Content


III) Chris Finley, 2011. “Decolonizing the queer native body (and
LISTENING / READING GUIDES


Sarah Hunt is a 2-Spirit Kwakwaka’wakw woman who has recently started a professorship at UBC. We have included her talk because we think it is a useful introduction to binary gender as colonial, and non-binary “traditional Indigenous gender roles” that are essential to Indigenous economies and societies. To expose the “imposition of colonial gender roles” Hunt focuses on the disappearance of Indigenous trans people from Indigenous anti-violence critiques and movements. Beyond this critique, Hunt argues that overthrowing the colonial gender binary is not only a goal of anti-imperial struggle, it is also a means.

Hunt’s talk introduces central themes of this reading series, and also some key terms that will come up a lot. Here’s some working definitions of some of these terms:

- **Heteropatriarchy**: Structure and ideology of compulsory heterosexuality and masculine power
- **Gender binary**: Structure and ideology of gender organized, under heteropatriarchal power, that forces all people into one of two genders, according to the biological sex they are assigned. The “binary” assigns roles socially and culturally in a capitalist economy: men belong in public, and women in the private sphere.
- **Epistemology**: A way of thinking and being. A philosophical term that frames different types of logic as systems of social organization.
- **Agency**: The level of power people or social groups exercise to shape their own lives and destinies, within and despite oppressions that limit them


Other readings in this series examine colonial attacks on Indigenous gender and social organization, and people’s resistance to a binary colonial gender system. McClintock focuses on the centrality of gender power to the entire structure of British and European imperial power. McClintock shows that gender organized race power, imperial military power, and disciplined all classes of colonizers. McClintock helps us read gender as an imperial system.


Finley argues “Colonialism needs heteropatriarchy to naturalize hierarchies and unequal gender relations. Without heteronormative ideas about sexuality and gender relationships, heteropatriarchy, and therefore colonialism, would fall apart.” This means that the economic and governing structure of Canada needs the ideological, cultural, and social force of gender and sex. Without these ideologies and cultures, the economic and political order of the Canadian nation state would collapse.

We included this article to expose gender and sexuality as a link between popular ideology/culture and economic/political power. This link is different for Indigenous than Canadian people because, “the logic of
colonialism gives the colonizers power, while Native people are more adversely affected by these colonizing logics.” So while we are all harmed by the oppressive structures and ideologies of gender/sex power, we are differently affected, depending on our relationship to Canadian state power.

Definitions of key terms:

Reify / Reification: Ideology that makes power “real,” translating dominating power from an abstract feeling to a real-world force

Michel Foucault: French theorist who looked for social power in discourses - legacies of powerful ideas

Biopower: Foucault’s theory that modern industrial capitalist society manages and disciplines its populations through “positive” care and ordering of behaviour (ie. harm reduction), not just repressive violence (ie. police brutality and prison sentences)
I am not the wheatfield.
Nor the virgin land.

—Adrienne Rich

Consider, to begin with, a colonial scene.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus, blundering about the Caribbean in search of India, wrote home to say that the ancient mariners had erred in thinking the earth was round. Rather, he said, it was shaped like a woman’s breast, with a protuberance upon its summit in the unmistakable shape of a nipple—toward which he was slowly sailing.
Columbus’ image feminizes the earth as a cosmic breast, in relation to which the epic male hero is a tiny, lost infant, yearning for the Edenic nipple. The image of the earth-breast here is redolent not with the male bravura of the explorer, invested with his conquering mission, but with an uneasy sense of male anxiety, infantilization and longing for the female body. At the same time, the female body is figured as marking the boundary of the cosmos and the limits of the known world, enclosing the ragged men, with their dreams of pepper and pearls, in her indefinite, oceanic body.

Columbus’ breast fantasy, like Haggard’s map of Sheba’s Breasts, draws on a long tradition of male travel as an erotics of ravishment. For centuries, the uncertain continents—Africa, the Americas, Asia—were figured in European lore as libidinously eroticized. Travelers’ tales abounded with visions of the monstrous sexuality of far-off lands, where, as legend had it, men sported gigantic penises and women consorted with apes, feminized men’s breasts flowed with milk and militarized women lopped theirs off. Renaissance travelers found an eager and lascivious audience for their spicy tales, so that, long before the era of high Victorian imperialism, Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination—a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears.

The European porno-tropics had a long tradition. As early as the second century A.D., Ptolemy wrote confidently of Africa that “the constellation of Scorpion, which pertains to the pudenda, dominates that continent.” Leo Africanus agreed that there was “no nation under heaven more prone to venerie” than “the Negros.” Francis Bacon’s Hermit was visited by the Spirit of Fornication, who turned out to be a “little foule, ugly Aethiope.” John Ogilby, adapting the writings of Olfert Dapper, rather more tactfully informed his readers that west Africans were distinguished by “large propagators,” while the planter Edward Long saw Africa as “the parent of everything that is monstrous in nature.” By the nineteenth century, popular lore had firmly established Africa as the quintessential zone of sexual aberration and anomaly—“the very picture,” as W. D. Jordan put it, “of perverse negation.” The Universal History was citing a well-established and august tradition when it declared Africans to be “proud, lazy, treacherous, thievish, hot and addicted to all kinds of lusts.” It was as impossible, it insisted, “to be an African and not lascivious, as it is to be born in Africa and not be an African.”

Within this porno-tropic tradition, women figured as the epitome of sexual aberration and excess. Folklore saw them, even more than the men, as given to a lascivious venery so promiscuous as to border on the bestial. Sir Thomas Herbert observed of Africans “the resemblance they bear with Baboons, which I could observe kept frequent company with the Women.”
Long saw a lesson closer to home in the African spectacle of female sexual excess, for he identified British working-class women as inhabiting more naturally than men the dangerous borders of racial and sexual transgression: "The lower class of women in England," he wrote ominously, "are remarkably fond of the blacks." The traveler William Smith likewise warned his readers of the perils of traveling as a white man in Africa, for, on that disorderly continent, women "if they meet with a Man they immediately strip his lower Parts and throw themselves upon him."11

During the Renaissance, as the "fabulous geography" of ancient travel gave way to the "militant geography" of mercantile imperialism and the triangular trade, so the bold merchant ships of Portugal, Spain, Britain and France began to draw the world into a single skein of trade routes.12 Mercantile imperialism began to be emboldened by dreams of dominating not only a boundless imperium of commerce but also a boundless imperium of knowledge. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) gave exemplary voice to the immodesty of intellectual Renaissance expansionism. "My only earthly wish," he wrote, "is . . . to stretch the deplorably narrow limits of man's dominion over the universe to their promised bounds."15 But Bacon's vision of a world-knowledge dominated by Europe was animated not only by an imperial geography of power but also by a gendered erotics of knowledge: "I come in very truth," he proclaimed, "leading to you Nature with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave."14

All too often, Enlightenment metaphysics presented knowledge as a relation of power between two gendered spaces, articulated by a journey and a technology of conversion: the male penetration and exposure of a veiled, female interior; and the aggressive conversion of its "secrets" into a visible, male science of the surface. Bacon deplored the fact that "while the regions of the material globe . . . have been in our times laid widely open and revealed, the intellectual globe should remain shut up within the narrow limits of old discoveries."15 Voyaging into the enigma of infinity, there to unlock "Nature's secrets," Faust likewise cried out:

New roads lie open to me. I  
Shall pierce the veil that hides what we desire,  
Break through to realms of abstract energy.16

Knowledge of the unknown world was mapped as a metaphysics of gender violence—not as the expanded recognition of cultural difference—and was validated by the new Enlightenment logic of private property and possessive individualism. In these fantasies, the world is feminized and spatially spread for male exploration, then reassembled and deployed in the interests of massive imperial power. Thus, for Rene Descartes, the expansion of male knowledge amounted to a violent property arrangement that made men
“masters and possessors of nature.” In the minds of these men, the imperial conquest of the globe found both its shaping figure and its political sanction in the prior subordination of women as a category of nature.

**WOMEN AS THE BOUNDARY MARKERS OF EMPIRE**

What is the meaning of this persistent gendering of the imperial unknown? As European men crossed the dangerous thresholds of their known worlds, they ritualistically feminized borders and boundaries. Female figures were planted like fetishes at the ambiguous points of contact, at the borders and orifices of the contest zone. Sailors bound wooden female figures to their ships’ prows and baptized their ships—as exemplary threshold objects—with female names. Cartographers filled the blank seas of their maps with mermaids and sirens. Explorers called unknown lands “virgin” territory. Philosophers veiled “Truth” as female, then fantasized about drawing back the veil. In myriad ways, women served as mediating and threshold figures by means of which men oriented themselves in space, as agents of power and agents of knowledge.

The following chapters explore, in part, the historically different but persistent ways in which women served as the boundary markers of imperialism, the ambiguous mediators of what appeared to be—at least superficially—the predominantly male agon of empire. The first point I want to make, however, is that the feminizing of terra incognita was, from the outset, a strategy of violent containment—belonging in the realm of both psychoanalysis and political economy. If, at first glance, the feminizing of the land appears to be no more than a familiar symptom of male megalomania, it also betrays acute paranoia and a profound, if not pathological, sense of male anxiety and boundary loss.

As Columbus’ and Haggard’s images suggest, the erotics of imperial conquest were also an erotics of engulfment. At one level, the representation of the land as female is a traumatic trope, occurring almost invariably, I suggest, in the aftermath of male boundary confusion, but as a historical, not archetypal, strategy of containment. As the visible trace of paranoia, feminizing the land is a compensatory gesture, disavowing male loss of boundary by reinscribing a ritual excess of boundary, accompanied, all too often, by an excess of military violence. The feminizing of the land represents a ritualistic moment in imperial discourse, as male intruders ward off fears of narcissistic disorder by reinscribing, as natural, an excess of gender hierarchy.

Mary Douglas points out that margins are dangerous. Societies are most vulnerable at their edges, along the tattered fringes of the known world. Having sailed beyond the limits of their charted seas, explorers enter what Victor Turner calls a liminal condition. For Turner, a liminal condition is ambiguous, eluding “the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space.” There on the margins between known and
unknown, the male conquistadors, explorers and sailors became creatures of transition and threshold. As such, they were dangerous, for, as Douglas writes: “Danger lies in transitional states. . . . The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others.” As figures of danger, the men of margins were “licensed to waylay, steal, rape. This behaviour is even enjoined on them. To behave anti-socially is the proper expression of their marginal condition.” At the same time, the dangers represented by liminal people are managed by rituals that separate the marginal ones from their old status, segregating them for a time and then publicly declaring their entry into their new status. Colonial discourse repeatedly rehearses this pattern—dangerous marginality, segregation, reintegration.

**Imperial “Discovery” and Gender Ambivalence**

Consider, in this respect, another colonial scene. In a famous drawing (ca. 1575), Jan van der Straet portrays the “discovery” of America as an eroticized encounter between a man and a woman [Fig. I.1]. A fully armored Vespucci stands erect and masterful before a naked and erotically

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**Figure 1.1**  **Porno-tropics: Women as Imperial Boundary Markers.**

America, ca. 1600 engraving by Theodore Galle after a drawing by Jan van der Straet (ca. 1575).
inviting woman, who inclines toward him from a hammock. At first glance, the imperial lessons of the drawing seem clear. Roused from her sensual languor by the epic newcomer, the indigenous woman extends an inviting hand, insinuating sex and submission. Her nakedness and her gesture suggest a visual echo of Michelangelo's "Creation." Vespucci, the godlike arrival, is destined to inseminate her with the male seeds of civilization, fructify the wilderness and quell the riotous scenes of cannibalism in the background. As Peter Hulme puts it in a fine essay: "Land is named as female as a passive counterpart to the massive thrust of male technology." America allegorically represents nature's invitation to conquest, while Vespucci, gripping the fetish instruments of imperial mastery—astrolabe, flag and sword—confronts the virgin land with the patrimony of scientific mastery and imperial might. Invested with the male prerogative of naming, Vespucci renders America's identity a dependent extension of his and stakes male Europe's territorial rights to her body and, by extension, the fruits of her land.

On closer examination, however, van der Straet's drawing, like Haggard's map and Columbus' breast fantasy, tells a double story of discovery. The inaugural scene of discovery is redolent not only of male megalomania and imperial aggression but also of male anxiety and paranoia. In the central distance of the picture, between Amerigo and America, a cannibal scene is in progress. The cannibals appear to be female and are spit-roasting a human leg. A pillar of flame and smoke issues into the sky, conjoining earth, fire, water and air in an elemental scene, structured as a visual assembly of opposites: earth-sky; sea-land; male-female; clothed-unclothed; active-passive; vertical-horizontal; raw-cooked. Situated on the shore, the threshold between land and sea, the drawing is, in almost every sense, a liminal scene.

Most notably, the boundary figures are female. Here, women mark, quite literally, the margins of the new world but they do so in such a way as to suggest a profound ambivalence in the European male. In the foreground, the explorer is of a piece—fully armored, erect and magisterial, the incarnation of male imperial power. Caught in his gaze, the woman is naked, subservient and vulnerable to his advance. In the background, however, the male body is quite literally in pieces, while the women are actively and powerfully engaged. The dismembered leg roasting on the spit evokes a disordering of the body so catastrophic as to be fatal.

This anxious vision marks one aspect, I suggest, of a recurrent doubling in male imperial discourse. This may be seen as the simultaneous dread of catastrophic boundary loss (implosion), associated with fears of impotence and infantilization and attended by an excess of boundary order and fantasies of unlimited power. In this way, the augural scene of discovery becomes a scene of ambivalence, suspended between an imperial megalomania, with its
fantasy of unstoppable rapine—and a contradictory fear of engulfment, with its fantasy of dismemberment and emasculation. The scene, like many imperial scenes, is a document both of paranoia and of megalomania.

As such, the scene is less about the soon-to-be-colonized “Other,” than it is about a crisis in male imperial identity. Both Amerigo and America, I suggest, are split aspects of the European intruder, representing disavowed aspects of male identity, displaced onto a “feminized” space and managed by recourse to the prior ordering of gender.

Suspended between a fantasy of conquest and a dread of engulfment, between rape and emasculation, the scene, so neatly gendered, represents a splitting and displacement of a crisis that is, properly speaking, male. The gendering of America as simultaneously naked and passive and riotously violent and cannibalistic represents a doubling within the conqueror, disavowed and displaced onto a feminized scene.

As in many imperial scenes, the fear of engulfment expresses itself most acutely in the cannibal trope. In this familiar trope, the fear of being engulfed by the unknown is projected onto colonized peoples as their determination to devour the intruder whole. Haggard’s map and van der Straet’s discovery scene are no exceptions, for they both implicitly represent female sexuality as cannibalistic: the cannibal scene, the “mouth of treasure cave.”

In 1733, Jonathan Swift observed:

So geographers in Afric maps
With savage pictures fill their gaps
and o’er uninhabitable downs
Place elephants instead of towns. 25

Later, Graham Greene noted how geographers traced the word “cannibals” over the blank spaces on colonial maps. With the word cannibal, cartographers attempted to ward off the threat of the unknown by naming it, while at the same time confessing a dread that the unknown might literally rise up and devour the intruder whole. Colonial documents are replete with reminders of the fetish fascination that the blank spaces of maps cast over the lives of explorers and writers. However, the implosive anxieties suggested by the cannibal trope were just as often warded off by fantastical rites of imperial violence.

The colonial map vividly embodies the contradictions of colonial discourse. Map-making became the servant of colonial plunder, for the knowledge constituted by the map both preceded and legitimized the conquest of territory. The map is a technology of knowledge that professes to capture the truth about a place in pure, scientific form, operating under the guise of scientific exactitude and promising to retrieve and reproduce
nature exactly as it is. As such, it is also a technology of possession, promising that those with the capacity to make such perfect representations must also have the right of territorial control.

Yet the edges and blank spaces of colonial maps are typically marked with vivid reminders of the failure of knowledge and hence the tenuousness of possession. The failure of European knowledge appears in the margins and gaps of these maps in the forms of cannibals, mermaids and monsters, threshold figures eloquent of the resurgent relations between gender, race and imperialism. The map is a liminal thing, associated with thresholds and marginal zones, burdened with dangerous powers. As an exemplary icon of imperial “truth,” the map, like the compass and the mirror, is what Hulme aptly calls a “magic technology,” a potent fetish helping colonials negotiate the perils of margins and thresholds in a world of terrifying ambiguities.26

It seems crucial, therefore, to stress from the outset that the feminizing of the land is both a poetics of ambivalence and a politics of violence. The “discoverers”—filthy, ravenous, unhealthy and evil-smelling as they most likely were, scavenging along the edges of their known world and beaching on the fatal shores of their “new” worlds, their limbs pock-marked with abscess and ulcers, their minds infested by fantasies of the unknown—had stepped far beyond any sanctioned guarantees. Their unsavory rages, their massacres and rapes, their atrocious rituals of militarized masculinity sprang not only from the economic lust for spices, silver and gold, but also from the implacable rage of paranoia.

Mapping the “Virgin” Land and the Crisis of Origins

“Discovery” is always late. The inaugural scene is never in fact inaugural or originary: something has always gone before. Van der Straet’s drawing confesses as much in its subtitle: “Americus Rediscovers America.” Louis Montrose suggests that the scene was probably understood at the time as referring to a nasty incident that reputedly occurred during one of Vespucci’s earlier voyages. A young Spaniard, who was being inspected by a curious group of women, was suddenly felled with a terrific blow from behind by a woman, summarily slain, cut into pieces and roasted, in full view of his fellow countrymen.27 This tale, with its unseemly burden of female menace and resistance to intrusion contradicts the myth of women’s invitation to conquest. At the same time, it contradicts Vespucci’s claim to be first.

Vespucci is, in fact, late. Nonetheless, he disavows his belatedness and claims a privileged relation to the moment of “discovery” and the scene of origins by resorting to a familiar strategy: he names “America,” after himself. The desire to name expresses a desire for a single origin alongside a desire to control the issue of that origin. But the strategy of
naming is ambivalent, for it expresses both an anxiety about generative power and a disavowal.

Luce Irigaray suggests that the male insistence on marking “the product of copulation with his own name” stems from the uncertainty of the male’s relation to origins.28 “The fact of being deprived of a womb,” she suggests, is “the most intolerable deprivation of man, since his contribution to gestation—his function with regard to the origin of reproduction—is hence asserted as less than evident, as open to doubt.”29 The father has no visible proof that the child is his; his gestative status is not guaranteed. The name, the patrimony, is a substitute for the missing guarantee of fatherhood; it is only the father’s name that marks the child as his.

Historically, the male desire for a guaranteed relation to origin—securing, as it does, male property and power—is contradicted by the sexual doubling of origins, by women’s visibly active role in producing a child and men’s uncertain and fleeting contribution. To compensate for this, men diminish women’s contribution (which, as Irigaray notes, can hardly be questioned) by reducing them to vessels and machines—mere bearers—without creative agency or the power to name. The insistence on the patrimony marks a denial: that something different (a woman) is needed to guarantee the reproduction of the same—the son with the same name as the father.30

The sexual scene of origins, I suggest, finds an analogy in the imperial scene of discovery. By flamboyantly naming “new” lands, male imperialists mark them as their own, guaranteeing thereby, or so they believe, a privileged relation to origins—in the embarrassing absence of other guarantees. Hence the imperial fixation on naming, on acts of “discovery,” baptismal scenes and male birthing rituals.

The imperial act of discovery can be compared with the male act of baptism. In both rituals, western men publicly disavow the creative agency of others (the colonized/women) and arrogate to themselves the power of origins. The male ritual of baptism—with its bowls of holy water, its washing, its male midwives—is a surrogate birthing ritual, during which men collectively compensate themselves for their invisible role in the birth of the child and diminish women’s agency. In Christianity, at least, baptism reenacts childbirth as a male ritual. During baptism, moreover, the child is named—after the father, not the mother. The mother’s labors and creative powers (hidden in her “confinement” and denied social recognition) are diminished, and women are publicly declared unfit to inaugurate the human soul into the body of Christ. In the eyes of Christianity, women are incomplete birthers: the child must be born again and named, by men.

Like baptism, the imperial act of discovery is a surrogate birthing ritual: the lands are already peopled, as the child is already born. Discovery, for this reason, is a retrospective act. As Mary Louise Pratt points out, the discovery
has no existence on its own: “It only gets ‘made’ for real after the traveler (or other survivor) returns home and brings it into being through texts: a name on a map, a report to the Royal Geographical Society, the Foreign Office, the London Mission Society, a diary, a lecture, a travel book.”

Discovery, as Pratt remarks, usually involves a journey to a far-flung region, asking the local inhabitants if they know of a nearby river, lake or waterfall, paying them to take one there, then “discovering” the site, usually by the passive act of seeing it. During these extravagant acts of discovery, imperial men reinvent a moment of pure (male) origin and mark it visibly with one of Europe’s fetishes: a flag, a name on a map, a stone, or later perhaps, a monument. I will return, in due course, to the question of the fetish and its relation to the crisis of origins.

THE MYTH OF THE EMPTY LANDS

Guiana is a countrey that hath yet her maydenhead,
never sackt, turned, nor wrought

— Walter Raleigh

The myth of the virgin land is also the myth of the empty land, involving both a gender and a racial dispossession. Within patriarchal narratives, to be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency, passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason. Within colonial narratives, the eroticizing of “virgin” space also effects a territorial appropriation, for if the land is virgin, colonized peoples cannot claim aboriginal territorial rights, and white male patrimony is violently assured as the sexual and military insemination of an interior void. This doubled theme—the disavowed agency of women and the colonized—recurs throughout the following chapters.

The colonial journey into the virgin interior reveals a contradiction, for the journey is figured as proceeding forward in geographical space but backward in historical time, to what is figured as a prehistoric zone of racial and gender difference. One witnesses here a recurrent feature of colonial discourse. Since indigenous peoples are not supposed to be spatially there—for the lands are “empty”—they are symbolically displaced onto what I call anachronistic space, a trope that gathered (as I explore in more detail below) full administrative authority as a technology of surveillance in the late Victorian era. According to this trope, colonized people—like women and the working class in the metropolis—do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency—the living embodiment of the archaic “primitive.”
A presiding dilemma faced colonials, however, for the “empty” lands were visibly peopled, while traces of the peoples’ antiquity lay obviously to hand in the form of ruins, ancient settlements, skulls and fossils. Here lies at least one reason for the Victorian obsession with survivals and traces, ruins and skeletons—allegorical reminders of the failure of a single narrative of origins. In Chapters 4, 5 and 10, I explore the ramifications of these colonial dilemmas in more detail.

For women, the myth of the virgin land presents specific dilemmas, with important differences for colonial or colonized women, as I argue in Chapters 9 and 10. Women are the earth that is to be discovered, entered, named, inseminated and, above all, owned. Symbolically reduced, in male eyes, to the space on which male contests are waged, women experience particular difficulties laying claim to alternative genealogies and alternative narratives of origin and naming. Linked symbolically to the land, women are relegated to a realm beyond history and thus bear a particularly vexed relation to narratives of historical change and political effect. Even more importantly, women are figured as property belonging to men and hence as lying, by definition, outside the male contests over land, money and political power.

It is important to stress from the outset, however, that the gendering of imperialism took very different forms in different parts of the world. India, for one, was seldom imaged as a virgin land, while the iconography of the harem was not part of Southern African colonial erotics. North African, Middle Eastern and Asian women were, all too often, trammeled by the iconography of the veil, while African women were subjected to the civilizing mission of cotton and soap. In other words, Arab women were to be “civilized” by being undressed (unveiled), while sub-Saharan women were to be civilized by being dressed (in clean, white, British cotton). These sumptuary distinctions were symptomatic of critical differences in the legislative, economic and political ways in which imperial commodity racism was imposed on different parts of the world.

DOMESTICITY AND COMMODITY RACISM

_**domestic**, a. & n. 1. Of the home, household, or family affairs.
_**domesticate**, v.t. Naturalize
(colonists, animals) . . .
civilize
(savages)

—The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English
In 1899, the year that the Anglo-Boer War broke out in South Africa, an advertisement for Pears' Soap in McClure's Magazine [Fig. 1.2] announced:

The first step towards lightening THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness. PEARS' SOAP is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as civilization advances, while amongst the cultured of all nations it holds the highest place—it is the ideal toilet soap.

The advertisement shows an admiral decked in pure imperial white, washing his hands in his cabin as his steamship crosses the oceanic threshold into the realm of empire. In this image, private domesticity and the imperial market—the two spheres vaunted by middle-class Victorians as entirely and naturally distinct—converge in a single commodity spectacle. The domestic sanctum of the white man's bathroom gives privileged vantage onto the global realm of commerce, so that imperial progress is consumed at a glance—as *panoptical time*.

The porthole is both window and mirror. The window, icon of imperial surveillance and the Enlightenment idea of knowledge as penetration, opens onto public scenes of economic conversion. One scene depicts a kneeling African gratefully receiving the Pears' soap as he might genuflect before a religious fetish. The mirror, emblem of Enlightenment self-consciousness, reflects the sanitized image of white, male, imperial hygiene. Domestic hygiene, the ad implies, purifies and preserves the white male body from contamination in the threshold zone of empire. At the same time, the domestic commodity guarantees white male power, the genuflection of Africans and rule of the world. On the wall, an electric light bulb signifies scientific rationality and spiritual advance. In this way, the household commodity spells the lesson of imperial progress and capitalist civilization: civilization, for the white man, advances and brightens through his four beloved fetishes—soap, the mirror, light and white clothing. As I explore in more detail below, these domestic fetishes recur throughout late Victorian commodity kitsch and the popular culture of the time.

The first point about the Pears' advertisement is that it figures imperialism as coming into being through *domesticity*. At the same time, imperial domesticity is a domesticity without women. The commodity fetish, as the central form of the industrial Enlightenment, reveals what liberalism would like to forget: the domestic is political, the political is gendered. What could not be admitted into male rationalist discourse (the economic value of women's domestic labor) is disavowed and projected onto the realm of the "primitive" and the zone of empire. At the same time, the economic value of colonized cultures is domesticated and projected onto the realm of the "prehistoric."
A characteristic feature of the Victorian middle class was its peculiarly intense preoccupation with rigid boundaries. In imperial fiction and commodity kitsch, boundary objects and liminal scenes recur ritualistically. As colonials traveled back and forth across the thresholds of their known world, crisis and boundary confusion were warded off and contained by fetishes, abolution rituals and liminal scenes. Soap and cleaning rituals became central to the demarcation of body boundaries and the policing of social hierarchies. Cleansing and boundary rituals are integral to most cultures; what characterized Victorian cleaning rituals, however, was their peculiarly intense relation to money.

I am doubly interested in the Pears' Soap ad because it registers an epochal shift that I see as having taken place in the culture of imperialism in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This was the shift from scientific racism—embodied in anthropological, scientific and medical journals, travel writing and ethnographies—to what I call commodity racism. Commodity racism—in the specifically Victorian forms of advertising and photography, the imperial Expositions and the museum movement—converted the narrative of imperial Progress into mass-produced consumer spectacles.
During the eighteenth century, what Pratt calls “planetary consciousness” emerged. Planetary consciousness imagined drawing the whole world into a single “science of order,” in Foucault’s phrase. Carl Linne provided the impetus for this immodest idea with the publication in 1735 of *Systema Naturae*, which promised to organize all plant forms into a single genesis narrative. For Linne, moreover, *sexual* reproduction became the paradigm for natural form in general.

Inspired by Linne, hosts of explorers, botanists, natural historians and geographers set out with the vocation of ordering the world’s forms into a global science of the surface and an optics of truth. In this way, the Enlightenment project coincided with the imperial project. As Pratt puts it: “For what were the slave trade and the plantation system if not massive experiments in social engineering and discipline, serial production, the systematization of human life, the standardizing of persons?” The global science of the surface was a *conversion* project, dedicated to transforming the earth into a single economic currency, a single pedigree of history and a universal standard of cultural value — set and managed by Europe.

What concerns me here, however, is that, if the imperial science of the surface promised to unroll over the earth a single “Great Map of Mankind,” and cast a single, European, male authority over the whole of the planet, ambition far outran effect for quite some time. The project was fissured with intellectual paradox, incompletion and ignorance. The technological capacity to map and catalog the earth’s surface remained, for some time, haphazard, shoddy and downright inept. The promoters of the global project sorely lacked the technical capacity to formally reproduce the optical “truth” of nature as well as the economic capacity to distribute this truth for global consumption. In order for this to happen, the global project had to wait until the second half of the nineteenth century, with the emergence, I suggest, of commodity spectacle — in particular photography.

The following chapters are concerned with this shift from scientific racism to commodity racism, by which evolutionary racism and imperial power were marketed on a hitherto unimaginable scale. In the process, the Victorian middle-class home became a space for the display of imperial spectacle and the reinvention of race, while the colonies — in particular Africa — became a theater for exhibiting the Victorian cult of domesticity and the reinvention of gender.

Domesticity denotes both a *space* (a geographic and architectural alignment) and a *social relation to power*. The cult of domesticity — far from being a universal fact of “nature” — has an historical genealogy. The idea of “the domestic” cannot be applied willy-nilly to any house or dwelling as a universal or natural fact. So often vaunted as involving a naturally occurring, universal space — ensconced within the innermost interiors of
society, yet lying theoretically beyond the domain of political analysis—the cult of domesticity involves processes of social metamorphosis and political subjection of which gender is the abiding but not the only dimension.

Etymologically, the verb to domesticate is akin to dominate, which derives from *dominus*, lord of the *domum*, the home. Until 1964, however, the verb to domesticate also carried as one of its meanings the action “to civilize.” In the colonies (as I explore in more detail in Chapter 6), the mission station became a threshold institution for transforming domesticity rooted in European gender and class roles into domesticity as controlling a colonized people. Through the rituals of domesticity, increasingly global and more often than not violent, animals, women and colonized peoples were wrested from their putatively “natural” yet, ironically, “unreasonable” state of “savagery” and inducted through the domestic progress narrative into a hierarchical relation to white men.

The historical idea of domesticity thus bears an ambivalent relation to the idea of imperial nature, for “domestication” bears energetically upon nature in order to produce a social sphere that is considered to be natural and universal in the first place. In the colonies, in other words, European culture
(the civilizing mission) became ironically necessary to reproduce nature (the "natural" divisions of domestic labor), an anomaly that took much social energy—and much domestic work—to conceal. The idea of progress—"nature" improving itself through time—was crucial to managing this anomaly.

The cult of domesticity, I argue, became central to British imperial identity, contradictory and conflictual as that was, and an intricate dialectic emerged. Imperialism suffused the Victorian cult of domesticity and the historic separation of the private and the public, which took shape around colonialism and the idea of race. At the same time, colonialism took shape around the Victorian invention of domesticity and the idea of the home.40 [Fig. 1.3, Fig. 1.4.]

This, then, is a central theme of this book: as domestic space became racialized, colonial space became domesticated. Certainly, commodity spectacle was not the only cultural form for the mediation of domestic colonialism. Travel writing, novels, postcards, photographs, pornography and other cultural forms can, I believe, be as fruitfully investigated for this crucial relation between domesticity and empire. Commodity spectacle, however, spread well beyond the literate and propertyed elite and gave domestic colonialism particularly far-reaching clout.

**PANOPTICAL TIME**

We need no longer go to History to trace (human Nature) in all its stages and periods...now the Great Map of Mankind is unrolled at once; and there is no state or Gradation of barbarism and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same instant under our View.

—Edmund Burke

The imperial science of the surface drew on two centralizing tropes: the invention of what I call panoptical time and anachronistic space. With the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin bestowed on the global project a decisive dimension—secular time as the agent of a unified world history. Just as Linne attempted to classify the fragmentary botanical record into a single archive of natural form, so social evolutionists after 1859 undertook the massive attempt of reading from the discontinuous natural record (which Darwin called "a history of the world imperfectly kept") a single pedigree of evolving world history. Now not only natural space but also historical time could be collected, assembled and mapped onto a global science of the surface.
Johannes Fabian’s important meditation on time and anthropology, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, shows how the social evolutionists broke the hold of Biblical chronology—that is, chronicle time—by secularizing time and placing it at the disposal of the empirical project—that is, chronological time. In order to do this, he points out, “they spatialized Time.” “The paradigm of evolution rested on a conception of Time that was not only secularized and naturalized but also thoroughly spatialized.” The axis of time was projected onto the axis of space and history became global. With social Darwinism, the taxonomic project, first applied to nature, was now applied to cultural history. Time became a geography of social power, a map from which to read a global allegory of “natural” social difference. Most importantly, history took on the character of a spectacle.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, panoptical time came into its own. By panoptical time, I mean the image of global history consumed—at a glance—in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility. In the seventeenth century, Bossuet, in *Discours sur l’histoire universelle*, argued that any attempt to produce a universal history depended on being able to figure “the order of times” (“comme d’un coup d’œil”) at a glance. To meet the “scientific” standards set by the natural historians and empiricists of the eighteenth century, a visual paradigm was needed to display evolutionary progress as a measurable spectacle. The exemplary figure that emerged was the evolutionary family Tree of Man.

Renaissance nature—divine nature—was understood as cosmological, organized according to God’s will into an irrevocable chain of being. By contrast, the social evolutionist Herbert Spencer envisioned evolution not as a chain of being but as a tree. As Fabian puts it: “The tree has always been one of the simplest forms of constructing classificatory schemes based on subsumption and hierarchy.” The tree offered an ancient image of a natural genealogy of power. The social evolutionists, however, took the divine, cosmological tree and secularized it, turning it into a switchboard image mediating between nature and culture as a natural image of evolutionary human progress.

Mantegazza’s “Morphological Tree of the Human Races,” for example, shows vividly how the image of the tree was put at the disposal of the racial scientists [Fig. 1.5]. In Mantegazza’s image of global history, three principles emerge. First, mapped against the tree, the world’s discontinuous cultures appear to be marshaled within a single, European Ur-narrative. Second, human history can be imaged as naturally teleological, an organic process of upward growth, with the European as the apogee of progress. Third, disobligeing historical discontinuities can be ranked, subdued and subordinated into a hierarchical structure of branching time—the differential progress of the races mapped against the tree’s self-evident boughs.
In the tree of time, racial hierarchy and historical progress became the fait accomplis of nature.

The tree image, however, was attended by a second, decisive image: the Family of Man. The “Family Group of the Katarrhinens” offers a good example [Fig. 1.6]. In this family group, evolutionary progress is represented by a series of distinct anatomical types, organized as a linear image of progress. In this image, the eye follows the evolutionary types up the page, from the archaic to the modern, so that progress seems to unfold naturally before the eye as a series of evolving marks on the body. Progress takes on the character of a spectacle, under the form of the family. The entire chronological history of human development is captured and consumed at a glance, so that anatomy becomes an allegory of progress and history is reproduced as a technology of the visible [Fig. 1.7].

Social evolutionism and anthropology thus gave to politics and economics a concept of natural time as familial. Time was not only
secularized, it was *domesticated*, a point Fabian, for one, does not address. The merging of tree and family into the family Tree of Man provided scientific racism with a *gendered* image for popularizing and disseminating the idea of *racial* progress. There is a problem here, however, for the family Tree represents evolutionary time as a *time without women*. The family image is an image of disavowal, for it contains only men, arranged as a linear frieze of solo males ascending toward the apogee of the individual *Homo sapiens*. Each epoch is represented by a single male type, who is characterized in turn by visible anatomical stigmata. From the outset, the idea of racial progress was gendered but in such a way as to render women invisible as historical agents.

In this way, the figure of the Family of Man reveals a persistent contradiction. Historical progress is naturalized as an evolving family, while women as historical actors are disavowed and relegated to the realm of nature. History is thus figured as *familial*, while the family as an institution is seen as beyond history. The chapters that follow (in particular Chapter 11) are centrally concerned with the historical implications of this paradox.

**Figure 1.6** "THE FAMILY GROUP OF THE KATARRHINEN": INVENTING THE FAMILY OF MAN.

**Figure 1.7** PANOPTICAL TIME: PROGRESS CONSUMED AT A GLANCE.
ANACHRONISTIC SPACE

Walter Benjamin notes that a central feature of nineteenth century industrial capitalism was “the use of archaic images to identify what is historically new about the ‘nature’ of commodities.” In the mapping of progress, images of “archaic” time—that is, non-European time—were systematically evoked to identify what was historically new about industrial modernity. The middle class Victorian fixation with origins, with genesis narratives, with archaeology, skulls, skeletons and fossils—the imperial bric-a-brac of the archaic—was replete with the fetishistic compulsion to collect and exhibit that shaped the musée imaginaire of middle class empiricism. The museum—as the modern fetish-house of the archaic—became the exemplary institution for embodying the Victorian narrative of progress. In the museum of the archaic, the anatomy of the middle-class took visible shape [Fig. 1.8].

Yet in the compulsion to collect and reproduce history whole, time—just when it appears most historical—stops in its tracks. In images of panoptical time, history appears static, fixed, covered in dust. Paradoxically, then, in the act of turning time into a commodity, historical change—especially the labor of changing history—tends to disappear.

At this point, another trope makes its appearance. It can be called the invention of anachronistic space, and it reached full authority as an administrative and regulatory technology in the late Victorian era. Within this trope, the agency of women, the colonized and the industrial working class are disavowed and projected onto anachronistic space: prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity.

According to the colonial version of this trope, imperial progress across the space of empire is figured as a journey backward in time to an anachronistic moment of prehistory. By extension, the return journey to Europe is seen as rehearsing the evolutionary logic of historical progress, forward and upward to the apogee of the Enlightenment in the European metropolis. Geographical difference across space is figured as a historical difference across time. The ideologue J.-M. Degerando captured this notion concisely: “The philosophical traveller, sailing to the ends of the earth, is in fact travelling in time; he is exploring the past.” The stubborn and threatening heterogeneity of the colonies was contained and disciplined not as socially or geographically different from Europe and thus equally valid, but as temporally different and thus as irrevocably superannuated by history.

Hegel, for example, perhaps the most influential philosophical proponent of this notion, figured Africa as inhabiting not simply a different geographical space but a different temporal zone, surviving anachronistically within the time of history. Africa, announces Hegel, “is no Historical
part of the world . . . it has no movement or development to exhibit.” To Africa came to be seen as the colonial paradigm of anachronistic space, a land perpetually out of time in modernity, marooned and historically abandoned. Africa was a fetish-land, inhabited by cannibals, dervishes and witch doctors, abandoned in prehistory at the precise moment before the Weltgeist (as the cunning agent of Reason) manifested itself in history.

In the industrial metropolis, likewise, the evocation of anachronistic space (the invention of the archaic) became central to the discourse of racial science and the urban surveillance of women and the working class. Racial scientists and, later, eugenicists saw women as the inherently atavistic, living archive of the primitive archaic.

In order to meet the empirical standards of the natural scientists, it was necessary to invent visible stigmata to represent—as a commodity spectacle—the historical anachronism of the degenerate classes. As Sander Gilman has pointed out, one answer was found in the body of the African woman, who became the prototype of the Victorian invention of primitive atavism. “In the nineteenth century,” Gilman notes, “the black female was widely
perceived as possessing not only a ‘primitive’ sexual appetite but also the external signs of this temperament—primitive genitalia.” In 1810, the exhibition of the African woman Saartjie Baartman became the paradigm for the invention of the female body as an anachronism. The supposedly excessive genitalia of this woman (represented as they were as an excess of clitoral visibility in the figure of the “Hottentot apron”) were overexposed and pathologized before the disciplinary gaze of male medical science and a voyeuristic public. Cuvier, in his notorious medicalizing of her skeleton, compared the female of the “lowest” human species with the “highest ape” (the orangutan), seeing an atavistic affinity in the “anomalous” appearance of the black woman’s “organ of generation.” As with Linne, sexual reproduction served as the paradigm of social order and disorder.

In the overexposure of African genitalia and the medical pathologizing of female sexual pleasure (especially clitoral pleasure, which stood outside the reproductive teleology of male heterosexuality), Victorian men of science found a fetish for embodying, measuring and embalming the idea of the female body as anachronistic space. Thus, a contradiction within the middle class formation (between clitoral sexuality—sex for female pleasure—and reproductive sexuality—sex for male pleasure and childbearing) was projected onto the realm of empire and the zone of the primitive. As an inherently inadequate organ, says Freud, “the female genitalia are more primitive than those of the male” and the clitoris “is the normal prototype of inferior organs.” As a historical anachronism, moreover, the “immature” clitoris must be disciplined and subordinated within a linear narrative of heterosexual, reproductive progress—the vaginal task of bearing a child with the same name as the father.

As I argue in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, Victorian domestic space was also brought under the disciplinary figure of anachronistic space. Women who transgressed the Victorian boundary between private and public, labor and leisure, paid work and unpaid work became increasingly stigmatized as specimens of racial regression. Such women, it was contended, did not inhabit history proper but were the prototypes of anachronistic humans: childlike, irrational, regressive and atavistic, existing in a permanently anterior time within modernity. Female domestic servants were frequently depicted in the iconography of degeneration—as “plagues,” “black races,” “slaves” and “primitives.”

INVENTING RACE AND THE FAMILY OF MAN

In 1842, Friedrich Engels, maverick son of a German manufacturer, crossed the North Sea to investigate the “true condition” of the working people who powered his father’s mills. A few years later, he announced
that amidst the calamities of that first great industrial crisis, he had found “more than mere Englishmen, members of a single, isolated nation.” He had found “MEN, members of the great and universal family of Mankind.” Yet Engels’ remarks belie a paradox. Venturing through the labyrinth of urban woe into the verminous hovels and alleys, past the belching dye-works and bone-mills of an industrializing Britain, Engels finds the “family of Mankind” to be everywhere in disarray. Rather than the “Family of ‘One and Indivisible’ Mankind” to which he appeals in his preface, Engels discovers “the universal decadence of family life among the workers.” Indeed, the distinctive tragedy of the universal, working class “Family of Man” was that “family life . . . is almost impossible.” Moreover, as Engels sees it, there is one cause of the confusion: “It is inevitable that if a married woman works in a factory, family life is inevitably destroyed.”

What interests me here is that Engels, in delivering his revolutionary “bill of indictment” to the English, figures the familial crises besetting the urban poor through the iconography of race and degeneration. Living in slums that were little more than “unplanned wildernesses,” the working class, he feels, has become utterly degraded and degenerate: “A physically degenerate race, robbed of all humanity, degraded, reduced morally and intellectually to bestiality.” The working class is a “race wholly apart,” so that it and the bourgeoisie are now “two radically dissimilar nations, as unlike as difference of race could make them.”

Engels figures the first great crises of industrialism through the two tropes of racial degeneration and the Family of Man—one trope drawn from the realm of domesticity, the other from the realm of empire. One witnesses here the figure of a double displacement: global history is imaged as a universal family (a figure of private, domestic space), while domestic crises are imaged in racial terms (the public figure of empire). After the 1850s, I suggest, presiding contradictions within industrial modernity—between private and public, domesticity and industry, labor and leisure, paid work and unpaid work, metropolis and empire—were systematically mediated by these two dominant discourses: the trope of degeneration (reversible as the progress trope) and the trope of the Family of Man.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the analogy between race and gender degeneration came to serve a specifically modern form of social domination, as an intricate dialectic emerged—between the domestication of the colonies and the racializing of the metropolis. In the metropolis, the idea of racial deviance was evoked to police the “degenerate” classes—the militant working class, the Irish, Jews, feminists, gays and lesbians, prostitutes, criminals, alcoholics and the insane—who were collectively figured as racial deviants, atavistic throwbacks to a primitive moment in human prehistory, surviving ominously in the heart of the modern, imperial metropolis.
In the colonies, black people were figured, among other things, as gender deviants, the embodiments of prehistoric promiscuity and excess, their evolutionary belatedness evidenced by their “feminine” lack of history, reason and proper domestic arrangements. The dialectic between domesticity and empire, however, was beset by contradiction, anomaly and paradox. This book inhabits the crossroads of these contradictions.

After mid century, I suggest, a triangulated analogy among racial, class and gender degeneration emerged. The “natural” male control of reproduction in heterosexual marriage and the “natural” bourgeois control of capital in the commodity market were legitimized by reference to a third term: the “abnormal” zone of racial degeneration. Illicit money and illicit sexuality were seen to relate to each other by negative analogy to race. In the symbolic triangle of deviant money—the order of class; deviant sexuality—the order of gender; and deviant race—the order of empire, the degenerate classes were metaphorically bound by a regime of surveillance and were collectively figured as transgressing the proper distributions of money, sexuality and property. Seen as fatally threatening the fiscal and libidinal economy of the imperial state, they became subject to increasingly vigilant and violent policing.

THE PARADOX OF THE FAMILY

After 1859 and the advent of social Darwinism, the welter of distinctions of race, class and gender were gathered into a single narrative by the image of the Family of Man. The evolutionary “family” offered an indispensable metaphoric figure by which often contradictory hierarchical distinctions could be shaped into a global genesis narrative. A curious paradox thus emerges. The family as a metaphor offered a single genesis narrative for global history, while the family as an institution became void of history. As the nineteenth century drew on, the family as an institution was figured as existing, naturally, beyond the commodity market, beyond politics and beyond history proper. The family thus became both the antithesis of history and history’s organizing figure.

At the same time, technologies of knowledge had to be found to give the family figure an institutional shape. The central technologies that emerged for the commodity display of progress and the universal family were, I suggest, those quintessentially Victorian institutions of the museum, the exhibition, photography and imperial advertising.

In an important observation, Edward Said has pointed to the transition in Victorian upper-middle-class culture from “filiation” (familial relations) to “affiliation” (non-familial relations): showing how failure to produce children took on the aspect of a pervasive cultural affliction. For Said, the decay of filiation is typically attended by a second moment—the turn to a
compensatory order of affiliation, which might be an institution, a vision, a credo or a vocation. While retaining the powerful distinction between filiation and affiliation, I wish to complicate the linear thrust of Said’s story. As the authority and social function of the great service families (invested in filiative rituals of patrilineal rank and subordination) were displaced onto the bureaucracy, the anachronistic, filiative image of the family was projected onto emerging affiliative institutions as their shadowy, naturalized form.

The filiative (familial) order, in other words, did not disappear. Rather, it flourished as a metaphoric afterimage, reinvented within the new orders of the industrial bureaucracy, nationalism and colonialism. Moreover, filiation would take an increasingly imperial shape as the image of the evolutionary family was projected onto the imperial nation and colonial bureaucracies as their natural, legitimizing shape.

The power and importance of the family trope was twofold. First, the family offered an indispensable figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests. Because the subordination of woman to man and child to adult were deemed natural facts, other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature. The family image came to figure hierarchy within unity as an organic element of historical progress, and thus became indispensable for legitimizing exclusion and hierarchy within nonfamilial social forms such as nationalism, liberal individualism and imperialism. The metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as natural and familial thus depended on the prior naturalizing of the social subordination of women and children.

Second, the family offered an invaluable trope for figuring historical time. Within the family metaphor, both social hierarchy (synchronic hierarchy) and historical change (diachronic hierarchy) could be portrayed as natural and inevitable, rather than as historically constructed and therefore subject to change. Projecting the family image onto national and imperial progress enabled what was often murderously violent change to be legitimized as the progressive unfolding of natural decree. Imperial intervention could thus be figured as a linear, nonrevolutionary progression that naturally contained hierarchy within unity: paternal fathers ruling benignly over immature children. The trope of the organic family became invaluable in its capacity to give state and imperial intervention the alibi of nature.

After the 1850s, the image of the natural, patriarchal family, in alliance with pseudoscientific social Darwinism, came to constitute the organizing trope for marshaling a bewildering array of cultures into a single, global narrative ordered and managed by Europeans. In the process, the idea of divine nature was superceded by the idea of imperial nature, guaranteeing henceforth that the “universal” quintessence of Enlightenment individualism belongs only to propertied men of European descent.
Queer Indigenous Studies

Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature

Edited by
Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen
Decolonizing the Queer Native Body
(and Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke)
Bringing “Sexy Back” and Out of Native Studies’ Closet
Chris Finley

Whence the Freudian endeavor (out of reaction no doubt to the great surge of racism that was contemporary with it) to ground sexuality in the law—the law of alliance, tabooed consanguinity, and the Sovereign Father, in short, to surround desire with all the trappings of the old order of power.
—Michel Foucault

Thinking about how gender reifies colonial power has begun to be an important analytic in Native studies with the publication of special issues on Native feminisms in American Quarterly (2008) and Wicazo Sa Review (2009), and the three exciting panels on Native feminisms at the 2008 Native American and Indigenous Studies Conference in Athens, Georgia. While gender is not a main theoretical framework in Native studies, discussions of gender occur more frequently than do those about sexuality. In Native studies, gender is not as scary a topic as sexuality, especially discussions of Native sexualities. This reaction should be reconsidered. An important analysis of colonial power for Native studies and Native nations can be found in Michel Foucault’s theories of sexuality and biopower. He argues that the modern racial state comes into being by producing “sex” as a quality of bodies and populations, which get targeted for life or death as a method of enacting state power. He says that historically this “gave rise . . . to comprehensive measures, statistical assessments, and interventions aimed at the entire social body or at groups taken as a whole. Sex was a means of access to both the life of the body and the life of the species.” Scholars in Native studies increasingly argue that biopower defines the colonization of Native peoples when it makes sexuality, gender, and race key arenas of the power of the settler state.

Histories of biopower deeply affected Native people’s relationship to the body and sexuality. Natives, and lots of other folks, like sex but are
terrified to discuss it. For many tribes, this shame around sex started in the boarding schools, and sexual shame has been passed down for generations. Throughout the imposition of colonialism in the United States, one of the methods Native communities have used to survive is adapting silence around sexuality. The silencing of sexuality in Native studies and Native communities especially applies to queer sexuality. While it does not differ from mainstream U.S. society, this attitude of silence has more intense consequences for Native peoples, because of the relationship of sexuality to colonial power. Sexuality is difficult terrain to approach in Native communities, since it brings up many ugly negative realities and colonial legacies of sexual violence. As Andrea Smith argues, sexual violence is both an ideological and a physical tool of U.S. colonialism. Because of this reality, there is a high rate of sexual abuse in Native communities. Non-Native pedophiles target children in Native nations because there is little chance of perpetrators being brought to justice or caught by tribal police, since non-Natives on tribal lands are not bound to the same laws as Natives. Historically, and arguably in the present, Native women are targeted for medical sterilization. In some Native nations, tribal councils have adapted heterosexual marriage acts into their tribal government constitutions. All this proves that discussions of sexuality are happening in Native communities. Yet the relationship between colonial power and normalizing discourses of sexualities is not a part of these dialogues. Heterosexism and the structure of the nuclear family needs to be thought of as a colonial system of violence.

My goal here is to show how new and exciting work linking Native studies and queer studies can imagine more open, sex-positive, and queer-friendly discussions of sexuality in both Native communities and Native studies. This not only will benefit Native intellectualism but also will change the ways in which Native nationalisms are perceived and constructed by Native peoples, and perhaps non-Native peoples. How are queered Native bodies made into docile bodies open to subjugation by colonial and imperial powers? How does the queering of Native bodies affect Native sovereignty? Can Native peoples decolonize themselves without taking colonial discourses of sexualities seriously? What might some of the results of a decolonizing revolutionary movement for Native people that challenged heteropatriarchy look like? How could a decolonizing movement that challenged biopower be constructed as a coalitional and community-building movement?

Heteropatriarchy, Biopower, and Colonial Discourse: Not So Sexy

Imagining the future of sexuality in Native studies and Native nations produces many stimulating possibilities for decolonization. One place where sexuality is discussed explicitly is in queer studies, yet this field only rarely addresses Native peoples and Native issues. The debates over the civil rights of queer peoples form one of the main topics of discussion in queer studies. Thinking about sovereignty and colonialism in relation to theory in queer studies would shift conversations of citizenship and subjectivity to rethinking the validity of the U.S. nation-state. Importantly, queer theory's critiques of heterosexism, subjectivity, and gender constructions would be very useful in the context of Native studies.

There are potential problems in intersecting queer studies with Native studies. For the most part, neither discipline has shown much interest in critically engaging the other. It is my hope, along with other scholars in this collection, to change this relationship. I pursue that work here by: interrogating the queered colonial discourses that define Native people; critiquing the state for constructing Native people as nonheteronormative, since they do not conform to heteropatriarchy; and critiquing Native nation building that uses the U.S. nation-state as a model. In Native studies, discussions of sexuality, gender, and colonialism have the possibility of exposing heteronormative discourses of colonial violence directed at Native communities. Heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity should be interpreted as logics of colonialism. Native studies should analyze race, gender, and sexuality as logics of colonial power without reducing them to separate identity-based models of analysis, as argued by Andrea Smith in “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing.”

The simple inclusion of queer people or of sexuality as topics of discussion in Native studies and Native communities is not enough to effectively detangle the web of colonialism and heteropatriarchy. Taking sexuality seriously as a logic of colonial power has the potential to further decolonize Native studies and Native communities by exposing the hidden ways that Native communities have been colonized and have internalized colonialism. As Smith has argued, colonialism is supported through the structure of heteropatriarchy, which naturalizes hierarchies. Heteropatriarchy disciplines and individualizes communally held beliefs by internalizing hierarchical gendered relationships and heteronormative
attitudes toward sexuality. Colonialism needs heteropatriarchy to naturalize hierarchies and unequal gender relations. Without heteronormative ideas about sexuality and gender relationships, heteropatriarchy, and therefore colonialism, would fall apart. Yet heteropatriarchy has become so natural in many Native communities that it is internalized and institutionalized as if it were traditional. Heteropatriarchal practices in many Native communities are written into tribal law and tradition. This changes how Natives relate to one another. Native interpersonal and community relationships are affected by pressure to conform to the nuclear family and the hierarchies implicit in heteropatriarchy, which in turn, are internalized. The control of sexuality, for Native communities and Native studies, is an extension of internalized colonialism. As Foucault argues in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, simply talking about sex and having more deviant sex does not challenge power relations produced by sexuality. Instead, the “excitement” of sexuality discourses reifies their power. Purposeful deconstruction of the logics of power rather than an explosion of identity politics will help end colonial domination for Native peoples.

Colonialism disciplines both Native people and non-Native people through sexuality. The logics governing Native bodies are the same logics governing non-Native people. Yet the logic of colonialism gives the colonizers power, while Native people are more adversely affected by these colonizing logics. The colonizers may feel bad, stressed, and repressed by self-disciplining logics of normalizing sexuality, but Native people are systematically targeted for death and erasure by these same discourses. Rayna Green discusses the intersecting logics of race, gender, and sexuality in her work to show the unequal power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

Green’s “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture” argues that colonial discourses represent Native women as sexually available for white men’s pleasure. These images of Native women equate the Native female body with the conquest of land in the “New World.” In other words, the conquest of the “New World” with Native women’s bodies presents Native women’s heterosexual desire for white male settlers as justifying conquest and the settlement of the land by non-Natives. I would like to consider this sexualization, gendering, and racialization of the land by providing a queer reading. First, the land is heterosexualized within the heteropatriarchical order through the discovery, penetration, and ownership of the land by white men.

Of course, this narrative erases the fact that Native peoples were living on and owning these lands. The conflation of Native women’s bodies with racialized and sexualized narratives of the land constructs it as penetrable and open to ownership through heteropatriarchal domination. Becoming critically aware of the heterosexual construction of land while queering Native peoples would be a queer Indigenous studies approach to rethinking conquest, even as it would shift ideas of sovereignty, subjectivity, recognition, nationalism, and self-determination to include queer Indigenous readings of the land.

While I agree with Green’s formulation, her focus on Native women’s conflation with land erases the sexual desirability of Native men in the colonial matrix. Green states, “But the Indian woman is even more burdened by this narrow definition of a ‘good Indian.’ For it is she, not the males, whom white men desire sexually.” Here, I want to include Native men as well as Native women as having been sexualized, gendered, and racialized as penetrable within colonial and imperial discourses. In other words, it is not only Native women who are (hetero)sexually controlled by white heteropatriarchy, for Native men are feminized and queered when put in the care of a white heteropatriarchal nation-state. Importantly, heteropatriarchy is effective whether Native women are read as queer or heterosexual, because “deviant” queer Native women need to be disciplined and controlled by colonial sexual and gendered “norms.” Nevertheless, heteropatriarchy is more effective if Native women are read as heterosexual, since they can fit neatly as mothers and wives into its power hierarchies. All sexualization of Native peoples constructs them as incapable of self-governance without a heteropatriarchal influence that Native peoples do not “naturally” possess.

Under the disciplining logics of colonialism, Native women need to be heterosexualized to justify conquest. The “creation” story of the U.S. nation carefully includes a Native woman named Pocahontas who chooses her love for John Smith, and later John Rolfe, over the interests of her Native family. According to these colonial logics, Native women need to be managed, because they lack control over their sexuality and therefore their bodies. Native women embody the reproductive position of receiver of the fertile white colonial heteropatriarch and the mother of the U.S. nation. Under the logics of patriarchy and white supremacy, when a Native woman reproduces with a white man the child of this union becomes a white inheritor of the land. The child, although racially half Native, through white supremacy and patriarchy becomes white,
since inheritance under patriarchy is passed on through the father. Indigeneity, unlike blackness, is erased through miscegenation with whiteness, since colonizing logic stipulates that Native people need to disappear for the settlers to inherit the land. Then as soon as the Native mother gives birth, her indigeneity must disappear and die for her offspring to inherit the land and replace her body. For this whole narrative to work, the Native woman must be heterosexual and desire to have her body sexually and reproductively conquered through her love of the white man. Her body, and therefore her land, would now be owned and managed by the settler nation.

If the Native woman were read as queer, her heterosexual desire for white settlers to invade her nation would not be for the universal truth of love, since the sexual desire for white men would not exist. The narrative of universal love covering for imperial expansion and colonial violence would be exposed and destroyed. For this narrative to work, the Native woman must desire white heteropatriarchy through her desire of heteronormative sex and the love of white men. With a queer Native mother, the sex with the white settler may not have been consensual. In the absence of consent and the death of the mother sans the love story, conquest is revealed as a violent process with no regard for Native life. Colonialism naturalizes the heterosexual Native woman’s desire for a white man to make conquest a universal love story.

In turn, in colonial narratives Native men must be queered as sexually unavailable object choices for Native women. While Native women are necessary for the imaginary origin story for the U.S. nation, Native men are not. In fact, Native men’s presence in that story is erased. They must disappear to allow the white male heteropatriarch to rule over Native women without competition from Native men. For this to occur, Native men are constructed as nonheteronormative and unable to reproduce Native peoples. Native men are read as nonheteronormative because Native men do not comply with heteropatriarchy and govern Native women and children. Native gender norms and family structures, which vary from tribe to tribe, do not conform to Native men having control of the public space and the nuclear family or to caring for the land correctly. In other words, in a colonial reading, Native men “allow” matriarchal structures to govern society and extended families, while Native peoples do not make as much profit off the land as the settlers would. Native men are seen as sterile members of a dying race that needs a “genetically superior” white race to save it from the “unavoidable” extinction. Native

men are constructed as nonheteronormative to justify the extinction of Native people. Since it is the father that gives the child the inheritance in patriarchy, white heteropatriarchy can slip in and “save” the Natives through the management of Native women and erasure of Native men.

Through the action of colonial discourses, the bodies of Native women and men are queer and racialized as disordered, unproductive, and therefore nonheteronormative. By making Native bodies “disappear,” the colonial logic of Native nonheteronormative sexualities justifies genocide and conquest as effects of biopower. On these terms, Native people are diseased, dying, and nonheteronormative, all of which threatens the survival of the heteronormative U.S. nation-state. Native people are eliminated discursively or actually killed to save the heteronormative body politic from possible contamination by Native nonheteronormativity. Yet through death and disappearance, nonheteronormative Natives are transformed into heteronormative spirit/subjects in discourses told by the colonizer to appropriate the land and culture of Native peoples while building a heteropatriarchal nation.

Nation-Building: Native Feminist Critiques and Decolonization as Foreplay for Sexy Native Nations

Taiaiake Alfred, a Mohawk Native, offers a decolonizing challenge to Native people. He does not center his construction of indigeneity in apolitical identity politics or solely on genealogy. Instead, he wants Native people to recreate the relations between themselves and their land base. He advocates fighting colonialism through regaining the spiritual strength and integrity colonialism has stolen from Native communities (as well as the hope Native people have given away to colonialism). This is a beautiful conception of sovereignty and self-determination. Alfred writes:

Wasá:se, as I am speaking of it here, is symbolic of the social and cultural force alive among Onkwahonwe dedicated to altering the balance of political and economic power to recreate some social and physical space for freedom to re-emerge. Wasá:se is an ethical and political vision, the real demonstration of our resolve to survive as Onkwahonwe and to do what we must to force the Settlers to acknowledge our existence and the integrity of our connection to the land.
Alfred wants freedom for Native people that can come only from decolonizing Native communities. For him, this is a political project that involves Native communities and the colonizing settlers. Alfred does not discuss how colonialism impacts Native women specifically or how colonial discourses of sexuality dispossess Native people from the land and from capacity for governance. Yet his alternative construction of sovereignty can be used to include sexuality as part of politics and land management.

Jennifer Nez Denetdale is one of the few Native scholars overtly discussing the politics of sexuality, gender, and Native nationalisms in her work. Denetdale’s work exposes homophobia as part of modern Native nation building. To critique masculinist discourses working within Navajo nationalism, Denetdale, along with other Native feminists, has found it necessary to critique traditionalism in Native communities. This is an important intervention, because Native peoples are often read as existing outside of homophobic discourse or as more accepting of trans and queer people in Native communities because of traditional Native ideas regarding gender and sexuality. Denetdale writes: “With the imposition of Western democratic principles, Navajo women find themselves confronted with new oppressions in the name of ‘custom and tradition.’”

Here, tradition is invoked to justify heteropatriarchy and male leadership in the Navajo Nation (as in other Native nations) by discouraging or forbidding Native women from taking leadership roles, on account of this being constructed as untraditional. Ironically, as Denetdale points out, Navajo women are allowed to participate in the Navajo Nation beauty pageant but not to hold a position on the tribal council. Denetdale supports Native sovereignty, but she also believes Native traditions should be historicized so that traditions are not abused and used to support forms of oppression, such as antiblack racism and heteronormativity. She writes:

While it is necessary for Native scholars to call upon the intellectual community to support and preserve Indigenous sovereignty, it is crucial that we also recognize how history has transformed traditions, and that we be critical about the ways tradition is claimed and for what purposes. In some cases, tradition has been used to disenfranchise women and to hold them to standards higher than those set for men. Tradition is not without a political context.

Denetdale explains that traditionalism is used in Native communities to silence women and to disenfranchise them from possessing political power. She does not dismiss Navajo traditions when she asks critical questions about whether certain traditions emerge in a historical trajectory or how Navajo men benefit by defining traditionalism in a historical vacuum. Her critique denaturalizes heteropatriarchal traditionalism by placing it inside histories of heteropatriarchal discourse instead of outside of modern constructions of power. Native nations should be self-critical of Native constructions of nationalisms.

Native nations’ use of heteronormative citizenship standards also disallows nonheteronormative identity formations from belonging in Native nations. Denetdale discusses this matter further when she also takes on the Diné Marriage Act passed by the tribal council of the Navajo Nation, in her paper entitled, “Carving Navajo National Boundaries: Patriotism, Tradition, and the Diné Marriage Act of 2005.” Denetdale examines how the intersection of heteropatriarchy, militarism, and homophobia strengthened the Navajo Nation in the post-9/11 moment.

She criticizes her tribe for participating in oppressive colonial nation building by trying to enforce heteronormative marriage practices on Diné people. This sort of homophobic nationalism is similar to the U.S. nation-state’s use of hyped-up homophobic nationalism and militarism in this time of war. Nationalism that is dependent on the exclusion of queer people has many consequences for Native communities. Denetdale tells how some Navajo youth left the Navajo Nation to move to urban areas and to find a queer community because of the backlash against nonheteronormative Navajos. This is a loss to the Navajo Nation. As Denetdale successfully argues, Native nations that mirror the U.S. nation-state by relying on homophobia and heteropatriarchy to establish national belonging and exclusion are not ideal models to further Native sovereignty. She forcefully argues, “Critically examining the connections constructed between the traditional roles of Navajo warriors and present-day Navajo soldiering for the United States, as well as the connections made between family values and recent legislation like the Diné Marriage Act, are critical to our decolonization as Native peoples.”

Denetdale, like many other Native scholars, advocates looking for a construction of sovereignty and Native nation building other than the model of the U.S. nation-state. She does not want to reproduce the oppressive colonial methods that exclude queers, women, and black Natives. Instead, she, like Alfred, challenges us in Native studies to conceptualize a more harmonious construction of sovereignty and Native nationhood. Native people and Native studies need to understand...
how discourses of colonial power operate within our communities and within our selves through sexuality, so that we may work toward alternative forms of Native nationhood and sovereignty that do not rely on heteronormativity for membership.

Centering discourses of sexualities in Native studies engages gender, sexuality, and indigeneity as enmeshed categories of analysis, since examining gender is an important part of deconstructing sexualities and exposing colonial violence. Andrea Smith writes, "The very simplified manner in which Native women’s activism is theorized prevents Native women from articulating political projects that both address sexism and promote indigenous sovereignty. In addition, this framework does not show the complex way in which Native women organizers position themselves with respect to other coalition partners." I build my ideas upon the work of Indigenous feminist theorists whose ideas and articulations of indigeneity could transform other fields of study, such as white feminist and white queer theories. The scholarly work of Indigenous feminisms centers Native women and critiques white heteropatriarchy, colonialism, sexual violence, and the U.S. nation-state model of nationalism. I want to take this a step further, as some Native feminists have done, and add the intersection of these power relations with sexuality to reveal colonizing logics and practices embedded in constructing Native peoples as hypersexual and nonheteronormative. It is time to bring "sexy back" to Native studies and quit pretending we are boring and pure and do not think or write about sex. We are alive, we are sexy, and some of us Natives are queer. Native nationalisms have the potential to be sexy (and are already sexualized), but to be sexy from a Native feminist perspective, they need to be decolonizing and critical of heteropatriarchy.

Conclusion

Critical theory of biopower exposes the colonial violence of discourse on Native nonheteronormativity being used to justify Native genocide and the "disappearance" of Native people. Deconstructing Native sexualities within a biopolitical analysis has the ability to further unlock the closet of Native studies and expose how colonial power operates in Native nations. The silence in Native studies around issues of sexuality, even heterosexuality, does not benefit the work of decolonizing Native studies or articulating it as a project of freedom for Native people. Silence around Native sexuality benefits the colonizers and erases queer Native people from their communities. Putting Native studies and queer studies in dialogue creates further possibilities to decolonize Native communities. Doing so will expose colonial violence in discursive practices that construct the Native body as hypersexualized, sexually disordered, and queer while presenting Native people as incapable of governance on Native land. Centering a queer studies framework within Native studies also calls Native communities to confront heteropatriarchal practices that have resulted from internalizing sexual colonization.

In response to Justin Timberlake’s song "Sexy Back," the artist Prince stated, "Sexy never left." The same can be said for Native studies and Native communities, because sex is always there, but Native sexualities are just beginning to be theorized. Sexuality discourses have to be considered as methods of colonization that require deconstruction to further decolonize Native studies and Native communities. Part of the decolonizing project is recovering the relationship to a land base and reimaging the queer Native body. What does this look like? We will have to imagine this and build this together. I want to imagine that Native peoples have a new bright future full of life and the spirits of our ancestors.

Notes

4. See, for example: Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism" (this vol.).
6. This is changing rapidly and some Native studies scholars are engaging queer theory and queering indigeneity. See, for example: Daniel Heath Justice and James Cox, eds. “Queering Native Literature, Indigenizing Queer Theory” SAIL: Studies in American Indian Literature 20, no. 1 (2008); Daniel Heath Justice, Mark Rifkin, and Bethany Schneider, eds., "Sexuality, Nationality, Indigeneity: Rethinking the State at the Intersection of Native American and Queer Studies" GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies 16, no. 1-2 (2010).
Queer Theory and Native Studies

The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism

Andrea Smith

Native studies and queer theorist Chris Finley (this volume) challenges Native studies scholars to integrate queer theory into their work. She notes that while some scholars discuss the status of gender-non-normative peoples within precolonial Native communities, virtually no scholars engage queer theory. This absence contributes to a heteronormative framing of Native communities. "It is time to bring 'sexy back' to Native studies and quit pretending we are boring and pure and do not think or write about sex," Finley insists. "We are alive, we are sexy, and some of us Natives are queer." Furthermore, she notes, while there are emerging feminist and decolonial analyses within Native studies that point to the gendered nature of colonialism, it is necessary to extend this analysis to examine how colonialism also queers Native peoples. Thus, her charge goes beyond representing queer peoples within Native studies (an important project); it also calls on all scholars to queer the analytics of settler colonialism. Qwo-Li Driskill further calls for the development of a "two-spirit" critique that remains in conversation with, while also critically interrogating, queer and color critique.

Queer theory has made a critical intervention in GLBT studies by moving past simple identity politics to interrogate the logics of heteronormativity. According to Michael Warner, the "preference for 'queer' represents, among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a minimalizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal." Native studies, however, has frequently intersected more with GLBT studies than with queer theory in that it has tended to focus on the status of "two-spirit" peoples within Native communities. While this scholarship is critically important, I argue that Native studies additionally has more to contribute to queer studies by unsettling settler colonialism. At the same time, while queer theory does focus on normalizing logics, even those engaged in queer of color critique generally neglect the normalizing logics of settler colonialism, particularly within the U.S. context.

8. Ibid., 72.
9. Foucault, The History of Sexuality, 4. I am certainly not discouraging the practice of deviant sex, which is such a broad category, anyhow.
11. Ibid., 703.
15. Traditionalism is seen as existing outside of discourse and existing before the invention of the law. By contextualizing tradition in history and heteropatriarchy, Denetdale disrupts the narrative of traditionalism as sacred and uncorrupted by modernity.
17. Ibid., 289.
19. Native people, who are racialized as being dead and gone, should be aware of the psychological damage erasure causes and be mindful not to do it to other people in our communities.