African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization
Neville Hoad
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African Intimacies is an important contribution to the growing body of cultural studies work that challenges Euro-American queer theory in order to put race and globalization at the center of sexuality studies. Hoad's book is also a timely queer intervention into African studies, charting how sexuality has long been a crucial site for contestations over the terms of African modernity. Racialized narratives about homosexuality as "un-African," in particular, provide leaders in Africa today with a discourse through which to assert national sovereignty and cultural authenticity, when they are otherwise embedded—enthusiastically, anxiously, or unwillingly, as the case may be—in Western models of "development." Hoad is adamant, however, that castigating these leaders for their homophobia simply reinforces notions of African backwardness. In the face of increasing state persecution of homosexuals, from Zimbabwe to Zanzibar, demanding gay rights can all too easily become the West's civilizing mission of the day—which only exacerbates the underlying conflict being played out across the terrain of sexuality. The contemporary politics of sexual morality in Africa are also inextricable from the impact of HIV/AIDS, and one of the strengths of this study is the way it puts these two issues in conversation.

Hoad's selective genealogy presents two moments in history as important for an understanding of contemporary political urgencies. He takes his cue from Walter Benjamin, presenting "flashpoints" (xviii) from the past to interrupt the present. The first fragment of the past is the 1880s, and the fascinating history of Mwanga, the last independent ruler of the then kingdom of Buganda, who came into conflict with the British over his right to practice certain "corporeal intimacies" with pages in his court. He executed converts to Christianity who refused these acts; twenty-two of them were subsequently canonized. While Hoad provocatively argues that one can interpret Mwanga's insistence on these acts as "anti-colonial resistance," he is primarily interested in how radically different understandings of physical intimacy run into and re-shape one another in this colonial conflict. For the Victorians, Mwanga was indulging in sinful personal inclinations, but for the Bugandans, he may not have been "having sex" at all, but rather, enacting political power. This chapter suggests that the production of the figure of the homosexual was linked to the consolidation of colonial power. *African Intimacies* thus extends the

work of Ann Laura Stoler and Anne McClintock on the importance of Empire in the formation of domestic ideologies of sexuality in Europe.

Hoad then explores the era of decolonization, and the question of black male sexuality, through Wole Soyinka's 1965 novel *The Interpreters.* This novel's representation of a predatory gay African-American character, Joe Golders, has been much debated. Hoad suggests, through a discussion of Fanon, that attempts to reconsolidate African masculinity after colonialism are inevitably haunted by the wounds of the past, and that the errant, hybrid Golders is a kind of walking reminder of the irreparable loss of (imagined) racial wholeness and virility. The question of homosexuality is at the heart, then, of decolonizing black masculinity. The question of postcolonial *femininity* and its relation to narratives about race and sexuality remains rather woefully unexplored by Hoad, however.

To unravel the contradictory status of male homosexuality in the African neoliberal present, Hoad dissects a series of formative episodes. On the one hand, there is the 1998 Lambeth Anglican Conference of World Bishops, at which African bishops succeeded in passing a resolution advocating debt relief for poor countries, and another stating that homosexuality is incompatible with scripture. On the other, there is post-apartheid South Africa's constitutional institution of gay rights, and therefore identities, as part of "rainbow" nationalism. Hoad suggests that gay identity nonetheless continues to be read as foreign across Southern Africa—and that Thabo Mbeki's need to prove his anti-colonial mettle by insisting that the African AIDS epidemic is a Western fantasy should be understood in this context of fraught racialized sexualities and the "sexual ideology of racism," as Mbeki puts it (xxii).

For Hoad, a rigorous Foucaultian, gay identities are created, not found. *African Intimacies* is thus aligned with Joseph Massad's *Desiring Arabs* (2007), which presents a devastating account of the effects of the "incitement to discourse" about homosexuality in the Islamic world produced by international gay rights activism. Both books are a salutary departure from a tendency in queer global studies to simply celebrate transformative appropriations of Western sexual identities around the world.

Hoad departs from Massad, though, in his emphasis on what we might call queer African cosmopolitanism—an alternative to both the false universalism of "gay" identity, and the narrowness of a queer subaltern localism. Hoad argues that this cosmopolitanism emerges from histories of loss, and is about the shared experience of suffering; he thus also situates Africa as a significant interlocutor in today's black Atlantic modernity, rather than as the point of lost origin. He presents South African Phaswane Mpe's irreverent and original 2001 novel *Welcome To Our Hillbrow* as an example of this cosmopolitanism, and as the beginning of a counter-archive of African texts that imagine sexuality and AIDS in new ways. Hoad thus puts into conversation a series of highly suggestive histories, events, texts and ideas; some of these ideas deserved more amplification

than he gave them, but this is a stimulating, intellectually dense and daringly conceived book that maps out important conceptual territory.