African Intimacies
Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization

Neville Hoad

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Introduction

The impetus for this book comes from two major strands of public discourse, separated by roughly one hundred years, concerning the relationship between homosexuality and African politics.

In 1886, the last indigenous ruler of Buganda, the kabaka (king) Mwanga, executes over thirty pages at his royal court, apparently for refusing to have sex with him following their recent conversion to Christianity. The reinscribing of certain corporeal intimacies between king and subject as sex (and “homosexual” sex at that), in tandem with the more usual suspects (trade and Christianity), effectively delegitimized local political institutions. The kabaka lost his absolute power, and the office of the kattkarita (prime minister/major domo) grew in importance. In addition, local chiefs could find legitimacy from the missionaries. These events created new forms of African agency and facilitated the implementation of colonial rule. In chapter 1, I produce a polemic that identifies African sodomy in this moment as a kind of primary anticolonial resistance.

A century later, controversy arose in many sub-Saharan African countries about the un-African nature of homosexuality. This controversy arguably began with President Robert Mugabe’s expulsion of GALZ (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe) from the Zimbabwean International Book Fair in 1995. Calling homosexuals “sodomists” [sic] and “sexual perverts,” the president banned the exhibit, though the Zimbabwe Supreme Court ruled that GALZ should be allowed to exhibit; in subsequent book fairs, GALZ has done so. Some days later at a Heroes Day rally for veterans of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle in Harare, President Mugabe made his now notorious pronouncement: “If dogs and pigs don’t do it, why must human beings? Can human beings be human beings if they do worse than pigs?”

Worldwide controversy ensued over this remark. Seventy members of the U.S. Congress sent President Mugabe a letter of protest accusing him of bigotry. Later that year, while traveling in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and the Netherlands, Mugabe was frequently greeted by demonstrations; upon his return to Harare, he remarked, “They can demonstrate, but if they come here [to Zimbabwe] we will throw them in jail.” The difference between “here” and “there” suggests that tolerance of homosexuality is becoming, among other things, a strategy for marking
national and civilizational specificity. Zimbabwe has anti-sodomy laws on its statute books from its colonial past ("here" and "there" were once closer), and there have been incidents of police harassment of self-identified gay individuals and groups. The 1998 trial of Canaan Banana, the former president of Zimbabwe, and its ensuing scandal were as much about sexual harassment as homosexuality. An old subcontinental joke goes, "There is no homosexuality in African culture, well, except for Canaan Banana."

The 1990s controversies spread quickly. While national nuances to the ensuing debates clearly exist, a highlight reel of statements by national leaders, particularly heads of state, can establish a set of common themes across considerable ideological diversity, ranging from states like Uganda, which have embraced free-market principles, to those like Zimbabwe, which espouse various forms of African socialism.

Kenya: In September 1999, Daniel arap Moi, then president of Kenya, announced: "It is not right that a man should go with another man or a woman with another woman. It is against African tradition and Biblical teachings. I will not shy away from warning Kenyans against the dangers of the scourge."44

Uganda: In July 1998, President Yosif Museveni told reporters, "When I was in America some time ago, I saw a rally of 300,000 homosexuals. If you have a rally of 30 homosexuals here, I would disperse it." Museveni was further quoted in the state-owned newspaper 
New Vision as saying: "I have told the CID [Criminal Investigations Department] to look for homosexuals, lock them up, and charge them.

The statement followed press reports (apparently false) of a marriage ceremony between two gay men in a suburb of Kampala.6

Namibia: President Nujoma, while addressing students at the University of Namibia in 1996, said, "The Republic of Namibia does not allow homosexuality or lesbianism here. We will combat this with vigor. We will make sure that Namibia will get rid of lesbianism and homosexuality. . . . Police are ordered to arrest you and deport you and imprison you. . . . Those who are practicing homosexuality in Namibia are destroying the nation. . . . It is the devil at work."

Accounting for these remarks and many like them by President Mugabe and other African leaders is difficult. Some contend that President Mugabe's statements were an attempt to deflect attention from the collapsing Zimbabwean economy and his increasingly autocratic rule and that homosexuals were merely a convenient scapegoat for the failures of decolonization. Given the timing of these remarks, it may be possible to read homophobic strands in African nationalisms as displaced resistance to perceived and real encroachments on neocolonial sovereignty by economic and cultural globalization. In chapter 4, I will speculate that President Mugabe's remarks may have been a response to the inclusion of a "no discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation" clause in the postapartheid South African constitution of 1993 (ratified 1996).

The end of apartheid meant that South Africa emerged from world pariah status, and its position as economic superpower in the region acquired a new moral authority. Namibia or Zimbabwe could cite the South African constitution's assertion of equal rights for those of divergent sexual orientations as evidence that they, and not the more racially hybrid giant to the South, still laid claim to the region's authentic African moral leadership, which they had occupied as members of the so-called Frontline States at the forefront of the fight against apartheid.45 I think this deployment of rhetorics linking questions of homosexuality to African identity may have produced a corresponding need for postapartheid South African leaders to assert authentic Africanness, as observed in the otherwise incoherent pronouncements and policies of South African President Thabo Mbeki on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which will be extensively discussed in chapter 5.

The only definite assertions are that questions of homosexuality and homophobia are overdetermined and that pathologizing individual leaders does little to further understanding. The Euro-American politics of moral outrage that only lingers long enough to establish shared "gayness" and does not care enough to learn the worldlings of those it purports to help does little more than shore up the moral credentials of the outraged.

This highlight reel has been seized upon by international human rights activists, but it is salutary to remember that while most leaders of states in North America and Western Europe are quite careful about what they say in public, it is very easy to find public officials in the ostensibly more tolerant Western world expressing very similar sentiments. In the United States, Senator Rick Santorum's comparison of "man on man" sex to "man on dog" sex is an obvious case in point. The risk of such a highlight reel is that one only lingers long enough to establish "homophobia." However, this book's goal is to present a genealogy of the ideas of race, sex, and nation that move beneath these utterances; while from a certain perspective "homophobia" may be the tip of the iceberg, the iceberg is not just iceberg all the way down. In the moment of writing, the emergence of an international public sphere dedicated to finding and making "homosexuals" in parts of the world that have not seen public articulations of such persons may further allow "homosexuality" to be seen as an ongoing imperial project.46
The rhetorics of race, sex, and respectability that underpinned the
and responses to, the AIDS pandemic that made massive inroads in
tially genocidal proportions. The earlier "gay disease" characterization
has meant that homosexual questions and attributions
continue to inform the African case despite overwhelming evidence of
predominantly heterosexual transmission in sub-Saharan Africa.¹

A remark by President Museveni of Uganda reveals the necessity
and the difficulty of connecting the homosexuality debates and the
HIV/AIDS crisis. In accepting an award in 2004 from the Commonwealth,
28 percent to 10 percent over a little more than a decade (although
unprotected sex. We don’t have homosexuals in Uganda so this is
mainly heterosexual transmission,"³ President Museveni’s frank (if
problematic) acknowledgment of the disease and the sexual nature of
its transmission can be usefully contrasted with the denials of South
Africa’s President Thabo Mbeki (discussed in chapter 5), making it
impossible to assert that leaders of countries that afford legal protections
homosexuals are more willing to address HIV/AIDS issues
or vice versa. Arguably, Museveni’s success in the HIV/AIDS arena
may have been helped by his insistence on removing homosexual
stigma from the stigma of being HIV-positive. The attribution in the
West of an African origin for HIV has further meant that responses
disease and sexuality.

Diverse local, international, and national understandings of the various
possible meanings of both Africa and homosexuality, with their
shifting histories, have proved central to these unfolding events, and
not only in academic ways. The question emerges of how these terms
of particularity, Africa and homosexuality, with their varying histories
and modes of othering, may be read and represented. How might they
be connected in more than just identitarian ways? From the earliest
days of public discussion of the pandemic, there has been a critical
recognition that traditional representational frameworks have been
hopelessly inadequate in representing HIV/AIDS as a disease; a syn-
drome; an impossible concatenation of medical, social, and political
events; and a site where lines between cause and effect have been and
continue to be powerfully contested.⁴

While the strict cartographic designation of Africa remains constant
over the time-spaces discussed in this book, the meanings of Africa re-
veal themselves as both stubbornly persistent and continually revis-
able. Important shifts in time-space occur from the Euro-African colo-
nial theater of chapter 1 to the postindependence Black Atlantic of chapter
2 to the post–Cold War, neoliberal moment of the Lambeth Conference of chapter 3. Chapter 4 takes the reader into the constitu-
tional triumphalism of South Africa’s delayed entry into postcolonial
ity in a wider moment of transnationalism, and the final two chapters
ponder the deep temporality and geographic dispersions of the
HIV/AIDS pandemic within and beyond the frame of the “new” na-
tion. Nevertheless, my archive is focused on what can be termed Ang-
lophone sub-Saharan Africa.

I think what is at stake here, besides my range and expertise, are
significant questions about the history of colonialism and postcolonial
African sovereignties. A focus on Francophone and/or Arab Africa
would require another book and probably result in a different set of
conclusions and speculations. I hope my work in these areas can help
scholars see how a focus on homosexual questions can complicate
thinking about these shifts in time-space in relation to both local and
global imaginings of Africa. Within the time-spaces I discuss, at least
two strands of historiographic thought exist: (1) a Marxist tradition
that argues for a kind of South African exceptionalism on the grounds
of extensive white settlement, earlier and more comprehensive capital
penetration, and attendant proletarianization due to the late
nineteenth-century mineral revolution (gold and diamonds); and
(2) Mahmood Mamdani’s significant counter to this, which sees
apartheid as the logical extension and subsequent consolidation of the
legal and racial ramifications of British policies of “Indirect Rule” in
Britain’s other colonial possessions in Africa.

This book’s focus on “intimate matters” contributes to these major
historiographic debates by reading migrant mine-marriages in
chapter 4 as something like a sexual form of internal colonialism and
polygamy in chapters 2 and 3 as a site for the negotiation and renego-
tiation of cultural and civilizational differences. African Intimacies arg
ues that attention to questions of desire, affect, and experience
suggests the contested and palimpsestic nature of Africa under the
time-spaces of colonialism, decolonization, postcoloniality, and now
globalization. As Achille Mbembe argues:

I wish I could have made it clearer that what is called Africa is first and
foremost a geographical accident. It is this accident that we subse-
sequently invest with a multitude of significations, diverse imaginary
content, or even fantasies, which, by force of repetition, end up becoming
authoritative narratives. As a consequence of the above, what we call
"Africa" could well be analyzed as a formation of desires, passions and
undifferentiated fantasies. It is a subjective economy that is cultivated,
nurtured, disciplined and reproduced. To nurture it, to police it and to
replicate it involves an intensive form of the imagination. But it also en-
ables a tremendous labor of bad faith social science discourse does not
know how to deal with.  

This book investigates the place of an entity that comes to be called
"homosexuality" in the production (discursive, material, imaginary) of
a place called "Africa." It argues that "homosexuality" is one of the
many imaginary contents, fantasies, or significations (sometimes in
the negative, sometimes not) that circulate in the production of African
sovereignties and identities in their representations by Africans and
others. Of course, Mbembe's subjectivity is underpinned by the
economy of centuries of imperial material interest in this part of the
world. The literary as a mode of knowing tends to access this im-
perial history through imagination. "Homosexuality" is a small and
not obvious thread in this wider tapestry of space, desire, and identity.
Race is the big one.  

Within biologics, homosexuality is definitionally noncreational
and thus is difficult to convey as a metaphor of social reproduction. It
is occasionally imagined as a half-valued space of play, or more usu-
ally imagined as a space of death: national, cultural, racial, or literal.
In 1898, the important maverick British sexologist Havelock Ellis
called "homosexuality" a "barbarously hybrid" term, no doubt refer-
ing to the yoking together of Greek and Latin components in its
coinage. However, the words barbarous and hybrid could not avoid
anxieties about race and sex and the risks of their mixture in the 1890s
any more than they can now. By investigating the emergence of
"homosexuality" (the term/concept itself is a loaded one and carries
with it willy-nilly the contaminating contingencies of its Western ori-
gin at the height of European imperialism) in a variety of African his-
torical contexts, I propose to pull at this thread and see what unravels.

A body of scholarship currently exists that engages homosexuality
in terms of the relationship between identity and sexual practice.
Within the emergent field of lesbian and gay studies (itself a marker of
the consolidation of certain insurgent ideas about sexuality in the
North Atlantic world), the 1980s saw a controversy around the idea of
the social construction of homosexuality. Social constructionists built
on the Foucauldian notion that the passage between the sodomite (a
temporary aberration) and the homosexual (a species of human being)
occurs at a specific moment in European history.  

1870. Consequently, social constructionists argued for a careful his-
torical and geographic bracketing of homosexual identity, held under
the sign "lesbian/gay" in the modern West. So-called essentialists ac-
cused the social constructionists of nominalism and argued for the
cross-cultural and transhistorical appearance of individuals and com-
communities that could be recognized as "homosexual," suggesting some
kind of deeper transhistorical determinant of "homosexuality" (usu-
ally biology, sometimes a more diffused idea of benign variation in hu-
nan sexual function).

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick reframed this debate in terms of minoritar-
ian and universalizing views of homosexuality. Is homosexuality, as
Freud asserted, a universal human possibility ("All human beings are
capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made
one in their unconscious\textsuperscript{23}), or is it a defining attribute of a minority
of human beings in certain societies at certain times? In 1988, Kobena
Mercer and Isaac Julien called for a wider set of historical determin-
ants within the social constructionist model: "the European con-
struction of sexuality coincides with the epoch of imperialism and the
two interconnect." Some significant work has been accomplished in
this area.

While my opening chapter considers the relation between emergent
identitarian forms of homosexuality in Europe and African forms of
sovereignty and sex, the rest of the book moves Mercer and Julien's
claim into the present to ponder the current neoliberal and globalizing
forms of homosexuality. President Mugabe's now notorious utterances
mark a strong intervention in this terrain, where imperial legacies and
African authenticities struggle to imagine the relationships between
"Africa" and "homosexuality."

Multiple exclusions enable the debate on the relation of lesbian and
gay identity to Western imperialism. Most obviously, the positions of
gay and lesbian Africans are not easily articulable in the confrontation,
for example, between progressive bishops of the Anglo-American
world and their African counterparts in chapter 3, or between Robert
Mugabe and the international gay and lesbian human rights move-
ment discussed in chapter 4, precisely because questions of sexuality
are used to police both national and racial authenticity.

Two strands of argument currently exist about the relation of les-
bian and gay identity to globalizing capital. The first theory argues that
capital produces homogenizing effects in the intimate relations of the
personal experiences it produces. This argument draws on an
anticolonial Marxist tradition of thinking about questions of cultural
imperialism and argues for an easy imposition of Western forms of
desire and sociality following new patterns of production and consumption, particularly among urban elites in the so-called developing world, with the attendant violence toward “indigenous” sexual worlds. Yet to some extent, attributing these social changes to international capital is only possible from a certain privileged perspective.

While one is suspicious of the homogenizing effects of the culture industry, too quick an assertion of cultural imperialism and sexual identity as cultural imperialism misses the ways in which these images/identities are consumed and may be used from below to very different ends. John D’Emilio’s thesis concerning the double-edged nature of capitalism for gay and lesbian identity in the West speaks to this. To paraphrase, capitalism shifts the focus of material production out of the home and makes lesbian and gay identity possible, but privatizing sexual reproduction also institutes and sustains homophobia and imposes or exacerbates a gendered division of labor.26

Whether this holds in a global market that is increasingly dependent on the super-exploited labor of women of the global South is uncertain. As Gayatri Spivak exhorts: “We must keep trying to deconstruct the breach between home and work in the ideology of our global struggle to reach this female bottom layer that holds up contemporary global capital.”27 Capitalism’s further rearticulation of familial ideologies may not open up the economic independence that D’Emilio implies is essential for the flourishing of lesbian and gay identity.

The second theory, which finds its home in a burgeoning subfield within anthropology and queer studies in the academy rather than in the international activist sphere, argues for the emergence of new sexual identities under global capital.28 This set of theoretical formulations and empirical assertions can be termed the proliferation of perversity hypothesis.

While the emergence of lesbian and gay social spaces and political organizations, particularly among the urban classes in many Latin American, Asian, and African countries in the last decade of the twentieth century, can be offered as evidence for the globalizing of the homo/hetero binary as the hegemonic means of organizing people’s sexual practices, the “cultural imperialism” model cannot account for forms of sexual identity and practice that are not reducible to the homo/hetero binary. These forms may claim “tradition,” or might be articulated as cultural heritage by the nativist strand in postcolonial nationalisms. However, they generally are not, due to the submerged familial and reproductive metaphors in European discourses of nationalism that anticolonial struggles have inherited. There may also be new forms, rearticulations of local gender and class variables that have entered an expanded public sphere under the pressure of events such as the global AIDS pandemic, sex tourism, state and international health initiatives, expanded media representations, and the like. How recognizable these new forms can be to international lesbian and gay organizing is both an empirical and conceptual question. Organizations of male sexuality centered on questions of sexual aim, rather than gender of object choice (the organizing principle of the homohetero divide) in which only the inserted party gets marked (I suspect through displaced misogyny), may be irrecoverable for international lesbian and gay organizing.

The resistance to moving sexual practice into identity may be another factor. Those forms of intimacy and identity that can be held under the proliferation of perversity hypothesis could theoretically be added as categories in the GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer) expansive trajectory. Within an additive logic, might it be possible to imagine a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, queer, hijra, kathoey, berdache, or other global movement? I suspect that such a movement would be caught between what Lauren Berlant calls “the romance of the incommensurate” and a newly sophisticated form of cultural relativism within the expanding regime of liberal democratic forms of capital.29

This book seeks both to develop an archive for the investigation of “homosexuality’s” place in contemporary Africa and to interrogate the meaningfulness of the terms sexuality and homosexuality as they appear in diverse contexts, genres, and publics. The archive for this work is fragmented and on the move. The chapters proceed roughly chronologically from Buganda in the 1880s to South Africa today. As both Benedict Anderson and Johannes Fabian have shown, however, “time” in such contexts cannot be assumed and organizes social relations and the ways they may be represented in complex ways.30 Geography is also endlessly renegotiated in this work both historically and conceptually, as I try to elaborate a worldly Africa through the lens of an imbricated genealogy of categories of race and homosexuality, two terms with uneven cartographies and temporalities. This lens is as much kaleidoscope as it is camera, microscope, or telescope, and the narrative produced is not one of historical causality. Rather, I focus on a series of events that operate as points of crisis, or flashpoints, during which longstanding discursive forces that have organized representations of race, sex, sovereignty, and imperialism become visible as they struggle to accommodate themselves to a changing world.

My opening chapter on the 1886 Buganda martyrs reviews a moment in the immediate prehistory of the scramble for Africa. At this
time, European forms and norms of what could be called sexual intimacy misrecognize what could be called African forms of embodied sovereignty and play a role in the emergence of colonialism in the region. The events in Buganda may allow for tracing the genealogy of metropolitan male “homosexuality” to exceed narrow national contexts. In addition, these events permit a consideration of how homosexuality functioned as a colonial regime of power (a subject-making discourse).

I do not know whether the specificities of Buganda will defy generalization, but my hopes are two-pronged. I hope that my reframing of Mwanga’s story may convince historians of metropolitan homosexuality of the relevance of colonial archives. In order to understand how sexuality is theorized, perhaps even lived, under imperialism and globalization, one cannot assume the self-sufficiency of the metropolis or a one-way street between metropole and colony, center and periphery. I further hope that specific colonial histories would incorporate careful framings of transformations in the significations of a range of bodily practices.32

The 1965 Soyinka novel The Interpreters, discussed in chapter 2, is reviewed as a consideration of homosexual subjectivity in decolonization where nationality works orthogonally to race in a neocolonial allegory. Although diasporic black homosexuality is imaginable, Nigerian homosexuality is not, even though a certain class solidarity allows for racial allegiance to win out over national identity. The gay African American character, Joe Golder, is often homophobically represented but remains an integral part of the African Bohemia of the central protagonists. He is not handed over to the Nigerian police for his part in the death of a handsome street youth. Thirty years before Robert Mugabe made his now notorious pronouncements, The Interpreters offers a far more complex consideration of the place of male homosexual desires, practices, and identities in relation to national belonging, racial authenticity, and emerging neocolonial economic structures. Methodologically, in this chapter, I hope to speculate on questions of race, sex, and globalization to show how a novel written in the throes of decolonization and immediately before a catastrophic civil war, well before the terms globalization and/or queerness/queer theory had any political or critical purchase, represents in narrative form problems of human embodiment, economic exploitation, and subjective desires that we may call sexual.

The remaining chapters all engage versions of the present in the context of the condensed colonial and decolonizing/neocolonial cases of the two initial chapters. Chapter 3 discusses the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops, which saw a strong split, along predominantly geographic lines, between bishops on the question of ordaining “homosexual” priests and sanctioning same-sex unions. “Conservative” African and Asian bishops successfully opposed their more “liberal” European and North American counterparts. In this chapter, I argue that Lambeth in 1998 becomes an emblematic event for thinking through the place of sex, sexuality, and intimacy in the genealogy of neoliberal rhetorics of development, and how the latter cite and partially transform the sexual ideologies of colonialism and post-neocolonial modernity. The meanings of both my central analytic/descriptive terms (neoliberalism, Africa, homosexuality) and an important global institution (the Anglican Church) shift for varied constituencies of interest, such as African bishops exercising power in the now global Anglican church, Africans laying claim to lesbian and gay identity, international lesbian and gay human rights activists, and scholars who would write about such things. Lambeth in 1998 allows one to watch reorganizations of ideas of race, Africa, homosexuality, and globalization as they unfold into new continuities and contradictions. Of particular interest is the way that “conservative” Africans position themselves as theoretically central and that being African enables a claim to represent the Anglican universal rather than continuing to carry the marker of cultural difference.

Chapter 4 offers an analysis of lesbian and gay rights in Southern Africa in response to the new South African constitution. Sexual-orientation-based rights mark the most recent attempt to give social specificity to the universalizing human rights legacy of the European Enlightenment. These rights circulate in a variety of public spheres (international, regional, national, and local) and are usually imagined as a universalizing of a category called lesbian and gay identity or, less and more specifically, “sexual orientation.” This identity or orientation has its own geographically and temporally circumscribed history, and generally maps very unevenly onto the bodily practices or more extensive worlding(s) of the subjects it promises to describe and help. This chapter attempts to account for why, at the level of the law, South Africa has embraced the notion of lesbian and gay rights and why the South African case frames the relationship between race, nation, and homosexuality in very different terms compared to my opening highlight reel of homophobic pronouncements by heads of state from other African countries.33

The final chapters move us into the representational crisis around the HIV/AIDS pandemic, where intellectual labor and imagination have been required to displace homosexual questions given Western
representational hegemony over HIV/AIDS in the 1980s. This displacement inevitably leaves traces. Chapter 5 ponders the question of the imperial legacy in representations of the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa. The chapter considers two public speeches given by Thabo Mbeki, the president of South Africa: the inaugural Z. K. Matthews Memorial Lecture at Fort Hare (October 12, 2001) and his speech at the funeral of Sarah Bartmann (August 9, 2002). Both speeches came in light of accusations of AIDS denialism leveled against the South African president. In these speeches, President Mbeki gives an account of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European racism in terms of sexualized and gendered European investments in black bodies and produces a critique of what could be called the sexual ideology of racism.

Given President Mbeki’s increasing reluctance to give interviews on HIV/AIDS, I speculate on how the speeches’ critique of the sexual ideology of racism may underpin the South African government’s difficulty in mustering the political will to respond systematically to the AIDS pandemic facing its citizens. Both speeches assert that the legacy of colonial and apartheid-era racism is very much alive in the postapartheid and postcolonial era and that the representation of HIV/AIDS as a sexually transmitted disease destroying black people fits in only too well with earlier racist renditions of the lasciviousness of blackness.

Rather than dismiss Mbeki’s invocation of the history of colonial racism, as many have done, in relation to present day HIV/AIDS, this chapter argues that Mbeki’s trenchant analysis of racism needs to be extended to colonial racism’s representation of the sexual norms of whiteness. In addition, new tropes for the representation of black sexuality need to be found within the archive of Pan-African literary and cultural production. The buried polemic here is that it is not enough to describe the diversity of African sexual practices on the ground in order to suggest that Mbeki’s assumptions about the sexual nature of HIV transmission are counterfactual; that description alone, no matter how scrupulous, still produces African sexuality as the object of a prurient Western gaze. Moreover, a certain anthropological praxis, while indispensable, is by itself insufficient for the task of rethinking and reimagining sexualities in Africa. It may run the risk of reproducing the very epistemological formations it wishes to undo and that President Mbeki has pointedly criticized.

The final chapter begins exploring an alternative archive for representations of African sexuality through an in-depth reading of a recent South African novel. Chapter 6, “An Elegy for African Cosmopolitanism: Phaswane Mpe’s Welcome to Our Hillbrow,” argues that Mpe’s 2001 novel problematizes notions of African identity by resolutely re-

vealing the mutual implication of rural and urban worlds, South Africa and the rest of the continent, Africa and the world at large, risking what Edward Said calls “the essence of the cosmopolitan.” Mpe’s novel, through deferral to a notion of heaven as the living endlessly retelling of the stories of the dead, works to keep open several ongoing historical wounds of the apartheid era and the postapartheid era (rapid urbanization, xenophobia, resurgent witchcraft, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic). The novel makes it clear that coherent national and/or communal identities are “false palliatives.”

My reading invokes the reanimation of Freudian notions of melancholia in recent U.S.-based queer and immigration studies to suggest that the refusal to give up the lost loved object (the cornerstone of Freudian melancholia) can be made to do ethical and political work in the face of the personal and historical traumas the novel recounts. I link this recent strand in queer theory to Edward Said’s recent reading of Freud, which also offers a transfiguring of the experience of melancholia. Said understands the experience of the cosmopolitan as one of repeated loss of identity by hanging on to the originary break in identity. The cosmopolitan experience reminds us that self/other relations are structured not only in antagonistic reaction formation but that the self is indebted to the other in more proximate and intimate ways. Race, nation, and sexuality are all brought into question as vectors of othering. Mpe narrates and renarrates stories of love, death, and writing through, rather than in, contemporary Hillbrow. These stories are not universal, nor are they only South African or African. They can be told and retold. In their citation by different communities of interest, new figurations of Africanness and sexuality begin to emerge through the tenacity of never completely relinquishing loss for the melancholic and the cosmopolitan.

Very few book-length engagements have focused on the questions of African sexuality, let alone African homosexuality, under globalization. Recent edited anthologies have tended to be anthropological in focus. They are concerned with the necessary work of establishing the facticity of such practices and, in some cases, identities among various African groupings across place and time. To my knowledge, none consider homosexuality in relation to changing forms and norms of African sovereignty.

Two recent anthologies may be taken as emblematic, in diverging ways, of the uses to which ethnographic and anthropological approaches to the questions of homosexuality and Africa have been put. Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities (Murray and Roscoe 1998) organizes its essays geographically to sug-
gest both regional specificities and wider continental patterns. However, with few important exceptions, it does not put the organizing rubric “homosexualities” under any conceptual pressure. The forms of intimacy, genital and other, between bodies described in the essays may signify kinship, power, shifting systems of gender, pedagogy, age-group socialization, and even pleasure. However, the case for sexuality as an organizing rubric is assumed rather than made.

This diversity of experiences subsumed under the sign of homosexuality, even pluralized, can never interrogate the terms of the assertion that “there is no homosexuality in African culture.” It can only answer: “No, but there is, look . . .” In this way it precisely reproduces the terms of the debate it wishes to end in a landscape of assertion and counterassertion where finding practices that look “homosexual” to a Western eye has little intellectual or political capital. The claim to rights on the basis of homosexuality has been a fraught business in the modern West. A universalizing faith in the liberatory potential of such politicization of sexual minority identities repeats the failures and fantasies of modernization theory without taking into account its devastating riposte: underdevelopment theory.

Questions of audience complicate the stakes of who benefits when we find “homosexualities” everywhere. Remaining within an anthropological framework, albeit a strategic nativist one, Ifi Amadiume provides an admonition in the preface to her own ethnographic work that allows African sex and gender norms a kind of radical alterity without forgetting the place of Africa in the Euro-American imagination. It is an admonition that remains salutary:

There are already some indications that black lesbians are using such prejudiced interpretations of African situations to justify their choices of sexual alternatives which have their roots and meanings in the West. Black lesbians are, for example, looking into African women’s relationships and interpreting some as lesbian (see Carmen et al., 1984). What prejudices and assumptions are they imposing on African material? How advantageous it is for lesbian women to interpret such practices as women-to-women marriage as lesbian (see Lorde, 1984). Such interpretation of, for example, the cases cited in this book would be totally inapplicable, shocking and offensive to Nkobi women, since the strong bonds and support between them do not imply lesbian sexual practices. In our search for power, or more positive role models and images of powerful women, there is a limit to how facts can be bent or our own wishes and fantasies imposed.

In this case, Amadiume points to the kinds of political capital to be found for Western sexual minority identities in the experiences of African peo-

ple. This seeking of self-consolidating evidence from elsewhere to universalize and naturalize one’s own experience can also be found in many of the early British (and European, more generally) articulations of “homosexuality” in their emergent activist, sexological, anthropological, and psychoanalytic guises. In a representative example, John Addington Symonds, in *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (1896), tells us:

It confronts us on the steppes of Asia, where hordes of nomads drink the milk of mares; in the bivouac of Keltish warriors, lying wrapped in wolves’ skins round their camp-fires; upon the sands of Arabia, where the Bedaween raise desert dust in flying squadrons. We discern it among the palm-groves of the South Sea Islands, in the card-houses and temple-gardens of Japan, under Esquimaux snow-huts, beneath the salty vegetation of Peru, beside the streams of Shiraz and the waters of the Ganges, in the cold clear air of Scandinavian winters. It thrives in our huge cities. The pulse of it can be felt in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, no less than in Constantinople, Naples, Teheran and Moscow. It finds a home in Alpine valleys, Albanian ravines, Californian canyons, and gorges of Caucasian mountains.

The “it” that Symonds is so slow to name in this panting eroticizing of the world is found everywhere. He mobilizes its geographic universality in an impassioned plea against its criminal status in Britain. The language of the extract is saturated with exotic icons. *Climate* and *landscape* are the idealized terms that Symonds uses to posit human difference in the claim of “homosexual” sameness, though what exactly the “it” is remains unclear. However, its presence among many of the subject people of empire could be and was used as evidence that it should be further criminalized and/or pathologized. For the same reasons and purpose, it was used as justification for colonizing, as my discussion of the Bugandan case in chapter 1 will make clear. Some ninety years later, a figure like Audre Lorde, and writers like Steven O. Murray and Will Roscoe, repeat Symonds’s move of using the diversity of elsewhere to shore up beleaguered sexual identities in the metropole.

Of course, my own position here becomes untenable if not impossible: a white gay boy standing behind an African woman to make a criticism of a sanctified figure like Audre Lorde, herself a figure of much more geographic complexity than Amadiume acknowledges here. The point is that an identity politics of sameness, literally of appropriative identification, is potentially as harmful as the fetishizable difference of exoticism. My reading of Mpe through the lens of Said’s Freud marks an attempt to think the concepts of homosexuality and Africa, difference and sameness, identification and disavowal, in a way that lets “our” differences stand in another way, neither a reification of otherness nor a
projective incorporation into self. I suggest that what enables this rethinking is a refusal to forget continuities in power differentials in the shifting forms of global sovereignty over the last hundred years.

The similarities and differences between the titles of Amadiume's *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (1987) and Murray and Roscoe's *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities* (1998) are pointed and illuminating. In Amadiume's title "Male Daughters, Female Husbands" works to confound Western readers' expectations of sex and gender roles. In Murray and Roscoe's title "Boy-Wives and Female Husbands" works to consolidate (despite the plurality of "homosexualities" and the particularity of "African") certain Western notions of gender transitive homosexuality in ways that risk repeating the commonplaces of commonsense homophobia that reduce gay and lesbian relationships to the template of heterosexual coupledom.  

The singularity of Amadiume's "an African Society" suggests the ways in which the book's arguments seek to preserve the possibilities of internal differentiation within Africa. *Sex and gender* stand as analytic categories, not as *sexes* and *gender*, which are classifiable if not fixed identities on the ground. In contrast, "Studies of African Homosexualities" implies that both Africa and homosexualities can be stable objects of study and that what unifies all these different kinds of homosexualities is that they are African. In Amadiume's book "Gender and Sex in an African Society" are used as a lever to problematize ideas of sex and gender tout court. In Murray and Roscoe's anthology "homosexuality" becomes big enough to embrace its African variances by becoming "homosexualities."

It is risky to judge a book by its cover, but these differences at the level of title are borne out by the respective contents, with two important exceptions. Two of the best essays in the Murray and Roscoe anthology evidence extreme caution about the term *homosexuality*. Deborah Amory in "Mashoga, Mabasha, and Magai: 'Homosexuality' on the East African Coast" keeps the term in scare quotes throughout in ways that suggest the lack of its proper fit to the people and practices she describes. Kendall in "'When a Woman Loves a Woman' in Lesotho: Love, Sex and the (Western) Construction of Homophobia" all but eschews the term's utility. The essay begins: "My search for lesbians in Lesotho began in 1992, when I arrived in that small, impoverished southern African country and went looking for my own kind." She never finds her own kind but encounters another form of apparently normative erotic relationship among Basotho women, which is not assimilable to lesbianism if one takes Basotho definitions of sex seriously. This missed encounter, this failure to find one's own kind, and the process to learn something else is what is most striking in Kendall's essay.

Many of the essays in Signe Arnfred's edited collection *Rethinking Sexualities in Africa* (2004) are extremely careful in describing local practices in in-depth, bottom-up ways, but it remains difficult to imagine how these various local redescriptions can avoid a certain incommensurateness. While "sexuality" as an organizing rubric is certainly rethought, "Africa" as a designation remains a concatenation of singularities or a vague geographic gesture. Recent social science studies of the HIV/AIDS pandemic may allow a restatement of the idea of "African" in a more multifocal way, situating the meaningfulness of the designation "African" in material and representational global economies. What can the historian of ideas and the cultural critic contribute?

The relation of African sovereignty to the history of imperialism and current realities of globalization/transnationalism is integral to the conceptualization of *African Intimacies*. This book seeks both to supplement and to critique anthropological endeavors by considering the overdetermined genealogies of representations of African "homosexuality" in the context of the historical experiences of imperialism, decolonization, and now globalization. *African Intimacies* analyzes a series of historical and literary representations of predominantly, but not only, male same-sex corporeal intimacies in Africa. These representations are contextualized in the light of current and recent public debates about the un-African nature of homosexuality and the necessity and difficulty of discussions of African sexuality more generally in relation to the sub-Saharan HIV/AIDS pandemic.

This book argues that the literary and cultural critic can contribute to these important debates in two key ways. First, the book outlines the continuities and ruptures in figurations of African sexuality produced under imperialism, decolonization, and globalization. Second, the book opens up the archive of African cultural productions that engage questions of sexuality as an intellectual resource for epidemiologists, social scientists, and policy makers.

Recent social science work moves the discussion of HIV/AIDS in Africa beyond narrow biomedical understandings of the disease and attendant behavior-modification approaches to prevention. The editors of *HIV & AIDS in Africa: Beyond Epidemiology* (2004) write:

Our departure from these paradigms comes in striving to uncover the various ways AIDS is embedded within social, economic, cultural, political and ideological contexts. The contributors to this volume largely disagree with the representation of AIDS as multiple instances of individual risk resulting from lack of information or poor decisions. We
Let me work through a perhaps surprising example. John Le Carré’s *The Constant Gardener* (2001), a *New York Times* best-seller, imagines the HIV/AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa in ways that engage all the central problems of *African Intimacies* and, along the way, makes the argument for the value of fiction and literary reading. Le Carré has perhaps written the first popular novel in English to read globalization critically. Inevitably, the novel reproduces many of the social and political forces it attempts to critique. It gives us globalization from the middle up. In this way, it reproduces several of the representational axioms of the great imperialist novel. As in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Graham Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), and Isak Dinesen’s *Out of Africa* (1937), Africa (in Le Carré’s case, Kenya) is the disturbing, exotic, exciting, terrifying (pick an adjective) backdrop or symbol for the adventures, moral dilemmas, romances (pick an event) of white people. It might be useful to provide the briefest of summaries of the 600-plus page novel here.

Tessa, the feisty young heroine and wife of Justin (who is a sweet, handsome, somewhat dull, but full of integrity mid-level diplomat-bureaucrat at the British Kenyan High Commission), is murdered along with her purported black lover, Arnold (who actually turns out to be gay). She is killed after blowing the whistle that a new drug for the treatment of tuberculosis, which is being tested in Africa, is actually killing people. The novel is essentially about Justin’s attempt to find out who killed her and why.

The novel is not actually about AIDS at all, except perhaps at a displaced level of allegory or more cogently at the level of fantasy and/or politics. There is a way in which the AIDS crisis is both symptom and allegory of a world in which borders are increasingly open to the flow of goods and capital and certain kinds of people but the movement of the poor are increasingly regulated. The HIV virus, as a subindividual agent, moves more in the way of a powerful abstraction like capital, although where it hits, hurts, and stays can be attributed to factors that are recognizably local. However, let us be literal here and consider closely the one place in which the novel directly addresses the problem of the African HIV/AIDS crisis. Paradoxically, this only makes it apparent that at its heart it is not really African at all, that its causes lie within a much more widely dispersed global economic and political system.

We are with Justin, at a food drop location in southern Sudan. He has tracked Lorbeer, a kind of Kurtz figure who appears to be implicated in Tessa’s death and has been connected to many of the new TB-drug-related deaths. At this point in the narrative, we know
that Lorbeer was one of the new drug's developers and is the person responsible for its testing on human subjects. In a crisis of conscience, realizing the drug, which he has hoped will cure people more effectively and make him a considerable fortune, actually kills people, he has gone to work in a famine relief center in Sudan. Justin (Peter), masquerading as a journalist, interviews him there.

"Africa has 80% of the world's AIDS sufferers, Peter. That is a conservative estimate. Three-quarters of them receive no medication. For this we must thank the pharmaceuticals and their servants, the U.S. State Department, who threaten with sanctions any country that dares produce its own cheap version of American patented medicines. OK? Have you written that down?"

Justin gives Lorbeer a reassuring nod. "Keep going."

"The pills in that jar cost twenty U.S. dollars apiece in Nairobi, six in New York, eighteen in Manila. Any day now, India's going to manufacture the generic version and the same pill will cost sixty cents. Don't talk to me about the research and development costs. The pharmaceutical boys wrote them off ten years ago and a lot of their money comes from governments in the first place, so they're talking crap. What we got here is an amoral monopoly that costs human lives everyday. OK?"

Lorbeer knows his exhibits so well he doesn't need to search for them. He replaces the jar in the shelves and grabs a large black and white box.41

Readers are put in the interesting but uncomfortable position of being asked to agree with the novel's most morally compromised voice. Le Carré establishes a damning body of evidence against the pharmaceuticals: Third World dumping, testing new drugs on vulnerable populations who have no recourse to either legal protections or medical care should anything go wrong. Why put this moment of most explicit critique in the mouth of a probable murderer, a known apostate? This tension between who speaks and what is said is especially interesting as Le Carré (as behooves a writer of Cold War spy thrillers) is in many ways a Manichean thinker, with a fascination with the mechanisms of complicity and betrayal that spy novels must engage. This difficulty of reconciling who speaks and what is spoken is one of the many things for which fiction functions well. Fiction addresses a subject's imagination, an imagination that is paradoxically but profoundly embodied: paradoxically because the act of reading (sitting still, being transported into another world) is often a disembodied experience; profoundly because imaginative identification involves the entire sensorium. We can see, taste, smell, weep, laugh, get aroused, or get bored reading a novel.

Narrative fiction necessarily embodies intellectual positions by embedding them in character's mouths, bodies, and life trajectories. This conversation between Lorbeer and Justin/Peter requires an ethical engagement from its readers: What would you do if you were Lorbeer, if you were in his body, in his geographical location with his life experience? This question reveals the way the text both imagines and fails to imagine its readership. It cannot imagine the victims of Lorbeer's halfway good intentions gone wrong—the millions of impoverished Africans dying because they lack, among other things, access to the medicines that might save them—as its readers can. To do so would risk an obscenity, and the genre of the middle-brow thriller definitionally precludes those not at all or barely literate (in English).

If the readers of the middle-brow thriller can be imagined as smaller Lorbeers, well-intentioned subjects caught up willy-nilly in an evil system from which they accrue significant benefits, whether they want them or not (in a snide moment, I wonder whether or not Tessa's massive financial resources, which allow for Justin's exposure of the pharmaceuticals, are independent of investments in the very pharmaceuticals or the diversified conglomerates of which they form a part), the writer here can be imagined as Justin disguised as Peter, who writes down exactly what Lorbeer tells him: "OK? Have you written that down?"

Lorbeer comes to conscience late in the novel. Will its readers, sitting on planes, on trains, in armchairs—all locations that mark them as members of the world Lorbeer implicitly denounces—do the same? The novel's careful staging of its representational work (conscience-raising, rather than consciousness-raising), sugar-coated by the seductions of narrative suspense, may allow its readers to begin ethical work that in turn may become political. However, the limits of the novel's political vision, and perhaps the vision of any novel, become clearer in the narrative's failure, or refusal, or constitutive inability to imagine a collective resistance to the forces of globalized capital, symbolized by the ruthless pharmaceuticals, which are also embodied in the figure of Lorbeer. More importantly, these limits are revealed in the solitariness of the act of reading.

Justin can trust no one, most of all the people Tessa's work so desperately wants to help. Unrepresentable in the narrative and definitionally outside the potentially ethical circuit of reader/writer, the African person with HIV/AIDS disappears here in the very exchange that depends on him/her for its moral weight. We are in the familiar landscape of subalternity here. In the world of The Constant Gardener (and the title resonates with the notions of death and rebirth, sustained cycles of labor and repose) we have African AIDS and African disease more generally staged as a crisis for, for the want of a better shorthand, European conscience. I do not think that this
staging is necessarily always a bad thing, provided one marks its limits. One should be wary of a vestigial romanticism that sustainably locates agency in spontaneous collective responses from below.44

As fine a novel as The Constant Gardener is, it can only speak for and about (never to or from) Africans with HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, it offers incitements to agency for readers who may be able to participate in solidarity tourism at worst, and disinvestments and boycott politics at best. I further think that the novel’s million plus readers, many of whom know little and care just as little about Africa, reading the sentence, “What we got here is an amoral monopoly that costs human lives everyday. OK?” is not a bad place to begin.

Cynically speaking, the pharmaceuticals in Africa allow Le Carré as a novelist to give continued life to the set of narrative conventions he mastered in writing about the Cold War. Yet, within that maneuvering, agentic possibilities may emerge. The novel remains useful to me in the ways that it gives a multiscalar analysis of the pandemic—from the transnational to the national to the local to the personal—narrative and affective content.

African Intimacies privileges the term intimacies as a frame for negotiating those various scales of analysis in the language of imagination and affect.45 Methodologically, the book interrogates the difficulty of subsuming a range of historical experiences and representations under the banners of sexuality and homosexuality, though these are terms that I cannot quite do without. The chapters circle an interlocking series of questions in the unstable terrain of contemporary African and sexuality studies. They move from the assumption that the experience of the embodied pleasures, stories, and traumas held together in the liberal modern West under the sign “sexuality” have a profoundly public character. This profoundly public character is deeply affected by the set of economic and discursive relations that pertain under imperialism in its shifting temporalities from the scramble for Africa in the 1880s through the colonial and decolonizing periods of the twentieth century to current-day globalization.

Ann Laura Stoler attempted to give Foucault’s History of Sexuality (1978) its imperial geography in Race and the Education of Desire in the context of the Dutch imperial adventure in Indonesia. Western and anticolonial feminisms have always deeply contested the public/private split central to liberal ideologies of sex and gender. In recent years they have moved to a more geographically stratified notion of “woman” in ways that are profoundly enabling for thinking through the problems of corporeal pleasures and pains within a continually racialized and gendered national and international division and defi-
Chapter 3

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE CHURCH
The World Conference of Anglican Bishops

This chapter moves us into the institutional palimpsests of post-Cold War neoliberal Africa. I am unsure what narrative and/or conceptual relations can be elaborated from the key terms of my paratactic title (neoliberalism, homosexuality, Africa, the Anglican Church) as they collide at an event (the Anglican Conference of World Bishops held at Lambeth in 1998). Moreover, they are terms and definitions with specific institutional forms and histories that have their meanings contested in a process of apparently ceaseless revision. I read the conference as a site for arresting moments in their various genealogies and for offering a cross-section of their intersection in order to isolate the conditions of agency for the various participants. A snippet from Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals captures succinctly the problem I face here with all four terms:

The cause or origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart, whatever exists having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a becoming master, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous meaning and purpose are necessarily obscured or even obliterated.

What happens to the meanings of the terms neoliberalism, Africa, homosexuality, and the Anglican Church as they collide during the course of the conference? What “previous meanings and purposes” remain intelligible even as they are “necessarily obscured”? What does the subduing? Where might the fresh interpretations come from? And most importantly, what might be the stakes of the transformation of meanings of these powerful abstractions, institutions, and designations for varied constituencies of people: African bishops exercising power in the now-global Anglican Church, Africans laying claim to lesbian and gay identity, international lesbian and gay human rights activists, or scholars who would write about such things? The most obvious theoretical problem remains the difficulty of thinking through the place of sex, sexuality, or intimacy in the genealogy of neoliberal rhetorics of development and how the latter diverge from and repeat the sexual ideologies of colonialism and post- or neocolonial modernity. The 1998 Lambeth conference is an event in which strands of this problem become visible.

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

Despite the national, cultural, and perhaps even racial specificity implied by its name, the Anglican Church has always claimed universality. It can now, however, make assertions to being a global church in ways that it could not earlier in its history, most simply because it now claims more African, Asian, and Latin American congregants than, for want of a better shorthand, white ones. The global Anglican communion is estimated to have around 77 million members, with over 30 million members residing in Africa. With this expanded global congregation, the church’s perceived centers of vitality have also shifted from Canterbury. The meaning of this change in the social and geopolitical locations of members and centers of vitality of the Anglican community was up for grabs at Lambeth. A distinctly hostile rhyme from Brendan Behan’s Borstal Boy (1958) on the founding of the Anglican Church can neatly stage (and upstage) the messiness of origins and the continually contaminating contingencies of history in relation to the truth claims made by all the Lambeth participants: “Don’t speak of the alien minister, Nor of his church without meaning or faith, For the foundation stone of his temple, Is the ballcocks of Henry the Eighth.” Behan writes from an anticolonial platform in mid-twentieth century Ireland, implicating the Anglican Church in a continuously bloody history of British imperialism. His writing also unwittingly registers the church’s original role in a discourse of national self-determination (the articulated goal of anticolonial struggles) of self-generation, even if I may overread “ballcocks” a bit.

The rest of Behan’s poignant and hilarious novel/memoir springs from inside a range of colonial stereotypes about the drunken, criminal Irish. Without attempting a potted history of the Anglican Church over the five hundred years of its existence, a few salient points need to be made. Sexual politics embedded in questions of divorce and dynastic succession are central to the Anglican Church’s becoming a distinct entity at all, and we note a key and ongoing paradox over the course of its institutional history: It is an institution partially founded to resist foreign domination, which later plays a significant role in the implementation of British imperialism, as well as in resistance to it. The Church may then find itself an increasingly resistant voice against certain vectors of current globalization. This chapter argues that questions around
that the Anglican universal has when it acknowledges cultural difference, and how, in the late nineteenth century, gender is the occasion for this acknowledgment. One rule exists for men, but “local conditions” will decide rules for women. This requirement that women mark the embodied, the particular, and the local, while male subjects have less-mediated access to the universal and its agentic possibilities has been a key quarrel that anticolonial feminists have picked with anticolonial nationalisms, and Western feminists have had more generally with the Enlightenment legacy. If this earlier focus on polygamy forced gender to carry the weight of cultural difference, the 1998 conference’s focus on homosexuality partially hands this task over to sexuality, though the ordination of women clergy remained a divisive issue on similar geopolitical lines. Ordaining a woman in a polygamous marriage was not an issue that could have been broached in 1888 and likewise was not raised in 1998. The 1888 resolutions largely confirmed the position of the Church Missionary Society, the organ of the Anglican Church most involved in sending missionaries to proselytize in the colonial or potentially colonial spheres. This position, which argued against the baptism of polygamists, was outlined in Henry Veni’s memorandum of 1856, though many high church organs, constitutively suspicious of the evangelical streak in missionary endeavors, considered it too strict. Bishops from Africa were all missionaries from the British Isles, though an anticipatory excitement was expressed about the future possibility of native bishops representing these dioceses. These colonial bishops were trenchant about admitting no concession in relation to church toleration of polygamous practices. The tension between metropolitan liberals and more conservative “colonial” bishops on matters of “sex,” is already present at Lambeth in 1888.

Some 110 years later, African bishops (no longer exclusively white missionaries) showed greater flexibility on the issue of polygamy and resolved not to condemn polygamous unions. However, issues around “sexuality” remained high on their agenda and they were similarly conservative on such issues (albeit, I will argue, for a range of different reasons). The most divisive issue of the thirteenth Lambeth Conference held in 1998, was the question of ordaining “non-celibate homosexual clergy” and the legitimacy of clergy presiding at “same-sex unions.” This conference marked the first time such questions made it onto the agenda. After intense debate and several amendments, the bishops overwhelmingly passed a resolution stating homosexual activity to be “incompatible with Scripture” and recommended against the ordination of noncelibate homosexuals and the blessing of same-sex unions. The final vote

embodiment, identity, and ritual and mundane practice, straining under the banner of sex, play a pivotal role in this paradox.

Broadly speaking, the relation of Christianity (and let us subsume Anglicanism under Christianity for this moment of the argument) as an ideological force to the broader social forces of both imperialism and decolonization is complex and contradictory, producing an attendant difficulty in generalizing a relation at all outside of specific local contexts. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler suggest some of the possibilities during the period preceding and during colonization:

In the Philippines as much as in Africa, people heard what Christian missionaries had to say but scrambled the message—sometimes finding in the mission community something valuable and meaningful to them, sometimes using their mission education to gain secular advantage, sometimes insisting that their conversion should enable them to run the religious organizations themselves, and sometimes dismantling both doctrine and organization to build a religious edifice or even a revolutionary movement that was wholly new, neither the Christianity of Europe nor a recognizable variant of local religious practices. In short, the church was always potentially on all sides. The thirteenth Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops, as an event in the neocolonial aftermath of decolonization, and despite, or perhaps because of, its history as an imperialist metropolitan center, encapsulates some of these diverging trends, which affect the ways it also functions as a site: uneven, contested, and fragmentary to be sure, for the emergence of cross-culturally recognizable sexual norms. The Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops, first held in 1868 and generally held every ten years since, has almost from its inception been a forum in which “sexual” norms across cultures (or where sexual norms have been used to define “cultures”) have been negotiated under the banner of an ostensibly unified church. Granting and denying religious sanction to corporeal intimacies (for reasons that should become apparent, I am wary of the term sexual, believing that it begs the question it is then used to answer, in these contexts) has frequently been a divisive factor.

At the height of the late nineteenth-century scramble for Africa, the third Lambeth Conference, held in 1888, passed two resolutions on the subject of polygamy: (1) A converted polygamist should not be baptized, but should continue a catechumen until he should be in a position to accept the law of Christ (i.e., monogamy). (This resolution was passed by 83 votes to 21.) (2) The wives of polygamists might be baptized under conditions to be decided on locally. (This was carried by a margin of 54 to 34.) In this second resolution, we see the difficulty
was 526 in favor to 70 opposed, with 45 abstentions. In mitigation, the resolution committed the church to “listen to the experience of homosexual people” and called them “full members of the Body of Christ.” Keeping and modifying an earlier proposal, the conference also condemned “irrational fear of homosexuals.” Though not binding on the Communion’s 37 provinces, the resolution carries moral weight as a statement of the Lambeth Conference.

The build up to, and the rhetoric around, this resolution deserves close attention for the ways in which questions around the production of the category of sexuality, visible and invisible markers of something called cultural difference, and the identities of those who are obliged to carry those markers are rearticulated. The very identity of the Anglican Church also appeared at stake for some bishops. The newly authorized African Anglicans aligned themselves with the self-named traditionalists from the West at the conference. The Lambeth conference dates back nearly 150 years; this is a salutary reminder that public forums with global reach and aspiration precede the U.N apparatus and global “free markets.” The tensions within the global Anglican Church at Lambeth in 1998 and their subsequent history may simultaneously mark the rupture between an older imperial global order and a newer neoliberal globalized one.

AFRICA

In the colonial era, Africans’ access to the emergent apparatuses of a recognizable international public sphere was restricted. Under different colonial systems, colonized Africans could represent themselves in the form of sub- or para-state units, a tribe, a nation, or (most expansively in the case of a movement like Negritude) a race. In recent years, African voices and perspectives, compromised as they may be by a neocolonial political order and a globalizing economic one, have entered sectors of the international public sphere as representatives of the universally human. I think here of the role recently decolonized African countries played in the nonaligned movement at the United Nations during the Cold War, as well as the appointment of Boutros Ghali and later Kofi Annan to the position of Secretary General of the United Nations.

Decolonization allowed Africans access to the normatively universal and geographically global form of political modernity: the nation-state, with Africans as leaders of nation-states and participants in the normative formalities of global geopolitics in the post–World War II era. The 1998 Lambeth Conference features such an instance of African leadership roles in institutions with universalist assumptions and global reach. African bishops were instrumental in the passing of the conference’s two most controversial resolutions. Resolution 1.15 on International Debt and Economic Justice called for debt relief in impassioned terms:

We have heard and understood the point of view that poverty reduction is more important than debt cancellation. Nevertheless we conclude that substantial debt relief, including cancellation of unpayable debts of the poorest nations under an independent, fair and transparent process, is a necessary, while not sufficient precondition for freeing these nations, and their people, from the hopeless downward spiral of poverty. Because indebted nations lose their autonomy to international creditors, debt cancellation is also a necessary step if these governments are to be given the dignity, autonomy and independence essential to the growth and development of democracy. We believe it vital that all of God’s people should participate, on the basis of equal dignity, in the fruits of our interdependent world.

This resolution passed unanimously. The second resolution in which African bishops played a prominent role was more divisive. It is clear that the issue of sanctioning homosexuality through either ordaining noncelibate homosexual clergy or allowing Anglican clergy to preside at same-sex unions is one that is divisive throughout the Anglican community. In an attempt to diffuse the racialized rhetoric that surrounded the resolution, the Archbishop of Canterbury himself denied that the resolution represented a cultural divide, pitiful the churches in Africa against the churches in Western Europe and North America:

We have to work from theology and we have to find agreement within that theology so that, as well as listening to the experience of the homosexual community, together we have to listen to authority as it comes to us through Scripture, and through the entire Christian tradition as well. . . . On the subject of homosexuality the rift goes through all the churches.

Nevertheless, with the exception of a few South African bishops, African bishops were almost unanimously in favor of fairly strict restrictions on any church endorsement of homosexuality and insisted on a literalist biblical understanding of sexual morality. With the support of European and North American conservatives, they pushed
through several amendments that strengthened language condemning homosexual sexual activity and pressed for abstinence as the only acceptable alternative to marriage. Furthermore, language expressing an allegiance to the idea of homosexuality as definitionally alien or un-African was common.

Bishop Wilson Mutebi of the Diocese of Mitinya (Uganda) asserted that in his diocese, and throughout Eastern Africa, the Bible is the foundation for faith. Anglicans in his region, he said, are aware of what science and philosophy have to say on homosexuality, but for them the final truth resides in Scripture: “For us, the Bible and the apostolic tradition have authority through all our church.” “In the Sudan we know nothing of homosexuality,” claimed Bishop Michael Lugor of the Diocese of Rejaf. “We only know the Gospel and we proclaim it.”

Ironically (and to have the pleasure of quibbling with a bishop on biblical matters), none of the gospels have anything at all to say on the matter of same-sex sexual activity. Rather, the notorious proscriptions are found in Leviticus and in the letters of Paul. Bishop Eustace Kamanyire of the Diocese of Ruwenzori (Uganda) stated that homosexual activity is condemned as immoral in both the Old and New Testaments, saying that “pastoral care towards homosexuals should emphasize repentance.” He also criticized liberal bishops for continuing to ordain noncelibate gay men and lesbians and bless same-sex unions, which “is causing serious damage and scandal to Christ and his church. The Christian faith is not only under attack by unbelievers but is actually being undermined by some of the same people who are supposed to be its defenders.” Homosexuality is unknown in their regions and proscribed by the Bible, even if it were known. These Anglicans are clear that there is no place for practicing homosexuals in their church.

It was clear that a regionally partisan showdown on sexuality was scheduled for Lambeth after a meeting of Anglican leaders from the southern hemisphere at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in February 1997. In a statement, the eighty participants agreed:

Holy Scriptures are clear in teaching that all sexual promiscuity is sin. We are convinced that this includes homosexual practices between men or women, as well as heterosexual relationships outside marriage. . . . We are deeply concerned that the setting aside of biblical teaching in such actions as the ordination of practicing homosexuals and the blessing of same-sex unions calls into question the authority of Holy Scriptures. This is totally unacceptable to us.

The Kuala Lumpur Statement placed the issue on the agenda of the worldwide Anglican Communion, expressing “concern about mutual accountability and interdependence within our Anglican Communion.” The Standing Committee of the province of Southeast Asia endorsed the statement and said that it would “be in communion with that part of the Anglican Communion which accepts and endorses the principles of Kuala Lumpur and not otherwise.” The controversy is ongoing.

Following the 1998 Lambeth Conference, the position of certain African bishops has hardened. The Nigerian and Ugandan Church broke ties with the U.S. Episcopal Church over the latter’s 2003 consecration of New Hampshire Bishop V. Gene Robinson, who lives with another man in a gay relationship. The archbishops of Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda, who have some 30.5 million Anglicans in their pastoral care, announced they will not accept grants from the Episcopal Church. Some Rwandan and Tanzanian bishops have followed suit.

The costs for these dioceses have been high as American conservatives have not stepped in to match the funds refused. Rwandan Bishop John Rucyahana of the Diocese of Shyira acknowledged: “To be honest, there is not enough money for the needs we have in Rwanda after the [1994] genocide, but if money is being used to disgrace the Gospel, then we don’t need it.” Kenyan Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi said in an interview he was willing “to do without the money” in order to remind the U.S. Episcopal Church of its mission. “It was to preach the Great Commission, but what kind of Gospel are they preaching now, saying there should be union of people of the same sex.”

Educational and AIDS services programs have been cut and basic infrastructure imperiled. In July 2005, the Rev. Alison Barfoot, assistant to the Anglican Archbishop of Uganda, reported that the Anglican province has no working phones in its Kampala headquarters because it lacks the funds. Over 70 percent of the operating budget for the dioceses of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa is estimated to come from U.S. Episcopal funds generated from either tithes or donations. U.S. bishops who have had their donations refused have in turn impugned the Christianity of the African bishops. Central Pennsylvania Bishop Michael F. Creighton called Ugandan Bishop Jackson Nzerebende’s decision to cut ties with his diocese, which had donated more than $65,000 for school fees, transportation, college tuition, and an AIDS program, “a Good Friday nail in the compassion of Christ.” He added: “Our consent to the election of a bishop in New Hampshire appears to be more important than the compassionate ministry we have shown with his own people,” he said, “who are struggling with and dying of AIDS.”

In September 2005, the Anglican Church of Nigeria issued a statement announcing “all former references to ‘communion with the see
of Canterbury' were deleted" from its constitution.\(^{13}\) While stopping short of a feared formal schism, the changes reveal how the controversy around homosexuality is deeply divisive within the global Anglican Communion. Rowan Williams, the current Archbishop of Canterbury, has ordered a commission to investigate how the breaches between Anglican Churches over sexuality questions can be healed.\(^{15}\)

Why do African bishops pledge allegiance to a literal interpretation of Scripture with the attendant repudiation, if not wholesale disavowal, of the possibility of indigenous same-sex sexual practices? I am tempted to read this as a reaction formation in the psychoanalytic sense against certain colonial sexual and racial formations. In the colonial era, corporeal attributes (real and/or imagined; sexual or ritualistic) like the largely mythic cannibalism,\(^{20}\) or imagined hyperfemininity of African peoples were invoked in the production of the new scientistic theorizings of racial hierarchies. The Victorian white bourgeois patriarchal family is posited as the evolutionary pinnacle, and other social arrangements are ranked by European anthropologists in a fairly explicit evolutionary hierarchy. These scientific theories argue that the evolution of humanity is a long march from primitive promiscuity to the institution of the incest taboo to group marriage to polygamy to the Victorian norm, with certain groups of people stuck at way stations along the road.\(^{21}\)

Moreover, postabolition\(^{22}\) imperial cultural representations hypersexualize blackness, particularly along the lines of simultaneously feminizing and hypervilifying black men. The general lasciviousness of savages is a trope that cuts across genres and disciplines throughout the nineteenth century. Though marked by multiple ruptures and significant shifts and reversals, there is arguably an important strand of thinking beginning in Victorian anthropology and moving through psychoanalysis to current configurations. This approach views AIDS as a predominantly homosexual and African (and, in the U.S. context, Haitian) disease linking the homosexual and the savage, who are both required to represent promiscuous unbridled lust and are held to embody states of arrested development or degeneration.

In this context, anti-Western attacks on "homosexuality" can be seen as responses to these prior attributions of primitiveness, and as reversals of the racist charge of retardation and/or degeneration. These attacks consistently locate the origin of perversion (and, with greater political urgency, AIDS) in the West. While Christian dogma, with its rhetoric of the universal brotherhood of man, can and has mitigated against some of the racism in these imperialist formations, and the sign "marriage," Christian or not, can render the other grave threat to Christian sexual norms (polygamy) somewhat recuperable, imperial

"civilized" sexual norms can remain in place and can paradoxically be defended as authentically African.

Temporality as a marker of civilized sexual behavior becomes particularly convoluted in the context of an event like the 1998 Lambeth Conference. Tolerance of homosexuality is seen among other things, as a marker of civilized sexual values, often obliquely invoked by states like Israel, Taiwan, and, more recently, Romania, which use their anti-discrimination against homosexuals laws in processes of global exclusion and differentiation or as a means of deflecting attention from other human rights abuses in these countries. In the Romanian instance, this strengthens its case for entry into the European Union.\(^{23}\)

Tolerance of homosexuality becomes a marker of civilized modernity, but in the African context and perhaps also in a more generalized postcolonial one, the bourgeois nuclear family is seen as the proper intimate form of modernity. In a witty and compelling analysis of domesticity on the Zambian copperbelt, James Ferguson writes of company-run courses for the wives of mineworkers:

A continuation of the paternalistic social welfare policies of the colonial mining industry, these courses were intended to teach mineworkers’ wives to be “good housewives” by giving them instruction in cooking, cleaning, sewing, knitting and so on—all in the name of fostering modern family life in the mine townships.\(^{24}\)

Ferguson concludes by noting the anachronism of the figure of the 1950s U.S. housewife as a model for African modernity. “Like the Westinghouse kitchen in Tomorrowland, ‘the modern housewife,’ in mid-1980s Zambia appeared preposterously archaic and somehow poignantly out of place.”\(^{25}\) The bourgeois nuclear family simultaneously emerges as a phantasm of nostalgia and developmental aspiration. Arguably, the African bishops at Lambeth in 1998 worked an earlier domestic ideology of civilized modernity (the nuclear family, anachronistically coded as religious tradition) against an emerging one: public tolerance of homosexuality.

These temporal problems around the questions of modernity, civilization, and domesticity can be found not only in the utterances and actions of African bishops, but also more generally in strands of African nationalism. In certain crucial ways, nationalism, as a hybrid product of European enlightenment and romantic discourses, carries its own set of implied gender relations and sexual norms, even when appropriated, or used from below by anticolonial nationalisms in the struggle for decolonization.\(^{26}\) Sub-Saharan anticolonial nationalisms struggle to imagine lesbian and gay citizens. Moreover, the anticolonialist and nationalist
discourses of postcolonial ruling elites of Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, and Swaziland express an entrenched resistance to emerging lesbian and gay identities in their countries.

However, a paradox exists in the way the resistance is expressed, by simultaneously defending modernity and tradition. The emergent African postcolonial nation needs to present itself as the vehicle for economic and cultural progress—in other words, as the agent of modernity. Simultaneously, it must represent itself as the custodian of the fixed identities conferred on it by a precolonial past—in other words, as the repository of tradition. In the bifurcated temporality of postcolonial nationalism, representational roles have been embodied differentially along class and gender lines. Thus it is usually (but not always) women and rural populations that represent tradition, while men, particularly urban men, are seen to embody progress into modernity. Whether or not this still holds is uncertain, given the failure of postcolonial modernization across much of sub-Saharan Africa.

The importance of women’s varied and often informal economic activity makes their position as the ideological placeholders of precolonial traditions increasingly untenable. What positions can gay men and lesbians occupy in this representation of emergent nations as both the voice of the past and the vehicle for the future? Three configurations emerge. The first one perceives lesbian and gay identity as a consequence of excessive Westernization and a violation of traditional norms and forms of sexuality. The African bishops at Lambeth, understandably ignoring the fact that Christianity also marks Westernization and at minimum a compromise of precolonial traditions, frequently articulate this position, lending it biblical sanction. The second configuration, which holds tenuous sway in South Africa, aligns lesbians and gay men (often across class and racial divides) with the historically oppressed. This view, which was less in evidence at Lambeth is the subject of the following chapter. The third configuration, perhaps at the heart of the impulse of the pro-homosexual bishops at Lambeth and perhaps most easily attached to ideas of neoliberalism, imagines tolerance of homosexuality as part of a telos of universal human progress. It is possible to read the conflict around homosexual questions at Lambeth as symptomatic of a wider tension between a religio-politically inflected postcolonial nationalism and emergent global human rights culture, with both sides evading the question of their respective imperialist legacies.

To return to the first configuration, the strange synthesis between African nationalism and Christianity (arguably the colonial cultural import par excellence) has not gone unnoticed by lesbian and gay activists on the ground. GALZ (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe) responded to the ongoing Namibian fracas and the statements by certain African political leaders with which this book begins by precisely making such an allegation: “the minds of many of our Southern African political leaders remain thoroughly colonised by Victorian dogma which they now have the audacity to claim is the backbone of our African cultural heritage.” If it is difficult for the homosexual to be African, what can he be? (And he is indicatively male in these debates.) The homosexual is definitionally a Westerner and implicitly white or a diasporic African or Asian for these religious and nationalist discourses.

My previous chapter discussed the representation of an African American gay man, Joe Gilder, in Wole Soyinka’s The Interpreters as a nuanced fictional exploration of this problem. Early on in the history of the AIDS pandemic, Simon Watney noticed the legitimating by reversal inversion of this racialized attribution. Gay men suffering from HIV and AIDS in the West are Africanized. Consequently, it becomes extremely difficult for Africans laying claim to lesbian and gay identity to find a public voice in these nationally and religiously inflected debates. In this case, South Africa seems to be an exception, at least at the level of legal discourse; this topic will be considered more extensively in the following chapter.

**Homosexuality**

Homosexuality, as a word designating a lifeworld predicated on same-sex erotic attraction, was first coined in 1869. Much scholarship exists on where and when social and psychic phenomena that we might now recognize as homosexual originated. The wealth of material generated around the essentialist vs. social constructionist understandings of (homo) sexuality during the 1980s offers a useful introduction to central definitional problems in writing histories of homosexuality. John Boswell makes the most compelling case for the transhistorical and transcultural existence of recognizably homosexual persons.

Following Michel Foucault, David Halperin argues forcibly for historical specificity and later provides an impressively nuanced reappraisal of these earlier controversies. Genital intimacies between partners of the same sex have been subject to a wide variety of legal, religious, social, and medical opprobrium in many different societies. Considerable ongoing anthropological and historical work on societies exists where such acts can be sanctioned, celebrated, and institutionalized into forms of social reproduction. Predictably, it appears impossible to assign any single meaning to these acts across space and time. Sin, preference, disease, noblest form of love, unmentionable
vice, pedagogy, means to establish hierarchy, military coherence, political subversion, political resistance, initiation ritual, hazing, lifestyle, developmental phase, contingency, romantic friendship, peccadillo, and various combinations of these offer themselves as candidates for the possible meanings of same-sex genital intimacy.37

However, a definition eludes me here. What is less uncertain, and of even more recent provenance than the term homosexuality itself, is the use of this term, which is often refined to a further level of abstraction as "sexual orientation" in a variety of public forums as a way of claiming legal rights and protections. Reading sexual orientation as homosexuality in these legal contexts is justifiable as the other orientation, heterosexuality (provided we bracket its many deviant forms, such as polygamy, prostitution, and sam, among others), has very rarely required any protection under human rights logic. The protection of women's rights in heterosexual relationships has been of concern to feminist human rights. However, protecting heterosexuality has not been necessary because, as Adrienne Rich argues, a massive array of social, legal, political, and economic dictates and incentives render heterosexuality "compulsory."38

It is this meaning of homosexuality as sexual orientation, and sexual orientation as part of what it universally means to be human, that concerns us here. This meaning can claim rights in an increasingly neoliberal network of local (the antidiscrimination ordinances and domestic partner registration provisions in any number of U.S. and Western European cities), national (the new constitutions of Ecuador and South Africa), and transnational institutions (single-issue organizations like ILCA and IGLHRC, or broader umbrella human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International). This relatively new meaning of homosexuality thus circulates in diverse global public spheres,39 although events at Lambeth show it is far from hegemonic. African neocolonial elites have been quick to contest the universal claims of this new meaning, using a time-honored strategy for refuting universal claims (i.e., by pointing to homosexuality's historical situatedness, its particularity), and attempt to reconfigure the controversy as one between competing cultural relativisms.

If homosexuality, in its new meaning and overlaid with earlier religious understandings, has become un-African in elite African political and religious discourse, what are its points of origin? In the debates leading up to the resolution vote, certain African bishops offered an answer, in the form of asserting that it was an "abuse to impose the Western concern with homosexuality on the Third World." Bishop Benjamin Kwashi of Nigeria said that many Africans felt "oppressed with this Western problem." Yet what exactly is being imported from the West here?

In a discussion of African lesbianism, Gaurav Desai pithily captures the ambivalence of the colonial experience for African sex and gender norms, while nuancing the activist claim that it is homophobia, rather than homosexuality, that is the decadent Western import: "Could it be that just as British colonialism radically changed the gender possibilities available to women, it may also have instituted and regulated sexual practices so that the 'offense' at the thought of lesbianism may be precisely the ideological mark of such intervention."40

The homophobia of anti-imperialist movements and regimes in such diverse contexts as Cuba, Iran, and more recently Zimbabwe, Namibia, Kenya, and Zambia, as well as the actions and statements of the African bishops at Lambeth, cannot simply be responded to by white gays and lesbians with quick accusations of homophobia.41 The translation of homophobia into "irrational fear of homosexuals" in the resolution passed at Lambeth marks how little currency the term homophobia has in these conversations.

If I am struggling to understand why anti-imperialism cannot imagine the practitioners of nonnormative sex acts as part of its constituency, or why African bishops claiming to speak for the entire Anglican Communion feel the need to exclude homosexuals, I wish to insist that the question can be usefully reversed: What of the international homosexual rights movement's complicity in developmental and universalist depictions of third world sexual mores? The problem here is that much of the initial human rights documentation in the West arises from asylum cases that have a vested interest in making conditions appear as bad as possible elsewhere.

IGLHRC begins life as an immigration lobby for lesbian and gay couples divided by nationality. Supplementing this or legitimating it by reversal is the insistence on third world difference by lesbian, gay, and queer anthropologists; however, since the subjects of the proliferation of perversity hypothesis (outlined in the introduction to this book) did not enter the debates at Lambeth, they concern me less here. Are an interested cultural relativism or outright cultural imperialism the only possible positions?

I suggest that the universalization of the homosexual as a transhistorical, trans-spatial subject, as it is articulated in human rights discourse and used by advocates within the Anglican Church at the 1998 Lambeth Conference, reproduces certain axiomatics of imperialism. Like their missionary forbears, international gay rights activists and the predominantly Anglo-American pro-gay bishops assert that their sexual norms are the only valid ones, that their specific cultural organizations of corporeal intimacies need universal protection, in this
instance that sexual orientation is a common property and right of humanity. Paradoxically, the antihomosexual African bishops partake in the same legacy, by asserting another proselytizing universal norm. However, to return to the Kuala Lumpur statement, it is possible to mark a resistance to modern conceptions of sexuality as an identity-conferring attribute, as the bishops proscribe all practices, heterosexual or homosexual, outside of marriage.

While I am not interested in the theological aspects of these debates, and their positions are asserted as scripturally based, I wonder if it is possible to locate some resistance to the imposition of newer Western norms in an insistence that sexual acts in and of themselves do not necessarily give rise to sexuality. (An aside here: My secularism position implicates me in these debates as religious fundamentalism is frequently invoked as a sign of non-Western backwardness, particularly by liberals; see Bishop Harris’s comments in my final section.)

To return to human rights discourse, by identifying people who engage in same-sex erotic acts as homosexual persons, do we not ignore the worshipping of the majority of participants in same-sex acts in “other cultures.” Steven O. Murray provides a long list of Arabic, Turkish, and Farsi words indicating a range of names given to men sexually involved with other men. Some of the terms refer to propensities, others indicate the person who occupies a certain position in a sex act, and still others refer to indeterminate gender status.

While Murray marshals this evidence to make the case for some kind of transhistorical “homosexuality,” the cross-cultural examples he elaborates could equally be used to explode the very notion of “homosexuality” as an epistemologically grounding term, since the acts, propensities, relations, and identities he records reveal a range of understandings, if not contestations, of what may be held under the sign “sexual” in ways that cannot be contained by the binary homosexual/heterosexual.

The cost/benefit analysis of claims to homosexuality and the right to sexual orientation under global capitalism remains to be done and would be an extremely difficult, if not impossible, empirical project. It may be that sexuality as an organizing frame, for the claim to being human may be the problem here rather than homosexuality per se. Sexuality, as an organizing principle for corporeal intimacies between partners of the same gender, is far from universal and carries the traces of its Western origins (imbedded as they are in imperial racial formations) in all the debates I am referencing. Moreover, the project of international gay rights may depend on a prior successful heterosexualizing of the world.

Neoliberalism

In thirty-one countries of the world, the majority of them African, the per capita foreign debt exceeds the per capita gross national product. The hardships this creates for these countries’ citizens cannot be underestimated. I would define neoliberalism as the set of global economic policies and institutions that have created this situation. Along with Dennis Altman, I would isolate policies “which, in the name of the free market and greater competition, have urged an end to restrictions on foreign investment, privatization of government-owned enterprises; reduction in the power of unions; corporate deregulation, deficit reductions, the downsizing of the public sector, often through a process of ‘outsourcing’; and steady cuts in public expenditure on health, education and welfare.” These policies have become the condition for support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for poor countries under the name of “structural adjustment” over the past two decades.

In this context, the World Conference of Anglican Bishops, along with many other religious organizations with a global reach, functions as a kind of global counter-public sphere. It is important to reiterate that the other arena in which bishops of the South prevailed was in a resolution condemning the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in relation to the problem of Third World debt. The servicing of this debt was articulated as the major obstacle in the face of the conference’s theme “Towards full humanity.”

Following the Kuala Lumpur statement, the Episcopal Synod of America, a traditionalist organization within the Episcopal Church USA, endorsed and commended the resolution against tolerance of homosexuality and raised the possibility that the Episcopal Church “should be expelled from the worldwide Anglican Communion” if it failed to reverse its acceptance of the ordination of noncelibate homosexuals and the blessing of same-sex unions.

In the fall of 1997, African bishops from sixteen nations met with American traditionalists in Dallas and issued a statement arguing that “it is not acceptable for a pro-gay agenda to be smuggled into the church’s program or foisted upon our people—we will not permit it.” The statement concluded, “Those who choose beliefs and practices outside the boundaries of the historic faith must understand that they are separating themselves from communion, and leading others astray.”

The Rev. Vinay Samuel of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, a sponsor of this Anglican Life and Witness Conference in Dallas, said that the statement was a plea to churches in the North to stop making decisions that breed disunity. One of the key intentions of the Dallas
conference is to enable the church in the South, and all those committed to orthodox Christian faith, to contribute to the shaping of the theological direction of the Anglican Communion.” The subsequent failure of conservative U.S. Episcopal dioceses to match the “liberal” funds the African Anglicans have given up on principle renders the claim of enabling “the church in the South” ironic, if not hypocritical.

However, it was not only traditionalists who commented on the ostensibly homophobic positions of the African bishops. Bishop Barbara Harris of Massachusetts, the Anglican Communion’s first woman elected to the episcopate, was somewhat trenchant. In her column in the diocesan newspaper, she expressed relief that the conference was over “and I never have to do this again!” Even though she knew a number of the bishops, Harris said, “Nonetheless, I was struck by how precious little we really know about each other and the cultural norms and values with which we live, as well as the depth of our divisions.” She added, “At times it was difficult to fathom what holds the Communion together beyond our love of the Lord Jesus Christ and Wippell’s [international outfitters to the clergy].”

In trying to explain “the tone of the most contentious resolutions the conference passed,” she pointed to “our different understandings and interpretations of Scripture, its place in the life of the church and the struggle of newly developing churches in the hostile environments of many developing nations.” She claimed that another factor was the different sharing of authority in parts of the world church, “To put it more bluntly, in many provinces of the church—particularly those in African and Asian countries—diocesan bishops hold absolute sway.” Claims of cultural relativism are as subject to hierarchical evaluations of culture as accusations of failure to meet the standard of a putatively universal norm.

For Harris “the vitriolic, fundamentalist rhetoric of some African, Asian and other bishops of color, who were in the majority, was in my opinion reflective of the European and North American missionary influence propounded in the Southern Hemisphere nations during the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.” In her acknowledgement of a history of colonialism, however strangely conceived (Did Christianity have any awareness of the Southern Hemisphere during the second century? What might it mean to talk of nations in the tenth century?), Harris identifies a similar contradiction that GALZ pointed to in its claim that it was Victorian dogma that southern African political leaders were claiming as authentic African culture.

The hard-line stance on gays and lesbians and the role of women in the church was rooted in what she called “a belief in the inerrancy and primacy of Scripture, which supports a preexisting cultural bias.” That meant bishops from the developing world brought the same truth “that not only had been handed to their forebears, but had been used to suppress them.” In addition, they found allies in “a small contingent of U.S. bishops who had been unable to move their agenda at last summer’s General Convention.” These allegations were repeated when Bishop Richard Holloway, the primus of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, publicly charged the American conservatives with influencing the Africans. “These Americans have lost the battle in their own Episcopal Church so they have hired a proxy army,” he said in a press interview.

Unpacking the stakes of these various claims is a complicated task, as many of the remarks evidence the collapse of global inequalities into American identity politics, scriptural solidarities confound political interests, and my allegiances become irrevocably split. Imperialist benevolence is noteworthy in both the liberal and conservative American camps. African agency is simultaneously appropriated and refuted in a cross-ideological refusal to allow African bishops to speak for the Anglican universal. The Africans are “their pawns,” per Harris, or “our parrots,” per Samuel. Once again a position on sexuality is used to police insider/outsider status, with race ironically only being a marker for the liberal position.

West African bishops sponsored an amendment that condemns homosexuality as “a sin, which could only be adopted by the church if it wanted to commit evangelical suicide.” New York Bishop Catherine Roskam warned that condemning homosexuality would be “evangelical suicide in my region” and result in a “divided church.” What is interesting about this exchange is the configuration in which the historical metropole or core is reconfigured as a “region,” that Western homosexuality becomes a marker of cultural, if not racial, difference. The unmarked cultural category “white” or “Western” becomes marked through appending “homosexuality” to it. A shift in the hegemonic constituents of the Anglican church as a global church is visible. A metropole or center is quite literally provincialized.

Bishops from Uganda and Nigeria demanded that bishops who are pushing for equal rights for homosexuals either repent or leave the Anglican Communion. Bishop Wilson Mutebi of Uganda further commented: “Homosexuality is a sin and any bishop who teaches otherwise is committing a sin. He must repent in order to be in communion with us. If he does not, we cannot be in the same church as him.” Noting in passing that bishops are necessarily men for Bishop Mutebi, and his anachronistic insertion of a word coined only in 1869 into an ancient biblical discourse (sodomy may be a sin, but homosexuality is hardly coterminous with sodomy, and I strongly suspect that the bishop would
have little patience with my etymological niceties), I am forced between a grudging respect for his insistence on his right to speak for, and as, the Anglican universal and a desire to point out the neocolonial compromises that allow for this utterance.

To introduce a critical piece of narrative information late in the day, it is important to note that the resolution started off as a pro-homosexual resolution, with the condemnation directed against "homophobia." This was amended to a resolution declaring homosexuality to be against Scripture. The residue of the original resolution is found only in the language condemning the "irrational fear of homosexuals." The process of amending the resolution may be regarded as a resistance on the part of African bishops to having the homosexual agenda foisted upon them, as a refusal to submit to the dictates of a new Western position, and to use an earlier Christian, masquerading as African, set of arguments against it. In a Foucauldian paradigm, one could argue that the first pro-homosexual resolution put forward by the liberal bishops marked an incitement to discourse. Had that first resolution not been put forward, no such condemnatory resolutions would have been passed.31

Why are African elites (bishops and presidents) invested in taking positions against homosexuality in its new neoliberal meaning of sexual orientation as a fundamental attribute of being human? I can only conclude with a series of speculations. As I will suggest in the next chapter, with regard to the political elites, it is possible to allege that their apparent homophobia is symptomatic, a strategy for deflecting attention from pressing social problems that they have been unwilling or unable to address. This case is more difficult to make against the African bishops at Lambeth, given their pointed and vocal awareness of what the forces of globalization are doing to their congregants.

In this case, the antihomosexuality positions may possibly be read as symptomatic in another way: an attempt to mobilize a Christian universalism shot through with the legacies of colonialism to defend institutions of the nation and family that are increasingly hamstrung in the reproduction of social life under neoliberalism. In order to achieve this, these bishops became part of an uneasy global family values coalition, relying on a nostalgic and aspirational, almost phantasmic, structure for the distribution of resources and affect—the nuclear family—that both could and could not accommodate African claims to speak for, and as, the Anglican universal. They needed to forget that 110 years earlier at Lambeth they could not represent themselves, that their sexual and familial practices were grounds for exclusion from the Anglican Communion. Sharing the homophobia of some of their European and North American colleagues may mark a cost of the historical amnesia of their anti-imperialism. In turn, the pro-homosexual liberal bishops need to remember that in the name of civilization, imperialism has been dictating what Africans should and should not do with their bodies for at least 200 years in order to enter the community/communion of the human.