involved. Yet love, as Dankwa argues, 'is much more than a twosome' (p. 216). The relationship between love and the bathhouse, which are both 'queered' through relatedness and defamiliarization, needs further interrogation. If the bathhouse makes possible the expression of 'provider love' (p. 217), how is this space different from other intimate or domestic spaces such as the kitchen, where the same form of love is expressed? In relying on the notion of queerness, is it possible that the potential for theorizing the everydayness of the bathhouse and its related practices is foreclosed? Rather than the space being queered by love, perhaps its multiple possibilities and opportunities suggest that the bathhouse is already a queer space. Could this be a useful point of departure?

The third aspect related to friendship pertains to sugar motherhood and its framing as part of 'queer family networks' (p. 219). Queer kinship and the idea of a chosen family affords different types of family structure and collectives that are not reliant on marital ties or genealogical relations. The sharing practices and networks of friendships of 'knowing women' go beyond the notion of the chosen family. The attachment to this queer frame of family appears to be limiting in the context of the women in Ghana. Sugar motherhood, as a sort of motherhood, extends the notion of provider love. However, this extension is foreclosed by the need for these relationships to be 'disguised much more carefully' (p. 269). How, then, can we make sense of sugar motherhood as motherhood when it requires negotiations with genealogical motherhood or heteronormative expectations? Might there be a need to challenge conceptual assumptions about motherhood in the African context?

We could take a leaf out of the pages of these 'knowing women' and attempt to live our lives on our own terms, without the limits of trying to fit into frameworks and paradigms that reshape our existence. Through these women's voices and lives, Dankwa delivers a rich, excitingly messy, perfectly wayward and full life of African women's genius.

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Response by the author

Thanks so much to the three reviewers for engaging so thoroughly with *Knowing Women*. As with every project that takes so long to germinate, it went through phases when I wondered whether the efforts to make it an open-source publication were worth it. It is extremely rewarding to have such rich and nuanced responses.

All the reviewers raise questions about how knowing women's self-identifications draw upon gender, class and racial notions against the backdrop of contemporary homophobia and LGBT+ activism. Starting my research, there were no self-identified lesbians in Accra's emerging LGBT+ movement. Instead, I found women who love women in spaces far from those of visible activism. I settled for referring to them as 'working-class women', after abandoning the term 'working poor', although most of them were indeed working hard while remaining poor. Some of them have already died premature deaths caused by the lack of adequate medical care in the aftermath of traffic accidents or by hypertension in combination with the long-term effects of inhaling toxic fumes as well as other corollaries of living a precarious, subaltern life.

Although race in Ghana is a less immediate category than in parts of Africa that were ruled by settler colonialists, race is a compelling category in construing

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sexualities. Fantasies about bodily, sexual and romantic practices of white lesbians were idealized or belittled by my respondents and often jokingly juxtaposed with their own erotic practices and desires. While I was highly attentive to enactments of race both in Ghana's public sphere and in the parlance of my respondents (not least due to my own racialized socialization in Switzerland), other categories of difference appeared to be more vital to the everyday love lives of subaltern women, notably age, status and seniority.

Race leads me to Georgina Oduro, who wonders if a '"local Ghanaian researcher" who may not belong to the same-sex subculture could successfully carry out similar research without challenges'. While such research is never without challenges, especially when there is no clear-cut same-sex subculture in the first place, being considered 'half-caste' or 'Burger' did frame me in a different way from 'local' researchers. This, however, did not release me from the ethical dilemma and the conflicting loyalties Sylvia Tamale described, when researching female intimacies among her native Baganda.[9] Rather, in terms of language, 'local' scholars have a great advantage in striking up meaningful conversations with subaltern women. What this sort of inductive research requires, however, besides time (read adequate research budgets), is the courage and the privilege to abandon ready-made research formulas, to question epistemologies of sexuality and to develop a queer – as in counterintuitive – approach to everything intimate. The fact that there is little queer feminist research by scholars based in Ghana speaks of the pressures faced by Ghanaian scholars to conform to heteronormative scripts. The structural marginalization that prevents many queers (not only in Ghana) from becoming researchers contributes to the lack of 'local' research on same-sex intimacies.

Following Tamale's injunction not only that we should deconstruct Africa – by, say, detecting homophobic legislation as a colonial import – but that there is a need to reconstruct Africa, my research stayed attentive to precolonial languages and to expressions such as *ɔbaa barima* (a manly, as in brave, woman) or *supi* (for a close 'superior' female friend). While some of my respondents joked about having a *supi*, they did not deploy this noun as a self-designation. Against my own desire to offer an alternative label, I decided not to capitalize it – a decision inspired partly by a young South African activist I met at the Gay and Lesbian Archive in Johannesburg. She told me how in Lesotho the word *motsoalle*, which has been used in similar ways to *supi*, lost its powerful multiplicity in the aftermath of its translation into the more explicit LGBTI+ context. Still, *supi* could be mistaken for the 'queer Other', as Phoebe Mbasalaki's reading suggests. Certainly, the book's 'constant dance between erotic subjectivities of [doing] *supi* and the globalized Western identity of lesbian' relates to my location as a doctoral student at a European university at the time. Yet, it also reflects the absence of African theoretical frameworks that would conceptualize female intimacies, without denying the possibility of the erotic. Thus, at least part of the dance between Euro-American queer theoretical approaches, such as butch/femme theories and their critiques, and West African feminist theories of motherhood and woman marriages was an attempt to locate the subaltern 'queer' lives that are missing from both African and Northern bodies of literature; unable or unwilling to enter the arena of LGBT+ politics, these voices remain unheard. Nevertheless, the book's emphasis on *supi* as practice may be seen as part of the racialized juxtaposition between the *practices* of African women versus the *identities* of 'modern [read

[9] S. Tamale (2009) 'Eroticism, sensuality and "women's secrets" among the Baganda', *IDS Bulletin* 37 (5): 89–97.

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white] homosexuals'. Far from construing the gap between 'the West and the rest', the book seeks to destabilize the anthropological binaries between 'sexual practice' and 'sexual identity' and to decolonize the way in which erotic subjectivity has been framed and captured. I did this by staying close to verb constructions such as *doing supi*. It would take much more historical research to be sure of a link between the Asafo *supi* captains and *supi* in the girls' school contexts. And, even if the two were related, *supi* may still be framed by the colonial encounter, through Asafo secret societies and their European-inspired regalia. The term *supi* itself is perhaps less interesting than its surrounding grammar that departs from Eurocentric understandings of sexual identity.

Responding to zethu Matebeni's review, the bathhouse is in fact not the privileged site for acts of 'provider love'. The term 'provider love' refers to intimacies between lovers of a gap in age and/or status and thus to what I framed as sugar motherhood in an attempt to dethrone biologized notions of motherliness. Rather, the kitchen with its erotically charged notions of feeding and providing 'chop money' more aptly represents the site for 'provider love'. The bathhouse, however, figures in the context of lovers of the same age group. Especially for young women (and not necessarily two), it is a space they may retreat to as 'sisters'. The bathhouse kept occurring in stories that conjured up the beginnings of erotic attraction. Yet, as zethu rightly suggests, the bathhouse with its multiple possibilities is already queer and does not need to be 'queered by love'. Rather, it gains significance in the midst of overcrowded compounds as one of the few sites for everyday privacies among those who have little space to claim as their own. Privacy is indeed the most desired good for those who need to be discreet and indirect about their intimacies. Notwithstanding this imperative of discretion, the opposite-sex relationships of knowing women cannot be considered a mere 'cover-up' for their same-sex passions – to many of them, a sexual relation with a cis man is integral to their erotic spectrum.

As Matebeni suggests, friendship in its vagueness does not translate into LGBT activism with 'its need for naming and labelling'. If there is a 'tug of war' between different modes of framing same-sex intimacy, it has long been won by LGBT activism. When institutions such as the ritualized 'friendship bonds' among the Nzema are 'discovered', they are relegated to an unattainable precolonial past or subsumed under Africa's 'gender and sexual diversity' without exploring their potential to decolonize the binaries that have separated the erotic from other aspects of our being in the first place. However, studying the language of friendship may open up an archive of tacit same-sex intimacies that should not be overlooked in the heat of fighting state-sanctioned homophobia. This archive lives on in language and practice and waits to be reinvented, not only to make the rainbow flag more colourful, but perhaps to undermine the flagging and to rejuvenate indigenous grammars instead.

And yes, there is friendship within and among LGBT+ activist groups, as much as there is factionalism among the letters of this alphabet, owing not least to competitions over donor monies and the requirement for queer Africans to be legible and internationally governable, as Varyanne Sika and Awino Okech point out.[10] Friendship – and, with it, the idea of being nearby and not identical – emphasizes our deeply relational being and harbours the potential for new coalitions. While it

[10]V. Sika and A. Okech (2019) 'African sexual politics: a Pan-African lesbian perspective' in S. Corrêa and R. Parker (eds), *SexPolitics: trends and tensions in the 21st century – contextual undercurrents*. Rio de Janeiro: Sexuality Policy Watch.

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is freeing to find terms to identify with, the actual labels matter less than the connections and friendships forged while extending the alphabet.

Last but not least, southern Ghana, with its historical emphasis on (matri-) lineages and female autonomy rather than marriages and nuclear families, is not only 'heavily encoded in heterosexuality'. As the newly established initiative *Silent Majority, Ghana* insists, the violence and hateful rhetoric against 'gayism' are also a proxy war and a distraction that increasing numbers of Ghanaians in Ghana and abroad are starting to oppose. Perhaps the possibility of doing so without mastering the LGBT+ lexicon but by queering notions of friendships might inspire ever more of us to do so – and, in so doing, to stand up for the sexualized scapegoats of neo-colonial, racial capitalism.

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Adriaan van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer: religion, LGBT activism, and arts of resistance in Africa*. University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press (hb US$89.95 – 978 0 271 08380 3; pb US$29.95 – 978 0 271 08381 0). 2019, 232 pp.

I enter *Kenyan, Christian, Queer*, first, as a self-identified queer Ghanaian man who continues to wrestle with Christianity, the religion into which I was socialized. And, second, as a scholar invested in the emerging field of critical queer African studies, to which Adriaan van Klinken's book makes a vital contribution. The book's emphasis on the vexatious intersections between Africanness, religion and queerness couldn't be timelier. Intellectually, theologically and ethnographically valuable, the book assembles an array of narratives and experiences contiguous with my own experience of what it means to be Christian, queer and Ghanaian.

In that respect, I engage with the book as an intellectual who embraces, unapologetically, the zeal of the personal. Van Klinken glaringly makes his personal presence palpably felt by embedding himself in the project, albeit with a great sense of unease. The book has many strengths, one of which is the author's reinforcement of how the personal is political in the lives of Kenyan queers who are coterminously Christian. Undeniably, the author translates this African Atlantic feminist dictum into a bodily principle, refusing to leave it in the realm of abstraction. I am drawn to Van Klinken's engagement with the situated knowledges of his interlocutors. These knowledges are indubitably vital and vibrant sites of creativity for queer subjects, and in ways that resist the temptation to see being African, Christian and queer as bereft of contiguity. Poignantly, too, the methodological canvass that stimulates the work illuminates how methodologies are situated. In that spirit, if knowledges are situated, then the author, in a nourishing fashion, reveals that methodologies are, too.

Early on in the book, Van Klinken makes it clear where the book's allegiances lie. 'This book is particularly interested in the role of religious belief and practice in what I call Kenyan Queer "arts of resistance" and it presents four case studies that analyze how religion, specifically Christianity, is drawn upon in lgbt activism in contemporary Kenya' (p. 4). What can be gleaned from the author's provocation here is how Kenyan queers engage in the 'arts of resistance' in a nation that panoptically disciplines queer bodies. The 'arts of resistance' unreservedly make being

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