the materiality of the immaterial. Discontinuous with everything happening around her, Sandra sat still for a while, gathered herself and then left.

Prophets as Animals

Emmanuel has a complicated connection to animality. Emmanuel received a rather vociferous backlash from the Ghanaian pneumatic community – and beyond where his antics often are pilloried and parodied in internet postings or memes – when he claimed that he had become a snake himself. He claimed that he can, and does, become various animals as it suits his ministry. In many ways, the same way that he utilizes spirits to fight evil spirits, animal spirits are used to fight animal spirits. He claimed to possess supernatural powers that allowed him to trans-mogrify into any animal.

His wife endorsed the magnitude of his magical means of metamorphosis. His primary animal of choice is a snake. Emmanuel claimed that he once transmogrified into a snake while at the same time Jesus transformed into a lion and they jointly visited someone. When his comments, believed heartily by his followers, were met with some public derision he said: “You
don’t touch the anointed. Even Angels in Heaven do not have the same powers. Some are more powerful than others. When you sleep, you sleep deep; but I don’t sleep. I lay down and work for the children of Jesus in the spiritual realm.” He remains adamant that most people simply do not understand the enhanced sense of sight and being that his spiritual powers allow for. Most people do not have perspicience.

Prophet Baah not only endorsed Emmanuel’s claims, but added that he too changed into animals. He was incredulous with my asking about animality. He smirked and said, “I can turn into an animal, definitely.” He described why a prophet would ever want or need to turn into an animal: if a person is being pursued by a spirit animal then an incredibly effective way to attack that spirit is to submit to the animal kingdom yourself, “if you want to go there you have to also turn into that animal.” The same way that the spirit is disguised as an animal the prophet must also work with disguises. In typical Pentecostal parlance, Baah said “it is a gift...the gift is there so there is no incantation where you have to cite words.”

Baah has turned into a snake, spider, lion and a dog. These are all familiar animal spirits with whom people have sexual experiences. He told the story of his turning into a spider. A woman looking to become pregnant was being pursued by an evil spirit disguised as a large spider. Baah recounts “the spider opened its mouth to swallow her...she shouted [and] I quickly turned into a bigger spider and I swallowed the spider.”

But prior to becoming a powerful prophet Baah had a spiritual marriage of his own. He would regularly wake up and realize that the one who had slept with him was an animal. “I slept with dogs!” he proclaimed, “what I would see was dog. Dog, dog, dog.” But one day his sexual dreams – or sexual experiences with spirits – became physical. He woke up and realized
he was physically fighting the dog. This same dog that had been his sexual partner manifested physically, and was thwarted when he picked up a rock.

Others I spoke with were dubious of Emmanuel’s claim about changing into animals. Nikoi told me, “that is a false man of God.” But Nikoi had never been a fan of Emmanuel and had always implied his work was the work of someone summoning evil powers. Kwofie, who earlier in our meeting tried to claim Emmanuel as a disciple and often spoke admiringly of Emmanuel, said “No true man of God can turn into a snake.” Kwofie, though, in his previous life as a traditional priest had been able to turn into five different animals: a snake, crocodile, butterfly, lizard and a crab. He writes of a conversation between himself and a demon about the power of trans-mogrification:

I can change humans to the forms of animals,” the demon replied. "I can change humans into animals or vice versa!" I laughed and suddenly, he changed me into a snake. I got so excited and wanted to leave the room and go and play in this new body. I looked at the door, but it was locked. I wanted to open it, but, Satan told me to just think about it and it would happen. So I thought about going through the door and I did! Without realizing that I had the same mind, just a different body, my changed body began to slither on the ground like a snake.

These powers of trans-mogrification manifest in a porous, unstable body.

*Trans-mogrification/Trans-substantiation*

Returning to Emmanuel's ministry, on a Sunday in early March in which the heat was less stifling, he delivered Esther from a variety of spirit animals that she had been engaged with sexually. The deliverance did not start any different than the many discussed above. Esther’s body fell to the floor, spasming and Emmanuel had his ushers bring her forward. A woman quickly wrapped her body in an orange creamsicle colored piece of material, a practice that is concerned with modesty. Her chest heaved again and again, so that her body appeared to
move in a wave. When Emmanuel yelled perhaps the most common phrase of charismatic deliverance, “Holy Ghost, FIRE!” Esther squirmed out of the grasp of the ushers and fell to the floor. Recall the words of Baah in this case, to yell “Holy Ghost, FIRE!” is not merely some sonic interjection. It is a literal description of what is happening, of what is seen. Fire is witnessed as coming out of the mouth of the prophet. Esther propelled herself around the floor by moving her knees, waist and neck, trying to evade the fire and sliding toward the congregation.

As soon as Esther slid across the floor Emmanuel responded with a loud and definitive diagnosis: “Spiritual marriage.” And then he asked, “Have you seen the snake married to this lady?” Again, the eyes are central to this whole enterprise: have you seen the snake married to this lady? The snake married to this woman manifested through trans-mogrification of the woman's body, her material body seen as something else. The complicated relationship between possessed and possessor is assumed as self-evident through sight. Emmanuel merely asks “Have you seen the snake married to this lady?” as if such a sense describes much, much more than he could explain.

As she slid across the floor Esther screamed loudly, persistently, angrily. She tried all sorts of permutations of bodily movements to move her body across the floor, eventually relying on a slithering action. When her body looked most snake-like in its movements Emmanuel interjected: “It’s a snake spirit and sometimes it turns into a lion.” He had seen the snake and the lion, but his interjections toward the congregation indicated that he did not expect everyone to see what he was seeing.

Esther struggled physically to get up. She tried to foist herself up in slow, unsure movements. The sum of her movements was not enough to propel her body to stand. She was
left resting on her right side in such a manner that her right hand, armpit and feet created the
three points of a triangle. She stayed in this yoga-like pose until she eventually staggered to her
feet. Once on her feet, the pastors approached her. She swung her arms in a wild front stroke.
Her eyes were wide open and her mouth was gapping. She took quick and short backwards
steps, all the while still screaming. She stopped just before the front row and bent up and
down at the waist so that she moved quickly between standing erect and the top of her head
pointing toward her toes.

Emmanuel interjected again, “Holy Ghost,” and the crowd joined him as he yelled,
“Fire!”

She started rolling at the waist instead of moving up and down, so that her torso drew
large circles into the charged air. Emmanuel yelled something incomprehensible about a
marine spirit and instructed the ushers to grab the woman. He threw a flurry of questions
toward the spirit: “How has the girl wronged you? What is she to you?” This was clearly
addressed to the spirit. Emmanuel moves back and forth in between Twi and English and also
back and forth between who he is addressing so that it is sometimes impossible to determine
to whom he is speaking.

Esther continued to struggle but her resistance was mostly futile against the tight grips
the ushers had hooked around her wrists and armpits. A third pastor held the microphone up
to her face augmenting a loud sigh that descended in pitch: “Ahhhhh.” She dramatically shook
her head no, and took deep, heaving breaths. The cloth wrapped around her shook loose and
fell to the ground, its creamsicle orange no longer clashing with her purple shirt emblazoned
with 01 and her black and white leggings. Pastors commonly inveigh against such leggings —
dismissing them as a hybrid of Western (they only make sense in the cold) and demonic (sexually revealing) influences.

Emmanuel and Esther partook in the standard dialogue that outlined the basic parameters of spiritual marriage. Esther said, “She’s my wife.” Emmanuel repeated it in the form of a question. And Esther, more forcefully this time, repeated it once more, “She’s my wife!” With Esther trying very weakly to pull away from her captors, not so much creating a scene of resistance but a gentle sway, Emmanuel observed, “You demons always prefer the beautiful and handsome ones.” Something about this observation provoked Esther and she began to struggle in earnest, moving quickly and fervently, twisting rapidly until two ushers could no longer control her body. Emmanuel, in an urgent voice, called for more pastors. A pastor in purple yelled at an usher whose smile made it seem as if he enjoyed the physicality. In the commotion Esther broke free and began slapping and biting the ushers. Emmanuel yelled, “She is biting them so help hold her, hold her in numbers.” A slew of pastors emerged running toward Esther and in no time six people were restraining her. The volume of the congregation rose in a crescendo as she struggled with the ushers in the same way that the crowd noise swells during the more vicious parts of a prizefight.

Emmanuel, confident that she was once more restrained, asked “Who again did you say you are?” and then followed up the question with an observation, “Oh, so you’ve made yourself a tiger.” He saw a tiger. At the observation, she flashed her teeth and growled. For a moment, she kept her lips as far away from each other in an effort to make all her teeth visible. Her eyes bulged.
She was a tiger with polymorphous dexterity – now having been a tiger, a lion and a snake. She was in sexual relationships with spirits who manifested as these animals. The conversation went in multiple directions until Emmanuel brought it back to the crux of the deliverance: spiritual marriage, or spiritual sex with spirit animals, in this case a snake, tiger, and lion. Emmanuel asked, even though it had already been established, “You are her spiritual husband?”

With a look of disgust and a roll of her eyes, Esther responded, “Yes! I don’t even know who directed her here.”

Emmanuel pushed the issue, “Who blessed her marriage to you?”

Esther pursed her lips and pushed them away from her face, “No one gave her to me. I love her.”

The conversation rambled on as Emmanuel posed more questions, received answers and then implied that he already knew the answer. For example, he asked “Is it right what you’ve done to her?” To which Esther responded, “Ask her, I’ve given her sickness.” These animal spirits had sickened her through their sexual liaisons. Emmanuel countered with, “Do you need to tell me? I’m aware of the virus you’ve injected into her blood; I didn’t want to say.”

Esther laughed, spat and yelled “Wooooo!” Emmanuel just kept talking, “Do you know that the virus will be taken out of her today?”

The virus was HIV. All of the prophets in this dissertation claim to cure people from HIV. Deliverance is considered a way to heal HIV. The prophets always promise discretion as they discuss somebody’s HIV diagnosis in front of small and large crowds. They promise deliverance and immediate healing.
The conversation then veered in another direction as the spirit and Emmanuel spoke about another spirited effort to disgrace Esther. Back and forth they continued. “Her man always told her she looked like a man; I was behind it all,” Esther said.

Emmanuel repeated her statement seeking clarification, “Her man always said she looked like a man and not a woman in bed?”

Esther confirmed this, saying, “Yes, she looks like a man and not a woman. I was behind it all...Leave me right now.” At the center of this discourse, this performance, are the eyes. The spirit animal speaks here of their ability to trans-mogrify Esther’s body into that of a man. They made her look like a man in the eyes of her husband. So, in a slightly complex construction the spirit animals who in deliverance manifest through the trans-formation of Esther’s body are also capable of trans-forming her body into other forms. And primarily this trans-mogrification centers around sex. The spirits, refusing Esther sex with her husband, use trans-mogrification to ensure Esther’s sexual fidelity to them. And in this case the sight is not some gift of the spiritually enlightened – like all the other cases we have discussed – but in this case the spiritually unenlightened husband, completely unaware of what is causing the abnormal visuals, sees Esther as a man. This troubles sight entirely for accordingly all sight should be doubted. What one sees around sex could be or could not be as it appears. It recalls the warning Gifford recorded at Alive Chapel International that, “not everyone in a skirt or blouse in the street is a human being.”

The visual charade continued with Esther threatening Emmanuel, “I want to fight you. If you think you are man enough, let them free me.”

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435 Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity, 100.
Incredulous, Emmanuel shot back, “You want to fight me?”

Esther responded with a question and a demand, “But can you fight me? Let them free me.”

Increasingly confident Emmanuel asked, “Do you know the Bishop you talk to?” He turned to his ushers and said, “Bring her here.”

The soundscape grew tense. There was an errant cymbal crash and the murmurs of anticipation throughout the crowd grew. Emmanuel, with his hand raised and fingers outstretched, yelled into his microphone, “Today, any marine spirit married to this girl! Fire! Leave her!”

Esther screamed and ran backwards away from the prophet. When she had moved a safe distance away she stopped running and started jumping up and down like a boxer skipping rope, bouncing on one foot and then the other.

Emmanuel goaded her by stating, “But you said you wanted to fight me?” This angered Esther. She flipped the orange blanket over her head and let out a desperate scream. She strolled confidently right up into the prophet’s face so that they were eye to eye. But she could not bear the look of the prophet – in much the same way Sandra could not. As soon as they were eye to eye she stumbled backwards. Emmanuel continued to mock her with cries of “Won’t you hit me? Hit me!”

Mocking shenanigans aside, Emmanuel returned to the serious business of deliverance. He yelled “Holy Ghost!” and the crowd responded with “Fire!” This call and response played out a few times, and ended when Emmanuel screamed “In the name of Jesus!”
Esther growled. A deep, guttural growl. She moved her head back and forth as she growled. In between growls she bared her teeth. And she got down on all fours. Emmanuel combatted this manifestation, presumably the tiger spirit previously named, by spitting “pfft” into the microphone and shooting his hand in her direction. She collapsed. The crowd applauded and cheered the animal’s apparent death.

When Esther stood up she immediately started vomiting. She vomited a stream of white foam that hung off her lips before falling to the ground. She said while pointing at Emmanuel, “because of you I’m going to leave her.” She added “I’m a snake, so I want to leave.”

Emmanuel encouraged Esther, “Vomit and bring out the sickness. If you do not vomit, I shall hit at you again. Vomit out all your evil sicknesses injected into her.” Esther continued to vomit, a steady stream of white foam fell from her mouth. She gagged a couple times, heaved deeply and threw up some more. Emmanuel added with an air of braggadocio, “You snake who turns into lions and tigers cannot scare me.” Esther went to all fours, growled more meekly than before and continued to vomit.

Emmanuel continued to make demands of the animal spirit, “Take out your sicknesses. Take out your HIV-AIDS. You mad spirit!” Esther tried to stand but slipped this way and that way as if she were running on ice. Emmanuel instructed the spirit to, “Take your sickness and break your spiritual marriage to her.” He swung his arm at eye level. Esther’s eyes rolled back and then bulged in anger. She started slithering like a snake in Emmanuel’s direction. “Snake!” Emmanuel yelled. He launched into a deliverance prayer, “In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord! This is why Jesus called Emmanuel, to free the children of the living God! Marine Spirits and Animal Spirits, take out your sickness and spiritual marriage.” With that Esther rolled onto her
back, sat up and performed a lengthy scene of death which ended with her lying still and docile on her back.

The crowd erupted with cheers. Emmanuel quietly walked over to Esther’s docile body and covered her eyes and made a “shhh” sound. Emmanuel’s covering of Esther’s eyes again draws our attention back to the sense of sight. It was not the only time that Emmanuel covered someone’s eyes at the end of deliverance. It was as if he was marking deliverance sight as unique and restoring the regular sense of sight. For perspicience must always be a limited sense for otherwise one would always inhabit the world of spirits.

After a few moments of docility, Esther stood up. She was confused about why she was at the front and what had just occurred. As Emmanuel gave her a shortened version of the events she continued vomiting. Emmanuel informed the congregation, “You see her vomiting out the snake’s venom that caused her sickness. God has saved her from every sickness.”

Chen writes, “If human substantiation endurably depends on the expulsion of animals – then it is imperative that we ask questions not only about how animals matter, but how they matter sexually.” While deliverance ministries expel the figure of the animal, or more accurately they intimately embrace them even while they expel them, we still must ask how they matter sexually and in doing so we discover the trans-ness of animal figures. That is to say that animals violate borders, a primary markers of trans-being. And Chen, with a note of religion, directs this trans-ness toward trans-substantiation. That is, the “relational exchanges between animals and humans can be coded at the level of ontological mediation, or

436 Chen, Animacies, 128.
437 Chen, 128.
alchemical transformation, one that goes beyond vitalism that infuses given boundaries with lifelines.”\textsuperscript{438} This trans-substantiation is a form of ontological mediation between human animal and nonhuman animal. They actually become animals in a substitutional form, and they are of the same substance.\textsuperscript{439} Furthermore, it is not humanized animals but animalized humans in the form of possession. The blurring of the boundary between human animal and nonhuman animal happens at the point of the human becoming animal.

\textit{Fish, Ants, Cocks and Genitalia}

It is not only serpents, but also a host of animals that visit humans sexually. We have encountered Edna before at Emmanuel’s church but in a secondary role. Edna was the friend who invited Queen, who experienced the violent deliverance – or perhaps not – from the spirit of lesbianism. During the proceedings Edna stood demurely up front making it transparent that she did not identify with the spirit of lesbianism. But that is not to say that Edna did not struggle with her own sexual spirits. Edna was spiritually married to a fish. Often in her dreams she found herself sleeping with a fish. She said, “We have this fish, we call it madfish...At times I dream that fish is sleeping with me.” She added with a sense of levity, “I’ve never dreamt that I slept with Tilapia. It is a madfish. It is always a madfish.”

Knowing this, I was unsurprised when during Baah’s weeklong crusade against spiritual sex Edna was caught up in the deliverance. When I asked Edna what she was delivered from she referred to the madfish, only the madfish were multiplying. Her sexual experiences with madfish were not only more constant but also, “At first it was just one fish but now I’ll be

\textsuperscript{438} Chen, \textit{Animacies}, 129.
\textsuperscript{439} Chen, \textit{Animacies}, 129.
In her own words, she wakes up “with my legs splayed and wet. I can’t move my legs. I had to yell Jesus and only after I yelled Jesus could I move my legs.” Sometimes people are uninterested in finding out much about the spirits that plague them, but Edna is curious and asked a lot of questions. She is sure it is a marine spirit, that the fish “in reality stands for marine spirit, Mami Wata, and stuff.” She still has not figured out how she contracted the marine spirit, but the dreams mean she must be married to that spirit. It is worth noting that this kind of spirited bestiality is a dramatic reversal of active human and passive animal into active animal and passive human.

While his own ability to trans-mogrify into animals is hotly contested and unique amongst prophets, the idea of animal spirits having sex with humans is not unique to Emmanuel’s ministry. It is quite widespread. I am loathe to call my informants friends, it always reads so artificially, but there is no other way to describe my relationship with Rosemary but as one of friendship. I was invited to her wedding, and she was an ever-present guide for me through the world of Ghanaian Pentecostalism. She was a believer and a skeptic, a prophetess and an academic. But of all the things in this dissertation if there is one thing she believed fully, it was spiritual marriage to animals. Sex between humans and spirit animals was undeniable to her. A prominent bishop in one of Ghana’s foremost Pentecostal churches told me something similar, “that one, I can confirm it does exist because I’ve been involved in deliverance and I’ve met believers who have perennial experiences where animal spirits come and sleep with them.” He added, “If somebody says he dreamt and saw it, an entity came to sleep with her, even men, married people, born again Christians, you can’t deny it, you have to
find a way of dealing with it and when you pray for them they manifest and the spirit begins to speak, you don’t know what to do. The answer is deliverance.” The answer to every sexuality – human-cum-human and human-cum-spirit-animal – is deliverance.

There are many reasons why Rosemary believed so firmly in the insatiable sexuality of animal spirits. To begin, there was the story of Cindy, a woman who occupied a prominent place in Rosemary’s cosmos. Cindy was caught and accused of witchcraft, though Cindy herself claimed to be a principality above a witch, “a little closer to Satan.” This caused Rosemary to go off on a tangent, “I don’t believe demons are only angels cast out of heaven, I am tempted to believe that humans can become his [Satan’s] angels.” Recall that material things are not always what they seem. Cindy was a human who had superseded the boundaries of witchcraft and become close to Satan. Cindy had sex with Satan. As Rosemary said, “She couldn’t have lied! It was really scary to me. I believe demons and witches have sex, if Satan himself sleeps with them, like Cindy said, then it must be true.” The logic for Rosemary, a logic that helped her understand her own experiences, follows that if people like Cindy have sex with Satan then of course Satan’s minions in the form of demons and witches have sex with humans.

Spiritual marriage to animals “has something to do with witchcraft” and Cindy and others were evidence that spirits can take many forms. Rosemary stated definitively that, “When you study witchcraft, you realize that most of the people who fly in the night or go in so many forms, you understand they change, some come as male even though they are female, some go as snakes, in fact there were times when we had the opportunity to interview some witches who were delivered and some of them said they turn into birds, some said they turn into snakes, some tortoise and all of that.” For example, from Rosemary’s experience “spirits
come in so many forms. One lady used to see her dad, you can be a female yet you see a female having sex with you or with a female with male genitalia, so many forms.”

One of those forms was an ant. I mentioned that Rosemary was a prophetess. She does not have a church per se, but does practice deliverance and she delivered a woman from a sexual relationship with an ant. Slightly different than those we have been considering, this one blurred the line between animal spirit sex and human sex. This woman would “physically feel a bite in her vagina from an ant, excuse me for saying” Rosemary told me with her own discretionary flourish. After each bite, the woman would become insatiable sexually until she had slept with someone. The number of bites equaled the number of men she would sleep with. Rosemary helped deliver her from this ant spirit, delivered her from a sexual relationship with animals.

Rosemary ardently believed in human-cum-spirit-animal sexual experiences not only because she had heard about others’ experiences, but also because she herself had long been plagued by a spirit animal. Well aware of the risks of spirit animals, Sandra developed all sorts of rituals to try to fight off the possibility of them sleeping with her. But it did not matter. She recounts “during my time, I could pray much, I could see so well you know, but then I was encountering all of that.” Here she invokes her enchanted, enhanced vision – she could see the things happening that are beyond the material body. She could see peoples’ problems and prophesy about them and deliver them. But she could not stop from having sexual experiences with animal spirits. This confused her greatly—how could she have such clear deliverance sight and not be able to shake the sexual animal spirits? How could she deliver others and not deliver herself? Every time she encountered a spirit animal sexually she questioned God,
“because we always see that spiritual marriage thing as coming from the devil, so how can…”

her sentence just trailed off. She added:

there would be times when you are fasting, even when you haven’t gone out, you haven’t sinned...because normally we say when you compromise, when you sin, the devil gets the chance to get into you and use you to do all sorts of things. So, in a situation where I personally had asked for forgiveness of sins and was fasting and then I'd been in my room, I had not gone out throughout the day, I had not sinned, I had not thought about anything bad yet I sleep and a spirit animal comes to sleep with me. It was something else to me, it was a question I posed to god...

Amidst her jumble of thoughts, the question is: how could such a faithful Christian and powerful prophetess with deliverance sight be prone to sex with spirit animals? How, and why?

When her prayers and pleadings with God failed her, she resorted to more extreme, material efforts. She,

would put my Bible on my private parts trying to prevent that spirit, but still you wake up and the bible is somewhere and it looks like the devil is not even afraid of the bible in your pants. And I’ve encountered other people who put the bible in their pants and the spirit would still sleep with them. The Bible will still be there but the spirit has slept with them. I remember once I got wet because of that... and because I put it there that particular one was a New Testament, those small Gideon’s translations, when I put it there, I mean, when I woke up it was wet because the spirit came to sleep with me. I said ‘oh!’

This fantastic image indicates the depth of the anxiety that plagues those visited by these spirits. And yet, despite her desperate efforts, the spirits still visited her, still slept with her, and still left her wet and satisfied.

Rosemary was plagued by a variety of spirits in the form of animals. She relayed this to me alongside sounds of shock and disgust. She said, “I even saw animals like, you know, the hen, a fowl; you see the private part of a fowl having sex with you. Sometimes a snake, you see snakes, oooh, huh. Woo.” The cock was the most common animal that visited Rosemary. She
described, “It’s a normal hen only that what you really see is the private parts. The private parts are magnified, something like that...they sit like this, like humans, come on, it is something else. And most times what you see are the private parts.” All she saw was the rooster’s penis, his large engorged penis. She described that the fowl had a large penis, using her arm to illustrate its length and girth. But almost all the various animals had sex in a similar manner, she added, “Same with the dog. They look like the animal but have sex in human positions.”

As Chen considers animal human relations in terms of sex she bumps up against a consistent discovery in representations of animals; they are almost always missing genitalia.\textsuperscript{440} Genitality, a focus or symbolic weight that is bore by the genitals, is prominent in the West implying gender, sexuality, race and class.\textsuperscript{441} Genitalia are constantly culturally overdetermined.\textsuperscript{442} So it is worth noting that in most Western depictions of animals the genitals vanish. For example, Chen considers the film \textit{Max, Mon Amour} in which the protagonist Margaret falls in love with a chimpanzee named Max. Repeatedly, Max and Margaret are depicted in various forms of intimacy, “including spooning tenderly in an unmade bed, its ripped mattress an indication of their love’s rupture of the social fabric.”\textsuperscript{443} But Max lacks visible genitalia, a common castrated cultural representation of animality.\textsuperscript{444} In this way there is a “prioritization of humanized animal figuration (and Max’s animal role) over

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{440} Chen, \textit{Animacies}, 128.
\textsuperscript{441} Chen, \textit{Animacies}, 136–137.
\textsuperscript{442} Chen, \textit{Animacies}, 136–137.
\textsuperscript{443} Chen, \textit{Animacies}, 140.
\textsuperscript{444} Chen, \textit{Animacies}, 141.
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animalized humanness.” This is a point of departure for sex with spirit animals, for in those cases it is not some castrated animal but indeed genital animality. This genital fact obviously goes against everything we have seen in this chapter, where genitals, oversized genitals to be exact, were in many ways the defining feature of animality. In spiritual marriage to animals the genitalia are prominent, juxtaposing nonhuman animals to humans in ways that crucially implicate sex. The sacrosanct importance of the penis or phallus in the stories of my interlocutors surely serves, “in any case, as a reflection of invested human interest in animals.”

Despite the oversized genitals, the sex was always clinical, “All you see them doing is just the sex, the sex, just penetrating, they don’t touch you or anything.” There was no foreplay or experimentation. Simply put, the spirit animals mounted Rosemary and had sex with her. And they always left physical evidence of their sexual visits: “you wake up and see that you have cum and you see all of that.” Sometimes it was more extreme than other times, “One night with the hen was very pleasurable and it is as if you want more and you cum in the dream. That one, I think it was very serious because when I woke up I was very wet.” This too causes anxiety because “some say spirits use semen and ejaculation against you.” Regardless of how wet one became it was always, “more pleasurable than sex with humans.”

Rosemary’s description fit perfectly how Kwofie described the whole process. He said that the animals have large genitals. But more concerning than the large genitals is the incredible pleasure that spirits are able to cause humans to experience. Humans cannot say no

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445 Chen, Animacies, 140.
446 Chen, Animacies, 141.
because it is so pleasurable. It is only in the aftermath, the wet, sticky aftermath, that the humans realize what has occurred.

When I asked Rosemary why spirits use animals, she had an interesting response. At first, she claimed she did not know. If it was only dogs Rosemary said she would understand. Dogs are carnal and sexually lascivious. She cited Revelation 22:1 and said the “Bible has helped us understand who dogs are.” It is unclear how Revelation 22:1 addresses dogs, but she also cited a Ghanaian tradition saying, “dogs are seen as immoral because they can have sex all the time.”

To call someone a dog is to imply they are a “fuckboy.” Nikoi similarly emphasized that the dog was an obvious choice for the spirits because “their lifestyle is lust filled.” He added,

Normally if it comes in the form of an animal the spirit is trying to hide its identity because Satan doesn’t want to be identified in a particular way because the moment you expose the spirit it won’t work and manifest itself any more. If you have sex, let’s say you see a dog making love with you in the dream, that’s the spirit of lust. Physically we see dogs having sex outside and that is why the person can’t control their sexual appetite. You can be stuck in a dog’s vagina for a long time.

This explained why people so often have sexual encounters with spirit animals as dogs. But questions still remain, such as why also a cock? These spirits do not only manifest as dogs and so Rosemary was stumped. Rosemary hummed and hawed and then finally stumbled upon an answer. “God reveals these things to us. It is God, for me, that causes us to see the spirits [as animals]. God covers them in the form of animals so that there is no confusion.” God causes the spirits to take animal forms so that the believer becomes acutely aware that “something

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447 Revelation 22:1 states: Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb...(RSV)
happened and it is devilish.” This was the only time I heard this theology espoused, but it is as interesting as it is novel. God is in the business of animality and bestiality. But, at the risk of being repetitive, look at the sense that God endows humans with: God causes humans to see the spirits, to see animals. God gifts perspicience.

**Conclusion:**

Nikoi, in his prayerful assertiveness yelled, “Any animal that represents sexual immorality perish! I locate the head of that animal and cut it off!” The point of the prayer was that any manifestation of animals is real and must be killed. As if his own prayer had sparked something inside of him, he turned to the assembled mass and transitioned to a mini sermon on Exodus 22:19. The verse condemns anyone who has sexual relations with an animal to death. The point of the sermon was that these fleeting nocturnal encounters were not merely phantasmagoric. The half-glimpsed, shadowy figures of animals were not illusions but real animals and sexual relations with these animals meant certain death. In his prayer-sermon Nikoi captured the two central forms of bestiality within this chapter – sex and trans-substantiation. But more than that, he captured the realness that deliverance ministries ascribed to these sights. And that realness of these animalistic object requires an enhanced, enchanted sense of sight.

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448 Exodus 22:19 states: Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death (NRSV).
Chapter 7 - Conclusion

“God can no longer guarantee any identity! This is the great ‘pornography’ the revenge taken by spirits on both God and bodies” – Deleuze

Amongst deliverance ministries, there is a clear and intimate relationship between sex and spirits. That relationship manifests in a plethora of ways including but not limited to those written about herein. But how are we to think about this relationship? I constantly asked my interlocutors, why were spirits and sex so intimately connected? Most responded with a variation of “I don’t know.” Some pushed their answer into the metaphysical: “only God knows.” Another woman said if she could she would like to query the spirits themselves. In this chapter I propose a theory that contends with the interpretation of the relationship between spirits and sex, simultaneously representing the contributions of my interlocutors and pushing beyond what many of them were able or willing to consider. I am titling this theory of interpretation pneumoeroticism.

Pneumoeroticism is a hermeneutic. It is a means of interpreting bodies and spirits, finding its point of departure and always returning to the body. Pneumoeroticism, a portmanteau, arises from the surplus of meaning in this spirit-cum-human erotic encounter and the way that this meaning shapes and molds ideas of the body and spirit. A pneumoerotic hermeneutic interprets both the ethereal and terrestrial but especially translates the melding of the material and immaterial in sexual relations. This chapter will explore not only the basics of this hermeneutic but in exploring the hermeneutical circle that starts with bodies and returns to bodies will excavate the many implications of this hermeneutic, in particular in issues of materiality, religion and sexuality.
Pneumoeroticism is a hermeneutic that through the combining of spirit (pneuma) and the capacious category of eroticism allows us to interpret the relationship between bodies and spirits. It is the space where spirit and the erotic meet in ecstatic encounter, forcing us to think in creative ways about what the body is and what the body does. In this sexual intermingling of bodies and spirits both categories are moved from their traditional moorings and take on more expansive possibilities. The body becomes more than its physical boundaries and spirits escape ethereality. Instead, in some combination spirits and the body determine each other, shape each other and make sense of the world.

There are two hermeneutical principles that form the foundation of pneumoeroticism: the primacy of the materiality and a commitment to indecent thought. First, much like Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor’s carnal hermeneutics, it starts with the materiality as interpretation.449 This is where the senses so excavated throughout come together into one theory. These corporeal sensations, which already “transcend the traditional dualism between understanding and embodied sensibility”, are interpretation.450 In following these material sensations the body provides meaning, and the body is meaning, that is to say, the body is signifier and signified at once.451 In a line that my Pentecostal interlocutors would agree with, Marcella Althaus-Reid writes that, “The theological scandal is that bodies speak, and God speaks through them.”452 The body screams out in a variety of ways – from movement to

docility, in great volume to silence – and Pentecostals believe that this crying out is significant and signifies an entire unseen realm. This then is the first key of pneumoeroticism: “all experience from birth to death is mediated by our embodiment and only makes sense of sense accordingly.”

The grounding of pneumoeroticism in the body, however, does not limit the hermeneutic. Pneumoeroticism ranges from material to ethereal, from spirited to embodied. The primary point of the dissertation has been that no matter how dramatically Pentecostals probe the cosmos, it is always sensorial, it is always sensed. So the hermeneutical circle of pneumoeroticism certainly starts with the body and returns to the body, but in the interim it travels to various spirited possibilities. To say that pneumoeroticism starts with the body and returns to the body is not to say that it returns to the same, unchanged body. It returns to the body with a new understanding of the breadth and capacity of that body. So, if pneumoeroticism starts with body A which has sex with spirits and then is delivered it returns to body A1, that is a familiar and unfamiliar body, a significantly expanded body.

The second hermeneutical principle, from the work of Marcella Althaus-Reid, is a playful sense of indecency. Althaus-Reid’s corpus continually mines experiences for the indecent, because of what it can say about theology, challenging the way that decency and order structure daily life. Her indecency starts with the assumptions that all theology is sexual and that various sexualities have been absent or underrepresented. As such, she offers an alternative to the stifling nature of decency. Likewise, pneumoeroticism assumes

hermeneutics often ignore large swaths of sexual possibilities, thus leaving them uninterpreted. In interpreting the sexual possibilities between spirits and humans, we are left with new bodily and spirited possibilities. Pneumoeroticism thus begins with indecency, that is, a commitment to these spirit-cum-human sexualities, that despite the ubiquity of such experiences, have yet to have adequately been theorized due to their inability to align with the sexual order of things. The very nature of these human-cum-spirit and spirit-cum-human sexual encounters is deemed unthinkable, demonic, indecent. That is to say that pneumoeroticism relies on indecency, because a commitment to decency has left the ubiquity of charismatic sexual experiences un theorized. These “per/versions” offer an alternative that does challenge order.456

Pneumoeroticism begins with the assumption that an individual’s sexual relationship to the spirit – however that spirit is identified – is a form of indecency, challenging orders and hierarchies in the way that spirits and humans relate. This indecency, coupled with the cultural indecency of most of the forms of sexuality that manifest – masturbation, homosexuality, spiritual marriage – “constitutes in itself the base for a paradigm in our present discussion.”457 In that space of spirits and sex, pneumoeroticism exposes the inadequacy of previous attempts to theorize religion and sexuality by being indecent.

Pneumoeroticism is a disruptive hermeneutic. It necessarily, always and already challenges a great number of categories – from bodies to spirits, from being to becoming – but in what follows I will focus on its ability to disrupt materiality, sexuality, and religion.

456 Althaus-Reid, Indecent Theology, 13.
457 Althaus-Reid, Indecent Theology, 18.
As a hermeneutic, pneumoeroticism challenges materiality. That is primarily because for deliverance ministries what is thought to be ethereal is considered material. Pnuema is not a lofty, inaccessible transcendence but inhabits the world in which we live, our bodies, and daily interactions. Whether embodied or disembodied, spirits are material for charismatics. This necessitates a rethinking of materiality.

Pneumoeroticism is also a hermeneutic that exposes the inadequacy of the terminology, broadly conceived, surrounding sex. For example, there are no terms that adequately define spirit-cum-human sex, and indeed, most of the terms surrounding sexuality are limited to the interaction of bodies and exclude the possibility of spirits. As a sensual hermeneutic it strives for radical sexual disruption.

This chapter will explore a plethora of ways in which pneumoeroticism is sexually transgressive. For example, pneumoeroticism challenges the location of sexual pleasure, creating scenes where sexual pleasure is felt in human bodies but also by spirits. And sexual pleasure, the most intense sexual pleasure, is instigated by spirits. Pneumoeroticism expands the conversation about sex and religion from the pulpit, text, dogma, and discipline, and transposes it to the realm of spirits. In this way, pneumoeroticism as a hermeneutic disrupts the heterosexual core of religion. Finally, in taking seriously the materiality of spirits pneumoeroticism challenges the idea that sex involves two or more bounded entities, setting it as an activity shared frequently between persons and spirits. Pneumoeroticism challenges our very understanding of what sex is and what sex can be.

The application of pneumoeroticism immediately transgresses traditional, approved sites of religious interpretation. This is not biblical exegesis, though we have occasionally
explored the Bible’s ability and inability to speak to these sexual experiences. This is not prophetic preaching, though the various prophets are prominent in the deliverance experiences. Now, instead, interpretation happens in bedrooms, in public, in bodies, in fantasies and in dreams. This dislocation of hermeneutics from its normal locus necessarily alters how we interpret. It dislocates assumptions about the world and interactions in the world and offers fantastic possibilities. And in doing so, pneumoeroticism challenges what is religion.

To begin with, one should not merely assume that pneumoeroticism is religious because it emerged from a charismatic religious sphere. Instead, one must consider the vast amount of experiences covered by the combination of spirits and humans having sex and realize that many of them are experienced outside institutional forms. But they remain religious experiences that could be defined as positive by the alien spirit that takes over the person’s body, or negative when some believe that the possessing spirit engages in actions that are considered sinful. Herein I will utilize Georges Bataille on taboo and transgression to demonstrate the religiousity of pneumoeroticism. But in defining these sexual encounters as religious experiences pneumoeroticism departs dramatically from Bataille. Instead of setting religion as an interior experience pneumoeroticism sets religion as primarily or even exclusively happening in the body.

The Sadean Circle

In order to explore the hermeneutic of pneumoeroticism, it is useful to apply it to a hermeneutic circle that likewise emerged from a sexual milieu, a hermeneutical circle that allows for a full appreciation of the erotic components of pneuomoeroticism. As such, I will
apply the hermeneutical keys from Althaus-Reid’s Sadean hermeneutical circle, taken from a brief but dense section in her text *The Queer God*. Riffing on Althaus-Reid’s categories provides a helpful point of departure because of the honest way it infuses sexuality into the hermeneutical conversation. The structure of the Sadean circle comes from Marquis de Sade’s descriptions of orgies; as Althaus-Reid states, “Many hermeneutical lessons can be drawn from the metaphor of the orgy.” That is to say that orgies reinvent and rethink hermeneutics while still utilizing hermeneutics inherent circularity.

The turn to orgies is not particularly surprising, for orgies are religious – traced to festivals and rituals. Michel Maffesoli writes of orgies that:

> The rites whose religious – or more precisely, orgiastic – basis is understood consist of fantasy incarnate. The word incarnate here carries its full semantic force: it indeed refers to aggressive, caressing, colliding, loving bodies. And before they were sanitized in the familiar political and religious rituals, these rites were truly and intimately a violent or tender confrontation involving fantasy, exertion, loss – in a word – the unproductive.

What is noteworthy within Maffesoli’s description is the combination of body and fantasy. Orgies are a spiritual tradition where spirits and humans intimately meet.

Pneumoeroticism is a hermeneutic of orgies of a sort, a hermeneutic of ritualized group religious sexual performances, a hermeneutic of bodies and spirits intimately entangled. The images described throughout this dissertation have a distinctive orgiastic feel to them in the

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458 Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 29. She also refers to the hermeneutical circle as combinative reduction, which also functions as the fifth key of the circle, but I will simply refer to it as a Sadean circle for the sake of clarity.
manner they combine bodies crying out for sexual deliverance, some of them manifesting their aberrant sexualities, the various intimate bodily combinations and permutations, and the intense voyeurism. Viewing deliverance rituals through the lens of orgies is only confirmed by looking at Karl Toepfer’s definition of orgy in *Theatre, Aristocracy and Pornocracy*.

Toepfer cites six components in the practice of orgy. Paraphrasing Toepfer, orgy involves: hidden excesses; a desire for the divine; carnal pleasure in worship; group eroticism and ecstasy; a theatrical quality; and current of exclusivity reserved for the initiated.\(^{463}\)

Deliverance and possession in their intimate dance offer all of the orgiastic components. There are excesses that are performed very publically, but also many sexual excesses that remain silent aspects of the whole performance. There is a deep desire for intimacy with the divine. There are obvious carnal pleasures, group eroticism and ecstasy, and theatrics. And perhaps most importantly, these experiences are only for the initiated – the twice initiated, for one must be initiated by the evil spirits and yet also initiated into charismatic Christianity to recognize the evilness of spirits. It then makes sense to consider the orgies of deliverance through an orgiastic hermeneutical circle.

We turn to this orgiastic hermeneutical circle for the manner in which it emphasizes that which is often unspoken but always present: indecency. This hermeneutical circle that I am coopting from Althaus-Reid has its own circuitous history. Althaus-Reid constructed the hermeneutical circle from Marcel Henaff’s study of Marquis de Sade. In that text Henaff

explores, through poetics and economics, Sade’s construction of the libertine body.\textsuperscript{464} Althaus-Reid sees the libertine body as important for queering theology and similarly I see the hermeneutical keys she extracts as important for exploring the world of sex and spirits.\textsuperscript{465} Althaus-Reid writes, “The libertine body then creates a process of theological mutations or prostheses simply because it has its own built-in hermeneutics, a sexual hermeneutics which provides us with body-maps, with a cartography of wild dreams, of transgressive movements in search of radical breakthroughs in our ways of thinking.”\textsuperscript{466} While a pnuemoerotic hermeneutic takes us in different directions than Althaus-Reid’s queering, her hopes for sexual hermeneutics echo my hopes for pneumoeroticism: a redefining of the body, sexuality, and religion in the radical restructuring of how we think.

Immediately upon applying the structure of libertine hermeneutics to pnuemoeroticism we run into the issue of sex-positivity versus sex-negativity, or the contrast between the libertine and demonic. How can we apply a libertine hermeneutical model to charismatics who very much believe sexual liberty to be sinful and demonic? The answer to that question centers around the import of the demonic in deliverance ministries. Demons and spirits animate the deliverance cosmos. Without demons, the entirety of their worldview falls apart. That is to say that, despite claims otherwise, deliverance ministries need the demonic. In fact, not only do they need the demonic, they desire the demonic as evidence of a spiritual cosmos and ultimately as evidence of God. And deliverance ministries need the demonic to be sexual

\textsuperscript{464} Marcel Hénaff, \textit{Sade: The Invention of the Libertine Body} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
\textsuperscript{465} Althaus-Reid, \textit{The Queer God}, 26.
\textsuperscript{466} Althaus-Reid, \textit{The Queer God}, 30.
because in sexuality borders are erased between human and spirit. The sexual makes the spiritual accessible. So, while this kind of sexual liberty is dismissed morali-

stically, as all sexualities outside of (re)productive sexualities are, it is absolutely necessary.

Furthermore, the voyeuristic delight that prophets and congregants alike seem to find in these experiences only multiplies the importance and centrality of sex with spirits rather than shut it down. This indecency and orgiastic fascination is actually consistent with the evidence marshalled throughout this dissertation where sexual deviance is simultaneously sought and resisted, abhorred and desired. Pneumoeroticism offers a way to understand these elements that are indecent and yet ubiquitous, providing an alternative narrative about sexuality, materiality and religion. Deliverance persons are closer to libertines than they care to admit, as such the Sadean hermeneutical circle begins to make a lot of sense for pneumoeroticism. I will explore each hermeneutical key by quickly and simply defining it before exploring its applicability to pneumoeroticism.

**Hermeneutical Key One: Bodies Transgress Limits**

The first hermeneutical key of Sadean hermeneutics is that bodies transgress limits. For Althaus-Reid this means that the assumption of heterosexuality or sexual binarisms are dissolved; “its aim is not to reflect any normative project while allowing a creative process made of interactions of different orders to happen.”\(^{467}\) The possibilities of this hermeneutic should become immediately apparent – pneumoeroticism is created by the interaction of a different order, of different orders, spirits and humans in sexual ecstasy.

\(^{467}\) Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 27.
To be clear from the outset, and to reiterate, pneumoeroticism is a materialist based hermeneutic despite the great cosmological heights it traverses. It starts with bodily senses. Deliverance and possession, those intimately linked phenomena, are both highly material realities despite their claims of an otherworldly origin. Each embodied action tells the story of the interaction between humans and spirits. The examples throughout of how deliverance and possession are embodied are many. Consider in masturbation it is Priscilla’s masturbating body that initiates that entire performance. It is the same with Martin’s masturbating. Only the embodied actions of touching themselves initiates the drama of possession and deliverance.

Think about the way that Spendy’s body came dramatically spasming from the back of the congregation possessed with the spirit of lesbianism. Or the manner in which spiritual marriages start with the pleasuring of bodies and are usually found out when one has a wet dream, Rosemary’s bible covered in secretions perhaps the most dramatic case of this embodiment. Or consider the slithering serpentine body. It is always a body that tells the story. The body signifies. Possession and deliverance are material and embodied endeavors.

And the bodies are not simply moving, not simply being but are transgressing boundaries. The boundaries they transgress are many including what is publically decent. Masturbating in public is indecent. Transmogrifying is indecent. Sextifying about bodily secretions initiated by spirits is indecent. It is bodily indecency which tells a story, the drama animated by the indecency.

But the primary boundary that these bodies are transgressing are between the world of spirits and the world of humans. For example, in masturbating during deliverance Priscilla’s body told the story of how she was possessed by the spirit of masturbation, Maggie. Spendy’s
body told a story of her being possessed by the spirit of lesbianism. Each serpent, kangaroo or hippopotamus transgressed the boundary between human and animal, but mostly human and spirit. And while the deliverance bodies quickly move from being grounded in the terrestrial to a seemingly more ethereal realm they actually remain tethered to the material for in charismatic Christianity pneuma or spirits are material in a multiplicity of ways. As Ruy Blanes and Diana Espirito Santo argue, “One frequent materialization of spirit possession effects has been located in bodily or embodied practices.”468 As bodies align in deliverance they set the stage for spirited dramas.

This dissertation has treated the sociality of spirits as if they are interlocutors. In doing so, as Blanes and Santo argue, it has articulated “the possibility that personhood or selfhood does not always end at the limits of body, mind, or conventional space-time.”469 This is not a particularly difficult endeavor, to treat the spirits as informants, as that is exactly how prophets and congregants alike treat the spirits. Prophets readily offered that it was spirits who taught them much of what they knew. They would often allow possessions to drag on – Emmanuel in particular – in order to learn more about the seen and unseen world, but also the past, present and future. Nils Bubandt has articulated this poignantly stating,

I argue that the idea of treating these spirits as informants is only counterintuitive because the category of the informant remains linked to conventional, philosophical idea(l)s about the bounded self. This vestige of individualism that continues to inform the concept of the informant is odd. The individualism sits awkwardly with recent attempts in anthropology and elsewhere to rethink the notion of the subject and the self. The goal of this trend has been exactly to move beyond implicit assumptions about universal individualism by highlighting the complexity and multiplicity of personhood, selfhood, and subjectivity. The one-body-one-person-one-mind model of the

468 Blanes and Santo, The Social Life of Spirits, 2.
As Bubandt articulates, only a limited understanding of the human minimizes the role of spirits. This dissertation has embraced a broad understanding of the world and relationship between spirits and humans and the thin line of articulation between those two beings.

Of course, the corporeality of each of the spirit possession experiences throughout this dissertation vary greatly from one story to another. But there is a consistent, underlying sense of embodiment that runs through all of them. Priscilla embodies Maggie by masturbating. Queen embodies Creamy by dancing and fighting. Sandra embodies the serpentine spirit by slithering and attacking those in her way. In spiritual marriages embodiment is more complicated but evidence of a form of embodiment is still found in secretions. Each embodiment is evidence of an encounter with a spirit in the material realm. In each case the spirits become embodied embracing the body as materiality. As Florencia Tola writes, “The conception of a body in permanent connection with other bodies (humans and nonhumans) which are also conceived as multiplicities and possessing other’s extensions, is coherent with an ontology that puts more emphasis on transformations and multiplicity than on stability and on individual entities, more on processes and on relations than on substances and on given or natural things or beings.” The body is constantly transforming, oscillating between

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possessed and dispossessed, and in possession altering between a variety of spirits. But in possession it gives each spirit a moment, however brief, of materiality.

Pneuma, in the deliverance model, is always only temporarily material but in those moments of materiality it is aggressively so. Masturbating Maggie forcefully took control of Priscilla’s body materializing in this way. Maggie only appears when she is materialized in Priscilla’s body. Presumably Maggie was disembodied before possessing Priscilla and disembodied after the deliverance was complete, but the only data available to the ethnographer is a materialized Maggie.

In these spirit materializations we see “spirit biographies intertwine with the autobiographical trajectories of religious practitioners, who sense and narrate the agency of spirits in their lives.”\(^{472}\) As Kristina Wirtz argues, any argument for spirit agency requires this attention to materiality. Only in understanding the materiality of pneuma can we begin to understand the role that spirits play in the lives of the faithful.\(^{473}\) It is in materiality that the biographies of the spirits impinge on and become part of the biographies of the religious practitioners. As Wirtz argues, understanding spiritual materialization can happen through two “orders”: sensation and discourse.\(^{474}\) This entire dissertation has been an argument for the order of sensation, that is the perception of pneuma through various senses. This sensing of the materiality of pneuma though is not merely about the ontology of spirit, but is a primary way in which religious practitioners interpret their own being in the world.

Wirtz’s argument about sensation and spirit materialization can be further extended by exploring the possibility that pneuma is also made material as a mode of perception. That is to say that the body senses and feels because pneuma circulates through and around the body. The body is always inundated with a maelstrom of spiritual forces. My interlocutors believe that they live in a world where spirits, disembodied as they might be, are constantly around them. These ethereal beings are always lurking as potential materiality. In sextifying and in ritual deliverance ministries provide ample opportunities for the materialization of these spirits.

Spirits are very much a form of perception. Throughout this dissertation we have enumerated four senses in which spirits are experienced in the body, in which they are felt, and by which they are known. Those senses – touch, kinesonicity, metakinesis, and perspicience – all are perceived through the spirit. Being is determined by spirit and that spirit allows knowing to occur through perception. Returning to Priscilla, this spirit stuff both allows her to perceive the world broadly defined and simultaneously constitutes the self. It is the spirit who tells Priscilla’s story, about their mutual masturbating, and it is the spirit who makes Priscilla masturbate. The spirit is how Priscilla knows and also constitutes Priscilla’s possessed being.

In this way pneumoeroticism opens with the body but immediately challenges the definition of that body. It is an expansive body, a transforming body and a body that is simultaneously signified and signifier. As Erica Frueh writes, “We are not sufficiently body-

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475 Dale Martin, The Corinthian Body (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). I originally took this idea from Dale Martin in The Corinthian Body who writes of the pneumatic body. While Martin discusses Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, his argument about the pneumatic body is used here as a lodestar guiding us toward a material understanding of pneuma. Instead of relying on the common – and as it is applied herein – appropriation of pneuma as spirit Martin begins by orienting the reader to the Stoic idea of pneuma. The Stoics understood pneuma as a very rarified air that was primarily “the stuff of perception.”
conscious. Body-consciousness comes from thinking about the body as a base of knowledge and using it as such. Mind is inherent throughout the body. To perceive blood, hair, flesh, senses and their existence in a network of information – social, political, ecologoi
cal structures that are the world – is to know that the body is not dumb.”\(^{476}\) Indeed, the body is not dumb but knowing and thus so central to pneumoeroticism as interpreter and interpreted.

It is not enough to make the argument that pneumoeroticism relies on materiality, but the key to the hermeneutic is that it transgresses boundaries of the body. It is this transgression that is absolutely vital for the hermeneutic begins with the body, departs the body and returns to the body. The primary way that bodies are transgressed is clearly through this spirit materialization. Spirit materialization complicates what is human and what is spirit, and how expansive the body actually is. For Pentecostals, the differentiation between spirit and human, which is never finally a differentiation as the two entangle in various ways, helps illustrate how the body is transgressed. The human – Priscilla – is used to make the spirit – Maggie – temporarily material. This differentiation is concretized when Baah and Emmanuel repeatedly hurled the question ‘who are you?’ at Maggie. After obfuscating, Maggie reveals herself. In that moment, we are able to name the differentiation between human and spirit while at the same time they are one. Who are you, is an ontological question. In answering Maggie reveals herself to be a spirit, though the spirit had already become embodied when the masturbation commenced. Priscilla is revealed to be possessed. The ontological boundaries of Priscilla are expanded, altered even. That is, knowing – or becoming temporarily differentiated

\(^{476}\) Frueh, *Erotic Faculties*, 114.
– is “an ontological performance of the world in its ongoing articulation.”\textsuperscript{477} And perhaps most importantly the body is transgressed. The body is no longer bounded but porous.

The bodily boundaries during deliverance are always unclear until the final – which is rarely actually the final – articulation of the docile body. Instead, one is left with the question where does the body end and the spirit begin? As Priscilla masturbates, which we already know is a coterminous action for spirit and human with both receiving pleasure in the act, the spirit and her body are mutually imbricated. How does one define the body in that moment as she strokes her vagina, each stroke reaching far beyond her body into the spiritual cosmos? And there are even more dramatic examples of the mutability of the body as an always changing dynamic entity in the transmogrifications that constitute chapter six. Clearly, Priscilla’s body is not fixed and its boundaries are indefinable.

This is the first hermeneutical key of the Sadean hermeneutical circle. It is about bodies transgressing boundaries, a transgression which takes on an especially dramatic force with pneumoeroticism, where bodies meet spirits, spirits possess bodies, and spirits determine sensual perception.

\textit{Hermeneutical Key #2: Programmed Scenes}

The second Sadean hermeneutical key is programmed scenes. For Althaus-Reid, libertine acts are “programmed carefully, to the last detail. There is no space of spontaneity.”\textsuperscript{478} She utilizes covenant, the highly theological term, to describe how these orgies are organized, that is how deeply binding agreements are constructed around what is


\textsuperscript{478} Althaus-Reid, \textit{The Queer God}, 27.
going to occur. Covenanting though should not be viewed as limiting or closed off to the generative desires that are so central to orgies. Instead, covenanting is itself a form of pleasure as it articulates, chooses and then concretizes these desires.\footnote{Althaus-Reid, \textit{The Queer God}, 27.}

This immediately seems to contradict deliverance ministries, which emphasize spontaneity as the primary characteristic of the Holy Spirit and evil spirits. But Pentecostal rituals are not spontaneous, certainly not as spontaneous as Pentecostals claim. Repeated observation of deliverance rituals tunes one into the rhythms that repeat themselves over and over again. Repetition is a central key to the pneumoerotic hermeneutic. There is, in libertine orgies, a similar reliance repetition as there is in deliverance. Like pneumoeroticism itself, the programmatic material of deliverance starts with the body, moves to the spirit and returns to the body, without succinct differentiation between the two entities. Chapter one articulated some of the details of the deliverance program in how it normally proceeds. I will not repeat myself here. But I do wish to explore how deliverance is programmed from the body through the spirit and back to the body.

Covenanting is a significant part of the deliverance experience. Being present is a covenant. Being present is a covenant with all those involved promising an openness to the potential moving of spirits – good or bad – and the leadership of the clergy to marshal these spirits. Presence is a pact that one is content to have their spirits revealed, manifested, or tested. It is not an insignificant covenant as it is an agreement to have the personal details of one’s life revealed or to be physically confronted. It is a covenant to be open to revelation. Revelation through pneumoeroticism is a public performance that reveals a whole host of
sexual possibilities thought forbidden or inaccessible to humanity. As this great revealer pneumoeroticism illustrates not only the porosity of the body but the ability of the body to transmogrify. Pneumoeroticism reveals things that are constantly hidden and unknown.

It is worth noting here that pneumoeroticism challenges the location of sexual practice in its revelation. That is to say that the covenant or pact is a public one. All sexual practice is performed publically in deliverance. Or more appropriately, deliverance erases the difference between public and private. All that is considered private – sexual intimacy – is immediately thrust into the public. Privacy is obliterated. In so doing, Pentecostalism again challenges norms of (re)productivity. Sex becomes less fixated and regulated.

Every deliverance service, whether it is a case of one-on-one or group deliverance, proceeds in the same manner. Deliverance is always the climax of a long list of programmatic elements including but not limited to some combination of prayer, singing and preaching. Then deliverance begins and the congregations posture changes noticeably. This is what people came for, often traveling great distances. Deliverance begins with corporate prayers which invoke the kinesonic. Bodies move. Bodies pulse. Bodies sweat. And once the bodies are exercised through prayer the prophet begins his ministrations. Usually, it is the body that will scream out toward the prophet, falling this way or that, jumping up and down, running or flailing around. This is how the prophet knows that deliverance is necessary. Think of Spendy’s body and its excessive movement during Queen’s deliverance; or Martin’s masturbating; or Sandra’s slithering. Bodies demand attention, immediate attention.

Once the body has spoken, it is the turn of the deliverer’s body to intervene. That is the prophet or one of his acolytes must then deliver the body and person from whatever spirit has
possessed them. This deliverance has been covenanted and as such the deliverer is gifted a wide variety of methods at their disposal, both spiritual and physical, to dispose of the spirits. It almost always ends with a physical confrontation in which the deliveree ends up lying docile on the floor.

A significant factor in deliverance rituals is repetition, repetition being a significant part of the programmatic nature of deliverance. This is not abnormal for Pentecostals who rely on repetition in most of their rituals perhaps most notably in worship. Everything is repeated, often verbatim or with very minor differences. The physical acts of the deliveree often loop in repetitious bodily motions whether it is jumping, writhing, dancing, fighting or spasming the person does the same thing again and again until deliverance happens. The dialogue is often filled with repetition. For example, Emmanuel will frequently repeat exactly what the deliveree says but in different intonations. The spirit may claim: “She is my husband.” To which Emmanuel will exclaim with shock and horror: “She is your husband. She is your husband. She is your husband.” And then he may ask her to repeat: “She is your husband?” And finally, the final physical confrontation will usually be marked by repetitive actions: Emmanual hitting the deliveree’s forehead repeatedly, Ofori blowing in the deliveree’s face again and again, or Nikoi kicking softly at the body splayed on the concrete. The repetition marks the programmatic nature of deliverance.

Hermeneutical Key #3: Artistic Variety

The third hermeneutical key is artistic variety. The variety is created by small surprises or little contraventions creating various permutations. These artful combinations and
variations construct “mini-mirrors for different people to keep seeing and re-creating themselves in their relationships.” So as we saw in the programmatic nature, repetition is vital to deliverance. But it is always repetition with variations, however slight.

Variety has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation. There is a force of exaggeration, creativity, explicitness and expressivity in sex. Each chapter represents a permutation of sex with spirits. But further, each example of variety within each chapter further complicates sexuality. Thus, pneumoeroticism offers a new theory of sexual possibilities through its variety. Sexuality cannot encounter spirits and remain beholden to traditional theories of sexuality. Instead, pneumoeroticism offers a new expansive sexuality. Combining intimacy and corporeality the various experiences of sex with spirits or that involve spirits begin to create a whole new sexual cosmos.

Pnuemoeroticism is constituted by indecent sex. But it is much more than religious orgies, bacchanals and delirious sexual encounters. In fact, it interrogates what sex even means. This dissertation has assumed that we — author and reader — mean the same thing by sex, that it is self-evident. There is a risk in this, obviously, that sex simply becomes an anachronism or worse, becomes something narrowly personal. So, we must ask the question, in the context of pneumoeroticism, what is sex? The best way to explore sex definitionally is through the way in which the variations disrupt traditional notions of sexuality.

First, pneumoeroticism is disruptive because sex is oriented from and toward something other than the body, a variation on dominant understanding of sex. Sexuality is seen first and foremost as originating from outside the body and outside the material cosmos. This is not

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insignificant as most definitions of sex start with the body and end with the body, they can be quite genitally disposed. Now to say that sex in pneumoeroticism is oriented from and toward something other than the body is not to say that it is not primarily a corporeal sensation, but that its origin and satisfaction are found beyond the body.

There are two ways to read the origin story of sexuality within the strictures of Pentecostalism. One is that it is a gift from God. That is to say that sex in its most pure form – in this case (re)productive sex in the bounds of marriage – was created for humans by God. Humans have since sullied this gift and thus the various sexual demons. While this theology is certainly present in Pentecostalism, I think the more appropriate manner to read sex is through emphasizing the demonic, which accesses a wider range of sexual possibility. I insert this interpretation because this dissertation has not been an exploration of Pentecostal theology but of Pentecostal practice of deliverance from what Pentecostals consider perverse sexuality and sexual practices that originate in the demonic. One could argue that given what we have seen from testimonies and deliverance services, instead of imagining pure sexuality as emanating from God, in practice Pentecostals imagine sexuality in all its variety as emanating from demons, and ultimately Satan. Again, we must remind ourselves that in this construct is not a simple dismissal of sex. Instead, the import that these sexualities have in the construction of this cosmos leaves no interpretation available but that they are foundational to an entire worldview. In this way, while transgressive these sexualities are not deviant. There is an odd acceptance or peace with transgression in deliverance ministries, an awareness that they are always only animated by transgression and that transgression teaches as much or more about the cosmos than the alternative. In this interpretation sex originates in the demonic and yet
seeks humans as partners. Sex is not only a human impulse but also a demonic one, and that sex transcends impulse into the realm of practice.

Besides its origins being ethereal, sex itself is also oriented toward these beings outside of the body. It is these beings that find pleasure in sex with humans, who seek out sex with humans, who encourage sex with humans and who ultimately either through mutuality or aggression find sexual gratification in humans. We have traveled through a great many examples of spirits seeking and finding sexual pleasure with humans from the animal spirits articulating their pleasure during Kwofie’s deliverance, to everybody’s insistence that in masturbation spirits receive mutual pleasure.

One of the aspects of sex that pneumoeroticism disrupts is the location of sexual pleasure. Almost everyone I spoke with discussed how sex with spirits was more pleasurable than human sex, that human sex paled in comparison. Most poignantly, there was the woman who described to me how she could differentiate between her spirit spouse and a dream about her human husband because one was far more pleasurable resulting in copious amounts of secretions. Pleasure was measured by its source, the more pleasurable encounters being with spirits.

The spirits of gayism and lesbianism are unique here in that they are mediated through human sexual partners. All the other sexualities are singular human bodies interacting with spirits, often knowingly and desiring to. I did not find the same insistence of spirits experiencing pleasure through homosexuality but all deliverance ministries were adamant that it was demonic. So, even without the overt orientation toward the demonic it still remains always oriented toward the demonic, just mediated through same-sex experiences.
Pneumoeoticism in all its variety dissolves the human-centric nature of sexuality. Pneumoeroticism challenges who can be involved in sex, it is clearly a human endeavor but much, much more than a human endeavor. In this dissertation, we have seen sex with spirits, animal spirits, and spirits of gayism, lesbianism and masturbation. We have met some of these spirits on a more personal level – such as Creamy and Maggie. Often, they went unnamed but the impact of their participation in sex is not diminished. Sexual acts originated with and found their satisfaction in spirits such as Maggie. The artistic varieties of sex with spirits only emphasize that there is a whole set of sexual possibilities that are not centrally or exclusively human.

Pneumoeroticism is certainly not limited to the materials of this dissertation. For example, one of the great exemplars of pneumoeroticism is Paschal Beverly Randolph who magically reinvented cosmologies. Randolph was a strong advocate for sexual magic descended from Africanist traditions. But it was not merely for the sake of pleasure or spirituality but stood as a resistance to the Western approach to sexuality. He argued that “human conjugation is or may be triple; that is, it may be of soul, spirit, or body, alone or either, and the binary minglings of all three, in various degrees, even to an infinity, for instance one part soul, ten spirit, five hundred or more body, and so on.” Theories of sexuality that merely focus on human participants are not consistent with a large number of sexual experiences, including but not limited to sexual magic and Charismatic Christianity. As

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482 Stallings, Funk the Erotic, 42.
483 Stallings, Funk the Erotic, 42.
484 Stallings, Funk the Erotic, 45.
Randolph states, sexual cominglings may exist, even to an infinity. While not infinite, this dissertation has begun to explore some of those many sexual cominglings.

One of the most poignant powers of this moving sex beyond the category of the human is that sex always and already resists work and reproduction.\textsuperscript{485} This is noteworthy. In fact, in many ways eroticism is very much separate from the sexual act itself, which Georges Bataille sees as linked to the goal of (re)production. Sex with spirits is always already something other than (re)production. Pneumoeroticism is very much unattached from (re)production as the sexual relationship between human and spirit does not offer (re)production in the sense of creating working, subservient humans.

Eroticism, instead, is “the disequilibrium in which the being consciously calls his own existence in question. In one sense, the being loses himself deliberately.”\textsuperscript{486} It is an act of being, being defined in an expansive, porous, and continuous manner rather than merely singular subjects. In this way sex in pneumoeroticism offers a new way of being. Sex with spirits undoes the subject and the subject’s sovereignty. In having sex with spirits subjects discover their own incoherence, and the incoherence of the world. In a hopeful and revolutionary Bataillian sentence L.H. Stallings states, “Sexual magic’s end goal is not to make more workers for the machine but to create supernatural beings with powers that can disassemble the machine and its asexual sex industry.”\textsuperscript{487} Randolph appeal to the paranormal moves sex from an act of reproduction to one loaded with transcendent possibility. In this way

\textsuperscript{485} Stallings, \textit{Funk the Erotic}, 8.
\textsuperscript{487} Stallings, \textit{Funk the Erotic}, 42.
Randolph is neither of Foucault’s sexual binarisms – neither or perhaps both *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis*. Instead he offers a new way of being. Similarly, the examples of this dissertation do not fit into simple binarisms but demand a more complex hermeneutic to interpret them, thus pneumoeroticism.

Randolph famously held that “true-sex power is God-power.” Sex, in its truest form, reaches beyond the body into the beyond. Sex points to possibilities within and without the body. There is something discursive at work in this model, another way of being human is possible that exceeds and explodes Cartesian dualisms. Such a fluid concept of the human for Randolph was possible through Afro-Asian approaches to sex and spirituality. As we have seen in Pentecostalism is something different than “God-power” but still leads us to a fluid concept of the human. For Pentecostals, true-sex power is demonic but definitively transcendent. Pneumoeroticism helps us understand the sexual magic of Randolph. By focusing on indecency and the body we can imagine a fluid concept of human being or becoming.

For Randolph, humans were already whole, “but that transcendence could be achieved with sexual magic from within rather than given by an external savior figure.” This is one of the primary differences between Pentecostals and sexual magic, Pentecostal spirit sex is dominated by external figures. It is far more material and other-dependent than the life force or transcendence that Randolph imagines. But Randolph was on to something when he argued

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488 Stallings, *Funk the Erotic*, 41.
489 Stallings, *Funk the Erotic*, 42.
490 Stallings, *Funk the Erotic*, 45.
491 Stallings, *Funk the Erotic*, 45.
that sexual power was something beyond the traditional power apparatuses. Pneumoeroticism allows us to consider this unwieldy form of power and its impact. While we were discussing the various sexual demons of this dissertation Reverend Saviour – one of Emmanuel’s most faithful acolytes – stated “sex produces power.” I was caught off-guard by the statement that could just as easily have come from any queer studies introductory class. But Saviour was referring to a spiritual power, the power to control another being, engaging principalities in another dimension. There is a power in sexuality, but pneumoeroticism challenges any interpretation of this power as merely human, but instead it points to a complicated interplay between spirits and humans.

Pneumoeroticism offers an expansive erotic, an eroticism that refuses the shrunken boundaries of the West, that transgresses the boundedness of sex and offers in its place something ecstatic.

**Hermeneutical Key #4: Desire and Delay (or Taboo and Transgression)**

The fourth hermeneutical key is the orgiastic tactic of desire and delay. Althaus-Reid writes, “The urgency of the passion is consistently contrasted with the delay mechanisms...Such delay or acts of patience work by intensifying desires while somehow magnifying the value of the expected in the narrative of the pacted scene.” There are a multiplicity of ways in which delay and desire are effected in deliverance spaces. To begin with, everyone attends desiring deliverance from something and yet despite the deep, metaphysical desires they are left at the

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492 Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 106. Bediako sees in African Pentecostalism a resonance of African Traditional Religions as both are systems of power which put believers “in touch with the source and channels of power in the universe.”

whims of spirits and prophets who determine who is delivered. Further, the deliverance drama plays with the desire for deliverance and a delay in providing it, docility rarely coming immediately but only after a long-protracted drama.

Another way, though, of understanding desire and delay is through the categories of transgression and taboo. Taboo creates delay while transgression and the need to transgress are the ultimate desire. Possession is a story of taboo and transgression – sexualities deemed indecent, off limits, inaccessible are transgressed and yet highly desired. In this way, we see desire and delay being enacted. Georges Bataille effectively exposed the relationship between taboo and transgression and in doing so transposes our conversation of pneumoeroticism into the realm of religion, an important aspect of pneumoeroticism.

Bataille enumerates three types of eroticism – physical, emotional and religious – but his obsession is religious eroticism. As he says, and as is applicable to pneumoeroticism, “Let me stress that in this work flights of Christian religious experience and bursts of erotic impulses are seen to be part and parcel of the same movement.” In the pneumoerotic we no longer need to imagine this claim, but see evidence that Christian religious experience and bursts of erotic impulses are indeed intertwined. What Bataille means is that, in both eroticism and religion, “the quest for continuity of existence systematically pursued beyond the immediate world signifies an essentially religious intention.”

Religious eroticism is the search for continuity beyond the immediate material world. This is the desire.

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494 Bataille, Erotism, 9.
495 Bataille, Erotism, 16.
The delay comes in the form of taboo. When Bataille references religion, “It is religion in general and no one religion in particular.” That being said, it is highly beholden to Christian mysticism despite his claims to lay Christianity aside. The reason that he does attempt to lay Christianity aside is because when it comes to eroticism he sees organized, institutional Christianity as an impediment to eroticism. Religion in general is erotic. Religion in the particular often “sets its face against eroticism.” And for Bataille Christianity is the religion that most sets itself against the erotic by setting up a series of taboos. Pentecostalism is no different with a desire to rupture the self, reaching desperately with sexuality for spiritual continuity while putting in place a significant number of taboos against this desire and defining (re)productive sex as the ultimate. Charismatic Christianity is erotic in spite of attempting to set its face against eroticism.

Combining eroticism and religion, as he often does, Bataille writes, “Knowledge of eroticism or of religion demands an equal and contradictory personal experience of prohibitions and transgressions.” Transgression is the key to understanding religion and eroticism, transgression animates both. Transgression is powerful because of its relationship to taboo, it derives its power from prohibitions. As Kripal writes, “transgression does not remove the taboo but suspends, completes, and transcends it.”

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496 Bataille, Erotism, 34.  
497 Bataille, Erotism, 32.  
498 Bataille, Erotism, 32.  
499 Bataille, Erotism, 36.  
500 Bataille, Erotism, 36.  
Pentecostalism which very much traffics in the demonic – that lurid taboo – but does so in a manner that transcends the taboo. The demonic is incorporated into the life and subjectivity of those involved. It is, like all taboos, simultaneously loathed and desired. It is this dialectic that powers transgression and makes these sexual experiences with spirits so powerful.

Bataille writes that “The realm of the sacred things is composed of the pure and of the impure. Pure or favorable sacredness has been dominant since pagan antiquity. But...impure or ill-omened sacredness was there underneath.” Taboo and transgression are always in dialectical relation in the same way that the impure and pure always are, in the same way desire and delay are. The power of transgression lay in this dialectic in which laws are constructed and then overturned. As Bataille states, “often the transgression of a taboo is no less subject to rules than the taboo itself.” First one must construct exaggerated laws of purity. This is clear in Pentecostalism where a whole host of strictures are constructed against a variety of sexualities. Indeed, the strictures outlaw almost all sexualities except for (re)productive sex within the bounds of marriage. Everything else is taboo. And they are constructed as demonic taboos, that is they are taboos with serious consequences to them. Then after the construction of these intense laws of purity comes violation. When one violates the laws and in doing so unleashes the force of transgression the idea of a bounded, isolated self dissolves. This happens in Pentecostalism with every example enumerated in this dissertation. As the sexual taboos – be it gayism, lesbianism, masturbation, spiritual marriage – are transgressed in body and in spirit the self expands finding continuity with a realm previously

502 Bataille, Erotism, 121.
503 Bataille, Erotism, 65.
inaccessible. The systematic manipulation of these purity taboos alone offers the potentiality to unleash this kind of continuity. In this way pneumoeroticism allows us to interpret a relationship between body and spirit that is propelled by transgression, but it is not sexual anarchy, it is instead ritualized transgression.

Transgression, especially sexual transgression, breaks down the “walls of isolation that separate individual beings, bursting through the limits of the finite, discontinuous ego and opening the self up to the limitless expanse of the infinite.” Eroticism and religion both work to dissolve self-contained, self-sufficient, bounded ideas of the subject. Eroticism and religion are both defined by the search for continuity, the lost characteristic of human being. That is to say that both religion and eroticism attempt to substitute a sense of continuity for the discontinuity that comes with being an isolated, bounded subject. The erotic and religion dissolve the contained self-sufficient subject and rationality as the person tries to escape discontinuity.

Transgression is sacred. Transgression is religious. And thus, eroticism is always religious because it is animated by this desire to transgress and explore that which is denied and hidden.

It is important to add that this discontinuity through transgression is always temporary. Never ending transgression would be akin to absolute war. This is important for

505 Bataille, Erotism, 17.
506 Bataille, Erotism, 15.
pneumoeroticism for one pneumoerotic encounters are always temporary. Masturbating Maggie only manifests for a time, for elsewise Priscilla would be left masturbating ad infinitum.

As evidenced by the preceding paragraphs, once we enter the realm of taboo and transgression the religious component of pneumoeroticism is intensified. That is to say the very specific way in which taboos built by or around deliverance enhances the religious element of pneumoeroticism – we can only understand the relationship between body and spirit by understanding its religious dimensions. Eroticism is often religious and this case is no different. Bataille wrote in *Tears of Eros*, “The meaning of eroticisms escapes anyone who cannot see its religious meaning! Reciprocally, the meaning of religion in its totality escapes anyone who disregards the link it was with eroticism.” In *Erotism* he wrote, “Eroticism is primarily a religious matter and the present work is nearer to theology than to scientific of religious history.” Eroticism, according to Georges Bataille, “is that within man (sic) which calls his (sic) being in question.” In the case of deliverance, pneumoeroticism allows us to interpret the various ways in which humans question their being and its relationship to something beyond themselves, namely spirits.

Pneumoeroticism is religious. This statement is different than saying pneumoeroticism comes from religious places, a la deliverance. I imagine pneumoeroticism having broader applicability than merely to things traditionally thought of as religious. I have relied on Georges Bataille and his corpus of work to make the case that eroticism is religious. Bataille is one of the

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twentieth century’s most vital theorists of religion.\textsuperscript{510} However, I wish to push beyond eroticism as religious and explore what the addition of pneuma to eroticism does in expanding Bataille’s theory. This is not an attempt to simplistically apply Bataille’s theory to the African charismatic example. As Hugh Urban writes, “The best use of Bataille is not just a simplistic application of his work to other historical or cultural examples but rather a more critical dialogue in which both sides are transformed by the encounter.”\textsuperscript{511} The addition of pneuma to Bataille’s theory of eroticism necessarily requires critical modification of some of his basic claims.

The first way in which adding pneuma to eroticism complicates Bataille’s work is in challenging the phallic-centric nature of Bataille’s work. The examples throughout this dissertation have portrayed an inconsistent relationship to gender, often gender-bending in unique and varied ways. This challenges Bataille who despite his emphasis on a transgressive, orgiastic sexuality that can dissolve the bounded idea of self, focused primarily on male sexuality. Bataille’s work is excessively phallic. In this way Bataille was ambivalent toward or even exclusionary of sexualities that were nonphallic, especially female sexuality.\textsuperscript{512} Women appear in Bataille as passive objects and/or victims.\textsuperscript{513} Alternatively, pneumoeroticism offers a wide array of erotic possibilities. We have seen clear phallic examples, for example Prophet Ofori being married to the penis with the knife. We have seen examples where women were passive victims to the sexual desires of spirits. But we have also seen examples of men with

\textsuperscript{510} Urban, “Desire, Blood, and Power,” 68.
\textsuperscript{511} Urban, “Desire, Blood, and Power,” 78.
female genitalia, wind providing sexual pleasure, women with sexual agency, men as passive etc. The sexual power of pneumoeroticism does not always only flow from the phallus but is rooted in this encounter between spirit and human. This is not to claim that Pentecostalism is feminist or queer in the modern Western sense of the terms. But in the realm of the sexual it provides a transgressive model that transcends the phallic.

The second and most important way that pneuma reconstructs eroticism is by making religion firstly and primarily embodied. For Bataille, religious eroticism is an important component of the inner life of humanity. This inner search for meaning and continuity is what constitutes religious eroticism, setting it apart from what Bataille refers to as animal sexuality. He writes, “Human sexual activity is not necessarily erotic but erotic it is whenever it is not rudimentary and purely animal.” Religious eroticism transcends animal sexuality when it causes humanity to call their very being into question. This is not to be confused with the animal sexuality of chapter six in which being is very much called into question. Bataille writes in Erotism, “In this book of mine I am describing an experience without reference to any special body of belief, being concerned essentially to communicate an inner experience – religious experience, as I see it – outside the pale of specific religions.” It may be counterintuitive, but the addition of pneuma actually moves eroticism from an inner experience to one that is experienced in the body. The emphasis on the pneumatic actually complicates Bataille by transposing this spiritual erotics into the realm of materiality. While in some ways bodies

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514 Bataille, Erotism, 29. I am being generous in universalizing Bataille who very much wrote his theory from the perspective of man for men.
515 Bataille, Erotism, 29.
516 Bataille, Erotism, 34.
matter for Bataille, he famously had an obsession with a photograph of a flagellated body and saw nakedness as a way to confront discontinuity, he largely sees religious eroticism as an inner experience. Pneumoeroticism, alternatively, is always embodied and it is in that embodiment that the possibility of continuity is confronted. It is always an embodied search for continuity. Think again to those masturbating who are simultaneously pleasuring themselves and a spirit. Thinking again to those having sexual relations with spirits. Think of snake spirits entering vaginas and spirits of lesbianism dancing. Over and over again in this dissertation the erotics have been spirited and embodied, not inner religious experiences. That is the body offers the possibility of continuity and only a view of the body as bounded leaves out this possibility. The experiences of my interlocutors do not leave open the possibility of a bounded body and in doing so illustrate an embodied, religious, sense of the erotic.

The religiosity of eroticism already places pneumoeroticism in the genre of religion. Eroticism is what occurs in the interplay between desire and delay, or taboo and transgression. But the addition of pneuma moves religion from an interiority to an embodied experience. Pnuemoeroticism in this sense is deeply religious, always emenating from and returning to the body.

_Hermeneutical Key #5: Combinative Reduction_

The final hermeneutical key is “combinative reduction.” The reduction is the dissolution of the scene as meaning has been saturated. Nothing more exciting lay ahead. That is the conclusion but it is much more than a conclusion for it, “usually gives way to another scene,
subject to the laws considered before, that is, counteracting excessive limits with minor variations and delaying the sense of urgency.”

In deliverance, the combinative reduction is a return to the body. At the conclusion of deliverance, the body lay docile. It is a coming back to the body from the various spirited possibilities that have been visited. But the body is not the same as it was at the beginning – it has been stretched, expanded, troubled, and challenged in spirited ways. So that if body A starts the deliverance scene then body A1 is what remains. If the person again goes through deliverance they would not return to A1 but as A2. This is pneumoeroticism, where no body remains unchanged.

We have also seen, perhaps most poignantly in the chapter on homosexuality, what happens when docility is not achieved. The scene still simply dissolves. But in each dissolution the possibility of a new scene emerges. There are a couple of ways in which the possibility of new scenes emerge. First, there is the idea that spirits who have been cast out need to find new material possibilities and may enter another person. But usually the new scene emerges with a different spirit being fought by the prophets. As we have seen, the saturated scenes end with the person returning to their cheap plastic chairs, treated as the same person who entered the church but never actually the same.

Conclusion:

This dissertation has made a sensuous appeal to understand the body and spirits through the ritual of deliverance. Repeatedly in deliverance, humans have sexual experiences with spirits. These experiences challenge if not erase traditional boundaries between spirit and

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517 Althaus-Reid, The Queer God, 29.
body. The ubiquity of these sexual experiences in all their combinations and permutations demand a new interpretation of body and spirit and the relationship between those entities. Thus, this conclusion has offered pneumoeroticsm as a hermeneutic for such experiences.

While pneumoeroticism is constructed in the conclusion, it should be clear that it has been operative throughout the dissertation. The exploration of the various senses in the deliverance sensescape was one way of exploring the ways in which the interaction between spirits and bodies shape and mold each other. The stories told articulated shifting bodies, trans-mogrifying bodies, porous bodies, bodies in physical and spiritual contortions. Repeatedly, we encountered bodies in flux that were only ever resolved by that moment of docility.

Furthermore, pneumoeroticism need not be limited to the data set of this dissertation. Indeed, there are broad possibilities for the applicability of pneumoeroticism as spirits – broadly conceived – and the erotic – again, broadly conceived – often intersect. This conclusion mentioned Pascal Beverly Randolph but the possibilities extend far beyond sexual magic. While this dissertation has specifically applied the hermeneutic to charismatic deliverance, there remains much work to do in expanding the applicability of pneumoeroticism.

In conclusion, relying on ethnographic data from nine months of fieldwork in Accra, Ghana, this dissertation has examined the centrality of sex and sexuality in Pentecostal deliverance. In particular, turning to the senses, it demonstrated how the ubiquity of sex and sexuality in deliverance is vital to understanding the body and spirit and the relationship between those entities. Each performance, from public masturbation to trans-mogrification into animals, demonstrated how sex is used to expand the definition of the body beyond its
fleshy boundaries and to make spirits immanent. In the spirit of charismatic Christianity, sex answers one of the most crucial questions of deliverance. Repeatedly, we have seen prophets hurling the question ‘who are you?’ far and wide. It is the conclusion of this dissertation that sex is a vital answer to that question, opening up possibilities thought impossible. The sexually-tinged answer to ‘who are you’ may surprise: you are one and yet two, you are material and yet immaterial, you are bounded and yet porous, you are simultaneously sexual and spiritual, you are of this world and yet more.
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