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Queering love

Sex, care, capital, and academic prejudices

Rachel Spronk

Introduction

In an important essay called “Queering queer Africa,” Stella Nyanzi (2014) wonders why queer African scholarship follows in the tracks of the Anglophone “loaded westernized frame of the LGBTI acronym,” and argues that queer Africa must broaden its scope so as to “explore and articulate local nuances of being non-heteronormative and non-gender conforming,” but also, crucially, to “demand a widening of the thematic focus for widening knowledge.” Namely,

The canvas of possibilities demanding queer production of knowledge from Africa include relationships, pleasure, intimacy, parenthood, education, voice and expression, representation and visibility, housing and shelter, movement, migration, exile and asylum, employment, income generation, livelihoods, family, ritual, health, spirituality, religion, faith, ritual, violence, security and safety, nationalism, ethnicity, and globalization.

(2014, 63)

Being the “loud-mouthed ... Black African heterosexual cisgender woman and mother ... [and] Christian,” she describes how she is often misrecognized for not being “queer,” if not accused thereof. Queering the production of knowledge regarding gender and sexuality in Africa implies, according to Nyanzi, to move beyond essentializing understandings how body, desire, and gender intersect (see also Nyeck 2011, 194) and to include the vicissitudes of life that characterize many people’s lives dealing with the heteropatriarchal structures of their societies.

In this chapter I engage with Nyanzi’s call and queer the production of knowledge regarding sexuality in African societies by broadening the scope beyond sexual orientation and focus on the deviations and divergences that a sexual life course can take. I will particularly focus on the role of money in relation to love and affection to tease out how “African contemporary realities suggest innovative analytical directions that are of global heuristic value for sexuality studies” (Hendriks and Spronk 2017, 28). Whereas, in many Western contexts, “sexuality” is starting to break down under its own conceptual weight (Halberstam

2012), scholars in and from Africa have long recognized its limitations as an analytical frame for understanding various sexual and gendered articulations and experiences. In Douglas Clarke's words: "Africa has a model for queer theory that is largely unexplored in the Western world" (2013, 175). In this chapter I wish to queer the normative implications of heterosexuality that pervades much scholarship¹ by focusing on the concept of love. I will question the normative assumptions underlying the frequent use of the term "transactional sex" in relation to Africa so as to queer the concept of love.

A Google scholar search of the term "transactional sex" yields 12,400 entries; 89 of the first 100 results pertain to studies on Africa.² The majority of these articles are written from a public health perspective that has cemented itself as the global health discourse (Koplan et al. 2009). A similar search on Google scholar looking for studies concerning love, erotics or affection in Africa, only finds a handful of references (see also Tamale 2011, 4). This is no coincidence, in Binyavanga Wainaina's words, "love between Africans is a taboo unless death is involved" (2005, 4). The very fact that love and affection are hardly taken into account in analyses of (same-sex and cross-sex) sexuality renders many explanations of people's motivations and experiences as instrumental and calculated, hence suspect to a disapproving understanding of the transactionality of sex. The term "transactional sex" emerged in the early 1990s and it was regarded as an important descriptor of HIV transmission by the mid-1990s. Transactional sex is mostly defined as the exchange of gifts, shelter, food, money or any kind of capital for sex. It soon became clear that these exchanges could not be placed under the rubric prostitution as "[t]hese type[s] of relations fall outside the local and western definitions of 'prostitution,' the usual focus of studies on the materiality of non-marital sex" (Hunter 2010, 100). Prostitution is generally seen as the business or practice of engaging in sexual activity in exchange for payment agreed upon by the transacting parties and it is discursively understood as excluding love. The term transactional sex was introduced to indicate more inclusive and longer-term sexual relationships (Hunter 2010). In the body of literature on this phenomenon there is roughly a division between transactional sex as motivated by the need for survival on the one hand and, on the other, by the desire for consumption. The term "survival sex" is interchangeably used with transactional sex and whereas the former usually implicates impoverished women, the latter has a wider connotation as it implicates a larger group of women who desire to improve their lives in a variety of ways. Based on the Google scholar search results, transactional sex seems to be a specific African phenomenon. This is, of course, not the case, so how then should we read this result? In this chapter I argue that this curious incidence is the consequence of a research tradition in the study of sexuality in Africa that is inflected by the Euro-American ideal of love, which obscures the intimate connection between love and financial support.

The area of global health has become one of the major drivers of research on sexuality in Africa and particularly through the extensive research on HIV/AIDS (cf. Izugbara et al. 2010; Undie and Benaya 2008). It is important to understand how its goals favor certain areas of study, such as sexually transmitted infections or sexual violence, and exclude other themes such as erotic pleasure or affection. The asymmetrical production of knowledge is understandable from a public health perspective as the imperative is to reduce illness and social suffering, but it also needs to be analyzed for the effects it produces in understanding people in Africa. In other words, when one reads the academic literature on sexuality in Africa, people come across as rather loveless and instrumental in their relationships. However, this does not tell us anything about people in Africa but more about research agendas and practices. Indeed, in a volume on love in Africa, Cole and Thomas write that "[s]tudies that dissect African sexualities while ignoring affect contribute to Westerners' persistent

figuring of Africa as the ‘other’ of European enlightenment” (Cole and Thomas 2009, 4). There is thus need to identify ethnocentrism and how it is prone to (re)producing stereotypes and second, to return the outcome and use it to study global Western cultures as one of many in the world; i.e. to use the analyses based on African realities to study Euro-American lives.

Below I first outline the ethnocentric trends underlying much research on sexuality in Africa that perceive intimacy and economy as separate spheres of social life (cf. Zelizer 2005). Then I present the life story of Violet, a Ghanaian woman whom I met during my research in 2011/12. Violet was a divorced mother of three children who successively engaged in sexual relationships with men when she needed financial assistance. A transactional perspective would explain her choices as calculating and/or a victim of double moral standards where women can use their sexual capital in exchange for financial favors, and it would likely not include the affection, pleasure, and companionship that such a relationship generates. In contrast, Violet’s life story brings into perspective how love and money are not mutually exclusive but are, in contrast, interdependent and mutually constitutive. Such an economy of love focuses on the way ideologies of affection intersect with material practices of care. This is in contrast to much Western scholarship, as Zelizer (2005) has argued, and therefore we need to “desacralize” love (Cole 2009) in scholarship and investigate how ideologies of intimate attachments intersect with an ideal of material reciprocity that structure relationships.

On the production of knowledge about sexuality in Africa

Scholarship is the authoritative and legitimate site for the production of knowledge but it is less a neutral ground than it is often assumed to be. Science and technology studies (STS) consider science as “a set of practices that are shaped by their historical, organizational and social context” (Law 2004, 8). Scholarly knowledge comes from somewhere; it is produced in a variety of practices, in universities, research institutes, expert centers, consultancy reports, and scientific publications. These practices do not take place outside social contexts, but are shaped by it, and also shape the frameworks in return. They do not merely describe, but they make themes out of data, and in so doing they co-produce reality. The study of sexuality in African society is historically rooted in the field of public health, from concerns regarding population growth and environmental degradation to gender equality and reproductive health. Since the 1990s, the study of sexuality has taken a high flight and has diversified to meet different social and health questions. While this is not problematic in itself, the fact that sexuality came only to be studied as a *problem* (of sexually transmitted infections, of unwanted pregnancies, of violence, etc.) is problematic. The dominant focus on social problems and injustice in research on gender and sexuality has resulted in an epistemological loop where affection has become excluded, and where problems have dominated our way of understanding social life in African societies. It has resulted in a limited understanding of people’s behaviors, experiences, and motivations. The way transactional sex is overrepresented is not reflecting a “reality” we can find out there in Africa, it is the product of particular research patterns.

Since early colonialism, Westerners have been preoccupied with the morality of the sexuality of people in Africa and particularly with what they deemed harmful practices such as clitoridectomy or polygyny and, consequently, “[t]he white man’s mission appeared to be both the ‘liberation’ of women and the ‘improvement of morals’” (Chanock 1985, 28). In the postcolonial era, the newly independent states participated in the creation of international

bodies while setting up the much-needed health infrastructures (which the colonial administration did not) to reach all their citizens. In this era the promise of progress by eradicating poverty, contesting women's suppression, and securing healthcare for all was tremendous and multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) were instrumental in fostering the idea of modernization to develop postcolonial countries from the 1970s onward. Clitoridectomy, for instance, became reframed as female genital mutilation and while polygyny was not an explicit question in health frameworks, the concern with population growth was accorded to it. Currently, the scale of what have become the numerous institutions and intersecting networks of global health is impressive. The goal, to provide health and wellbeing for all Africans is crucially important of course, yet it is also important to look at the underlying premises that have guided and continue to guide these objectives. My point is not to defend clitoridectomy or polygyny; instead, I want to take issue with the representation of "African" cultural peculiarities that undergird many public health efforts.

The way AIDS has framed the perception of sexuality is important to outline here (cf. Tamale 2011) as the HIV/AIDS research field has tremendously affected the course of sexuality research in Africa and has been foundational for the emergence of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHS). According to Packard and Epstein (1991), the development of medical research on AIDS in Africa resembles earlier efforts to understand the epidemiology of tuberculosis and syphilis in Africa. In all three cases, early research focused on the question of why these diseases exhibited different epidemiological patterns in Africa to those exhibited in the West. Early explanations of these differences focused on the peculiarities of "African" behavior, while largely excluding the wide range of contextual factors. Packard and Epstein analyzed how these initial perceptions shaped the subsequent development of AIDS research, encouraging a premature narrowing of research questions. As early as 1991, the authors warned that, as has happened in the research on tuberculosis and syphilis, this early narrowing down might generate inadequate and inappropriate responses to the AIDS epidemic and limit our understanding of the disease. However, their warning did not seem to do anything to reconfigure the general scope of AIDS research, probably because of the pressure to act immediately on the imminent crisis. This pressure revived colonial constructions of black sexuality in the attempt to explain the heterosexual character of AIDS (Epprecht 2008); the idea of "Africans" as being sexually promiscuous by nature became a discursive reality once again (Aina 1990; Patton 1992). In other words, scientific knowledge is not objective or free from the effects of history and global hierarchical social relations. Research on sexuality in relation to AIDS (and other public health concerns) is incomplete because it harbors omissions in the knowledge it has produced (Izugbara et al. 2010; Undie and Benaya 2008).

In short, a series of stereotypes seriously impedes research on African societies. One concerns the idea of Africans as a one population; i.e. we speak about Africa as a category (Ferguson 2006) in a way we never speak about Europeans or Asians. Second, the idea of the naturally polygynous African man is pervasive throughout the literature (Nyanzi et al. 2009; Spronk 2014). Third, the representation of the victimized African woman complements the former (Luke 2005). Interestingly, in the usage of transactional sex one can discern an interesting paradox. Whereas much of the global health discourse is focused on empowering African women, the subtext of transactional sex is that the same women are strategic and calculating agents when it comes to improving their lives by means of sex. Fourth, there is a prevailing impression that marriages in Africa are loveless due to, what Caldwell et al. infamously called, "lack of female pleasure" as a result of African descent systems that prioritize the family over the marital couple (1989). While their "African sexuality" thesis did not

leave much space for the many variations and diversities that exist on the African continent, their thesis was eagerly taken up in public health and development sectors, as it appeared to offer an explanation for Africa's supposed difference in the face of the imminent HIV crisis (Aina 1990; Iliffe 2006). Another trend is that most studies, if not all, focus on the impoverished groups of people in Africa. Focusing on the plight of marginalized groups is very important, but if this becomes the only area for social science research it lumps together a continent so diverse that it forecloses other important avenues of knowledge. As Murray and Myers (2007) state, we need to be more careful with taking the "degraded features of life" as the main foundation from which to study life in Africa, so as to avoid the stereotype of Africans as destitute and in need of help.

These trends, from the focus on sexuality as a moral question to studying sex only as a problem, and the production of a monolithic African universe as poor are informed by what Mudimbe has called "the paradigm of difference" (1994). For centuries, Euro-Americans have viewed Africans as embodiments of all that they disdained: Foreignness, savagery, and irrationality. These views have been perceptively channeled into the biomedical languages of pathology (Vaughan 1991), and especially particular pathologies that belie Africans mostly, such as AIDS (Patton 1992). Furthermore, the ethnocentric perspective on love that informs many studies skews the understanding of the construction of a peculiar "African" transactional sex, exacerbates the prejudice. Hunter's seminal book *Love in the Time of AIDS* (2010) effectively dispels many stereotypes impeding sexuality research in relation to AIDS by providing a historical account of the ways migration and severe economic decline have affected communities, families, and gender relations. In other words, rather than looking for cultural explanations of something typically African, a historical and material account of social life is needed to understand how a phenomenon called transactional sex is the result of structural violence across generations (see also Silberschmidt 2001). Nevertheless, while providing an account of the economy of the ways love and material reciprocity are related, studies such as Hunter's do not address how and where affection functions in relationships.

The economy of love

According to Zelizer (2005), in the global West, intimacy and economy are often seen as separate spheres and hostile worlds. The twin ideals of love as free from material interest and business as free from personal feelings are a pervasive truth in Western public and academic discourse. The idea that love transcends the financial union of a couple is a carefully kept ideal, despite its daily realities that show that they often sustain each other. The phrase "true love is blind" defines intimacy as rooted in an intangible and authentic emotion, a deep-seated affection that cancels out any calculable intention (Illouz 1997). In other words, economic exchanges between lovers expose a union that should, instead, be grounded in uncorrupted passions; only then will it be represented as true love. This understanding of love is intertwined with Christian ideals of humility and self-sacrifice: One is not supposed to love another for material gain or fame, one is supposed to love selflessly (Lindholm 2006). The need to desacralize love from its Euro-American inflections becomes imperative (Cole 2009) as such notions of love rule out any connection between financial assistance and communicating affection, leading to misunderstanding of the interconnections between love, sex, and money in different African societies, *and* beyond.

In her work on intimate relations in Madagascar, Cole analyzes the interconnection between affective attachment and material reciprocity and its importance to the social fabric of society (2009). At the turn of the century, economic conditions have made it difficult for

relationships to fulfill emotional and material needs and women negotiated notions of romantic love to gain money from their relationships to support others. Cole emphasizes the *political* economy of love and thus how people bargain economic possibilities in relation to their intimate partners. Her analysis privileges the importance of material reciprocity, possibly because she focuses on the limitations of making a living in a strained economy, while paying less attention to the emotional and affective qualities of these relationships. Passionate feelings are not part of the analysis, while they are probably crucial to people's lives to sexually engage with another. Such an *affective* quality of the economy of love privileges experiences of desire, fondness, and sensations. The question thus is how to incorporate the affective qualities of intimacy in the notion of the economy of love.

Hendriks (2016) is similarly concerned with the question how to understand erotic urban life and its intimate connection with the circulation of money in the democratic Republic of Congo. In his work on male sex–sex desires, he prefers to speak of a (homo)erotic economy rather than a sexual economy:

[w]hile the sexual economy might evoke the direct or indirect exchange of sex for money and gifts, the homoerotic economy is not merely an “economy” because it gives rise to money and gift exchanges. It is rather an extant and imaginary network of interrelated subject positions that are libidinally invested and entangled in the usually unspoken homoerotic affordances of everyday urban life that largely exceed actual sexual contact and resonate with broader societal changes producing their own dynamics of desire.

(2016, 233)

Hendriks emphasizes the need to broaden up the notion of economy beyond an instrumental understanding of reciprocity, which is exactly what impedes the usage of the notion transactional sex. Instead, sex and capital are intimately connected in affective and erotic rather than calculated ways. Affection is crucial to the erotic economy, from having fun to being mesmerized, from being desired to being cared for, from manipulating to being manipulated, from making love to loving. Economy (from the Greek words οἶκος, meaning “household” and νέμωμαι, meaning “to manage”), understood in its broadest sense, is the social domain of practices, imaginations, discourses, and material expressions, usually associated with the production, use, and management of resources, but it can also be used more figuratively. Managing a household, one's personal life, a sexual affair are all naturally imbricated with the material qualities of social life, but it is perhaps the affective qualities such as desire and imagination that are the engine behind the particular choices. In Nyanzi's words, we should queer sex so as to be able to focus on a larger economy of erotic desire. In order to do so I propose to look deeper into the notion of care as the central axis between love and sex(ual) desire. Caring for someone and being taken care of are importance affective practices to evaluate an intimate relationship and hence the meaning of love. Violet's life story, focusing on her love relationships, shows how care and capital are intimately connected and mutually constituted.

Violet's story

In 2011 and 2012 I conducted fieldwork on the developments of social mobility and changing patterns of gender and sexuality on the southern coast of Ghana. I focused on ideas and practices of love and sexuality from an intergenerational perspective, in order to chart changes starting with late colonialism, through early independence, post-coloniality, and up

to the current era of globalization.³ Together with two research assistants we collected 63 life stories and through these individuals we collected their family histories, with the youngest being 21 years and the oldest 89 years old. Violet, a pseudonym, was 41 years old in 2011 and her (cross-sex) sexual biography matches the definition of transactional sex to a large extent. She has had shifting relations in the course of her life and many of these were underpinned by the flow of financial assistance from her male partners.

In 2011, when I met Violet, she was divorced and mother of three children. She was a junior manager in an international company while studying for an Masters in Business Administration (MBA) to upgrade her qualifications. She lived in a lower middle-class neighborhood and was making arrangements to move to a larger house and finer neighborhood. She referred to herself an “achiever”: “everything you see right now is the result of being an achiever. If not for my personality, I would not have reached so far.”

Violet started her life story explaining her noble background, as her father’s family is part of the nobility in a certain town.⁴ She lived with him from the age of 8 to 15 until he died, living in comfort due to her father’s relative wealth. Her parents had been separated for a long time and her father was living alone at the time of this death. In the matrilineal family system, Violet mother’s family should take care of her and her siblings, although people deal very flexibly with these principles from case to case. When her father died, his family was not obliged to take care of her. Violet left to live with her mother’s family but without the protection of her mother, who was a trader in Nigeria, she was treated as a house-help.

While living with her father, Violet attended a private school and did extremely well, she was always came first in class. “That gave me the confidence I needed later to know I could always to better,” she said. She had to leave her school and attend one of the public schools, but Violet often missed class because she was forced to work at the house or sell goods on the market. She was sometimes beaten, often went hungry to bed, and was otherwise mistreated. Yet, Violet clung to her school as she realized that schooling would be the way out of a miserable life. Sometimes she would escape to one teacher’s house to be consoled, sleep before an exam or just to get away. This female teacher realized her predicament and pleaded with the family to let Violet stay with her in the year of her final exams, and that is how it happened. Violet was again first in class and sought admission in one of the prestigious secondary schools of Ghana. She was admitted but she had no money to pay the school fees, which angered and saddened her enormously. Nevertheless, she went to register the first day of school, hoping for a miracle, she said. She only had part of the school fees and when she explained the situation to the registrar he reacted in a very understanding manner and offered to pay the remaining amount. She was surprised and grateful and also realized that such a gesture did not come without strings. “But I didn’t care, I wanted to go to school,” Violet said.

To make a long story short, Violet married the registrar, as it was also a good way to leave her family’s house. But as she stated,

I didn’t love him I think, at first I was grateful to him. But he was so good to me and I got to love him, we took care of each other. For the first time after my father died I had somebody who truly cared for me, liked to see a smile on my face. He fed me, clothed we well, and was proud of me. He gave me back my confidence. He has been very important to me.

In her last year of secondary school she got pregnant, but finished school again with high marks. It didn’t take long after her pregnancy before she realized her husband had another

girlfriend. "I didn't mind at first, it happens. I was happy with my firstborn, we had a good life, I was getting ready to go to university," Violet recounted.

She got admitted to study economics and during her undergraduate years she gave birth to her other two children. During these years the couple grew apart; "he was not taking care of us anymore, he was spending his money on other women instead of his children. I came to see him as the lousy man he is," Violet said. At university she got to know a professor who took an interest in her; "he fell in love with my brains." The professor was 23 years her senior, a man, and they started a relationship. She found in him what she missed at home: A listening ear, an advisor, and somebody to go out with. She could always call him to vent her frustrations; he always made time for her. Whenever she had to make a decision regarding her children, career or other matters she would never decide before having consulted him. They would spend a Sunday at the beach every now and then, he took her along to conferences or workshops, and he loved buying her presents, from clothes to small items like special waist beads (also known as belly beads). Violet told me several times how Prof., as she called him, liked buying her waist beads, which is a very intimate present for lovers to exchange. The fact that the Prof. liked going out of his way to buy special waist beads was a sign of his dedication to Violet. And as her husband became increasingly unreliable she became further involved with Prof.:

He was more of a husband than my real husband, who became more and more irresponsible ... He didn't give me any pocket money [household money], we never saw him and imagine! Prof. started paying for the kids' school-fees! We really loved each other.

After giving me a hard look, Violet added, "you might not agree, but I loved him because of the way he cared for me." The need to explain herself further suggests that Violet was reacting to the hegemonic notion that she was in the wrong by being someone's mistress, and that she was thus syphoning capital from the legitimate partner, a practice strongly condemned in Ghanaian public opinion.

Paying school-fees is a particularly symbolic act. More than paying for food, paying school-fees is pivotal to being a respectable father. If a man does not pay the school-fees of his children anymore, he is considered an "irresponsible" father and, by default, husband. It is generally phrased as "he doesn't love his children," and so Violet also talked about her husband:

I believe he loved me once ... yes, he did. When our firstborn was born he was so happy, and proud, he bought me all kinds of presents to show how happy he was. I dunno, something changed along the way, he ... he came to see me as a house-help or something, he didn't respect me anymore.

Prof., in contrast, started acting as the father of the children and took over the role of Violet's husband. They were intimate lovers for six years and these years "were very happy years; he showed me again what love is about," Violet acknowledged. He also supported her to get divorced, which is very uncommon in Ghana. Couples get separated but hardly do they divorce. For Violet, divorce meant that she was in control, and not at the mercy of a man who acted "irresponsible and foolish." A few years after her divorce, Violet started wanting to get married again, as she said, "I was happy with Prof., but I wanted a real relationship, not a secretive one." She left Prof. to be alone and although their sexual

relationship ended, they continued being close friends, in her words “no sex but only friendship.” During the course of my fieldwork I noticed how with every major decision she consulted Prof., concerning getting a loan, changing jobs, and schooling of the children. She always spoke fondly of him.

After a few casual relationships Violet gave up on the idea of getting married, as she realized she would have to compromise something very precious: Her independence. Her relationship with Prof. worked out very well because she was not obliged to him as a wife would be, which strengthened their relationship. A couple of years ago she met Kwamena, via friends, a married man. They liked each other immediately and they became very close friends, and not much later lovers. During my research I was able to observe their relationship. Kwamena did not know I knew about it and we always met as Violet’s mutual friends. It was hard for Violet to explain why she was so fond of Kwamena. He was her first lover who was more or less of the same age, he shared his worries with her too, they spent a lot of time together stealing moments in between jobs and family obligations, and sharing the same kind of humor. He knew every movement she made during the day, and she knew his, they were constantly calling and text messaging each other. She planned everything with him: Her household budget, the choice of schools for the children, complicated family business, and so on. As she was in the process of building a house, she consulted him about every single decision, from the plot to the building materials to the kinds of trees she would plant as the border of the plot. He also helped her financially. According to Violet he enjoyed supporting her because he admired her for the way she organized her life as a single mother and “made decisions like a man.”

A few months into my fieldwork his wife started having suspicions and confronted Kwamena with his unfaithfulness. He denied it and Violet and he decided to keep a low profile. However, one day Violet met his wife at the parking lot of a supermarket and the woman charged at her, screaming and hitting her with a bag. Violet was furious but managed not to respond and drove away. She was so humiliated though and scared of what people might think of her that she decided to break up with Kwamena. He simply refused, saying he could not live without her. After a few weeks he asked a mutual friend to talk to Violet and convince her not to leave him. Violet told me about this episode when we were driving in the car. She sounded irritated. She was annoyed with the fact that Kwamena drew in others; she was maddened that she was confronted for being someone’s mistress; her pride was hurt. She ranted on, explaining how she was getting tired of the relationship anyway, how it was time for a new lover, and so on. When I responded that Kwamena probably would do anything not to lose her she grew quiet. I asked her whether she missed him and she said quietly; “damn I do ... god I miss him ...”

Conclusion

Currently, global health efforts continue to play a central role in sexuality research in Africa. But while health is obviously an important concern for many actors on the continent, such policy-driven studies often narrow down other research questions. Their constant framing of sex as a “problem” – as the cause of unwanted pregnancies, HIV infections, sexual violence, so-called female genital mutilation, and other human rights violations – stimulates an instrumental approach to sexuality, whereby sex becomes de-eroticized to an act devoid of meaning and feeling. Moreover, the language of “crisis” and “urgency” leads to a widespread use of rather limited methodologies – such as surveys, questionnaires, and rapid-assessment approaches – that cannot adequately explain the causes, feelings, and motivations behind the

patterns they detect. In Sylvia Tamale's words, "researching and theorizing sexualities beyond the tired polemics of violence, disease and reproduction and exploring their layered complexities ... will lead to fresh conceptual insights and paradigm shifts" (2011, 30). We need, thus, to develop an inclusive research program on sexual and gender justice in dialogue with, but not dependent, on the SRHR (sexual and reproductive health rights) framework. In the spirit of Stella Nyanzi, queering the production of knowledge about sexuality in African societies implies rethinking our theoretical repertoires. Queer is not limited to LGBTI studies or non-normative sexual orientation and, as Nyanzi suggests, the vicissitudes of life provide new avenues for queering our concepts. As she explained (2014, 62), this may meet some resistance as a hegemonic meaning of queer has been established in alliance with LGBTI rights. According to Nyeck, such frictions are productive as "[t]he idea of queerness must remain paradoxical in Africa in order to safeguard its critical nature and ability to puzzle" (Nyeck 2011, 195).

Love and money are not mutually exclusive in Ghana, as Violet's story narrated above exemplifies. To the contrary, a (same-sex and cross-sex) lover's or spouse's affection is understood through notions of "care" and "responsibility." The employment of care means that being attentive to someone's wellbeing and acting upon the desire to see a loved one flourishing, emotionally and materially, is pivotal to a good bond. A true lover, therefore, will make efforts to see the other happy, comfortable, and healthy. These labors are considered the backbone of responsibility toward beloved ones and signify the importance of devotion and passion. Love fundamentally means caring and is thus the effect from certain practices that imply monetary flows. As we can learn from Violet's account, the way love is interconnected with resources is crucial to people's self-perceptions as well as in the evaluation of social life.

Moreover, sex and passion are part and parcel of love, care, and capital. This is in contrast to the Western system where the ideal of love puts passion, sexual exclusivity, and freedom from (supposedly) mundane dealings as superior to the financial union. In this cultural logic, the ability to "love" in an "enlightened" way becomes then a "foundational event" for constituting free and self-governing subjects (Povinelli 2005). The notion that love is ephemeral and beyond the materiality of mundane life and that sex in relation to such a love is respectable and preferable became hegemonic in the previous century (Hekma 2008), whereby sex outside of a love relationship is considered substandard, because it is loveless. This is the bottom-line concerning the prejudice as expressed in the notion of transactional sex, which is seen as loveless by definition and loveless sex is inferior sex.

In conclusion, the use of the notion of "transactional sex" in studies on Africa is prejudiced by a particular ideal of love. It prevents scholars from recognizing the mutually reinforcing connection between love and financial support. Love is not free from material interest; love is expressed through material attentiveness. The economy of love implicates the multifaceted, open-ended, and poly-reciprocal nature of sex, materiality, and affection within relationships. Violet evaluated her relationships in terms of company; friendship and support from her past lovers in terms of sex, care, and capital. Her attitude can be misunderstood as calculative when one reads love as beyond material desires and when one considers proper sexual behavior as exclusively related to (an idea of) free love. Yet, as Zelizer points out, this is a carefully kept ideal in the global West, despite the fact that the diversity of amorous relationships suggests otherwise (2005). The fact that Prof. continued to take care of Violet was the confirmation of his enduring love for her, beyond the inclusion of sex. Love is thus both emotional and material; a caring partner will notice the plight of the lover and will subsequently take responsibility and act upon it.

The principle meaning of the economy of love therefore includes emotional qualities of love – how people are lovesick, desirous, and considerate – in other words, how desire, fondness, and sensations are interconnected with the material qualities of love – how people care and how this is (also) expressed through capital.

Notes

- 1 One way to queer heterosexuality is to perceive the term as a descriptive cultural term from the global West that has become hegemonic and use the term cross-sex and same-sex, but it goes beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed analysis. In this chapter, the terms cross-sex and same-sex are used rather than heterosexuality and homosexuality as the latter pertain to a certain cultural history that is not universal. Sexuality as in “my sexuality” is the invention of 19th century European sexology. It denotes a very specific way of producing and organizing knowledge about sex, which first gave rise to the supposedly deviant category of the “homosexual” and, only later, to its supposedly normal mirror category of the “heterosexual”. According to Foucault, the scientific study of sex thus produced “sexuality” when it transformed the (sinful) erotic *practice* of sodomy into a sexual *identity*: while “[t]he sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (Foucault, 1978, 43). In this article the term sexuality is used to refer to the assemblage of the human capacity to be sexually aroused and have erotic experiences; conscious or unconscious impulses, desires and fantasies; sexual behavior and/or sexual practices.
- 2 Accessed 1 March 2019. Of the eleven studies not focusing on Africa, three were from the same group of authors focusing on Vietnam.
- 3 In my study I have focused on family histories and people’s life-story herein, and hence I take ethnographic studies on personal life stories as starting point (Clark 1994; White et al. 2001). I was based in a small city like Tema but travelled throughout Ghana to interview people. The aim was to select a group of people from different ages, different ethnicities, and with different employment. The result is that all people lived in urban environments, a requisite for middle classes as the infrastructure of employment, professional networks and access to cosmopolitan lifestyle practices are usually located in urban areas. They did not come from wealthy or elite backgrounds, though there are significant differences between families’ capital and resources. I do not only use pseudonyms to protect my interlocutors, I have also changed ethnicity, marital status, religion, occupation, residence and exact data / periods when they were not directly relevant so as to avoid any possible exposure.
- 4 Ghanaian chieftaincy is well known for being a powerful and important institution and the dominion of royal families. Although these families are privileged, not all members are necessarily wealthy.

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