SETTLER HOMONATIONALISM

Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities

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In *Terrorist Assemblages* Jasbir Puar argues

that a key effect of the war on terror is the production of white heteronormative national subjects of life. In turn, terrorists and all who are linked to them are framed as racial and sexual populations marked for death, in a parallel process Achille Mbembe terms "necropolitics."[2] Puar has extended these arguments in other writing with Amit Rai, by arguing that both these life- and death-enhancing projects frame the terrorist as a monster who can be read as queer. This is so especially if colonial discourses conflate racialized terrorists with sexual perversion or uphold the heteronormativity of white citizens as in need of enhancement or defense. But as Puar and Rai note, the war on terror creates white heteronormative nationalism as not a target but the agent of terrorizing brutality. Terror in fact is the function of the biopolitics that purports to oppose it.[3]

I am compelled by Puar's analysis, which I extend at the intersections of queer studies and Native studies. Puar presents the term *homonationalism* to explain how racialized sexuality and national terror interact today. I interpret homonationalism as an effect of U.S. queer modernities forming amid the conquest of Native peoples and the settling of Native land. The terrorizing sexual coloniza-

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tion of Native peoples was a historical root of the biopolitics of modern sexuality in the United States. Colonists interpreted diverse practices of gender and sexuality as signs of a general primitivity among Native peoples. Over time, they produced a colonial necropolitics that framed Native peoples as queer populations marked for death. Colonization produced the biopolitics of modern sexuality that I call "settler sexuality": a white national heteronormativity that regulates Indigenous sexuality and gender by supplanting them with the sexual modernity of settler subjects. Despite having formed in the United States to serve Anglo-American landowning classes and the Euro-ethnics they absorbed, settler definitions of modern sexuality became hegemonic for all non-Natives, as well as for Native people who sought ties to sexual modernity. Settler colonialism thus conditioned the formation of modern sexuality in the United States, including modern queer subjects and politics. By the mid-twentieth century U.S. sexual minority movements had formed on normatively white and national terms, which could include reversing the discourses marking them as primitive and embracing a primitive or specifically Native sexual nature. Non-Native queers of color long remained marginal to such projects or critiqued them, as their participants or as the organizers of queer of color coalitions. But over time non-Natives were able to form shared identities and movements to claim modern sexual citizenship in the settler state. Under such conditions, queer movements can naturalize settlement and assume a homonormative and national form that may be read specifically as settler homonationalism.

This essay explains settler homonationalism as the product of a biopolitical relationship between the sexual colonization of Native peoples and the normative settler formation of modern queer projects in the United States. My conclusions invite further questions for theorizing homonationalism and settlement today. What might "terrorists," figured as foreign, have to do with "savages," figured as domestic, when the state identifies objects of colonial or imperial control? How has the closure of colonial frontiers informed the biopolitics of modern sexuality, or its imperial projections in the war on terror? How do U.S. queer claims on sexual nature or rights cite Indigenous roots to project their global scope? How is homonationalism part of the settler formation of U.S. queer projects, and how can their historical and contemporary complicities in terror be addressed? My answer to these questions is that settlement must be denaturalized in all its forms, including within U.S. queer projects. Scholars must study the past and present activity of settler colonialism as a contradictory and contested process, which even now produces and fractures homonationalism, exposing it to possibilities for critique.

The Colonial Biopolitics of Modern Sexuality

While I argue that homonationalism arises whenever settler colonialism is naturalized in U.S. queer projects, tracing this process demands more than simply adding the word "settler" to the term. Puar examines homonationalism as a formation of national sexuality linked to war and terror, and both must inform a theory of

settler homonationalism. Puar argues that in the biopolitics of U.S. empire, homonationalism makes the subjects of queer modernities "regulatory" over queered and "terrorist" populations that are placed under terrorizing state control. In kind, a theory of settler homonationalism must ask how in the United States, the terrorizing sexual colonization of Native peoples produced the colonial biopolitics of modern sexuality that conditioned queer formations past and present. My essay reinterprets historical writing on sexual colonization and on modern queer formations to explain how these processes relationally positioned varied non-Native and Native people within a colonial biopolitics. But this account rests, first, on linking insights in Native studies on gender and sexuality to feminist scholarship on biopolitics in colonial studies.

Feminist and queer criticism in Native studies already explains terror as key to the sexual colonization of Native peoples.[7] Andrea Smith argues that "it has been through sexual violence and through the imposition of European gender relationships on Native communities that Europeans were able to colonize Native peoples," in a process that included marking Native people "by their sexual perversity" as queer to colonial regimes.[8] Bethany Schneider affirms that "Indian hating and queer hating form a powerful pair of pistons in the history of white colonization of the Americas."[9] In part, Native peoples were marked as queer by projecting fears of sodomy on them that justified terrorizing violence.[10] At the same time, diverse modes of embodiment and desire in Native societies challenged colonial beliefs about sexual nature and were targeted for control. As Smith argues, given that "U.S. empire has always been reified by enforced heterosexuality and binary gender systems" while many Native societies "had multiple genders and people did not fit rigidly into particular gender categories . . . it is not surprising that the first peoples targeted for destruction in Native communities were those who did not neatly fit into western gender categories."[11] And, as Schneider concludes, "the tendency or tactic of Europeans to see sodomy everywhere in the so-called New World enabled a devastating two-fisted excuse for murderous violence and a complicated homoerotics of genocide."[12] Such readings of histories of terrorizing violence in Native studies are joined by arguments about how forms of violence acted as modes of social control in the new colonial moral order. Schneider notes that Mark Rifkin's work shows how "policies aimed at assimilating Indians through the destruction of kinship structures figured Indian cultures as other than heteronormative in order to reinvent and assimilate them as straight, private-property-owning, married citizens."[13] Rifkin pursues this claim by arguing that scholars investigate

> (1) how a sustained engagement with American Indian histories and forms of self-representation as part of a history of sexuality in the United States can aid in rethinking what constitutes heteronormativity and (2) how queer critique of federal Indian policy as compulsory heterosexuality can contribute to an understanding of its organizing ideological and institutional structure as well as strategies of native opposition to it.[14]

Queer and feminist readings in Native studies thus explain how terrorizing violence became normalized in colonial sexual regimes. Such work offers a productive basis for asking how terrorizing methods produce the colonial biopolitics of modern sexuality.

Theories of biopolitics and colonization are indebted to Ann Stoler's efforts to locate Foucauldian theories of sexuality within colonial studies. Many scholars have critiqued Michel Foucault's omission of colonialism from his work on sexuality. Stoler challenged this limit in Foucault's work by asking if the power relations he traced in Europe related to the histories of imperial metropoles and colonial societies. She argued that they did, by marking how Foucault addressed sexuality and race in his theories of biopower—or, in the form of government, biopolitics.[15] Stoler displaced a more common reading of Foucault's history of sexuality in queer theory, which tended to frame European societies and their normative whiteness as roots of modern sexuality, and to pay secondary if any attention to racial differences or colonialism. In particular, early queer theory did not emphasize Foucault's reading of modern sexuality as a biopolitics, by which he marked modern regimes that produce subjects of life by deploying state racism to define them apart from populations marked for death. Foucault argued that modern sexuality acts as a biopolitics when national institutions enhance normative sexuality as life while regulating racial and sexual populations marked for death. Stoler argued that linking a theory of biopolitics to colonialism shifted trajectories of queer theory that read Foucault's history of sexuality as "a history of western desire."[16] In light of colonial histories, Europe is Western only to the extent that it is metropolitan—a center of colonial empires—which means neither Europe nor Western cultural legacies will be understood before studying their formation in colonial and settler societies. Stoler and other scholars in colonial studies examined how racial and national formations of sexuality and gender produced the biopolitics of colonial regimes.[17] As Stoler notes, a focus in such work on modes of reproduction accounted poorly for nonheteronormative sexualities and genders, and still requires critically queer readings. Yet this work already shows—in concert with

Foucault's work, but against limits he put on it—that modern sexuality may have arisen first *in* the colonies, if not in their relation to the metropoles, rather than within the boundaries of Europe. In light of this, by "modern sexuality" I refer to the discourses, procedures, and institutions in metropolitan and colonial societies that distinguish and link primitive and civilized sexuality and gender, and define racial, national, gendered, and sexual subjects and populations in biopolitical relationship.

Colonial studies of biopolitics importantly historicize sexuality in relation to Foucault's theories of modern disciplinary power. Scholars of colonialism noted the historical transition that Foucault proposed for the history of European modes of punishment in *Discipline and Punish*.[18] In eighteenth-century Europe, a premodern right of the sovereign to mete out death in punishment, notably as public spectacle, was complemented or superseded by modern modes of punishment based on producing populations for surveillance. Foucault presented the panopticon in Jeremy Bentham's modern prison as an institutional image of disciplinary power. But he argued that discipline became the normative logic of modern institutions even more broadly and educated all modern subjects in their senses of self. In this context, Stoler explains the sexual and gendered regimes of metropolitan and colonial societies as being based on a colonial "education of desire." Stoler's phrase marks how colonial power historically deployed a sovereign right of death, which over time became complementary to a disciplinary education of desire separating normative subjects of life from subject populations. Stoler's work presents colonial biopolitics as what Foucault called a "society of normalization"—"a society where the norm of discipline and the norm of regularization intersect"—and shows that it formed subjects of life and populations marked for deadly regulation by educating them in their interdependent locations in colonial regimes.[19]

Stoler's reading of colonial biopolitics helps illuminate how in the United States the sexual colonization of Native peoples relates to the settler sexuality that arose to control and supplant them. While Stoler focused on historical colonies rather than settler societies, feminist and queer work in Native studies more directly inspires study of the biopolitics of settler colonialism. Modern sexuality arose in the United States amid the colonial conditions of a settler society. Terrorizing violence marked Native peoples as sexually deviant populations to be subjected to a colonial education of desire, while agents and beneficiaries of sexual colonization became subjects of settler sexuality. Settlement and its naturalization then conditioned the emergence of modern queer formations, including their inheritance and sustaining of colonial biopolitics in the form of settler homonationalism.

But what historical dynamics produced Native peoples as queered populations marked for death, and settlers as subjects of life—including, at times, as homonationalists? Detailed accounts have yet to be written. Yet signs appear already in histories of the sexual colonization of Native peoples that mark the trajectory suggested by Foucault, in which the spectacular violence of a sovereign right of death was incorporated into the deadly logic of disciplinary regulation. Colonial brutality always targeted sexual transgressions to control Native communities. But the growth of modern biopolitics linked the discipline of individuals to that of communities and defined Native people as racial and sexual populations for regulation. I now reread such histories in the United States as contexts in relation to which non-Native queer formations could arise as modern inheritors of the discipline of Native communities in a settler state.

Terror and Resistance in Sexual Colonization

Scholars in Native and queer studies are familiar with accounts of early colonists exacting a terrorizing right of death to educate Native people in the new colonial moral order. While interpreting Peter Martyr's account of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa's 1513 expedition in Panama, Jonathan Goldberg notes that Balboa's victorious arrival after battle at the house of the indigenous king was framed by his condemnation and elimination of what he perceived to be gender and sexual transgression. On reportedly finding the king's brother and about forty other men dressed in women's apparel or living in sexual relationships, Balboa threw them to be eaten alive by his dogs. Goldberg argues that this act "retrospectively justifies" the conqueror's earlier slaughters in battle—in which accounts stated that Spanish soldiers killed Indians "as animals"—or to quote Martyr, "hewed . . . in pieces as the butchers doo fleshe." For Goldberg, "post-facto, the body of the sodomite takes on an originary status, as the cause for what was done to the Indians in the first place."[20] Linking ascriptions of savagery to transgressions of sexual nature defined European rule as sexual colonization and justified its violences. This account of Balboa's expedition evokes qualities that also inflect other early Spanish, French, and British encounters with Native peoples narrated by the category *berdache*. This orientalist term arose to condemn Middle Eastern and Muslim men as racial enemies of Christian civilization, by linking them to the creation of *berdache* (in translation) as "kept boys" or "boy-slaves" whose sex was said to have been altered by immoral male desire. Like the category *berdache*, the transgressions Balboa described did not just mark gender or sexual transgressions

but the acts of powerful men that turned them or others against nature, resulting in an immoral and effeminized male leadership that invited and justified conquest. Earlier generations of feminist scholars argued that a bias in colonial tales of *berdache* erased female embodiment from accounts of Native gender and sexual diversity. But feminist critiques in the wake of Stoler and Smith will note that the central condemnation of Native male embodiment in colonial accounts of *berdache* established the masculinist and heteropatriarchal terms of colonial power.[21] Colonial discourses of race and sexuality then came to mark transgressive individuals and entire communities when they meted out spectacular death to educate Native peoples in the moral order of colonization.

Yet subsequent histories of colonial control of indigenous male sexuality support Foucault's claim that a sovereign right of death joined the rationalizing management of populations to produce modern disciplinary power. Zeb Tortorici examined a 1604 case of sodomy accusations in Valladolid, Michoacán, Mexico, that illuminates this shift. After the capture of two indigenous Purépecha men "committing the *pecado nefando*—the nefarious sin of sodomy," a regional investigation resulted in sodomy charges against thirteen indigenous and mestizo men, some of whom were relatives or in long-term relationships.[22] For two months, legal and religious authorities exacted confessions and implications that tried to determine the degree of interest or culpability in the alleged acts for each accused while threatening torture or public execution as punishments. Yet the investigation deferred its threatened outcomes to serve as a fact-finding exercise, which newly mapped social networks along which the church and government began to chart new routes for their authority in indigenous communities. Given that only six of the thirteen accused men were tried for sodomy, with four of them executed, and others who evaded capture never pursued, Tortorici suggests that in this era the intimation of sodomy among indigenous men remained deadly but no longer drew an absolute response.[23] Public execution now appeared as a threatened end to a broader process of surveillance and population management that sought more minute control over sexual transgressions and indigenous communities. Tortorici historicizes this shift in managing sexuality within "the secularization of colonial Mexican society," so that "while in 1604 four of the Purépecha men accused of sodomy were executed for their crimes, in the eighteenth century men found guilty of sodomy were never executed for their crimes."[24] Yet amid these changes, study of "sodomitical subcultures" (as Tortorici calls them) was sustained as a method for colonial authorities to study and control sexuality among Native peoples.

Scholars of anglophone and francophone North America also mark how gender and sexuality shaped colonial expansion and its formation of disciplinary

regimes of modern sexuality. Historians note that the settlement of French and British Canada and of colonial and post-Revolutionary New England produced strongly gendered modes of control over Native peoples, as war, containment on reserves, and colonial law, economy, and religion redefined roles for Native women and men in work, marriage, and community leadership.[25] While such histories invite more accounts of sexual and gender diversity, these appear clearly when British, French, and U.S. explorers, traders, and researchers traveled the fur trade or colonial expansion and met Native people whom they called *berdache*, "warrior women," or other terms of fascination or contempt. In the mid-nineteenth century when most such accounts appear, persons so marked were less often singled out for violence than subjected with their communities to military attack, containment, or removal. But they did gain note in colonial institutions established during settlement, such as Indian agencies, missionary churches, and boarding schools. Without needing to exact brute violence, these institutions used disciplinary education to try to break Native communities, languages, and cultural knowledges—as in the work of Richard Pratt at the Carlisle Indian School and his famous motto, "Kill the Indian, and save the man."[26] Scholars of Native studies argue that Native people made such institutions sites for defying the erasure of Native identity or community, including at times by adopting colonial languages or educational methods within new forms of resistance.[27] But both colonial control and Native resistance were shaped by struggle over gender and sexuality, in the establishment on the colonial frontier of modern methods for the colonial education of desire.

The grounding of U.S. colonization in sexual regulation and discipline is demonstrated by the history of the Crow Agency and the life of Osh-Tisch (Finds-Them-and-Kills-Them). Osh-Tisch was born in 1854 and was raised and recognized in Crow society as *boté* (or *badé*), a Crow role in which she lived consistently on Crow land to the age of seventy-five.[28] I use the pronoun *she* in line with the English usage attributed to Pretty Shield, a member of Osh-Tisch's village, who later recalled Osh-Tisch as "a Crow woman" who was also "neither a man nor a woman." Will Roscoe reports from oral histories of Osh-Tisch's life that her community included many *botés*, and at least one "woman who had no man of her own," The Other Magpie, whom Osh-Tisch accompanied in sharing exploits in battle.[29] Roscoe says that after the establishment of the agency and other colonial institutions, Crow people were "subjected to ongoing interference by representatives of the U.S. government," including in contests over *botés*, among whom Osh-Tisch was prominent. Robert Lowie said of Osh-Tisch that "former agents have repeatedly tried to make him [*sic*] don male clothes, but the other Indians themselves

protested against this, saying that it was against his nature."[30] Walter Williams interviewed the Crow tribal historian Joe Medicine Crow about his memories of Osh-Tisch, who died in 1929 when Medicine Crow was seven years old. Williams says that "when I asked about the controversy over Osh-Tisch's clothing, he did not answer but told me to meet him the following day on the grounds of the Bureau of Indian Affairs offices. I arrived the next day and observed that the BIA building was surrounded by huge oak trees." Medicine Crow then reflected that

> one agent in the late 1890s . . . tried to interfere with Osh-Tisch, who was the most respected *badé*. The agent incarcerated the *badés*, cut off their hair, made them wear men's clothing. He forced them to do manual labor, planting these trees that you see here on the BIA grounds. The people were so upset with this that Chief Pretty Eagle came into Crow Agency, and told [the agent] to leave the reservation. It was a tragedy, trying to change them.[31]

Both Lowie and Medicine Crow tell that the agency established its rule by targeting *botés* for gendered and sexual reeducation, which sparked resistance by Crow leaders and their community. Yet even as pressure for gendered and sexual conformity increased in schools and churches, resistance to it did not end. Roscoe describes how

> children were required to attend government-run boarding schools in which any expression or use of native language and customs was severely punished, boys and girls were segregated, and girls were not allowed to leave the school until husbands had been found for them. In such an environment, children with *boté* tendencies were quickly identified. According to Holder, when a Crow boy was found secretly dressing in female clothes in the late 1880s, "He was punished, but finally escaped from school and became a *boté*, which vocation he has since followed."[32]

Historical records indicate that Osh-Tisch lived as a *boté* for the rest of her life. In 1891 she took in "a three-year-old child" who was listed on a census as her "adopted son," but who four years later was recorded as a girl—suggesting that Osh-Tisch was fulfilling a role in Crow community of passing the life of *boté* to a next generation.[33] Yet by her late age, it appeared to colonial authorities that no other Crow people were living a traditional *boté* identity. Williams quotes Thomas Yellowtail saying, "When the Baptist missionary Peltotz arrived in 1903, he condemned our traditions, including the *badé*. He told congregation members to stay

away from Osh-Tisch and the other *badés*. He continued to condemn Osh-Tisch until his death in the late 1920s. That may be the reason why no others took up the *badé* role after Osh-Tisch died."[34]

Death thus still shaped sexual colonization in the era of containment and assimilation, but in new ways. Under colonial rule, Native people faced constant condemnation of gender and sexual transgression, which at times took shape as a violent education in a new life. But if public punishment—which now did not end in murder—failed to quell resistance, the deadly logics of regulation kicked in. After the passing of old resisters like Osh-Tisch, colonial education prevented a new generation being raised, so an entire way of life could appear to have passed. But the violence of this erasure persists in Native people's memories of these changes. Williams presents oral histories of Lakota traditionalists who recalled the effects of colonial education. As one tells,

> By the 1940s, after more Indians had been educated in white schools, or had been taken away in the army, they lost the traditions of respect for *winktes*. The missionaries condemned *winktes*, telling families that if something bad happened, it was because of their associating with a *winkte*. They would not accept *winkte* into the cemetery, saying "their souls are lost." Missionaries had a lot of power on the reservation, so the *winktes* were ostracized by many of the Christianized Indians.[35]

Williams quotes another telling "of the pressures put on *winktes* in the 1920s and 1930s": "The missionaries and agents said *winktes* were no good, and tried to get them to change their ways. Some did, and put on men's clothing. But others, rather than change, went out and hanged themselves. I remember the sad stories that were told about this."[36]

Williams also recounts a Navajo woman who had narrated her own story of being taken with her relatives as a child to the Carlisle Indian School:

> Her cousin, a *nadle*, was also taken there. Since he was dressed as a girl, school officials assumed he was female and placed him in the girl's dormitory. The Navajo students protected him, and he went undiscovered. Later, however, there was a lice infestation. The white teachers personally scrubbed all the girls, and were shocked when they found out that the *nadle* was male. The Navajo woman said, "They were very upset. They would not tell us what happened to him, and we never saw him again. We were very sad that our cousin was gone." The family still does not know if the boy was sent to another school, or to prison, or was killed.[37]

In these stories from the late nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth, multiple images of death frame Native people's memories of the erasure of gendered and sexual possibility: as exile from the community's spiritual continuity; in so restricting life as to force persons to "choose" to die; and in being "disappeared" by the traceless authority of the bureaucratic state. These are some of the results of shifting colonial authority from a brutal right of public execution to the normalization of death in regulatory regimes based on discipline. But disciplinary methods were no less terrorizing. They required internalizing a possibility that life as *nádleeh*, *winkte*, *boté*, or a "woman who had no man" was impossible, in this life or in the next. And they suggest that the sustained resistance of relatives and communities ultimately faced a colonial power to make loved ones literally disappear, beyond knowledge of life or death. These are the terrorizing acts of a society of normalization, as Foucault and Stoler theorized, and they formed on the frontier of the settler state by controlling Native peoples as populations for the colonial education of modern sexuality.

Yet if sexual colonization targeted particular persons, both oppression and resistance remained collective experiences. My account revises colonial accounts of violence against *berdache* by noting that the lives the term marked were not the singular experiences of a sexual minority but of Native peoples claiming relationship and collective identities. Here I affirm Jace Weaver's argument that Native resistance to colonization has pursued a "communitism" linking community survival to activism for justice.[38] Forcing *botés* into masculine dress and parading them as labor announced colonial power over the entire Crow community and its values. But Chief Pretty Eagle's defiance of the agent reaffirmed those values, by marking gender and sexuality as front lines in Crow people's experiences of colonization while demanding freedom for the *botés* as a condition of the community's collective sovereignty. In turn, the girls at the Carlisle School who protected the *nádleeh* youth defended the truth of their loved one's life, even as they recognized that a colonial intent to erase that life also sought to erase their interdependence. Neither their inability to protect their cousin nor the loss that this sustained for the survivors overwrites how the situation portrays Native people dignifying identities and sustaining collective ties amid colonial education. Finally, Chief Pretty Eagle's defense of *botés* in the 1890s suggests, under different conditions, encounters Brian Joseph Gilley describes at Two-Spirit gatherings in the 1990s, when Two-Spirit men and women began receiving recognition from traditionalist elders for embodying the very traditions that elders defended and that they now could choose to defend together.[39] Such moments can be read in relation to the earliest encounters of Native peoples with attempted conquest. They indicate that Native

gender and sexual diversity persistently troubled the boundaries of sexual colonization and, in its survivance, continues to inspire collective work for decolonization today.

Settler Colonialism and Queer Modernities

Modern sexuality arose in the United States as crucial to a colonial society of normalization. The violent sexual regulation of Native peoples became a proving ground for forming settler subjects as agents and beneficiaries of modern sexuality. Their subject positions arose relationally within the colonial biopolitics of modern sexuality and call for broad analysis in queer, American, and Native studies.[40]

My account has suggested a convergence between the sexual colonization of Native peoples and the growth in the United States of techniques of modern sexuality. These proliferated in the decades following the frontier's "closure," a time that in fact represented a heyday of state and religious efforts to institute a colonial education of desire, as in the events at the Crow Agency or during the 1879–1918 tenure of the Carlisle Indian School. Far from reflecting finality, this period witnessed tense negotiations of active and contested settlement. In such a time, any iteration of modern sexuality that placed Native people in the past knew itself to be a contingent claim that remained open to challenge. Thus scholars must recognize that modern sexuality is not a *product* of settler colonialism, as if it came into being in the United States after settlement transpired. Modern sexuality arose in the United States as a method to *produce* settler colonialism, and settler subjects, by facilitating ongoing conquest and naturalizing its effects. The normative function of settlement is to appear inevitable and final. It is naturalized again whenever sexuality or queer studies scholars inscribe it as an unexamined backdrop to the historical formation of modern U.S. sexual cultures and politics.