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Julin Everett, *Le Queer Impérial. Male homoerotic desire in francophone colonial and postcolonial literature*. Leiden and Boston: Brill-Rodopi, 2018. vii + 212 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$113.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-90-04-36553-7; \$113.00 U.S. (eb). 978-90-04-36554-4.

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Julin Everett's *Le Queer Impérial* is an insightful and educational read for any scholar interested in Francophone literature and culture of black Africa, both colonial and postcolonial. Everett's work is critical for literary scholars of black Africa since, as she highlights so well in her introduction, literary analysis of colonial and postcolonial African literature has not been done in this fashion. Even more impactful is her choice of corpus, composed of white European and black African authors, which underlines a trajectory for how readers can better understand the evolution (if we choose to use the term) of homoerotic desire and depiction in colonial and postcolonial Francophone African literature. Everett turns the tacit of homoerotic desire in black Africa into explicit knowledge for the readers of her work.

Her introduction does not simply lay the groundwork for what she achieves in her manuscript. Instead it takes the reader on a journey to understand from where this project truly stems—a desire to challenge the heterosexist, hexagonal nostalgia for an empire once lost. Everett focuses primarily on narratives that deal with homoeroticism between “white Europeans and black Africans and which are written both by white Europeans and black Africans” (p. 5). Her project therefore is full scope in that it takes two viewpoints and two literatures into account: a white European colonial frame as well as a black African postcolonial one, all the while unpacking the deep nuances of homoeroticism within each corpus. As mentioned earlier, what is appreciated about this work is that Everett is treating a topic that has “long been met with critical silence” (p. 5) by arguing for new approaches to reading male homoerotic desire and domination in colonial and postcolonial literatures of black Africa. She highlights how much of the work done on homoeroticism in colonial literature focuses on Gide, and furthermore, how critical work on homoeroticism in postcolonial literature tends to limit its interrogations to Maghrebi texts. I agree, as a researcher of that particular area, that the primary focus of queer African colonial and postcolonial investigations is indeed North Africa. Everett reviews the critical corpus of work done on Gide's sexual exploits by Emily Apter and Michael Lucey as well as the monumental contributions by Jarrod Hayes to a varied understanding of North African queer sexuality. Needless to say, she makes a strong argument for why more work needs to be done: striking a different chord with the European reader, Francophone black Africa dares “to expose the erotic entanglements of white men and black men in Francophone contexts, and claims that male homoerotic desire is an integral aspect of French Imperialism in black Africa” (p. 14).

Therefore Everett's corpus of texts consists of colonial works by Pierre Mille, André Demaison, and Herman Grégoire, and postcolonial productions by Ousmane Sembene, Saïdou Bokoum, Williams Sassine, and Sony Labou Tansi. Her analysis is framed by a larger context of research done on homoeroticism in colonial and postcolonial literature of Africa and, as she puts it, "seeks to expand on these studies, firstly by exploring the textual and cultural relationship between colonial and postcolonial Francophone literatures and secondly, by performing in depth analyses of each text as it relates to gender, sexuality, race, and class" (p. 10). It is this latter half that really defines the contribution her work makes to the field as she takes time in her chapters to outline the association between the aforementioned categories. What is refreshing is that her analysis does not focus solely on identitarian politics but rather on the complex intersections of class and race, gender and sexuality, providing the reader with a deeper understanding of the literatures in question. Since her focus is the periphery, it's safe to say that her work itself is situated on the periphery of established scholarly trends.

Everett's book is divided into three sections and those sections are further subdivided into three chapters each for a hearty nine-chapter manuscript. Such a structure provides helpful signposts signaling the author's thoughts on how the reader should digest the various subcategories of the analysis since her work does include both male and female subjects and colonial and postcolonial atmospheres. Chapter one examines male homoerotic desire in Pierre Mille and André Demaison's *La Femme et l'Homme nu* as well as Herman Grégoire's *Makako, singe d'Afrique*. In this same chapter, Everett navigates white female desire in a black colonial context through an analysis of the character Hélène from Grégoire's novel. In chapter two, she reexamines the sexual activity of the four principal characters of Grégoire's *Makako, singe d'Afrique* and the multifaceted homosocial, hypermasculine, and homoerotic paradigm at play (p. 40). Her third chapter breaks down the role of sexual fetishism in *La Femme et l'Homme nu*.

In section two, Everett explores male rape and homophobia. Chapter four unpacks the construction of racialized group identities and the representation of rape in Sembene's *Le Docker noir* and Saïdou Bokoum's *Chaîne*. Chapter five revisits *Le Docker noir* and delivers a unique reading of fantasy rape and victimization made even more relevant by recent discourses in the twenty-first century. To close this section, chapter six examines racial identity and homoerotic desire of the black African in post-imperial France in Bokoum's *Chaîne*.

In the final section, the focus of the three chapters is on homoeroticism in "postcolonial and neocolonial relationships" as well as "racial *métissage*, gender-bending, bisexuality," and exploitation in the postcolonial space (p. 20). Chapter seven studies prostitutions, politics, and corruption in both Sony Labou Tansi's *Je soussigné cardiaque* and Williams Sassine's *Mémoire d'une peau*. Chapter eight reevaluates *Mémoire d'une peau* as a locus of inbetweenness allowing new representations of sexuality, gender, racial and national identity. In her final chapter on Tansi's *Je soussigné cardiaque*, Everett explores "the potential of queerness, specifically homoeroticism as well as slippages between masculine and feminine personas" (p. 169) in an attempt to show how Queer Studies scholarship can apply to postcolonial African literature—primarily the revolutionary aspects of gender-bending and refuting the norm.

All-in-all, Everett's work presents a comprehensive study of black African colonial and postcolonial homoerotics. It is an informative and engaging read, especially when one takes into consideration the novel interpretations and applications of fantasy rape in chapter five and new

terms like “neocolonial slum-johns” in chapter seven (p. 126). What is most appreciated about the work is the audacity to finally answer a question that has seemingly gone unanswered for so long: “Well, what about black Africa?”

There are a couple of changes, albeit small, that could potentially help refine the project. First, Everett uses the term “Othered bodies” sparingly but always with a capital O. Here, we run into various interpretations that could play with O/other distinctions. The introduction or a later chapter could have benefitted from acknowledging perhaps why Everett decided not to treat “othered bodies” in addition to “Othered bodies.” I bring up this minor remark because it stands in juxtaposition to my second point—Everett’s extensive justifications and definitions of all things queer, i.e.: homosexuality, homoerotic desire, homosocial desire, and homophile. One on hand, I appreciate Everett defining her terms, her usage of them, and ultimately why homoerotic desire is the best term for her project. That is what a good scholar does. However, it does come off as somewhat convoluted. This sadly isn’t something I blame Everett for; rather, it’s more what the field of Queer Studies has to some extent become. Everett is merely reacting to potential critics by defining all previous terminology used to express same-sex desire/interaction/relations to demonstrate why homoerotic desire is best suited for the varying works that make up her corpus as well as to avoid being anachronistic and applying modern terminology to works that predate same-sex identities.

My final comment has to do with what is to come. I would have loved to have gotten an idea of where Everett will take things next or what questions still remain regarding postcolonial and neocolonial depictions of homoerotic desire. Are they being produced primarily inside the *métropole*? Or are they becoming more indigenous to the native land? As we continue to examine these cultural productions, it will be interesting for all those who are involved in Queer Studies or Africana Sexuality Studies to gain these types of insight. Until then, we can enjoy the work that has been produced thus far.

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