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同性戀轉喻學與後殖民／國族寓言

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摘　要

這篇論文一開始先探討所謂「同志文學」的具體含括範疇爲何，因爲觀察其實際操作的界定標準，就方法論的要求來說，其實是缺乏一致性且依照需要而權宜更換的。尤其晚近一個耐人尋味的文本現象的出現，更使得相關後設批評的問題無法被忽視，因爲現在文本儘管可以公開地呈現同性戀，卻出現了許多「別有目的」的此類呈現，使得同志批評必須尷尬地從以往擅長的「暗櫃閱讀」轉而批判否定這些同性戀呈現的同志價值。不過本篇論文以爲，正面地分解辨析這個宰制弱勢的主流再現體系，其實也應該是同志批評的重要工作之一。而爲了要論證這個「批評轉向」的必要，論文接下來選擇針對這個文本現象中一個特定的範疇，即後殖民／國族寓言，來進行具體的分析，特別是細部討論了索因卡的《詮釋者》、毛翔青的《勇氣的徒勞》、以及（比較簡略地）奈波爾的〈在自由的國度〉與《游擊隊》這幾個文本中的同性戀轉喻。同時論文並且嘗試透過對於寓言經濟體系與刻板形象動員等概念一個政治化的理論建構，來解釋這種寓言／轉喻化的再現機制爲何。

關鍵詞：同志、刻板形象、索因卡、毛翔青、奈波爾

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The Tropology of Homosexuality and Postcolonial/National Allegory

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Abstract

Starting with a critical interrogation of what constitutes "lesbian and gay literature" and finding its territorializing criterion methodologically inconsistent, this essay first proposes a metacritical examination of what the emergent field really means to whomever constructs it. For a most recent textual phenomenon, in which homosexuality is represented openly but apparently for "other" purposes, has forced this problem onto lesbian and gay critics, who are now stretched between the specialized practice of "closet reading" and the unprecedented denial of the relevance of those homosexual representations. A particular group of this textual phenomenon, namely that of postcolonial or national allegory, is chosen for close examination because it is believed that an analytical understanding of the dominant representational mechanism should also be considered an important task for lesbian and gay criticism. In order to illustrate this point, the essay discusses in particular the figurative presence of homosexuality un Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, Timothy Mo's *The Redundancy of Courage*, and (briefly) Naipaul's "In a Free State" and *Guerrillas*, and endeavors an explanation for this postcolonial/national allegorization of homosexuality through a political theorization of the allegorical economy and its mobilization as well as proliferation of stereotypes.

Keywords: lesbian and gay, stereotype, Wole Soyinka, Timothy Mo, V. S. Naipaul

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The Tropology of Homosexuality and Postcolonial/National Allegory

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1. Lesbian and Gay Literary Theory and Its Discontents[1]

As prominent as literary criticism is in the interdisciplinary emergence of lesbian and gay studies, what constitutes its "proper" field of research—namely, the territorialization of what is known as "lesbian and gay literature"—remains in a methodologically discontented state. This is not saying that the basic critical issues requisite for the territorializing task have not been tackled satisfactorily. They all have. And not just those shared by other minority literatures (feminist, ethnic, postcolonial and so on): the dominant representation of subordinate experiences; the "discovery" (or rather, construction) of a dissident subjectivity in writing as well as in reading; and, most boldly, the claim of a distinct textuality (call it "homotextuality" or "*écriture gaie*") that is capable of marking itself off.[2] But also

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* This essay comes as the first part (there is at least another one coming immediately after this) of the belated crystallization of two early research projects of mine which have turned out to be much more complicated than I anticipated. The author wishes to acknowledge the sponsorships of National Science Council for those two projects (NSC 89-2411-H-002-041 / NSC 89-2411-H-002-094), and to thank anyone who has borne with this delay with great patience as well as the anonymous readers who kindly offer thought-provoking comments that regrettably cannot all be incorporated into the final text.

1 Throughout this essay, the term "homosexual" is used for descriptive purposes regardless of the possible anachronism of the concept when applied in certain circumstances, for it is from the contemporary "lesbian and gay" perspective that representations of homosexual feelings/acts are considered meaningful as such.

2 For a pioneering collection of essays which touches upon most of the issues listed here, see Stambolian and Marks. More focused discussion of the dominant representation and its queering can be found in Zimmerman; the attention to minority subjectivity on the authorial part, in Wolfe and Penelope, "Sexual Identity" (and Lewis for a good critique of it), as well as Dyer, who, focusing on films, offers a revision of what at the beginning looks like a homosexual *auteur* theory; an attempt at final solution through the angle of reader-response is Jay and Glasgow. As to the assertion of "homotextuality"—or, less

the one peculiarity that distinguishes "lesbian and gay literature" from all the others: namely, the practice of *closet reading*, devised to detect and thus "recover" the presence of homosexuality (or just homoeroticism) whenever it gets muffled, as this condition of being able or, more likely, forced to be hidden in the closet is arguably "the epistemological distinctiveness of gay identity and gay situation in our culture."[3] No wonder most of the outstanding works of lesbian and gay literary criticism belong to this latter category (rather than the ones shared with other minorities), from which arise the most innovative theorizations, the kind that holds great potential for developing into general theories about the condition of unspeakability or unsayability, appearance and secrecy, coding and decoding, and other related issues of signs and signification.[4]

However, even with these theoretical innovations, the proprietary demands for the territorialization of "lesbian and gay literature" have not been truly fulfilled because of a central predicament that refuses to go away, which can be rendered most obvious when compared with what feminist criticism has achieved in the same respect. Sensing (among other things) the intractable voluminousness entailed by its early agenda—the so-called " 'Images of Women' criticism" (Moi 42-50)—feminist criticism has long redirected its attention and settled for the least problematic target of "works of women writers" or "literature by women" (with the latter phrasing being adopted by the canonizing Norton anthology in point). Yet as convenient as it

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commonly but more revealingly, "*écriture gaie*" (Martin), as the notion clearly takes its hint from *écriture feminine*—many have suggested but none have rigorously tried; one likely exception is the conceptualization of a lesbian or gay *narrative*, for details see note 7 below.

3 Sedgwick, *Epistemology* 75.Therefore Toril Moi's early and complacent assertion that "black or lesbian (or black-lesbian) feminist criticism have presented exactly the same *methodological* and *theoretical* problems as the [straight] rest of Anglo-American feminist criticism" (86) proves to be utterly wrong.

4 However, the very work which is most promising in this respect—what can it be other than Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*?—warns us against this generalization, by which "the cultural interrogations it [Sedgwick's own book] aims to make imperative will be trivialized or evacuated, at this early stage, to the degree that their procedures seem to partake of the a priori" (12). Indeed, the danger has been well anticipated by such a project as the collection of essays titled *Languages of the Unsayable* (edited by Budick and Iser), which, despite its promising connection, contains not a single reference to homosexuality. To make my point, a critical articulation of homosexual lifestyle and signs had been achieved long before the publication of this collection, in Harold Beaver's pioneering "Homosexual Signs."

seems (i.e. so long as you refrain from questioning the biological category of "women"), this comfortable manageability remains a luxury denied to lesbian and gay literature. For the group of texts presumably referred by it can never be so easily taken to mean just those literary works authored by writers who are themselves (found to be) lovers of the same sex—even if we could overcome the practical difficulty of ever ascertaining a person's (homo)sexuality. Although the works of such a writer are regarded almost automatically as falling within the domain of lesbian and gay literature, the working definition of the category actually encompasses *all* literary expressions of homoerotic sentiments and/or representations of same-sex activities, even if they are authored by writers who do not seem to share the same (homo) sexuality.

This is precisely how Claude J. Summers, editor of the greatly useful reference book *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage*, defines the volume's scope, despite what its subtitle seems to suggest: *A Reader's Companion to* the Writers and Their Works*, from Antiquity to the Present* (emphases mine). For besides "in-depth critical essays on major gay and lesbian writers in world literature," the companion in fact "provides overviews of the gay and lesbian presence in a variety of literatures and historical periods" (ix). In contrast to the rather clean shift of feminist criticism from a "universalizing" to a "minoritizing" approach (to borrow Sedgwick's terms), the territorialization of "lesbian and gay literature" still gets stuck in between, just opting for either approach which it sees fit for a particular case. Seemingly innocuous or even necessarily expedient, this eclecticism actually masks a methodological inconsistency that is rendered most clear in the following critique voiced by Gregory Woods, author of the first comprehensive book-length history of gay (male) literature:[5]

> It is easy to tell where gay literature begins—in openly gay authors' writing explicitly about the experience of being gay—but where does it end? [. . .] It must comprise any literary material which has anything to say

5 As the focus of the present essay's discussion will gradually show, it is gay rather than lesbian literature that is going to be examined for concrete analysis. However, I do not intend to give up the all-inclusive label because I regard the critical issues raised here as relevant to "lesbian and gay literature" as a whole.

> about matters which we now think of as pertaining to gender roles and to the spectrum of sexual experience. The former, restrictive definition is virtually impossible to use in relation to pre-twentieth-century materials; but the latter is so general as to include virtually all literature of all cultures and all times, and is therefore also unworkable. Each has its own attractions, each its own uses; but neither is sufficient. (12)

Despite the compromising conclusion with which this quote ends, Woods nevertheless succeeds in distilling one principle from the practical eclecticism of lesbian and gay literature and even manages to provide a rationale for it. That is, the seemingly inconsistent application of both a "universalizing" and "minoritizing" criteria is in fact divided diachronically rather than conflated synchronically. And for good reasons. On the one hand, the "universalizing" approach remains indispensable for an earlier age when the textual presence of homosexuality, due to silencing taboo and oppressive censorship, is scarce, under cover, or downright ignored if it still manages to appear despite all these adversities; hence any representation of it is simply too precious to be left aside for the construction of a "homosexual tradition" (Woods 3-4). On the other, the "minoritizing" approach becomes unavoidable for a later age when "homosexuality" as we know it emerges as a sexual identity and, with the modern conceptualization of sexuality as delineated by Foucault, it is no longer possible not to assume that "the homosexuality of an author affect[s] his or her work even when that work has nothing specifically to do with homosexuality" (Summers x); besides, homosexual representations have become too bountiful to be included in full anyway.

Yet an intriguing textual phenomenon which happens in this later era of ample lesbian and gay representations indicates that perhaps the unmanageable amount is not really an issue here. Turning to the post-WWII developments of gay literature in his historical account, Woods notes that:

> As homosexuality, particularly male homosexuality, becomes more and more a matter for open, public debate—as it does in the aftermath of the Second World War—its presences in and absences from literary texts become increasingly haphazard and unpredictable. Authors who are not

> homosexual themselves, and who have no interest in putting forward arguments either for or against the liberalisation of anti-homosexual laws and conventions, start *using homosexual characters for a broad range of ulterior motives*. For instance, such characters start to appear in American crime fiction as significant contributions to a generalised depiction of urban moral decay, alongside drug addicts, prostitutes and other criminal types; or in British spy fiction as the potential enemy within, reds not under the bed but in it together; or in many different fictional genres as symbols of decadence or outright evil. (257; emphasis added)

This indeed comes as an ironic twist for lesbian and gay critics, who, used to painstakingly recuperate the existence of homosexuality in texts where it does not look to be, now have to argue that its conspicuous presence in literary works may *not* be sufficient guarantee for lesbian and gay concerns.

We are thus compelled to ask: what act as the exact criteria for making judgments such as these? And what do they tell us about our (i.e. whoever make these judgments) deep assumptions of what really counts as "lesbian and gay literature," especially when scarcity of representation is no longer an issue? Of course, to phrase the question this way means that we do not fall back (as feminist criticism has done) on authorial subjectivity as the exclusive base of self-definition—a comfortable option that is denied to lesbian and gay criticism anyway—but chooses to face the central problems of meaning, concern, and value in our relation to literary works: Do they mean to us and in what way? Why do we feel concerned? What we regard as valuable? etc. At the same time, the twist also compels us to rethink our reaction to those lesbian and gay representations which we deem as "irrelevant." Besides queering them into meaningful texts (as tends to happen with established canons) or just critiquing them as unsalvageable slanders (as usually befalls contemporary proliferations), I feel that more efforts should also be redirected to understand the exact *mechanism* enabling those dominant representations of minorities, just as lesbian and gay studies have already realized the importance of understanding how heterosexuality works. In this respect, however, it lies less in the eyes of the reader/critic than in the hands of the author that homosexuality becomes symbolized for "ulterior motives," so the interrogation needs to look into what kind

of signifying context it is that facilitates and even calls for such authorial designs.

These are the polemics that underlie this essay. But instead of tackling them directly through a general theoretical discussion, I intend to examine a specific group of texts in point, namely those of postcolonial or national allegory which critically thematize the political condition of colonization or postcolonial nation-building and, intriguingly enough, also figure homosexual characters whose textual function clearly strikes us as symbolic or outright metaphoric (i.e. as more than itself or anything but itself). These are texts perfectly fitting Frederic Jameson's controversial but seminal assertion about "third-world texts" all being "national allegories": "Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*." Especially the intriguing connection between the national and the "libidinal" as foregrounded here.[6] Hence the main body of this essay will be devoted to tracing the rhetorical machinery that enables this postcolonial/national allegorization of homosexuality, mainly by way of a political theorization of the pivotal concept of "allegory." And a final word of clarification: the concern here has less to do with abstract theorization than with practical criticism, meaning the explorative endeavors of this essay do not aim at coming up in the end with a general conceptualization about what really qualifies as lesbian and gay literature (not to mention lesbian and gay "narratives") so that individual texts can be judged accordingly.[7] At most, the approach can be described

6 "Third-World" 69. For the controversies incited by Jameson's assertion and other different reactions, see the most recent re-evaluation by Szeman.

7 The first to propose a "homosexual narrative" seems to be D. A. Miller, who, by way of Roland Barthes, speaks of the default incompatibility between "gay fabulation" and "traditional narrative form" (43-51). Judith Roof and Marilyn R. Farwell follow suit, though with slightly different approaches: despite her proclaimed attention to "narrative," Farwell's pragmatics do not look much different from the prevalent practice of "closet reading"; Roof is more narratologically inclined in her theorization of narrative and sexuality as mutually informed and in her claim that "the lesbian and gay narrative might be the perverse narrative [. . .] not in its subject matter [. . .] but in the way any such narrative enacts a perverse relation to narrative itself" (xxiv). In a special issue (edited by Roof) of *Modern Fiction Studies* on "Sexuality and Narrative," Dennis W. Allen offers a persuasive critique of the essentialism evident in Miller's and Roof's formulations. As to a more content-orientated approach that seeks to define "lesbian fiction" in terms of a "counterplot," see Castle 66-91.

as metacritical, i.e. one that aims at engaging all critical readings, albeit specifically of lesbian and gay literature in this case, with a clear sense of self-reflexivity that is capable of reflecting on and thus rethinking their own implicit criteria of critical judgments and hidden presumptions of interpretive strategies.

2. An Odd Presence That Turns Out to Be Not Itself

Of course lesbian and gay critics are not the first to discredit the presence of homosexuality in texts which they regard as "suspicious." It is in fact a long and well-established practice for what today can be clearly identified as heterosexist or even homophobic criticism to habitually turn a blind eye to homosexuality whenever it appears in the texts and, if that is too conspicuous to ignore, undertake to explain it away by any possible means of interpretation.[8] The commonest strategy of which consists in the convenient and standard practice of *allegorization*: namely to evacuate the literal meaning of textual homosexuality by turning it into something else, usually non-sexual and more universal, so that their merits as "canonizable" texts can be salvaged.[9] The prejudiced presumptions behind all this are rather clear: "gay literature is 'good' literature only if it 'transcends its origins.' Perverted literature is 'good' only if it perverts itself; gay is good only if it is straight."[10]

8 Examples of this are so plentiful that to select any one (or even more than one) for illustration here risks serious under-representation; fortunately, the condition can be easily validated by looking into the mainstream criticism of any classics which are now also claimed as part of the lesbian and gay canon.

9 In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye reminds us: "It is not often realized that all commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagery. The instant that any critic permits himself to make a genuine comment about a poem (e.g., 'In *Hamlet* Shakespeare appears to be portraying the tragedy of irresolution') he has begun to allegorize" (89). Indeed. Yet I have to point out that, in this common process of critical allegorization, some parts of the text are often *more* allegorized (i.e. emptied out of their literal meanings) than others: the presence of homosexuality is one prominent example in point. Therefore it is still necessary to investigate the allegorization of homosexuality as a distinct critical endeavor that is not to be conflated with the ordinary operation of critical interpretation.

10 As James Creech incisively puts it (29). Sedgwick has astutely spoken of the entrapment of this (mainstream) critical "universalization" of "minority literary heritage" that is worth quoting in full: "Feminist critics have long understood that when the male-centered critical tradition has bestowed the tribute of 'universality' on a woman's writing, it is often not an affirmation but rather a denial of the sources of her writing in her own female specificity.

This "straight" allegorization of homosexuality no doubt smacks of the "cultural imperialism" as warned by Sedgwick (see note 10). Indeed, understood in this sense—i.e. in terms of allegorical *reading* rather than writing, the conflation of which forms the basic confusion caused by this umbrella term—"allegory" stands as a highly charged act of warlike maneuvering. Ismail Xavier, in his most comprehensive single-article discussion of the complex problematics involved in the concept of allegory, provides a succinct exposition of this through historical illustrations:

> Allegories usually rise from controversies. In ancient times, it was the debate on the legitimacy of mythic narratives in the Greek world that became a privileged occasion for the development of allegorical strategies of reading [. . .]. Later in its search for universal validity and domination, Christianity submitted different kinds of symbolic system and religious artifact to allegorical readings meant to inscribe the Other within the Christian frame of reference. Similarly, in different moments of a multi-focal historical process [. . .] new meanings were ascribed to old signifiers, where new cultural hegemonies were built on the ruins of defeated symbolic systems, in a process that largely obeyed [. . .] the material power and the will of the winner of history.[11]

And in response to these "colonizing" offensives, there come the survival defensives as always do in discursive maneuvers:

The extra virulence of racism in our culture has minimized the danger of this particular spurious naturalization of the work of writers of color, but the ambiguous, prestigious spectre of 'universality' has nevertheless exerted a structuring and sometimes divisive effect on the history of at any rate Black American culture. Similarly, a premature recuperation (as being about the entire range of social gender constitution) of a thematic array that might in the first place have a special meaning for homosexual men as distinctively oppressed group—which, beyond the reach of any unanswered questions, they unmistakably do constitute in our society as it is—would risk cultural imperialism" (*Between Men* 115).

11 Xavier 333-34. A more detailed historicist exposition of "allegory" that is equally politically informed and thus highly enlightening in unraveling the bewildering complexities of the notion can be found in Doborah L. Madsen's *Rereading Allegory: A Narrative Approach to Genre*, or more readily in its Appendix: "Allegory and the Question of Cultural Value" (135-47).

> Allegory is not a one-way process. If Christians allegorized pagan culture in order to dominate it, the "Others" could use similar strategies to give continuity to their own traditions—under disguise when the times were too hard, as occurred in Brazil when the African slaves maintained their religious traditions and rituals under the cover of Catholic saints and images.[12]

This explains why "allegory" may in turn be a useful notion in reading homosexuality in its disguise as something else.[13] Obviously we are back in the domain of "closet reading" as discussed above, but it should be clear by now the "allegory" in my following dissection does not belong to this usage, as the texts I will focus on do not secretly disguise but blatantly figure homosexuality.

If through such painstaking acts of reinscription, straight criticism aims at rendering textual homosexuality absent in order to perpetuate its inbuilt heteronormative prejudices, what, we are apt to wonder, could possibly be the occasions and rationales for lesbian and gay criticism to do the same with those texts which conspicuously feature homosexuality? With regards to the more specific group of postcolonial/national allegory that does so, Chris Dunton's survey of homosexual representations in African literature (albeit only those available in English or French) provides a convenient guide for examination. Dunton starts his article by stating that, "in [African] texts dealing with colonial rule, or with the experience of African students living in Europe and the United States, or with conditions in South African prisons, homosexual practice is almost invariably attributed to the detrimental impact made on African by the West." And this attribution results in the regularly "stereotypical" and "monothematic" representations of homosexuality in those texts, meaning that "the treatment of homosexuality provides a convenient reference point—a closely defined narrative element—which helps reveal the general thematic concerns and the larger narrative strategy of the text" (422).

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12 Xavier 334. This insightful formulation of Xavier's should remind us of Homi K. Bhabha's famous theorization of the ambivalent colonial subjectivity, which is why I risk confusion in extending the metaphors of imperialism/colonization here—but only here, for it is their literal meanings that are mostly deployed in this essay.

13 For such reversed usefulness of "allegory," Kuzniar (8-15) provides an excellent exposition. Roth attempts a typological delineation of the possible "modes of homosexual coding."

In other words, the representations of homosexuality in those texts are none other than *figurative*: that is, they do not come about just for their own sake, but mostly as metaphors (or, to be more precise, synecdoches or metonymies) for something else, basically that which is "profoundly 'un-African' " (423). For, as Dunton points out:

> if the engagement of the West with the African continent is generally identified as being exploitative, then homosexual activity is seen as being a particularly repugnant *aspect* of this. In a number of different contexts [. . .] homosexual activity is identified with exploitation, being enabled by money or power relations, and understood to be all the more disturbing because alien to African society. (424; emphasis added)

Considered in this light, "synecdoche" or "metonymy" seems to be a more adequate term than "metaphor" or "emblem" (both used by Dunton himself) in pinpointing the exact figurative function played by the presence of homosexuality in those texts. There are exceptions of course: homosexuality becomes truly "metaphoric" in fiction that thematizes "the neocolonial state ruled through collusion with Western advisers" or "the prison system under apartheid" (424) since it is not necessarily a part of the target critiqued in these works.[14]

Obviously taking a gay-(and-lesbian-)interested critical stance, Dunton follows his typological survey with a detailed reading of certain texts which are enumerated in it but deemed as different from the others because in them "the subject [i.e. homosexuality] is treated *nonpejoratively* and, in some cases, plays an *elaborate* and *central* thematic function" (428; emphases mine), and thus these texts "exhibit a

14 For the latter, Dunton says: "in the literature on the subject, homosexuality is stigmatized as being alien to traditional mores: its prevalence in South African jails metaphorically stands for the extreme distortions in social organization established by the regime" (425). As to the former, he provides the prime example in Mongo Beti's *Remember Ruben*, in which there is an allegation of a "[homo]sexual relationship between the European Sandrinelli and the country's future dictator and protégé of the colonial power, Baba Toura." Dunton's reading is astute: "Here, homosexuality is a weapon in the armory by which Beti discredits Sandrinelli and by which he emphasizes the symbiotic link between indigenous and Western interests in exploiting the African people." Besides the image of a homosexual neocolonial adviser that will come up again in this essay's final discussion of Naipaul, the insightful point of using homosexuality as a discursive "weapon in the armory" is also worth noting.

much deeper *imaginative* engagement in the condition of homosexuality and in its social psychology" (444; emphasis mine). Dunton's reasons for "redeeming" these texts may be revealing about the possible standards adopted by lesbian and gay criticism in its judgment of whether a text qualifies for critical concern. Yet in what follows I want to demonstrate, through a detailed reading of two texts in particular, that Dunton as well as lesbian and gay criticism in general, sometimes in their overhaste "redemption" of texts for minority-interested purposes, may have missed great occasions for inquiring into the dominant representation system which has victimized and continues to victimize those very minorities and thus deserves our frontal dissection. The first text in point is Wole Soyinka's early novel *The Interpreters*, which Dunton examines as one of the "redeemable" works in African literature. And the second is Chinese-British (for he has mixed parentage) novelist Timothy Mo's fourth novel *The Redundancy of Courage*, which has met with a similar reading informed by lesbian and gay interests.

Written just five years after the independence of Nigeria, which was already on the brink of civil war, *The Interpreters* offers a critical portrait of several Western-educated young elites in this troubled country, who, as the title suggests, are constantly caught and doomed to negotiate between two greatly different worlds: arguably their ideal version of a "modern" way of life and the disappointing reality of a postcolonial nation. Within such a narrative framework whose critical target is mainly local, the appearance (just a flash in the middle but looming large toward the end of the novel) of Joe Golder, an African American, clearly foregrounds itself. Characterized as "American and three-quarter white," Golder nevertheless teaches "African History" in college and hates himself for not being "a full African negro" (101-02), so much so that he is even willing to take drastic measures (such as suntanning himself to the extent of getting burnt) just in order to blacken himself. Yet besides his racial make-up which is the focus of his characterization, Golder is also intriguingly cast as a homosexual.

In terms of homosexuality, Dunton admits, "Soyinka's characterization of Golder can hardly be said to be sympathetic" (440). Indeed, during his second and major appearance in the novel, when one of the "interpreters" (Sagoe the journalist) meets him for the very first time and they have this long sequence of unpleasant

conversation, Golder is represented as aggressively "insolent" (a word actually used by Sagoe; 183), first in his obstinate probing of him and then forcibly revealing himself in return—all conducive to the "sickening" (195, 196) repulsion eventually felt by Sagoe (and the reader) when Golder's intention of (homo)sexual advances becomes clearer and clearer. And as if to firmly establish this "standard image of the *voracious* Western homosexual" (Dunton 440; my emphasis), in a later development Golder is further demonized as being responsible for the poor boy Noah's death as he also makes advances to the latter (so not only homosexual, he also becomes a pedophile).[15] Nevertheless, despite all these stereotypically negative characterizations of the homosexual Golder, Dunton still affirms the text's value in representing homosexuality because he thinks that, in accordance with the standards he sets out above, the text exhibits "a concern with Golder's social psychology that finally does distinguish his characterization from the stereotype and that suggests that his role bears a complex relationship to the novel's thematic development" (440).

Dunton takes "Golder's social psychology" to mean that his racial desire to become blacker "is in itself a *function*, a means by which Golder wills himself closer to an African society from which he is excluded—in a weak sense, as a foreigner, but more crucially as a homosexual" (440). In other words, in Dunton's gay-interested reading, Golder's prominent racial predicament is subsumed by the sexual one (how could it be otherwise?). Also deeming that "Soyinka presents Golder as a profoundly sympathetic character" because the novel "addresses his simultaneous negotiations of racial and sexual identities," Gaurav Desai goes even further in endowing Golder with what I have called *the postcolonial queer subjectivity* (see Chu):

> Golder is an individual who has had to claim actively at least two identities

15 Also setting out to reclaim the character Joe Golder from a gay critical stance, Gaurav Desai disagrees with this common reading and regards it as "speak[ing] more perhaps to the [heterosexist] critic's interpretive assumptions and cultural imaginary than to the actual unfolding of the narrative. For there is sufficient reason to believe that Golder doesn't quite understand why the boy jumps to his own death especially since he has assured him that he would not touch or harm him" (122-23). Yet Golder's assurance in the novel—"I told him to stop . . . I shouted stop! stop! I swore I wouldn't touch him . . . I pleaded, I swore I wouldn't touch him . . ." (236)—reported after the incident, is precisely how the text insinuates this causality of "homosexual molestation." Therefore Desai's reclamation of Golder's characterization in the novel stands as another example of the possible pitfalls resulting from the gay critical overhaste I am trying to point out here.

> which continually threaten to escape him—he is at once a light-skinned black man capable of "passing" as a white man and a homosexual capable of passing as straight. His choice not to pass—his choice to reaffirm at once two identities not only at odds with the hegemonic order of things but also, more importantly, at odds with one another—is a choice that must sober even the most unsympathetic of readers. (123-24)

It is true that Soyinka articulates the sexual with the racial through the character of Golder, but the articulation is evidently done in a way reversing Dunton's assertion as well as proving Desai's to be plain wishful thinking. For Soyinka's demonization of Golder's homosexuality is in fact a biting diatribe against the US "Americans," especially those self-identified as "African." If Golder's first appearance in the book as the model for Kola the painter (another interpreter) still enables sympathy with his desperate aspiration to be "black" (102; the suntanning episode), this very aspiration is rendered outright "perverse" in his encounter with Sagoe. When he declares to Sagoe: "I like black people, I really do. Black people are exciting, their colour has such vitality, I mean it is something really beautiful, distinctive," Sagoe's response is first to accuse him of being "mentally white" (195; just like the European praise of "noble savage," as Rousseau's name also comes up), and then to denigrate his desire as masturbatory: "Look, the truth is that I get rather sick of self-love. [. . .] It is this cult of black beauty which sickens me" (195-96). And when Golder persists, Sagoe retaliates harder: "When you talk of this black vitality I can almost hear you salivating and since I happen to be black—neither fault nor credit to me—I find it all rather nauseating. [. . .] I am astonished that black men can bear to be slobbered over, even by black men."[16]

That this happens *before* Sagoe becomes aware of Golder's (homo)sexuality evinces that there is first and foremost a "homosexualization" of what Golder stands for, and the very casting of Golder as homosexual may in effect be derived from this,

16 Soyinka, *Interpreters* 196. How much Sagoe's attack at Golder is congruent with the narrator's can be seen in a latter passage, in which the narrating voice vividly describes Golder's frenzy desire for the (male) African college students as having no outlets so it can only end with him "in the library staring at huge tomes of encyclopaedia, watching legs in shorts, slavering over blackness until he felt sick and giddy and was gradually restored" (217).

rather than the other way around. Yet what does Golder really represent here? Soyinka himself has talked about Golder being "representative of a certain type of unthinking superficiality [. . .] actually the kind of black American who used to come to Africa at one time."[17] And judging by Golder's rhetorics as well as Sagoe's critical rendering of it, the real culprit may actually be the proto-Black Power ideology of "black is beautiful" that emerged in the 1960s' US.[18] Therefore the common interpretation of Golder as "Soyinka's *emblem* of everything that is wrong with a Western-based, romanticized Afrocentricity" (122; emphasis added)—as Desai so aptly sums it up despite his disagreements—strikes me as a more accurate reading of Soyinka's design and also makes more sense in the signification context than Dunton's reading. As Rhonda Cobham points out in her brief discussion of Golder, this is a case of the "African novelists' use of homosexuality as a marker for a social relationship between colonizer and colonized rather than as an aspect of sexual identity" (47).

How this predominantly (neo)colonial and racial issue gets (homo)sexualized can be further traced in the novel's repeated associations of Golder with James Baldwin, which Desai positively regards as suggesting that "Golder is not some singular oddity but one with a legacy" (124). Baldwin stands for a legacy in the text all right, but one that is exploited as a useful shorthand for Soyinka's sexual attacks on what Golder represents in the neocolonial/racial relation between black Americans and native Africans. Apparently for the purpose of ridicule, Golder is shown respectively with a copy of Baldwin's *Another Country* and *Giovanni's Room*

17 Soyinka, *Conversations* 26. Soyinka thus describes those black Americans who once "went back" to Africa in nostalgic quests: "Really, Africa was flooded by all types of black Americans. Some of them had a genuine desire to relate to Africa, but they became literally like *white colonialists*. If we didn't dance in a raffia they felt that we were not being African. It was a natural, understandable, historical thing, but it was not easy on those of us who were waiting to welcome brothers from the Diaspora" (my emphasis). See also *Conversations* 61-62 for his opinions on those "returning" black Americans.

18 I add the prefix "proto-" because the Black Power Movement is usually dated later than this. But I do not regard it as an anachronism undercutting my arguments here because the sentiments constituting the movement certainly had existed long before the latter formally took shape. Another point: although it is well-known that Soyinka has strong objections against the Africanist conception of *négritude* (tersely expressed by his famous line: "The tiger doesn't talk about his tigritude"), I do not think it is the real target here (as suggested by Morrison 753) for reasons already set out, even though it is related eventually.

whenever he propositions other men (200, 217). On the first occasion, i.e. when Sagoe spots *Another Country* in Golder's car near the end of their interchange and Golder like a fan introduces the book as "the latest Baldwin," Sagoe answers with strong misogyny and homophobia: "I spell it Another Cuntry, C-U-N-T," and "It reminded me somehow of another title, *Eric, or Little by Little*! Said with an anal gasp if you get my meaning" (200). The key to a full understanding of this raging diatribe lies in the notorious similar attack, also more or less at the same time as this, by fellow black American Eldridge Cleaver on Baldwin.[19] In it Baldwin is taken to task predominantly for his refusal to support black separatism, and his integrationist racial stance is conveniently figured as homosexual love for white men not really because of his personal sexual preference but mainly because a too close relation with the oppressor has already been taken to signify as such.

This no doubt points to an important facet of the homophobic logic deployed by heteronormative masculinity in its *othering figuration* of what it regards as *an unapproved relation* (not necessarily sexual)—a logic obviously shared or adopted by postcolonial nationalists in their struggles against the metropolitan hegemony. Yet the possibility of this inquiry as opened up by such an intriguing character as Joe Golder is paradoxically missed by gay critics' overhasty redemptive readings as exemplified above, and this is hardly an isolated instance.[20] A similar example can be found in the gay-interested readings of Timothy Mo's fourth novel *The Redundancy of Courage*, which is a thinly disguised story about the brief independence of East Timor from Portuguese colonization in 1975 and its immediate invasion by Indonesia (both renamed as Danu and the *malais* in the novel). For this

19 For a useful exposition of this subject, see Bergman, "The Agony of Gay Black Literature," which also touches upon the relevant question of "gay black's relationship to Africa" (176).

20 However, despite my critique here, I still want to affirm the interventionary value of these lesbian-and-gay-interested criticisms, given the general reticence about or evasion of the representations of homosexuality in other critical studies of these African works, even if gender or sexuality is taken as one of their analytical topics. For examples, see Kanneh 103-04, 153-54 for her reading of *The Interpreters* and of Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*, Lazarus 117-84 for Ayi Kwei Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?*, and Christopher L. Miller 233-45 for Yambo Ouologuem's *Le Devoir de violence* [*Bound to Violence*]—all texts redeemed by Dunton as worth lesbian and gay interests but hardly discussed as such in these critical studies—as well as Florence Stratton's *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, which also totally passes over homosexuality.

tragedy of postcolonial struggles which focuses on the Danu nationalists who turned into resistance guerrillas after invasion and eventually all died in fighting the *malais* is elegiacally remembered after the event by one of the participants Adolph Ng, a Western-educated Chinese Danuese who, intriguingly, is also gay.

Adolph is designed to be a rather peculiar narrator because, first of all, his racial background renders him an outsider to Danu's nationalist politics in spite of his native origin and close companionship with almost all the nationalist leaders.[21] Defining "Danuese" racially as referring only to *mestizos*, the Danuese nationalists adopt "an unofficial Chinese exclusion" or "Danu for the Danuese" policy (76, 90); and Adolph's metropolitan education, capitalist status as a hotelier as well as his (homo)sexuality certainly do not help. All these characteristics composing the narrator are no doubt devised to endow the narrating voice with a critical distance that could save Adolph's participant story from being over-indulgent or -accusatory at the same time as being ultimately indignant and moving. Indeed, by adopting such an "inside/out" (to borrow Diana Fuss's formulation) narrating point of view, Mo has successfully concocted a sophisticated—i.e. both sympathetic and cynical—vision on such a sad case of postcolonial nation-building whose inevitable follies are redeemed by its tragic sacrifice in the hands of global powers, who decides the nation's destiny solely based on their own geopolitical interests (404-05). However, as this narrative function is arguably fulfilled first and foremost by Adolph being Chinese, it is then legitimate to wonder what authorial design requires him to be homosexual as well.

In an article which discusses *The Redundancy of Courage* along with Sri Lankan Canadian author Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*, John C. Hawley praises these two novels as queer(ing) interventions into and inflections of postcolonial nation-building in the sense that both of them not only tell the national story from a gay perspective but also analogizes it with the homosexual storyline. Whereas the case is arguable with *Funny Boy* because the novel is mostly a *Bildungsroman* of (homo)sexual awaking with the Sri Lanka's inter-ethnic (Tamil vs. Sinhalese) conflicts in the background,[22] it has troubles with *The Redundancy of Courage*

21 For a critical discussion of comparable situation in Indonesia where the Chinese population has been stuck in an overdetermined predicament as a result of colonial legacy, see Ang.

22 I will elaborate on this polemic and illustrate it with texts other than *Funny Boy* in another

because the latter can hardly be said to contain a *gay* plot. Hawley himself admits: "The homosexuality in both books remains a questionable *ploy*."[23] For in Mo's novel,

> the narrator never falls in love. There is more than a hint of infatuation with the man he ends up killing, but the only sexual encounters in the 400 pages of text are peripheral, flitting by without development or apparent significance in the protagonist's life. [. . .] It is as if Ng wishes occasionally to *prove to the reader* that it is not just the prissy observations and the attention to how things look that stereotypically mark the protagonist as a homosexual, but that he actually has some sort of sexual life. (125-26; my emphasis).

Hawley's criticism of the novel's sparse and insufficient representation of homosexuality as well as his suspicion of it being nothing but a "ploy" is indeed right on the mark, as the novel clearly lacks any *desire* in the gay narrator's depiction of people of his own sex, be it men or boys of whatever types. The only exception seems to be Adolph's friend and then comrade Osvaldo Oliveira, the Danuese (guerrillas) leader, whom Adolph describes with evident enthusiasm—i.e. not without an inkling of sexual attraction—early in the novel.[24] He thus recalls their

essay that originates from the same research projects as the present one and is thus devised in tandem with it.

23 Hawley 125; emphasis added. While Hawley is here on the right track about Mo's novel, the assertion is not fair at all to *Funny Boy*. That is why he immediately retracts it: "For Selvadurai this is less true. After all, his book ends just as the issue [homosexuality] might become uncomfortable for readers, for the author, and for the character himself, who is quite young, still maturing and coming to terms with himself." All in all, I think it is rather unfortunate for Hawley to discuss these two seemingly similar but actually quite different works in the same framework.

24 In the above quote, Hawley refers to him as "the man he [Adolph] ends up killing." But, technically speaking, Osvaldo is not killed by Adolph though the former dies saving the latter from being a betrayer/traitor (382-83, 388-89). Also Hawley seems to over-aggrandize the significance of this final scene between Adolph and Osvaldo, as moving as it is: "In his suggestion that Osvaldo did not want Ng to be further 'degraded,' the protagonist [. . .] is using the political act metonymically: he is making a plea for his own visibility as a full adult, homosexual though he may be, and as someone who has meant something to someone inarguably valorized in indigenous society—as if a marriage, of sorts, has taken place not only between Adolph and Osvaldo, but metaphorically between a Chinese member of society and an indigenous citizen. In the process, Timothy Mo suggests the indigenous acceptance of the love that (still) dares not speak its own name" (128).

first meeting (note the strong ambience of romance):

> He would have stood out anywhere. In Danu he was extraordinary. I saw him for the first time in the morning [. . .] with the sun rising out of the waves, dyeing the sand pink. Really very pretty. [. . .] I decided I'd have to do some weight-lifting, like the boys in my magazines. From the direction of town came an ant-figure along the beach. [. . .] Within a surprisingly short time it developed into a man, running. [. . .] Stripped to the waist, he was wearing baggy khaki shorts, woolen socks, and army boots. [. . .] You could see he was in good shape from his sinewy body [. . .]. I saw him again soon enough that very evening [. . .]. There was no mistaking the energy in that wiry figure. [. . .] Ridiculous, I shall be the first to admit, but I felt there was a bond between us, however tenuous.
>
> He did recognise me and I saw for the first of many times [. . .] the natural sombreness of expression subverted by his boy's smile. (59-60)

However, just at this moment of homoerotic euphoria, the narrator disclaims it all as nothing but Osvaldo's personal charisma—"in case you are wondering, no, I was not sexually attracted to him; although I was subject to his magnetism as much as anyone else" (60)—even though he continues to rhapsodize about Osvaldo's other body features (interestingly, most of which are racial).

It is no doubt this incongruity that prompts Hawley to view Adolph as "an unreliable narrator who, for reasons that may appear more clearly to non-Western readers [*sic*], cannot embrace and affirm a sexuality that is branded with the taint of Western decadence," and then to conclude that "Ng is waving the red flag of his Chinese ancestry as a distraction from what might otherwise jump off the page [i.e. his love for Osvaldo]" (127). Yet these statements (as psychologizing as Dunton's reading of Golder) could not be further from the truth as Adolph, studying in Toronto in the turn of 1960s and '70s, cannot be more comfortable with his (homo)sexuality (he is never coy about it in his narration). In fact, it is his "Chineseness" about which he feels obsessively anxious, even to the extent of racial self-hatred.[25] Signs of this

25 Hall's brief treatment (99-100) of this issue is the most acute among critics, for Mo in an interview admits: "I don't like him [Adolph Ng]. . . He's like a rat, continually resurfacing

appear early in the book—with his invitation for the reader to laugh at his surname: "To pronounce it, imagine you have been constipated a long time. Now strain" (24)—and spread throughout the novel, which ends with him changing his name to Japanese when eventually settling in Brazil: "Chinese I knew there would be, that petty diaspora of restaurateurs and storekeepers. But I had other, nobler plans for myself. I knew for a start that there were more than a million Japanese there" (402). Therefore Hawley's explanation that seeks (again like Dunton) to subordinate the racial to the sexual simply cannot hold.

As to Hawley's claim that Adolph is in fact "an unreliable narrator" whose love for Osvaldo, though disclaimed, is evident in his devotion to the Danuese cause despite his manifest pragmatism—just like "Manuel Puig's jailed homosexual [in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*] who also developed a political sense when he fell in love with a revolutionary," says Hawley (128)—I can only respond that the novel does not read at all like a hidden love story waiting to be discovered (at most an anti-imperialist one under the façade of cynicism). Hence the novel's under-representation of Adolph's homosexuality remains an unresolved problem, which can only be taken to indicate the extent of instrumentality in Mo's deployment of it—but to what figurative effect? The best guess, I think, is that Adolph's "deviant" sexuality is taken to act as *reinforcement* for his programmed inside/out status, which is mostly achieved but nonetheless cannot be totally safeguarded by his Chineseness (as the racial obstacle, though great, is not uncrossable by itself).

That Mo deploys homosexuality in order to characterize Adolph as "safely" othered by the postcolonial nation implies a fundamental incompatibility between homosexuality and nationalism that deserves further critical attention but is, once again, denied a chance of investigation in such a gay-interested reading as Hawley's.[26] Through this and the above rereading of *The Interpreters*, I hope I have successfully argued the case for a revision of the habitual practice of lesbian and gay

after the dust has settled. He's my nightmare of what I might be" (qtd. in Ho 161n5). This may also explain the narrator's meticulous attention to bodily features that are racial.

26 Once again, I am not completely denying the value of Hawley's gay-interested reading of the novel as other critical studies on it do not even take the issue of the narrator's homosexuality seriously enough; see the passing references to it in Wijesinha as well as in Elaine Yee Lin Ho's *Timothy Mo* (88-108), the first ever book-length study on him, which devotes a whole chapter to the novel.

criticism which tends to commit itself solely to establishing what may be called *the homosexuality of representation*, and for a turn of at least some of its attention to dissecting the dominant mechanism that appropriates while representing such minorities as the homosexuals. And to take the first steps, in what follows I am going to undertake a preliminary analysis of this very mechanism through a political theorization of the concept of "allegory," and then proceed to end this essay with a brief look at some other texts that could demonstrate the usefulness of such a critical turn.

3. A Political Theorization of Allegory

Since there are no readily available theoretical resources (of course) for my investigation into the postcolonial/national allegorization of homosexuality, I can only backtrack a little and seek to close in the real target through a detour from two fronts, by analyzing (1) the postcolonial/national propensity for (gendered/sexual) allegory and (2) the susceptibility of homosexuality to allegorization.[27] However, as my investigatory route shows, I do not intend, as many contemporary discussions facing similar issues have done, to backtrack all the way to "allegory" per se, especially its recent conceptualizations *à la* Walter Benjamin and/or Paul de Man (though it seems impossible to avoid critical resources informed by these two prominent masters altogether).[28] For in those theoretical formulations, "allegory" is no longer a genre of texts that invites a particular kind of reading by exhibiting

27 Judged by the terminology used in the title, Christopher Lane's *The Ruling Passion: British Colonial Allegory and the Paradox of Homosexual Desire* seems to be the most promising in providing such resources. However, a close examination proves otherwise, because not only Lane has a very peculiar use of "allegory" (more akin to "grand narrative" than any senses discussed here) but he considers homosexual desire to be conflictual with it (2-4)—which is quite different from the textual phenomena explored here. In comparison, Jenny Sharpe's *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, though more distant in subject matter, does bear more affinity to the present discussion in its insistent emphasis on "figuration." But the book consists mainly in historicist tracings of these sophisticated "figures" (one of which will be cited as exemplary in the final section of this essay) and does not venture far beyond for a theoretical explanation as demanded here.

28 The seminal master-pieces are of course Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* and de Man's "The Rhetoric of Temporality" and *Allegories of Reading*. Other significant articles include Owen and Fineman.

certain characteristics, nor is it the very kind of decoding (call it allegorical reading, *allegoresis*, or allegorization) often conflated/confused with the genre of allegorical texts.[29] In effect, it has become an "allegory" itself, a "vehicle" for articulating something else, be it our "postmodern" way of thinking or (even more heuristically) the "literariness" of historiography as well as the "narrativity" of ethnography.[30] As thought-provoking as these high theorizations of "allegory" are, the present polemic has little use of them since my discussion of "allegory" focuses mainly on its much more pragmatic usage as a way of textual signification and interpretation.

So first on the postcolonial/national propensity for allegory.[31] To pursue the aforementioned parallel between allegory and imperialism, Stephen Slemon points out: "if allegory identifies a process of signification in which an image in a literary text is interpreted against a pre-existing master code or typological system, a similar process of interpreting signs has been used in imperial thinking to read the world and to legitimise the power relations it establishes within it" ("Post-Colonial Allegory" 162). And Abdul R. JanMohammed's insightful analysis of "the manichean allegory" (I will come back to this later)—"which functions as the currency, the medium of exchange, for the entire colonialist discursive system" (83)—also bases itself on this

29 Frye's remainder is once more useful here: "it does not follow, as is often said, that any thematic criticism of a work of fiction will turn it into an allegory (though it may and does allegorize [. . .]). Genuine allegory is a structural element in literature: it has to be there, and cannot be added by critical interpretation alone" (53-54)—Frye then provides his own definition of these inbuilt characteristics that make a text "allegory" (see also 90-92).

30 For a concise metacritical exposition of these theories, see Madsen 121-29. Jameson provides a connection of the recent "revival of allegory" to postmodernism, which "can be characterized by a generalized sensitivity, in our time, to breaks and discontinuities, to the heterogeneous (not merely in works of arts), to Difference rather than Identity, to gaps and holes rather than seamless webs and triumphant narrative progressions, to social differentiation rather than to Society as such and its 'totality,' in which older doctrines of the monumental work and the 'concrete universal' bathed and reflected themselves" (*Postmodernism* 167-68). For the heuristic use of "allegory" in recent historiography and ethnography, see White and Clifford respectively.

31 As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "espousal of postcolonial reading as allegory" in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* has drawn some critical attention (see Edwards 8-9, where the quote is taken from), it is obligatory for me to distinguish the present polemic from it, which can be fairly said to be more akin to Paul de Man's theorization of allegory as "parabasis, 'the activism of ["speaking otherwise"]'," for it is "a practice of 'persistent interruption' in language where the cognitive or epistemological is continually breached by the performative or ethical, forcing the attentive reader to move against the current of the prose, to hear the charge of what it pushes away" (Edwards 8, whose quotes come from Spivak 156n).

very understanding. However, the best summary is offered by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam in their critical analysis of Eurocentrism: "Within colonialist discourse, metaphors, tropes, and allegorical motifs played a constitutive role in 'figuring' European superiority. [. . .] Tropological operations thus form a kind of figurative substratum within the discourse of empire" (137). And the concrete examples of such "Tropes of Empire" (title of the chapter devoted to this discussion) which they analyze with illustrations from films concentrate on "a specific constellation of *gendered* tropes that link the colonized to eroticized geographies of 'virgin land,' to the projective imaginary of 'dark continent,' to exotically 'veiled' territories, and to symbolic fantasies of rape and rescue" (141; my emphasis)—all tropes familiar to students of colonial discourse analysis. Can we thus deduce that postcolonial/national literature, in spite or rather because of its en-gendering in anti-colonialist struggles, in effect shares (either in the sense of unconscious inheritance or in that of intentional appropriation) this very propensity for allegory? At least this is how Slemon and Bill Ashcroft, by far the two most persistent theorists on this subject, explain the predominance of "postcolonial allegory": it is because "allegory" stands as such a dominant mode of (neo)colonial representation that postcolonial challenges tend to appropriate it for its own construction of a "counter-discourse."[32]

Now move on to the susceptibility of homosexuality to allegorization, which is a little more complicated because it is embedded deep within Andrew Hewitt's insightful study of what he calls "homo-fascism"—the "recurrent [heteronormative] conflation and/or association of homosexuality and fascism" (2). In *Political Inversions*, Hewitt argues that the heteronormative conflation of homosexuality and fascism "—while not grounded in historical fact—is by no means accidental" (9), for not only fascism is unrepresentable but homosexuality too "figures as an allegorical

32 Slemon, "Monuments" 11-13; "Post-Colonial Allegory" 158, 162; Ashcroft, *Transformation* 105; *On Post-Colonial Futures* 129. Besides it being a "counter-discourse," Slemon and Ashcroft also mentions another, more "substantial" reason for the prevalence of "postcolonial allegory": it facilitates an indispensably convenient intervention into "history," which ordinarily put the (ex)colonized in a disadvantageous position, because postcolonial allegory "recognizes that the history exists in the narrative and that the allegorical, by its very self-referentiality, disturbs the referential hegemony of imperial history" (Ashcroft, *On Post-Colonial Futures* 130; see also Slemon, "Post-Colonial Allegory" 159-61 and 164-65).

representation of the unrepresentable" (261). On the one hand, taking a hint from Ernst Bloch, Hewitt points out that "there always was something *unsäglich*—unspeakable—about fascism, something that confounded conventional political terminology" (8). On the other, by being "a desire that actualizes itself in its self-negation" (so thinks the heteronormative), homosexuality also "lends itself perfectly to a certain allegorical structure."[33] Therefore: "If homosexuality will serve as an allegory of fascism, this will be possible only because it is itself already predisposed to such allegorical displacements" (274-75). In other words, "as the negative representation (or allegory) of this radical negativity, the homosexual trope in fact opens up both itself and fascism to the production of truth and meaning" (246).

Hewitt is in fact neither the first nor the only one to theorize about this "allegorical" character of homosexuality; his theorization just stands as the most elaborate. For example, in his formulation of "homographesis," Lee Edelman has a rather similar take on homosexuality, which is said to be "constructed to bear the cultural burden of the rhetoricity inherent in 'sexuality' itself; the consequence [. . .] is that a distinctive literariness or textuality, an allegorical relation to the possibility—and, indeed, to the mechanics—of representation, operates within the very concept of 'homosexuality.' "[34] Therefore, coupled with the postcolonial/national propensity for allegorization, homosexuality, always already susceptible to allegorization, rather "naturally" assumes a figurative position in the grand scheme of postcolonial/national allegory. Yet what exactly is that figurative position occupied by homosexuality in postcolonial/national allegory and what makes it so remain

33 Hewitt 262. The logic is roughly as follows. The commonest apology for such "construction of homo-fascism" is that "we are talking here only of *repressed* homosexual desire; that uninhibited homosexuality is not necessarily fascistic" (12; my emphasis). However, this distinction "will prove itself again and again to be disingenuous. Over and over again, homosexual desire will emerge in both its anecdotal and theoretical formulations as having been always already repressed, as a desire, indeed, *for* repression."

34 Edelman xiv. However, Edelman bases his formulation differently on the will of modern Western culture to know (homo)sexuality and its eventual failure, which is then disavowed. So, "In order to disavow this unknowability, to deny or seal up the fissure that inheres in (and even as) sexuality, modern Western culture insists on both the psychic and visual determinacy of 'homosexuality,' and thus on its availability to (phobic) representation" (xv). For other similar theorizations of the figurative status of homosexuality (lesbianism in this case), see Meeze, who says: "when I write (of) the lesbian, I engage the problem of speaking metaphorically about metaphor, or representationally of representation" (8).

unanswered within this line of formalistic theorization.

It is Jameson who, in his conceptualization of all third-world texts being national allegories, provides a clue in terms of the different "stages" of "cultural development" between the first and the third worlds ("Third-World" 65): whereas "in the west [. . .] political commitment is recontained and psychologized or subjectivized by way of the public-private split" (71), "third-world national allegories [. . .] imply a radically different and objective relationship of politics to libidinal dynamics" (80), in which "the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself" (85-86). Indeed, there is obviously a(n) (il)logical articulation between the public and the private in the postcolonial/national allegorization of gender/sexuality. And this articulation can be further explained by Doris Sommer's ingenious analysis of a similar textual phenomenon in the nineteenth-century Latin American literature. In order to answer the interesting question of "why the national novels of Latin America—the ones that governments institutionalized in the schools and that are by now indistinguishable from patriotic histories—are all [heterosexual] love stories" (30), Sommer provides an elaborate theorization that cannot be properly summarized here. But for our present purpose, a preliminary answer will suffice:

> what monumental body needed legitimation so desperately as to account for the kind of public sex appeal that the novel evidently had? [. . .] I can think of only one body inclusive and insecure enough: the tenuously constructed antimonarchical state that needed [. . .] a self-legitimating discourse and found one in erotic desire. Sexual love was *the* trope for associative behavior, unfettered market relationships, and for Nature in general. (35)

If heterosexual love in fiction acts as the *naturalizing* mechanism that legitimates the post-monarchical nations, what figurative position could homosexuality—the prime embodiment of the "unnatural"—possibly fulfill in those postcolonial/national narratives except the ones that are the exact opposites of those represented by heterosexuality? Namely the trope for *negative associative behavior*

and for the *Un-natural* in general. This in effect brings us back to the significant link between allegory and stereotype (as already hinted at by Dunton), whose connection is directly spelt out by Ismail Xavier:

> Stereotype, undoubtedly, has an allegorical dimension, since it corresponds to a form of representation through which a general idea (namely, a preconceived idea) about a social group finds its "illustration," or embodiment, in a single image or narrative specially composed to confirm that false generalization. [. . .] Here the reader and his or her cultural bias [. . .] become the major instance responsible for the allegory. (339-40)

Yet it is JanMohamed who gives us the most insightful map of its "economy" (albeit in terms of colonialist discourse):

> the imperialist is not fixated on specific images or stereotypes of the Other but rather on the affective benefits proffered by the manichean allegory, which generates the various stereotypes [and,] with its highly efficient exchange mechanism, permits various kinds of rapid transformations, for example, metonymic displacement [. . .] and metaphoric condensation. (87)

That is, the postcolonial/national allegorization of homosexuality functions not only on the basis of existing homosexual stereotypes, which are mobilized in a grand scheme of signification, but also joins in an economical system that in turn produces new stereotypes through further associations, extensions and transmutations.

4. Final Textual/Critical Illustrations

It is this perspective of a bigger picture constituted by the allegorical economy that renders Jenny Sharpe's reading of Ronald Merrick—the sadistic homosexual British officer in Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* (mainly the first two volumes: *The Jewel in the Crown* and *The Day of the Scorpion*)—much more persuasive than all the others (even if they share the same opinions as Sharpe).[35] In this nostalgic story

35 For similar readings, see Cronin 154 and Sawheny 206; for disagreement, see Colwell 221-22.

reminiscing the British imperial rule of India just before its imminent retreat, Sharpe traces a representational system that is

> structured around a four-part figure of reversal that rotates the attributes of male and female, colonizer and colonized. [. . .] The rotation of attributes takes place on an allegorical level where "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else" [Benjamin 175]. Hence, the novel produces its allegory of imperialism as rape through a sliding chain of signification from English woman to Indian man to India. (139)

The central events to which Sharpe refers here are the rape of an English woman (Daphne) by some native Indian rebels and then the "symbolic" rape of her Indian male lover (Hari) by Merrick, who (sexually) tortures him during interrogation. Thus Sharpe convincingly remarks on the figurative function of Merrick's homosexuality:

> By making the agent of Hari's metaphoric rape a sadistic homosexual, Scott identifies the decline of the moral ideals of imperialism as the corruption of Victorian manliness. Thus isolating homosexuality as an inferior form of masculinity for which the pretensions of racial superiority compensate, the novel safeguards Victorian manliness and the homosocial relations of colonialism. (155)

And for conclusion, I am going to quickly examine two other texts, both by V. S. Naipaul, in order to illustrate the usefulness of the above theorizations that view allegory—or, more specifically, the postcolonial/national allegorization of homosexuality—as working through a *mobilization* of the existing pool of stereotypes (as well as further expanding it). The two texts are "In a Free State" (the novella forming the main body of the eponymous book) and *Guerrillas* (the immediately following novel), which both deal with the disappointing (or expected?) turmoil of postcolonial national/ism but also feature homosexuality.

First "In a Free State": two English expatriates—Bobby, "an administrative officer" who is homosexual, and Linda, the wife of a fellow British official—incidentally meet and together carry out an ill-starred journey through an African country (a former British colony) which is now on the brink of a civil strife. They finally reach the destination safely but the journey is full of unpleasant incidents

through which Naipaul launches his unreserved critique not only at postcolonial nations but neocolonial aids as well. Published four years after this (both in the first half of the 1970s), *Guerrillas* is the fictionalization of a real incident that happened in Trinidad in 1972: one Michael de Freitas (also known as Michael X or Michael Abdul Malik), a native Trinidadian who gained fame in England as a black activist and then returned home, murdered an English woman named Gale Ann Benson in a bizarre incident.[36] In this (i.e. the novel's) conspicuous critique of the Black Power movement along with its white affiliates, the protagonist Jimmy (the figure standing for Michael X, but curiously re-racialized as half-Chinese and half-black) is cast as involved in a homosexual relationship even if he also has sex with Jane (the woman murdered by him and his male lover together in the novel).

About "In a Free State," Timothy F. Weiss thinks that Bobby "represents liberal-minded cooperation" (174) because he is there to help the Africans build their own decolonized country. Yet,

> the novella undercuts his attitude of service if only by linking it with a political naïveté, a masking of differences between Europeans and Africans, and a combination of condescension toward and romanticization of Africa: "If I come into the world again I want to come with your colour," Bobby tells a Zulu man whom he tries to proposition. (174; the quote within comes from the novella: 107)

While Weiss remains rather tacit about Bobby's homosexuality (he seldom mentions it by name), another critic Fawzia Mustafa directly proclaims the novella as "one of his [Naipaul's] first and most studied explorations of *homosexuality as the sexual trope* most suited to exemplify a 'liberal' colonial paternalism" (117; emphasis added).

Yet Mustafa clearly misses the point when he continues to remark that "Naipaul fully compromises Bobby's more idealistic and apparently humanistic stand by casting him as a homosexual first and an administrator second." For characterizing Bobby as such, Naipaul is actually making things easier (i.e. making the signification

36 The account here follows Naipaul's own journalistic essay on the incident: "Michael X and the Black Power Killings in Trinidad: Peace and Power." For a much detailed critical comparison between the incident and Naipaul's fictional version, see Hayward 143-71.

more effective) by drawing on the old colonial stereotype of homosexual people being most suitable for colonial service due to their "immense idealism and dedication."[37] In other words: "who else would be naïve enough to devote themselves to those unruly postcolonial nationalists except the Western homosexuals, who are in fact more interested in getting their bodies?" so Naipaul seems to tease (see Chu 138). Besides, it is hard not to notice an intertextual link between what can be called "racial fetishism" in Bobby's attitude toward Africans, as evident in the quote above, and that of Golder's in *The Interpreters*—both function as the butt of postcolonial detestation and are therefore most likely derived from the same epistemological perception which reads this desire of "cross-identification" as perverse and then (what else could perversity be best represented except) as homosexual.[38]

As to *Guerrillas*, there is no question about the target of Naipaul's critique through the figure and action of Jimmy. But why is he characterized as predominantly homosexual (even confirmed by his heterosexual sodomy with Jane?) and racialized as "distinctly Chinese" (10)—all supposedly far different from the original event? Even though the conspicuous racial-sexual nexus here is widely acknowledged (see Mustafa 127; Gupta 47-48), none of the critics really offer satisfactory answers. However, if taking into account the continuous spectrum occupied by gendered/sexualized races—with black people being perceived by the white dominant as the most macho and Asians the most effeminate (see Chu 221-31)—the point of Naipaul's characterization—to satirically divulge the black machismo in fact as the Chinese sodomite—should be clear enough. Once again, it does not come as a coincidence that Adolph Ng in *The Redundancy of Courage* is also cast as both Chinese *and* homosexual: although the articulations in both cases

37 These are words said by Lord Nantwich, an old homosexual who went into colonial service, in Allan Hollinghurst's brilliant novel *The Swimming-Pool Library* (see Chu 26 and 213-18 for a more detailed reading of the novel). For an intertextual link in terms of the homosexual neocolonial adviser, see note 14.

38 Of course Golder's case is a bit different from Bobby's as the former may be said to involve elements of racial *self*-hatred; yet as far as both of them are considered to live in a "white mentality," they are in effect not that different. As for an insightful analysis of the articulation between racial fetishism (or, in Fanon's notorious inversion, racism) and homosexuality, see Fuss, "Interior Colonies."

arise from very specific thematic demands (as already explained), this intertextual pattern obviously indicates another overdetermined stereotype in the allegorical economy that requires critical address.

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