

QUEER THEORY AND NATIVE STUDIES

The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism

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The Native studies and queer theorist Chris Finley challenges Native studies scholars to integrate queer theory into their work. She notes that while some scholars discuss the status of gender nonnormative 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, pure and Victorian,” Finley writes. “We are alive, we are sexy, and some Natives are queer.”¹ Furthermore, she notes, while there are emerging feminist and decolonizing 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) and calls on *all* scholars to queer the analytics of settler colonialism. Qwo-Li Driskill (this issue) further calls for developing a “two-spirit” critique that remains in conversation with, while also critically interrogating, queer and queer of color critique.

Queer theory has made a critical intervention in LGBT 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 minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal.”² Native studies, however, has frequently intersected more with LGBT studies than with queer theory in that it has tended to focus on the status of “two spirit” peoples within Native communities.³ While this scholar-

ship 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.

Queer theory and Native studies often do not intersect because Native studies is generally ethnographically entrapped within the project of studying Natives. In her groundbreaking work *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, Denise Ferreira da Silva argues that the Western subject is fundamentally constituted through race.⁴ Through her exhaustive account of Enlightenment theory, Silva demonstrates that the post-Enlightenment version of the subject as self-determined exists by situating itself against “affectable others” who are subject to natural conditions as well as to the self-determined power of the Western subject. The central anxiety with which the Western subject struggles is that it is, in fact, not self-determining. The Western subject differentiates itself from conditions of “affectability” by separating from affectable others — this separation being a fundamentally racial one. The Western subject is universal, while the racialized subject is particular, but aspires to be universal.

Silva’s critique suggests that Native studies often does not question the logics of Western philosophy that are premised on the self-determined subject’s aspirations to achieve universality. Consequently, Native studies often rests on a Native subject awaiting humanity. In other words, if people simply understood Native peoples better, Natives would then become fully human — they would be free and self-determining. Unfortunately, the project of aspiring to “humanity” is always already a racial project; it is a project that aspires to a universality and self-determination that can exist only over and against the particularity and affectability of “the other.” Native studies thus becomes trapped in ethnographic multiculturalism, what Silva describes as a “neoliberal multicultural” representation that “includes never-before-heard languages that speak of never-before-heard things that actualize a never-before-known consciousness.”⁵ This representation, which attempts to demonstrate Native peoples’ worthiness of being universal subjects, actually rests on the logic that Native peoples are equivalent to nature itself, things to be discovered that have an essential truth or essence. In other words, the very quest for full subjecthood implicit in the ethnographic project to tell our “truth” is already premised on a logic that requires us to be objects to be discovered. Furthermore, within this colonial logic, Native particularity cannot achieve universal humanity without becoming “inauthentic” because Nativeness is already fundamentally constructed as the “other” of Western subjectivity. To

use Silva's phrase, ethnographic entrapment inevitably positions Native peoples at the "horizon of death."⁶

As a strategy for addressing ethnographic entrapment, many indigenous scholars such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Sandy Grande, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, while diverse in their concerns and methodologies, have all called for the development of a field of Native/Indigenous studies that is distinct because of its methodologies and theoretical frameworks and not just because of its object of study.⁷ Their scholarly contributions call into question the assumption that Native studies should be equated with its object of study—Native peoples. Rather, their work suggests that Native studies could potentially have diverse objects of study that might be approached through distinct methodologies and theoretical formations that are necessarily interdisciplinary in nature. Robert Warrior has called such intellectual projects an exercise in "intellectual sovereignty."⁸ Warrior understands Native studies as a field with its own integrity that can be informed by traditional disciplines, but is not simply a multicultural add-on to them. As I discuss below, this reformulation of Native studies does not entail rejecting identity concerns, but expands its scope of inquiry by positioning Native peoples as producers of theory and not simply as objects of analysis.

Warrior points out that intellectual sovereignty is not to be equated with intellectual isolationism. Many sectors of Native studies have often rejected engagement with other fields of inquiry such as ethnic studies and postcolonial studies, by highlighting the tension between Native studies and other fields.⁹ At countless Native studies conferences, I have heard Native studies scholars opine that they should not have to read Michel Foucault, Karl Marx, or Jacques Derrida because "they are not Indian." Unfortunately, as Rey Chow so compellingly points out, ethnic studies and, by the same logic, Native studies often confine themselves and are confined to the realm of ethnic or cultural representation rather than positioning themselves as intellectual projects that can shape scholarly discourse as a whole.¹⁰ Because Native studies scholars have often rooted their scholarship in a commitment to social and political justice for Native nations, it becomes all the more important for Native studies to develop its own intellectual project in conversation with rather than in isolation from potential partners. Alliances are necessary if Native scholars and activists are to build sufficient political power to enable the social transformation needed to ensure the survival of indigenous nations. A critical Native studies must interrogate the strictures within which Native studies and ethnic studies find themselves.¹¹ Native studies can be part of a growing conversation of scholars engaged in diverse intellectual projects that do not dismiss identity but structure inquiry around the logics of race, colonialism,

capitalism, gender, and sexuality. Native studies must be part of this conversation because the logics of settler colonialism structure all of society, not just those who are indigenous.

Queer theory provides a helpful starting point for enabling Native studies to escape its position of ethnographic entrapment within the academy. As Warner contends: “Nervous over the prospect of a well-sanctioned and compartmentalized academic version of ‘lesbian and gay studies,’ people want to make theory queer, not just have theory about queers. For both academics and activists, ‘queer’ gets a critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual, and normal includes normal business in the academy.”¹² A queering of Native studies might mean that it would move beyond studying Native communities through the lens of religious studies, anthropology, history, or other normalizing disciplines. Native studies would also provide the framework for interrogating and analyzing both normalizing logics within disciplinary formations as well as academic institutions themselves.

Thus Native studies can be informed by queer theory’s turn toward subjectless critique.¹³ As the coeditors of the *Social Text* special issue “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?” state: “What might be called the ‘subjectless’ critique of queer studies disallows any positing of a proper subject *of* or object *for* the field by insisting that queer has no fixed political referent. . . . A subjectless critique establishes . . . a focus on a ‘wide field of normalization’ as the site of social violence.”¹⁴ A subjectless critique can help Native studies (as well as ethnic studies) escape the ethnographic entrapment by which Native peoples are rendered simply as objects of intellectual study and instead can foreground settler colonialism as a key logic that governs the United States today. A subjectless critique helps demonstrate that Native studies is an intellectual project that has broad applicability not only for Native peoples but for everyone. It also requires us to challenge the normalizing logics of academia rather than simply articulate a politics of indigenous inclusion within the colonial academy.

At the same time, however, Native studies also points to the limits of a “postidentity” politic or “subjectless” critique. Sarita Echavez See, Hiram Perez, and others who do queer of color critique in particular have argued that within the field of queer studies, this claim to be “postidentity” often retrenches white, middle-class identity while disavowing it.¹⁵ For instance, in *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Warner concedes that queer culture has been dominated by those with capital: typically, middle-class white men. But then he argues that “the default model for all minority movements is racial or ethnic. Thus the language of multiculturalism almost always presupposes an ethnic organization of identity, rooted in family,

language, and cultural tradition. Despite its language of postmodernism, multiculturalism tends to rely on very modern notions of authenticity, of culture as shared meaning and the source of identity. Queer culture will not fit this bill . . . because queer politics does not obey the member/nonmember logics of race and gender.”¹⁶ He marks queer culture as free-floating, unlike race, which is marked by belonging and not-belonging. To borrow from Silva’s *Toward a Global Idea*, the queer (white) subject is the universal self-determining subject, the “transparent I,” but the racialized subject is the “affectable other.” But if queerness is dominated by whiteness, as Warner concedes, then it also follows a logic of belonging and not-belonging. It also relies on a shared culture—one based on white supremacy. As Perez notes: “Queer theory, when it privileges difference over sameness absolutely, colludes with institutionalized racism in vanishing, hence retrenching, white privilege. It serves as the magician’s assistant to whiteness’s disappearing act.”¹⁷ To extend Perez’s analysis, what seem to disappear within queer theory’s subjectless critique are settler colonialism and the ongoing genocide of Native peoples. The analysis that comes from queer theory (even queer of color critique), then, rests on the presumption of the U.S. settler colonial state. Thus this essay puts Native studies into conversation with queer theory to look at both the possibilities and limits of a postidentity analytic.

Queering the Future of Genocide

Within Native studies, many intellectual projects call on Native peoples to “decolonize” the academy as well as society at large.¹⁸ As I discuss below, the project of decolonization makes an important intervention into queer theory. But in this section, I look at how decolonizing political and intellectual work can benefit from a subjectless critique. Already, Native feminist works have complicated the politics of decolonization by noting that Native women are often marginalized within these projects.¹⁹ But the subjectless critique of queer theory further interrogates some of the problematic logics within much decolonization discourse by revealing how this discourse often reinstantiates rather than challenges colonial formations and ideologies.

Lauren Berlant demonstrates how decolonization projects can become unwittingly implicated in perpetuating colonization in her theorization of the “infantile citizen.”²⁰ She argues that U.S. politics is often directed toward protecting the future incipient citizen, such as the child or the fetus. By directing our energies toward the future citizen, we then feel justified in instituting repressive policies that oppress today’s citizens because these policies will supposedly pro-

tect the innocent citizens of the future. An example Berlant points to is the criminalization of abortion that oppresses women today in order to protect tomorrow's children. This idea of reproductive continuity as homophobia is further taken up by Lee Edelman, who articulates the Child as the anchor for reproductive futurity. "For politics, however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to produce a more desirable social order, remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child. That Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention."²¹ He contends that "queerness names the side of those *not* 'fighting for the children,' the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism."²² Edelman makes an important critique of how the investment in the future justifies contemporary oppression. Fighting for the future can impel us to reproduce the current social order as it is. Thus Edelman is offering a potentially radical critique of organizing that can be akin to a revolution without guarantees: an antinormativizing of political struggle that challenges how social norms are being reproduced at every turn.

This analysis could cohere with Judith Butler's critique of origin stories. Butler demonstrates how the past is mobilized to support contemporary oppressive political regimes in the way the future is similarly mobilized under Edelman's framework. Butler critiques theorists who posit a naturalized prediscursive sexed body as the foundation by which to critique contemporary heteropatriarchal practices. She argues that theorizing a prediscursive body necessarily means that the body cannot be prediscursive, since its account takes place within a discursive economy, and hence its account cannot be made outside prevailing power relations within its discursive economy. But positing the body as prediscursive allows the theorist to disavow her or his political investments because the theorist is supposedly rendering an account of the body prior to power relations. Butler's critique could then be more broadly applied to a critique of "origin stories." That is, when we critique a contemporary context through an appeal to a prior state before "the fall," we are necessarily masking power relations through evoking lost origins. "The self-justification of a repressive . . . law almost always grounds itself in a story about what it was like *before* the advent of the law. . . . The fabrication of those origins . . . thereby justifies, the Constitution of the law . . . making the constitution of the law appear as a historical inevitability."²³ Butler's analysis of "origin stories," in conversation with Jennifer Denetdale's critique of Native tradition, demonstrates how the appeal to "tradition" often serves as the origin story that buttresses heteropatriarchy and other forms of oppression with Native com-

munities while disavowing its political investments.²⁴ In her critique of antiblack racism, homophobia, and U.S. patriotism within Native communities, Denetdale argues that Native communities often support Christian Right ideologies in the name of tradition. Edelman's critique of futurity could add to Denetdale's critique of tradition by assessing how organizing for the "seventh generation" coalesces with uncritical uses of tradition to ensure that Native communities reproduce the colonial status quo with its attendant heteropatriarchy.

Thus normative futurity depends on an "origin story." The future is legitimated as a continuation of the past. Here I am reminded of how I have often heard Native activists say, "Let us not work on domestic or other forms of gender violence now, we must work on survival issues first."²⁵ Of course, since Native women are the women most likely to be killed by acts of gender violence in the United States, they are clearly *not* surviving. The many works on Native women and feminism that say that we are "American Indian women in that order," that position gender justice as something to be addressed *after* decolonization, all speak to how this politics of futurity sacrifices the lives of women and those who are not gender normative for the indefinitely postponed postcolonial future. As Denetdale notes, the Native nationhood that becomes articulated under this strategy of futurity is one that supports heteropatriarchy, U.S. imperialism, antiblack racism, and capitalism. As Edelman states: "Political programs are programmed to reify difference and thus to secure in the form of the future, the order of the same."²⁶ Edelman calls us to queer "social organization as such" to show how our efforts to secure a better future for our children lead us to excuse injustice in the present.²⁷

At the same time, however, this subjectless critique has its limits with regard to decolonization. For instance, Edelman's analysis lapses into a vulgar constructionism by creating a fantasy that there can actually be a politics without a political program that does not always reconstitute what it deconstructs, that does not always also in some way reaffirm the order of the same. Edelman's "anti-oppositional" politics in the context of multinational capitalism and empire ensures the continuation of that status quo by disabling collective struggle designed to dismantle these systems. That is, it seems difficult to dismantle multinational capitalism, settler colonialism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy without some kind of political program, however provisional it may be. Here, Native studies can temper this subjectless critique by engaging queer of color critique in particular. José Esteban Muñoz notes, for example, that an anti-oppositional politic ultimately opts out of relationality and politics. "Relationality is not pretty, but the option of simply opting out of it . . . is imaginable only if one can frame queerness as a singular abstraction that can be subtracted and isolated from a larger social matrix."²⁸ Furthermore,

an anti-oppositional politic can quickly lapse into a leftist cynicism, in which all politics are dismissed as “reproductive” with no disruptive potential. This cynicism then becomes an apology for maintaining the status quo. As Muñoz argues: “The here and now is simply not enough. Queerness should and could be about a desire for another way of being in both the world and time, a desire that resists mandates to accept that which is not enough.”²⁹ A politics of “opting out” clearly privileges those who are relatively more comfortable under the current situation. For indigenous peoples, however, who face genocide, as well as all peoples subjected to conditions of starvation, violence, and war, opting out is simply not an option.

The question then arises, who will be left when we opt out of a struggle against white supremacy, settler colonialism, and capitalism? Those most immediately sacrificed in this “anti-oppositional” politic are indigenous peoples, poor peoples, and all those whose lives are under immediate attack. Thus, while Edelman contends that the Child can be analytically separated from actual children, Muñoz demonstrates that Edelman’s Child is nonetheless a disavowed white Child. “The future is the stuff of *some* kids. Racialized kids, queer kids, are not the sovereign princes of futurity. [Edelman’s] framing nonetheless accepts and reproduces this monolithic future of the child that is indeed always already white.”³⁰

An indigenous critique must question the value of “no future” in the context of genocide, where Native peoples have already been determined by settler colonialism to have no future. If the goal of queerness is to challenge the reproduction of the social order, then the Native child may already be queered. For instance, Colonel John Chivington, the leader of the famous massacre at Sand Creek, charged his followers to not only kill Native adults but to mutilate their reproductive organs and to kill their children because “nits make lice.”³¹ In this context, the Native Child is not the guarantor of the reproductive future of white supremacy; it is the nit that undoes it.

In addition, while both “tradition” and “the future” must be critically engaged, it does not follow that they can be dismissed. As with identity, the notion of a tradition-free subject simply reinstatiates the notion of a liberal subject who is free from past encumbrances. As Elizabeth Povinelli’s work suggests, the liberal subject articulates itself as an autological subject that is completely self-determining over and against the “genealogical” subject (i.e., the indigenous subject) trapped within tradition, determined by the past and the future.³² Essentially then, this call for “no future” relies on a primitivizing discourse that positions the [white] queer subject in relation to a premodern subject who is locked in history. The “Native” serves as the origin story that generates the autonomous present for the white queer subject.

As Jasbir Puar notes, this articulation of queerness as “freedom from norms” actually relies on a genocidal logic of biopower that separates those who should live from those who must die.³³ That is, for the queer subject to live under Edelman’s analysis, it must be freed from genealogical, primitivist subjects who are hopelessly tied to reproductive futures. This impulse is similar to Warner’s juxtaposition of a transgressive queer subject with the racialized subject trapped within identity and ethnic organization. Puar terms this tendency a “sexual exceptionalism” that mirrors U.S. exceptionalism, in which a white queer subject reinscribes a U.S. homonormativity by positioning himself/herself in an imperialist relationship to those ethnic subjects deemed unable to transgress. “Queerness has its own exceptionalist desires: exceptionalism is a founding impulse. . . . ‘Freedom from norms’ resonates with liberal humanism’s authorization of the fully self-possessed speaking subject, untethered by hegemony or false consciousness, enabled by the life/stylization offerings of capitalism, rationally choosing modern individualism over the ensnaring bonds of family.”³⁴ If we build on Silva’s previously described analysis, we can see that the Native queer or the queer of color then becomes situated at the “horizon of death” within a “no futures” queer theory: such individuals must free themselves from their Native identity and community to become fully self-determined subjects. They must forgo national self-determination for individual self-determination; they cannot have both. Racialized subjects trapped within primitive and pathological communities must give way to modern queer subjects. Puar’s analysis of biopower suggests that modern white queer subjects can live only if racialized subjects trapped in primitive and unenlightened cultures pass away. For instance, some LGBT organizations (as well as feminist organizations) supported the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan because the bombing would supposedly free queer people from the Taliban. Apparently, throwing bombs on people frees them. But of course, it was not actually queer people in Afghanistan who were the real subject of liberation—rather, modern queer subjects in the United States could live only if a sexually savage Afghanistan were eliminated. To quote Puar: “Queerness as automatically and inherently transgressive enacts specific forms of disciplining and control, erecting celebratory queer liberal subjects folded into life (queerness as subject) against the sexually pathological and defiant populations targeted for death (queerness as population).”³⁵ Meanwhile, as Puar, Silva, and Povinelli imply, the white queer subject, despite its disavowals, is firmly rooted in a past, present, and future structured by the logics of white supremacy—it is as much complicit in, as it is transgressive of, the status quo. Rather than disavow traditions and futures, it may be more politically efficacious to engage them critically.

The “no future” framework also tends to presume a linear time frame, the normativity of which has been challenged by many Native scholars, particularly Vine Deloria.³⁶ He and others argue that indigenous epistemologies do not necessarily presume a temporal distance between the past, present, and future. For example, at the 2005 World Forum on Theology and Liberation held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, indigenous peoples from Bolivia stated they know another world is possible because they see that world whenever they do their ceremonies. Native ceremonies can be a place where the present, past, and future become co-present, thereby allowing us to engage in what the Native Hawaiian scholar Manu Meyer calls a radical remembering of the future.³⁷ Native traditions can allow Native communities to remember their nations as not necessarily structured through hierarchy, oppression, or patriarchy. These remembrances should be critically interrogated and not romanticized. Also, Native communities today cannot replicate their precolonial formations because Native nations are and always have been nations that change and adapt to the surrounding circumstances. However, our understanding that it was possible to order society without structures of oppression in the past tells us that our current political and economic system is anything but natural. While these visions may be critiqued for being utopian or romanticizing, their importance today is not so much that they were true of all Native communities or that Native communities were perfect. Rather, the fact that any memories of alternative social organization exist at all helps denormalize our current social structure. If we lived differently before, we can live differently in the future. Or to quote Muñoz, “A look toward the past . . . critiques the present and helps us envision the future.”³⁸

Edelman’s intervention is important because any struggle must look at how a “fight for the future” can reinstantiate inequality in the present. In fact, as I have noted elsewhere, many indigenous struggles have directly taken on this critique, arguing that a deferred future was creating an intolerable present for those engaged in the struggle.³⁹ But at the same time, not all futures are created equal, and futures themselves can be queered. The Child can be the phantasm that ensures the status quo, or the Child can be the nit that undoes it, or the Child can be both.

The Disappearance of Indigeneity

Besides providing a helpful place from which to engage the politics of decolonization, a subjectless critique can further reveal how current scholarship reaffirms the assumption of settler colonialism. A subjectless critique helps highlight

the ideological function of “the Native” even in works not ostensibly about Native peoples, thus expanding the intellectual reach of Native studies. In particular, Berlant’s previously described work on infantile citizenship provides some insights as to why the continuing colonization of Native peoples in the United States is normalized within critical theory. As she explains, “The abstract image of the future generated by the national culture machine also stands for a crisis in the present: what gets consolidated now as the future model citizen provides an alibi or an inspiration for the moralized political rhetorics for the present and for reactionary legislative and juridical practice. . . . Condensed into the image/hieroglyph of the innocent or incipient American, these anxieties and desires are about whose citizenship—whose subjectivity, whose forms of intimacy and interest, whose bodies and identifications, whose heroic narratives—will direct America’s future.”⁴⁰ Her analysis expands our analysis of genocide to include not just the physical disappearance of Native peoples but the ideological function of the figure of the Native within genocidal discourses. Ironically, however, while a subjectless critique may highlight this ideological function, it may be the case that within queer theory it obfuscates the manner in which the “queer” subject is also a settler subject. That is, we can posit the Native as the infantile “citizen” that enables the future of the white, settler citizen.

As many historians have noted, colonizers expected to find “Eden” in the Americas, “a place of simplicity, innocence, harmony, love, and happiness, where the climate is balmy and fruits of nature’s bounty are found on the trees year round.”⁴¹ Many of the early colonial narratives describe the Americas as an idyllic paradise. However, as Kirkpatrick Sale argues, colonizers approached “paradise” through their colonial and patriarchal lens. Consequently, they viewed the land and indigenous peoples as something to be used for their own purposes; colonizers could not respect the integrity of either the land or indigenous peoples. “The resulting tensions, then could be resolved . . . only by being played out against . . . the natural world and natural peoples. . . . the only way the people of Christian Europe ultimately could live with the reality of the Noble Savage in the Golden World was to transform it progressively into the Savage Beast in the Hideous Wilderness.”⁴² Within this colonial imaginary, the Native is an empty signifier that provides the occasion for Europe to remake its corrupt civilization. Once the European is remade, the Native is rendered permanently infantile or—as mostly commonly understood—an innocent savage. She cannot mature into adult citizenship, she can only be locked into a permanent state of infancy—degenerate into brutal savagery or disappear into “civilization.”

The Native as infantile citizen continues to exist not only in mainstream

or conservative political thought but also within radical theory and activism. The “crying Indian” enables the birth of a white enlightened environmental consciousness. This new consciousness, however, does not entail engaging with current environmental struggles on indigenous lands. An example of this tendency can be found in the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She describes indigenous peoples as providing a space for ecological knowledge, but then argues that this knowledge will be lost once indigenous peoples, whom she describes as racial minorities rather than as colonized peoples, necessarily assimilate into the settler state. “But must that part of their cultural habit that internalizes the techniques of their pre-national ecological sanity be irretrievably lost to planetary justice in the *urgently needed* process of integration, as a minority, into the modern state?”⁴³ Thus some strands of postcolonial thought ironically rest on the continued colonization of indigenous peoples.

As Povinelli’s *Empire of Love* describes, queer politics and consciousness often rely on a primitivist notion of the indigenous as the space of free and unfettered sexuality that allows the white queer citizen to remake his or her sexuality. However, once this sexual praxis is engaged, it does not translate into solidarity with indigenous peoples’ land struggles. The subjectless critique thus calls attention to both the importance of Native peoples within scholarly work and their disappearance within this work. At the same time, it may be the case that it is in fact a subjectless critique that disguises the fact that the queer, postcolonial, or environmentally conscious subject is simultaneously a settler subject.

This primitivist discourse that relies on the disappearance of the Native is found, ironically, also within ethnic studies and queer of color critique. For instance, within racial justice activism as well as ethnic studies analysis, it is the primitive Native that enables a mature mestizaje consciousness. Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*, the foundational text of borderlands theory, situates Indians and Europeans in a dichotomy that can be healed through mestizaje. Anzaldúa positions Indian culture as having “no tolerance for deviance,” a problem that can be healed by the “tolerance for ambiguity” that those of mixed race “necessarily possess.” Thus a rigid, unambiguous Indian becomes juxtaposed unfavorably with the mestiza who “can’t hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries.”⁴⁴ As many scholars have noted, Native identity is relegated to a primitive past, a premodern precursor to the more modern, sophisticated mestizo identity.⁴⁵ In queer of color critique in particular, mestizaje and queerness often intersect to disappear indigeneity through the figure of the diasporic or hybrid queer subject. The consequence is that queer of color critique, while making critical interventions into both critical race and queer studies, generally lacks an analysis of settler colonialism

and genocide. Within queer of color critique, many scholars engage subjectless critique while fully interrogating its limits. As such, this work can benefit the development of Native studies. At the same time, however, a critical limit often not explored by queer of color critique is the limits of settler colonialism. As such, indigeneity frequently disappears within these projects. Once again, a subjectless critique within Native studies assists in interrogating projects based on a queer of color critique that does not directly incorporate an analysis of Native peoples. At the same time, however, queer of color critique's version of subjectless critique can also veil the queer of color subject's investment in settler colonialism.

As an example, Gayatri Gopinath critiques Madonna for cultural theft, but then very uncritically celebrates the British Punjabi artist Apache Indian's obvious appropriation of Apache culture. Gopinath lauds this move for its "referencing of multiple diasporic locations including the Caribbean, India, the UK, and the United States," neglecting to list the Apache nation as a national location.⁴⁶ She seems to implicitly subscribe to the colonialist notion that Apache nationhood can be subsumed under the settler colonial logic of the United States. Furthermore, this appropriation is celebrated in the service of a "de-essentialized notion of 'Indian' identity."⁴⁷ Just as mestizo identity appropriates an essentialized indigenous identity, this time a mestizo "Indian" identity depends on the erasure of indigenous Apache identity. Quoting George Lipsitz, Gopinath likens Apache Indian's project to the appropriation of Native identity by African Americans during Mardi Gras celebrations as a "politics emanating from Indian imagery to affirm Black nationalism [which] lead[s] logically to a pan-ethnic anti-racism that moves beyond essentialism."⁴⁸ But why does appropriation necessarily lead to antiracism? First, this appropriation tends to depend on a very essentialized notion of Native identity that becomes the raw material for the building of a complex postmodern identity. Second, where is the evidence that any of these practices actually contribute to solidarity work with contemporary indigenous struggles?

As many Native scholars have argued, Native peoples are entrapped in a logic of genocidal appropriation. This logic holds that indigenous peoples must disappear. In fact, they must *always* be disappearing, to allow nonindigenous people's rightful claim over this land. Through this logic of genocide, non-Native people then become the rightful inheritors of all that was indigenous—land, resources, indigenous spirituality, or culture. Rayna Green demonstrates that the cultural appropriation of indigeneity is based on a logic of genocide: non-Native peoples imagine themselves as the rightful inheritors of all that previously belonged to "vanished" Indians, thus entitling them to ownership of this land. "The living performance of 'playing Indian' by non-Indian peoples depends upon the physical

and psychological removal, even the death, of real Indians. In that sense, the performance, purportedly often done out of a stated and implicit love for Indians, is really the obverse of another well-known cultural phenomenon, 'Indian hating,' as most often expressed in another, deadly performance genre called 'genocide.'⁴⁹ After all, why would non-Native peoples need to play Indian if they thought Indians were still alive and perfectly capable of being Indian themselves? Thus the appropriation of Native identity by even people of color or Third World subjects cannot be easily distinguished from a logic of genocide or a logic of biopower whereby Natives must die so that postmodern subjects can live.

Gopinath's uncritical support for appropriating indigeneity also contributes to her problematic juxtaposition of a simple national identity with a complex diasporic identity. Her work centers the diasporic subject as what troubles national identity. She "embraces diaspora as a concept for its potential to foreground notions of impurity and inauthenticity that resoundingly reject the ethnic and religious absolutism at the center of nationalist projects."⁵⁰ She then likens diaspora to queerness. "A queer diasporic framework productively exploits the analogous relation between nation and diaspora on the one hand, and between heterosexuality and queerness on the other; in other words, queerness is to heterosexuality as the diaspora is to the nation."⁵¹ This logic follows Anzaldúa's framework of juxtaposing the complicated, queer mestizo subject with the primitive, simple, indigenous subject. A subjectless critique within Native studies enables an indigenous critique of queer of color projects that do not directly engage Native studies but do depend ideologically on the disappearance of Native peoples. In particular, such a critique leads me to conclude that, just as, for instance, the image of the "welfare queen" becomes coded language to signify blackness, images of nationhood as necessarily simplistic and essentialist rest on the shadow of the primitive indigenous subject who cannot transcend her nationalistic identifications. The indigenous subject is once again an "infantile citizen," firmly rooted within a nation and a land base, and hence is insufficiently queered without a mixed or diasporic subject. Thus, even though Gopinath actually critiques the notion that the proper queer subject can be denoted by leaving home and community as a free self-determined citizen, her likening of queerness to diaspora tends to reify the assumption that the (indigenous) nation cannot be queered on its own. Left to its own, the (indigenous) nation is positioned as a heterosexual norm that requires diaspora to queer it.

Instead, perhaps we can understand indigenous nationhood as already queered. Gopinath's work does suggest some ways nationhood could be queered. She troubles the normative notion of the home as a place "to be escaped in order

to emerge into another more liberatory space,” in favor of “remaking the space of home within.”⁵² Echoing Silva’s and Puar’s analysis, she reads a variety of texts to argue that the narrative of leaving home to attain personal liberation again rests on the logic of the self-determining universal subject transcending particularity. “The equation of liberation with leaving and oppressing with ‘staying put’ cannot be upheld. In rejecting this progress narrative of freedom through exile and the renunciation of home, these texts instead enable a queer reworking of the very space of home itself.”⁵³ Thus, if home can be remade, perhaps we could go farther than Gopinath and argue that the home is always already being remade: this remaking is not necessarily dependent on the diasporic subject.

Renya Ramirez’s ethnography of urban Native communities suggests a way to put an analysis of diaspora in conversation with indigeneity to further Gopinath’s project of remaking home. She critiques prevalent notions of urban Native peoples “living as exiles without a culture, inhabiting a nether-world between the traditional and modern,” seeing them instead as people whose travel to and from reservations actually strengthens their relationship to their land base.⁵⁴ Informed by her ethnographic subjects, Ramirez develops the concept of the hub, which can be a geographic space (such as an urban area) as well as an activity (such as Internet communication) that allows people to maintain relationships and to develop political coalitions. However, the hub does not privilege the diasporic subject in relation to the nondiasporic subject who remains home. Rather, Ramirez’s narrative positions them all as having pivotal roles in developing political alliances, challenging oppressive behaviors within indigenous nations, and combating settler colonialism.

A subjectless critique centering on indigenous analysis can also interrogate the queering of oppositional politics within the works of queer of color critics who do not directly engage Native struggles. For instance, Muñoz centers his work on the figure of the *mestizo*, which he equates with the queer and the hybrid subject. Hybridity and queerness become a pivot by which he rearticulates oppositional politics. He argues that queer lives demonstrate that “the importance of such public and semipublic enactments of the hybrid self cannot be undervalued in relation to the formation of counterpublics that contest the hegemonic supremacy of the majoritarian public sphere.”⁵⁵ His model for political engagement is that of disidentification. According to Muñoz, whereas assimilationism seems to identify with the dominant society, and whereas counteridentification seeks to reject it completely, disidentification “is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideol-

ogy.”⁵⁶ Muñoz explains that disidentification neither fully accepts nor rejects dominant cultural logics, but internally subverts them, using the logic against itself. Muñoz clarifies that disidentification is not a middle ground between assimilationist and contestatory politics; rather, it is a strategy that recognizes the shifting terrain of resistances.⁵⁷

This model of disidentification can inform Native studies’ emphasis on decolonization. While there are many variations on how indigenous decolonization is articulated, with many Native studies scholars rejecting this framework altogether, decolonization is certainly a prevalent concept within Native studies. It generally tends to follow the logic identified by Muñoz as counteridentification. Native communities are frequently called on to reject the modern trappings of colonial society to build indigenous “decolonized societies.” In some cases, these calls frequently lead to political silencing; for instance, Native feminists are often accused of selling out to white feminism because decolonized Native subjects should address sovereignty to the exclusion of gender oppression. Calls for political and cultural purity then contribute to a political vanguardism in which the indigenous cultural elite govern improperly decolonized subjects. To give one example, I work with the Boarding School Healing Project that attempts to build a movement to demand collective reparations to Native peoples in the United States for boarding school abuses. The BSHP made healing central to the organizing work because, given the level of severe trauma suffered by boarding school survivors, we could not develop an organizing project if we did not address this trauma. In doing so, we also discovered how a group can unwittingly instill spiritual and religious orthodoxies in the name of liberation. Since most boarding schools were Christian-run, much of the healing work in Native communities focuses on healing “from historic trauma” through promoting traditional spiritual practices. However, when we attempted to hold a “decolonized” traditional ceremony at one event, survivors felt they were back in boarding school again, only this time they were being told they had to be “traditional” rather than Christian. We then learned that in doing spiritually grounded work, we could not make assumptions about what, if any, spiritual practices people might want to engage in. Many Native peoples today *are* Christian, and yet they become positioned as necessarily inauthentic or “assimilated” even if they are also concurrently involved in struggles for sovereignty and liberation. We found that we could not assert a one-size-fits-all healing model: we had to let the models develop organically from people themselves. We learned that decolonization projects can quickly become very colonial in their implementation. A disidentification strategy might have shifted our focus from expecting boarding school survivors to adopt a particular traditional identity to

providing the means by which their politicization could emerge from their actual multiple identifications.

While helpful, however, a strategy of disidentification has its limits when applied to the problematics of settler colonialism. Some of the inadequacies can be found in Muñoz's reliance on "public spheres" and "counterpublics" as his framework for understanding political engagement. The problem with the public sphere/counterpublic model is that it is implicitly based on a "minority" rather than an anticolonial framework that would seek to dismantle the public sphere. To demonstrate, Muñoz describes those opposing the hostile public sphere as "minority subjects."⁵⁸ But as Ramirez notes, Native struggle is not necessarily centered on trying simply to carve out a minority space within the settler state; it may try to dismantle the settler state completely.⁵⁹ In this regard, a counteridentification, while "utopian" (in Muñoz's words), is not necessarily unimportant. As Waziyatawin demonstrates, these utopian visions can also provide a way to measure the effectiveness of our short-term strategies.⁶⁰ Are our attempts to use society against itself actually working? Or are we simply being co-opted into settler colonial logics? A vision of decolonization can provide a helpful guide for constantly reassessing our strategies and not assuming that our strategies are necessarily effective.

Thus, while queer theorists such as Muñoz tend to be critical of binaries, I think it is important not to have a binary analysis of binaries.⁶¹ The presumption that binarism is bad and hybridity good often works against indigenous interests. Hence, in the case of queer of color critique, the subjectless critique actually relies on a "mixed" or "hybrid" subject who is positioned against the Native foil. For example, in his reading of Arturo Islas's novel *Migrant Souls*, Muñoz links queerness to migrancy and hybridity to mestizaje, seeing them as categories that defy "notions of uniform identity or origins."⁶² In particular, he celebrates one character, Miguel, "as a border Mexican with citizenship in a queer nation or a border queer national claiming citizenship in Aztlán."⁶³ What is erased in this analysis are the land claims of indigenous peoples who come from the land Chicanos may claim as Aztlán. Of course, Muñoz is not unaware of the anti-indigenous problematics within theoretical configurations of hybridity, but when indigeneity is not foregrounded, it tends to disappear in order to enable the emergence of the hybrid subject.

This valorization of mixedness then affects Muñoz's analysis of political engagement. He equates disidentification with a Gramscian politics of maneuver in opposition to a war of position. Antonio Gramsci did not disarticulate the two; both a war of position and a war of maneuver are mutually interdependent. A war of position is required to develop an ideological base that can enable a war of maneuver to build political power. But at the same time, a war of position is also

insufficient in and of itself; oppressed groups must seize state and capitalist apparatuses or re-create alternative models. "The decisive element in every situation is the permanently organized and long-prepared force which can be put into the field when it is judged that a situation is favourable. . . . Therefore the essential task is that of systematically and patiently ensuring that force is formed, developed, and rendered ever more homogeneous, compact, and self aware."⁶⁴ Muñoz, by contrast, dismisses the relevance or importance of a war of position, arguing that it has been temporally displaced by a war of maneuver. "Whereas the war of [position] was a necessary modality of resistance at a moment when minoritarian groups were directly subjugated within hegemony, the more multilayered and tactical war of [maneuver] represents better possibilities of resistance today, when discriminatory ideologies are less naked and more intricate."⁶⁵ This temporal supersession implies that the time of direct colonization and subjugation has passed, thus erasing the current colonization of indigenous peoples globally. Since not all peoples are in a postcolonial relationship vis-à-vis the state, a binary analysis of the colonizer and colonized can sometimes be helpful in highlighting the current conditions of settler colonialism that continue to exist today both in the United States and in the rest of the world.

Thus a politics of disidentification can be helpful to the project of decolonization. It provides a theoretical apparatus that can allow colonized peoples to engage in multiple strategies in order to build a sufficient base of support that can dismantle the settler state. Disidentification forces us to admit that we cannot organize from a space of political purity, that we have been inevitably marked by colonization. When we no longer have to carry the burden of political and cultural purity, we can be more flexible and creative in engaging multiple strategies and creating a plethora of alliances that can enable us to use the logics of settler colonialism against itself. At the same time, however, while political organizing is enabled by disidentification, sometimes it is also enabled by counteridentification that clearly identifies the United States as a settler colonial state. Otherwise, a disidentification approach can lapse into a politics that forecloses the issue of indigenous genocide by presuming the United States should and will always continue to exist.

Queering the Nation-State

The question arises, then, why is settler colonialism so seriously undertheorized in queer studies, even within queer of color critique? One possibility may be that

queer studies has not considered the possibility of alternative forms of nationalism that are not structured by nation-states. To be fair, queer theory does offer strong critiques of the heteronormativity of the nation-state as well as the heteronormativity of the citizen, particularly the U.S. citizen. Puar's and Gopinath's work demonstrates how the noncitizen, particularly in the figure of the refugee or the immigrant, queers the state's heteronormativity. Berlant also looks at how queer activist groups within the United States attempt to reconfigure citizenship within the current nation-state and even to question the "censoring imaginary of the state."⁶⁶ Muñoz similarly gestures to "beyond" the current political system when he says, "Our charge as spectators and actors is to continue disidentifying with this world until we achieve new ones."⁶⁷ Thus, queer theorists seem to exhibit some desire to think beyond the nation-state.

At the same time, queer theory seems to lapse back into presuming the givenness of the nation-state in general, and the United States in particular. For instance, Berlant contends: "It must be emphasized . . . that disidentification with U.S. nationality is not, at this moment, even a theoretical option for queer citizens. . . . We are compelled, then, to read America's lips. What can we do to force the officially constituted nation to speak a new political tongue?"⁶⁸ This statement curiously occludes the struggles of many indigenous peoples who have articulated themselves as belonging to sovereign nations rather than as being U.S. citizens. The reason for this occlusion can be found in another statement: Berlant contends that Native peoples "have long experienced simultaneously the wish to be full citizens and the violence of their partial citizenship."⁶⁹ She collapses Native peoples into the category of racial minority rather than recognize them as colonized peoples struggling against a settler state.

So the settler state is presumed within queer theory, while (as mentioned previously) indigenous nationhood is imagined as simply a primitive mirror image of a heteronormative state. However, many Native scholars and activists are offering internal critiques of contemporary Native politics to imagine potentially nonheteronormative forms of indigenous nationhood. As Taiaiake Alfred, Glen Coulthard, Denetdale, and others note, Native sovereignty struggles are themselves often articulated within, rather than in resistance to, the logics of settler colonialism.⁷⁰ That is, articulations of Native governance and sovereignty often mimic the logics of the settler state rather than draw on forms of indigenous governance that call into question many of the logics of nation-state forms of governance. As they argue, Native sovereignty struggles often focus on gaining recognition from the surrounding settler state. To gain this recognition, Native nations model themselves after

colonial states, mirroring their similar colonial logics. Coulthard explains that this politics of recognition also entraps colonized peoples in a death dance with their colonizers. The “key problem with the politics of recognition when applied to the colonial context . . . [is that it] rests on the problematic assumption that the flourishing of Indigenous Peoples as distinct and self-determining agents is somehow dependent on their being granted recognition and institutional accommodation from the surrounding settler-state and society. . . . Not only will the terms of recognition tend to remain the property of those in power to grant to their inferiors in ways that they deem appropriate, but also under these conditions, the Indigenous population will often come to see their limited and structurally constrained terms of recognition granted to them as *their own*. In effect, the colonized come to *identify* with ‘white liberty and white justice.’”⁷¹ He calls on indigenous activists to shift their focus from seeking recognition from the settler state to seeking recognition from each other as well as other oppressed communities. Native peoples’ ethnographic entrapment within the academy presumes the politics of recognition that Coulthard critiques. That is, Native peoples are compelled to represent themselves properly in order to gain recognition within the academy—they are not supposed to define the terms of discourse itself.

As I have discussed elsewhere, these alternative models of sovereignty are not based on a narrow definition of nation that entails a closely bounded community and ethnic cleansing. Native activists often articulate indigenous forms of nationhood organized around a logic of citizenship based less on rights within a nation and more on a system of interrelatedness and mutual responsibility.⁷² Because these visions of national liberation do not necessarily entail a nation-state form of governance as their end goal, they do not imagine a social structure based on social domination. As such, they can *potentially* challenge logics of heteronormativity because heteropatriarchy is a logic that naturalizes social hierarchy. That is, if under the logic of heteropatriarchy, men are supposed to rule women on the basis of biology, this social hierarchy becomes naturalized. As Karen Warren notes, social domination is effective primarily because it seems natural—otherwise, there is no reason why people would want to live under conditions of domination.⁷³ Once we challenge the idea that domination is somehow “human nature,” we have the potential to question the naturalization of all its manifestations, including heteropatriarchy.

Certainly, those who support heteropatriarchy recognize this connection, as can be seen in the Christian Right leader Charles Colson’s articulation of the relationship between U.S. empire and heteropatriarchy. Explaining that one cause of terrorism is same-sex marriage, he asserts:

Marriage is the traditional building block of human society, intended both to unite couples and bring children into the world. . . . There is a natural moral order for the family. . . . The family, led by a married mother and father, is the best available structure for both child-rearing and cultural health. Marriage is not a private institution designed solely for the individual gratification of its participants. If we fail to enact a Federal Marriage Amendment, we can expect, not just more family breakdown, but also more criminals behind bars and more chaos in our streets. It's like handing moral weapons of mass destruction to those who would use America's depravity to recruit more snipers, more hijackers, and more suicide bombers.⁷⁴

In a different issue of the same magazine, he states:

When radical Islamists see American women abusing Muslim men, as they did in the Abu Ghraib prison, and when they see news coverage of same-sex couples being “married” in U.S. towns, we make our kind of freedom abhorrent—the kind they see as a blot on Allah’s creation. [We must preserve traditional marriage in order to] protect the United States from those who would use our depravity to destroy us.⁷⁵

Colson is linking the well-being of U.S. empire to the well-being of the heteropatriarchal family. Heteropatriarchy is the logic that makes social hierarchy seem natural. Just as the patriarchs rule the family, the elites of the nation-state rule their citizens. Consequently, when colonists first came to the Americas, they saw the necessity of instilling patriarchy in Native communities because they realized that indigenous peoples would not accept colonial domination if their own indigenous societies were not structured on the basis of social hierarchy. Patriarchy, in turn, rests on a gender-binary system; hence it is not a coincidence that colonizers also targeted indigenous peoples who did not fit within this binary model. In addition, gender violence is a primary tool of colonialism and white supremacy. Colonizers did not just kill off indigenous peoples in this land, but Native massacres were always accompanied by sexual mutilation and rape. As I have argued elsewhere, the goal of colonialism is not just to kill colonized peoples but to destroy their sense of being people.⁷⁶ It is through sexual violence that a colonizing group attempts to render a colonized peoples inherently rapable, their lands inherently invadable, and their resources inherently extractable.

As Denetdale notes, however, because we have internalized these logics, our liberation struggles often reify the structures of social domination they claim

to displace. As I have shown above, an uncritical politics of futurity and tradition can contribute to reifying neocolonialism within our struggles for sovereignty. At the 2009 World Social Forum (WSF) I attended, a consensus that seemed to emerge from the indigenous peoples' organizations of Latin America was that indigenous liberation depends on global liberation from the nation-state form of governance. These groups explicitly linked the colonial nation-state system with patriarchy and Western epistemology, calling on indigenous and nonindigenous peoples to break with their internalization of social domination logics to imagine a world based on radical participatory democracy.

These visions of sovereignty entail a critique of Western notions of land as property. Patricia Monture-Angus contends that indigenous nationhood is based not on control of territory or land but on relationship with and responsibility for land.

Although Aboriginal Peoples maintain a close relationship with the land . . . it is not about control of the land. . . . Earth is mother and she nurtures us all. . . . it is the human race that is dependent on the earth and not vice versa. . . .

Sovereignty, when defined as my right to be responsible . . . requires a relationship with territory (and not a relationship based on control of that territory). . . . What must be understood then is that the Aboriginal request to have our sovereignty respected is really a request to be responsible. I do not know of anywhere else in history where a group of people have had to fight so hard just to be responsible.⁷⁷

Similarly, the indigenous peoples groups at the WSF argued that all peoples are welcome on their lands, but they must live in a different relationship with the land. Within the realm of legal recognition, Native peoples are forced to argue for their right to control their own land to be recognized by the settler colonial state. That is, to fight encroachments on their lands, indigenous peoples are forced to argue in courts that it is "their" land. What indigenous peoples cannot question within the dominant legal system is the presumed relationship between peoples and land. That is, should land be a commodity to be controlled and owned by peoples? Once land is not seen as property, then nationhood does not have to be based on exclusive control over territory. If sovereignty is more about being responsible for land, then nationhood can engage all those who fulfill responsibilities for land.

In this respect, the articulations of the indigenous peoples at the WSF, then, are engaging in a radical indigenous subjectless critique of settler colonial-

ism. That is, while these groups noted that they are facing literal and imminent genocide, they were not primarily engaged in a politics of representation to gain recognition from nation-states. Rather, they argued that their goal was not to save themselves but to save the world. They articulated indigeneity as a critical framework for not simply representing the interests of indigenous peoples but deconstructing Western epistemology and global state and economic structures in the interests of building another world that could sustain all peoples. This vision also challenges the presumed heteronormativity of national belonging because it demonstrates that the presumption behind a heteronormative nation is a relationship to land as commodity that must then rely on boundaries to include and exclude. These articulations point to alternative modes of national belonging that are not definitionally exclusivist.

Conclusion

Queer studies highlights the importance of developing analyses that go beyond identity and representational politics. For Native studies in particular, queer theory points to the possibility of going beyond representing the voices of Native peoples, a project that can quickly become co-opted into providing Native commodities for consumption in the multicultural academic-industrial complex. Rather, we have a task to uncover and analyze the logics of settler colonialism as they affect all areas of life. The subjectless critique of queer theory can assist Native studies in critically interrogating how it can unwittingly re-create colonial hierarchies even within projects of decolonization. This critique also sheds light on how Native peoples function within the colonial imaginary—including the colonial imaginary of scholars and movements that claim to be radical. As María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo argues, the revolutionary subject is generally positioned within a logic of development that defines itself against the primitive Native.⁷⁸

At the same time, Native studies can build on queer of color critique's engagement with subjectless critique. In the move to "postidentity," queer theory often reinstates a white supremacist, settler colonialism by appropriating colonized indigenous peoples as foils for the emergence of postcolonial, postmodern, diasporic, and queer subjects. Thus, in making these intellectual projects intersect, perhaps we can speak more of an "identity plus" politics. That is, we may need a politic that marks *all* identities and their relationship to the fields of power in which they are imbricated. As Butler states: "If the notion of the subject, for instance, is no longer given, no longer presumed, that does not mean

that it has no meaning for us, that it ought no longer to be uttered. On the contrary, it means only that the term is not simply a building block on which we rely, an uninterrogated premise for political argument. On the contrary, the term has become an object of theoretical attention, something for which we are compelled to give an account.”⁷⁹ With respect to Native studies, even queer of color critique does not necessarily mark how identities are shaped by settler colonialism. Thus, as Chris Finley notes, a conversation between Native studies and queer theory is important not just because Native peoples “are sexy” (although that is certainly true) but because the logics of settler colonialism *and* decolonization must be queered in order properly to speak to the genocidal present that not only continues to disappear indigenous peoples but reinforces the structures of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and heteropatriarchy that affect all peoples.

Notes

1. Chris Finley, “Decolonizing the Queer Native Body: Bringing ‘Sexy Back’ and out of Native Studies’ Closet” (paper presented at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Conference, Athens, Georgia, April 12, 2008).
2. Michael Warner, introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxvi.
3. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon, 1986); Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang, eds., *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Will Roscoe, *The Zuni Man-Woman* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991).
4. Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 169.
5. Silva, *Toward a Global Idea*, 169.
6. Silva, *Toward a Global Idea*, 27.
7. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, “American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story,” in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (London: Zed, 1999).
8. Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 98, 101, 103, 113–14, 117, 124.
9. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, “Who Stole Native American Studies?” *Wicazo Sa Review* 12

- (1997): 9–28; Winona Stevenson, “‘Ethnic’ Assimilates ‘Indigenous’: A Study in Intellectual Neocolonialism,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 13 (1998): 33–51.
10. Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 19–49, 95–127.
 11. To do so, Audra Simpson calls on Native studies scholars to engage in acts of “ethnographic refusal.” She details how this politics of representation serves as a strategy of containment for Native communities that domesticates a Native politics of decolonization into a strategy for liberal multiculturalism (“On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, ‘Voice,’ and Colonial Citizenship,” *Junctures* 9 [2007]: 67–80). Elizabeth Povinelli and Chow further demonstrate that liberal multiculturalism often relies on a politics of identity representation that is domesticated by nation-state and capitalist imperatives. See Chow, *Protestant Ethic*; Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).
 12. Warner, introduction, xxvi.
 13. Subjectless critique is also developed within Asian American studies. See Kandice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
 14. David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, introduction to “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?” special issue, ed. David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, *Social Text*, nos. 84–85 (2005): 3.
 15. Hiram Perez, “You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat It, Too!” *Social Text*, nos. 84–85 (2005): 171–91; Sarita Echavez See, *The Decolonized Eye: Filipino American Art and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
 16. Warner, introduction, xvii.
 17. Perez, “You Can Have My Brown Body,” 187.
 18. Devon Mihesuah and Angela Cavendar Wilson, eds., *Indigenizing the Academy: Transferring Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *Remember This!* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).
 19. Joyce Green, ed., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (London: Zed, 2007); Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Andrea Smith and J. Kehaulani Kauanui, eds., “Forum: Native Feminisms without Apology,” special issue, *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008).
 20. Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).
 21. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 2–3; emphasis original.
 22. Edelman, *No Future*, 3; emphasis original.

23. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 48.
24. Jennifer Denetdale, "Carving Navajo National Boundaries: Patriotism, Tradition, and the Dine Marriage Act of 2005," *American Quarterly* 60 (2008): 289–94.
25. M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey, "American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance in North America," in *State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End, 1992), 311–44.
26. Edelman, *No Future*, 151.
27. Edelman, *No Future*, 17.
28. José Esteban Muñoz, "Cruising the Toilet: Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Radical Black Traditions, and Queer Futurity," *GLQ* 13 (2007): 363.
29. Muñoz, "Cruising the Toilet," 365.
30. Muñoz, "Cruising the Toilet," 363.
31. David Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 131.
32. Elizabeth Povinelli, *Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
33. Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 22.
34. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 22–23.
35. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 24.
36. Vine Deloria, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CA: North American Press, 1992).
37. Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáʼse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2005).
38. José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 34.
39. Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2005).
40. Berlant, *Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, 6.
41. Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 166.
42. Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (New York: Plume, 1990), 203.
43. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 385; emphasis added.
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