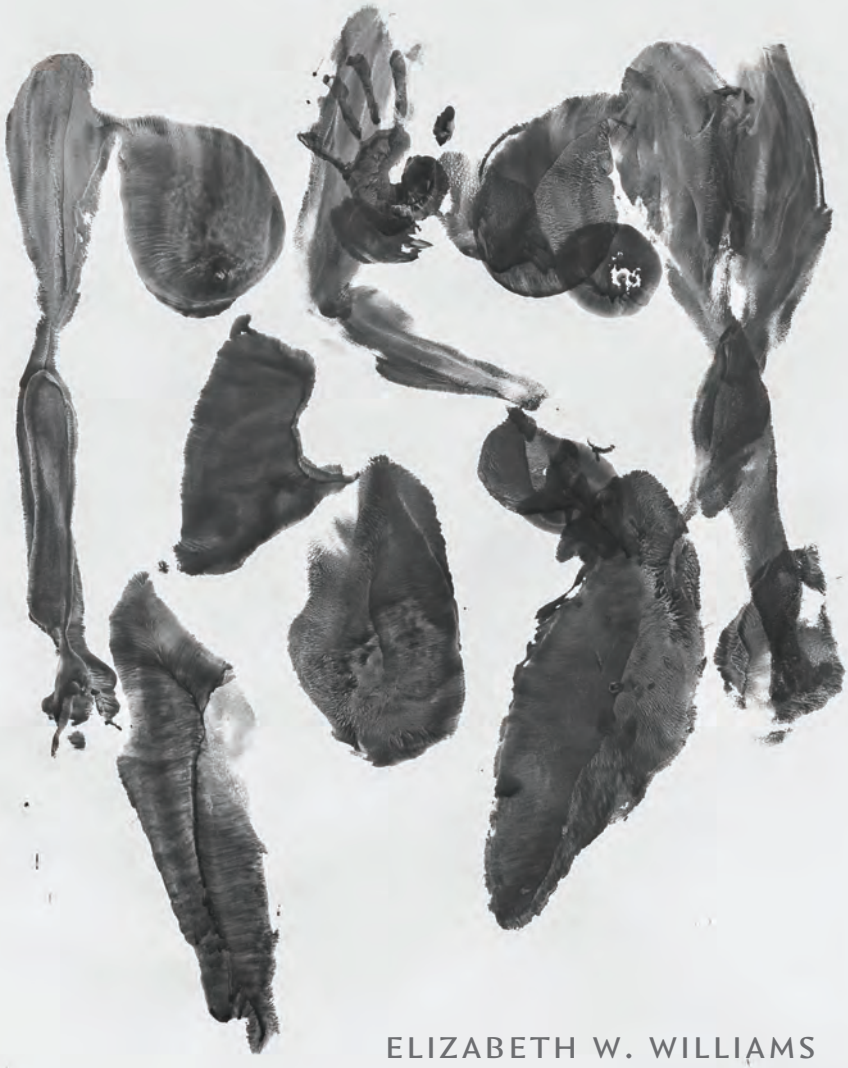
Primitive Normativity

Race, Sexuality, and Temporality in Colonial Kenya



ELIZABETH W. WILLIAMS

Primitive Normativity

ELIZABETH W. WILLIAMS

Primitive Normativity

Race, Sexuality, and Temporality in Colonial Kenya

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS *Durham & London* 2024

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Matthew Tauch
Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro and Comma Base by
Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Williams, Elizabeth W., [date] author.
Title: Primitive normativity : race, sexuality, and temporality in colonial Kenya / Elizabeth W. Williams.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2023014305 (print)
LCCN 2023014306 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478025498 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478020714 (hardcover)
ISBN 9781478027621 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Sex customs—Kenya—History. | Sex customs—Great Britain—Colonies—History. | Men, White—Sexual behavior—Great Britain—Colonies—History. |
Indigenous peoples—Great Britain—Colonies—History. |
Race discrimination. | Great Britain—Colonies—Race relations—History. | Great Britain—Colonies—Kenya. | Kenya—Race relations. |
BISAC: HISTORY / Africa / East | SOCIAL SCIENCE / Gender Studies
Classification: LCC HQ18.K4 W557 2024 (print) | LCC HQ18.K4 (ebook) | DDC 306.7096762—dc23/eng/20230609
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023014305
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023014306

Cover art: Syowia Kyambi, *Traces of Her Walking into the Wall (Chapter I Performative Marks)*, 2018. Ash and ivory and black pigment with archival glue on acid-free paper, 170 cm × 328 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

For Jesús Estrada-Pérez, who left too soon.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ADC	Assistant District Commissioner
BL	British Library, London, United Kingdom
BNA	British National Archives, London, United Kingdom
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
DC	District Commissioner
EAINC	East African Indian National Congress
EAP	East African Protectorate
EAS	East African Standard
EAWL	East African Women's League
IPC	Indian Penal Code
KAR	King's African Rifles
KNA	Kenya National Archives, Nairobi, Kenya
LEGCO	Legislative Council
MP	Member of Parliament
PP	Parliamentary Papers
RH	Rhodes House Archive, Oxford University Libraries, Oxford, United Kingdom

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I always read the acknowledgments. From a practical standpoint, it's good to see the scholars that a book has been in conversation with, and the institutions and programs that have facilitated it. But mostly, I am interested in other things: I like to figure out who people are friends with, attempt to recreate the timeline of their love lives, suss out familial relationships, and ideally to hear some details about their pets. In other words, I read the acknowledgments in an attempt to find the person who exists beneath and within the text that will follow.

Perhaps because of my own (possibly prurient) interest in acknowledgments, my own have been challenging to write. I worry that I will leave someone out, that I will fail to do my duty by the friends and companions and mentors who have traveled with me over the decade it took me to complete this project. Writing these words also compels me to revisit the events of these past ten years, some of which have been magnificent and some of which have been almost unbearable. Here, then, is a necessarily incomplete but nevertheless heartfelt list of some of the folks who have made this book—and the years it took to complete it—possible.

This project has been supported by several grants and fellowships. I thank the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change for a year of financial support, space to write, and a vibrant and eminently friendly intellectual community. A Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship funded a year of writing, while a Thesis Research Travel Grant provided the necessary funds to visit Kenyan archives—both funded by the University of Minnesota. In Kenya, my thanks go to the Department of History and Archeology at the University of Nairobi, and in particular then chair Dr. Ephraim Wahome, for providing me with an institutional home. Luise White generously agreed to read an early draft of the manuscript: I'm grateful for her extremely thoughtful comments as well as for her groundbreaking scholarship. My thanks also to the archivists and librarians at Rhodes House, University of Oxford, the Kenya National Archives, the

Jomo Kenyatta Library at the University of Nairobi, the British Library, and the British National Archives.

A huge thank you goes to Anna Clark, who has been endlessly supportive and an academic inspiration since I first read her work as an undergraduate student. I was tremendously lucky to work with her. Patricia Lorcin awes me with her ability to produce rich and important scholarship with seemingly effortless grace. Fun fact: she's also an extremely impressive Surrealist painter. M. J. Maynes, Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, Reg Kunzel, and Jigna Desai offered valuable feedback on the earliest iterations of this project; they continue to provide wonderful examples of how to produce insightful, rigorous scholarship. The opportunity to learn from a group of brilliant and fierce feminists is a blessing that everyone deserves and far too few of us get. I'm also deeply indebted to Jennifer Hall-Witt of Smith College; she introduced me to gender history, taught me to write and think like a historian, revised countless drafts of my senior thesis, and put up with a fair amount of crying with grace and patience.

At the University of Minnesota, I was blessed to build a queer family. The members of "Queer World" have been inviable allies in alternative world-making and have graciously played L-Word bingo at approximately six of my birthday parties. Karisa Butler-Wall is a brilliant feminist and an accomplished Zumba dancer. Watching her transition out of academia and build a life full of meaning, intentionality, and connection has left me proud and inspired. Angela Carter has taught me so much about disability studies and has supported my habit of breaking into song. Raechel Tiffe is creative and strong and brave and extremely enthusiastic about Catch-Phrase. Libby Sharrow is exceptional in everything they do and is one of the best storytellers I know. Eli Vitulli is smart and sensitive and very bad at responding to text messages, but we love him anyway. E. G. Nelson provided a much-needed connection to the world outside academia, and her bike race "Cirque de So Gay" remains the Minneapolis social event of the season. Jesús Estrada-Pérez was a brilliant scholar who felt deeply and lived loudly. I'm lucky to have known and loved him.

At Minnesota I was also blessed with a supportive community of peers. I benefited from the insights of several writing groups, the first with Mia Fischer, Katy Mohrman, and Jesús Estrada-Pérez, and the second with Melissa Hampton, Joanne Jahnke-Wegner, and Laura Luepke. Special thanks go to Adam Blacker, who has been enormously supportive and generous, and also forthcoming with facts about small German towns. Katie Lambright, Brooke Depenbusch, Wesley Lummus, Ketaki Jaywant,

and Melissa Hampton helped me establish a small but highly defensible historian enclave in uptown Minneapolis. Ann Zimo, Jecca Namakkal, and Emily Bruce paved the way and never hesitated to offer advice and encouragement. Sophie House and Aubrey Menard made my stay in Oxford fun and saw me through a very tumultuous trans-Atlantic romance—I'm very grateful for their friendship. Lars Mackenzie and Sarah Records have cooked me countless dinners, shared their lovely pets, and welcomed me into their beautiful family with open arms. Anne Wolf has gotten me through the rough patches with commiseration, advice, and pictures of her charming kid. Meryl Lauer has been a steadfast and delightful friend, and an invaluable writing partner. Sami Pfeffer is a brilliant free spirit—I've learned so much from them about how to be brave and take risks.

I'm also very grateful for the folks that helped me publish this book. My editor at Duke, Liz Ault, was first a friend and fellow graduate student at Minnesota. Placing this project in the hands of someone I know, trust, and respect made the process so much easier—I'm grateful for her efforts and her unfailing belief in this project. The anonymous reviewers greatly improved this book with their thoughtful comments and trenchant critiques. I'm also grateful to the team at Duke, including Emily Estelle and Lisa Lawley, copyeditor Katherine Dhurandhar, and Brian Ostrander of Westchester Publishing Services for their work on the editing and production of this book.

The University of Massachusetts at Amherst provided me with my first job and introduced me to a number of wonderful colleagues. I stanned for Laura Briggs long before I met her, and she more than lived up to my expectations as a friend, neighbor, and mentor. Kiran Asher, Lezlie Frye, and Jina Kim made my short stay in Western Mass a great one. During that time, I also met the incomparable Jack Gieseking, who started as a significant other and—in the true spirit of queer kinship—remains a beloved friend. Jack's feedback and support have been crucial to the completion of this project, and he also taught me the correct way to pronounce GIS.

I was lucky enough to score a tenure-track job in the department of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Kentucky. I really, really love my colleagues—they are smart and fierce and devoted to making change. Carol Mason deserves a special shoutout for being an outstanding friend and mentor. Patricia Ehrkamp adopted me as an honorary geographer—her friendship and guidance have been invaluable. I'm grateful to Anastasia Todd and Miles Feroli for their humor, their compassion, and their cat menagerie. Sharon Yam and Asher Finkel have shared many

meals and dog training expeditions, and they let me sit around their house when I'm feeling lonely. As members of the LTT writing group, Sharon, Anastasia, and Karrieann Soto Vega have also provided generous feedback on parts of this book. Karrieann, her partner Jared Whear, and their dog Bizu the Sato have also provided much joy and friendship. Chelsea Ebin and Jack Vimo have offered countless vegan dinners and much-coveted queer companionship. Nikki Brown is a beacon of light and a trusted advisor on all things academic. Lindsey Chambers has taught me about philosophy and watched a lot of reality tv with me. My platonic life-partner Nari Senanayake is a priceless gem: calm, thoughtful, brilliant, and compassionate. She makes my life better in countless ways.

My sister, Olivia, remains my oldest and best ally. She has coached me through countless panic attacks, exposed me to the joys of *The Real Housewives of Atlanta,* and taught me several useful household spells. Her kids, Wes and Freddy, bring incalculable joy and endless poop jokes into my life. My honorary auntie Christine Longoria is one of the brightest spirits I've ever known—she's a continuous example of how to live a life that is full, bold, and brave. Rachael McMillan Coe, my first friend, is a wonderful bonus sister and an all-around mensch. Thanks to my parents, Reed and Martha Williams, who have always believed in and supported my academic aspirations. Reed has also taught me a lot about North American mammals, great meats of the world, and the importance of sharpening your kitchen knives. Last but certainly not least, a couple of nonhumans have brought immense joy into my life. My dearly departed cat, Miss Lady, started as a loan but became an essential companion and an endless source of love and tuna-scented breath. Rubin the Great Dane mix (named for Gayle Rubin—she's really into leather) causes me endless anxiety, drains my bank account, and hogs the couch. I love her very much.

Introduction

Primitive Normativity

> The average native is simply an unmoral creature, and as a general rule he becomes immoral only after contact with certain forms of civilization, either Eastern or Western.
>
> MEMO TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, COLONY OF KENYA

THIS PROJECT BEGAN with a puzzle. Early in my graduate program, I was searching for a research topic that would allow me to examine discourses of race and sexuality in the British Empire. While looking for a paper topic for a graduate seminar in African history, I started examining primary sources from the Mau Mau rebellion. At first glance, these sources seemed to validate all I had learned about imperialism and sexuality, as they derided the Mau Mau as sexual deviants, supposedly involved in cannibalistic orgies that represented an atavistic return to savagery. Yet, these sources also contained a more surprising discourse: the officials, settlers, and clergy who penned these accounts consistently held up the supposedly deviant practices of the Mau Mau rebels as evidence of their distance from *real* Africans. Again and again, sources insisted that the Mau Mau could not possibly represent the *authentic* African perspective precisely because of the gendered and sexual aberrations of which they supposedly took part.

What was distinctive and disturbing about Mau Mau sexuality, both settlers and officials agreed, was how intensely it contrasted with the sexual

normativity of the "uncontaminated" African population, who supposedly practiced a sexuality that was exclusively heterosexual, focused on reproduction, and absent of practices like rape, prostitution, pedophilia, and even masturbation. In fact, this notion that "authentic" Kenyan African sexuality was distinctly normative became an important facet of anti–Mau Mau propaganda: colonialists claimed that the Mau Mau rebels could not possibly represent the sentiments of the broader population since their excessive sexuality marked them as essentially un-African. Few of the histories of Mau Mau that I subsequently read seemed concerned with this discourse, and yet for me it seemed to beg a number of key questions. Why did the narratives about Mau Mau–era sexuality seem to differ so markedly from other histories of sexuality and imperialism? How far back did this narrative of African sexual normativity extend? And how did normativity—tied so closely to the bodies of those with power in other places and times—come to be ascribed to the most subaltern figures in Kenya? What could this shift tell us about the nature of normativity and deviance in race-making projects?

This book, *Primitive Normativity: Race, Sexuality, and Temporality in Colonial Kenya*, attempts to answer these questions by tracing narratives of African sexual normativity back to the very beginnings of Kenyan colonialism. I unpack a distinctive narrative about Kenyan African sexuality that emerged through the colonial encounter. Kenyan Africans, this narrative held, were unfettered by the moral restraints that more "civilized" Europeans placed on themselves. Yet, precisely because Africans never had to suppress their sexual drives, experts believed them to be incapable of developing the forms of sexual neurosis—including hysteria, homosexuality, and frigidity—that seemed to be plaguing European communities at the turn of the century. This primitive normativity meant that Africans were viewed as more sexually unpolluted than the more "deviant" populations who colonized them. Colonists were able to argue that Africans must be "protected" from forces like urbanization, Western-style education, and political participation that would expose them to forms of "civilized" sexual deviance. Not coincidentally, these were the very forces that tended to produce the most vocal and effective critics of colonial rule. Furthermore, this protection from "contamination" would be provided by more *abnormal* communities of settlers, settlers whose very distance from the natural, healthy sexual mores of the colonized signaled their more advanced civilizational status.

In providing a genealogy of primitive normativity, I'm suggesting that normativity and deviance are produced both *in relation* to each other and

through other vectors of power, most notably race. I show that settlers' strategic claims to deviance were mobilized to gain and maintain access to power and to bolster the goals of the settler state. Normativity, meanwhile, functioned as an accusation that furthered and legitimated processes that targeted African populations for exclusion from the social body and even the human. In coining the term "primitive normativity," I am attempting to point to the degree to which ideas about African sexuality were tied to temporality, to an evolutionary narrative that placed African peoples in a prior moment in time. Their sexuality was thus deemed "normative" to the extent that it was supposedly absent of deviant practices, *but also* because it was understood to be suited to their particular stage of evolution.

Despite the ubiquity of sexual discourses in the archival record, sexuality has been relatively understudied in the history of colonial Kenya. Like much of African history, the historiography of colonial Kenya has been heavily weighted toward social histories. Since the late 1980s, however, several studies have adopted a more discursive approach to the history of colonial Kenya. Works by Brett Shadle, Dane Kennedy, David Anderson, Will Jackson, Paul Ocobock, Tabitha Kanogo, Lynn Thomas, and Carolyn Martin Shaw have greatly expanded our understanding of the operation of race, class, and gender in colonial Kenya.[1] Yet my project departs from these studies by incorporating insights from two fields that have not been consistently applied to African studies: settler colonial studies and queer theory. The next two sections expand on the concept of primitive normativity through its relationship to these literatures. First, I place the discourses surrounding Kenyan Africans within the context of settler colonialism and evolutionary time, via a brief cameo from your problematic fave.

The Temporality of Settler Colonial Sexuality

To understand how and why this discourse of primitive normativity emerged in colonial Kenya, we need to think of both colonialism and sexuality as temporal constructs. To illustrate this point, I shall briefly direct your attention to that doyenne of catchy pop music, Taylor Swift. In particular, I point you to the video for "Wildest Dreams" (2015), where Taylor appears decked out in 1950s safari gear and singing a song that, as far as I can tell, celebrates the joys of hooking up with a standardly attractive white man whilst being a normatively attractive white woman—in the great outdoors. We see the wildebeest on their migration, a giraffe

standing by majestically, a lion roaring and shaking his mane while Swift vamps in a silk gown. A zebra wanders through the set of an Old Hollywood film, presumably searching for the craft services table. What we do not see in this tableau of African imperialism is any African *people*. The landscape is chock-full of exotic game animals—Teddy Roosevelt would have wet himself with excitement—but absolutely denuded of any nonwhite people. We don't even see the standard stock figure of a blank-faced servant in kanzu and fez, holding a tray of gin and tonics.

I bring up Taylor Swift not because she is fun to mock (although, let's be honest, there's that too), but because this video neatly encapsulates the temporal narrative that has been told and *continues* to be told about colonial Kenya since almost its beginning: Kenya is a place out of time, an Eden before the fall, a place where man and beast live in terrifying closeness, where the landscapes cleave dramatically and the sun beats down mercilessly, and where white people go to reconnect with their own primitive urges, their own wildest dreams. But in the real Kenya, this Edenic project was populated not just with charismatic animals but also with millions of Indigenous people farming, grazing their animals, and living on the land. In the temporal framework of colonialism, these people too were viewed as emblems of a lost time, as occupants of a past era that was both spatialized and racialized.

Already the clock is ticking a little queerly. The notion that time operates differently in different geographic spaces—that in fact large swaths of the globe exist *in the past*—is and was central to imperial projects. It has the distinction of being both completely illogical *and* accepted as a commonplace by the imperial powers of the "modern West" for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But what makes this temporality queer—not just strange, but *queer*—is that the temporal registers of colonial Kenya were, in key ways, demarcated and delineated by sexuality. Sexuality was, in fact, used consistently to *mark time* in colonial Kenya, a chronography that became a well-worn tool of both settlers and officials in their effort to establish and maintain white supremacy.

When I claim that sexuality is a temporal category, I don't mean to say that conceptions of sexuality change over time, although that is of course also true. Rather, I am pointing to how constructs of sexuality make a set of claims that link bodies, acts, desires, and orientations to particular temporal formations. I find the language of queer time to be helpful here not only in its ability to tie sexuality to the multiple timescapes of the settler colony but also to cue us in to how the settler colony disrupts and reshapes

time through the language of sex. It's my contention that attending to the central temporal conflict of the settler colony—the idea that multiple timescapes coexist in a single space—can help us understand how sexuality operates as an alibi of empire.

Let's unpack this temporal conflict. Colonial choreographies established two distinct times—the "here and now" of settlers and officials, and the "here and then" of both Africans and indeed *Africa* itself. (The colony's other racial groups—primarily Arabs and South Asians—were plotted into a third temporal regime that existed somewhere between now and then, a dynamic I'll discuss more in chapter 3.) While these temporalities were envisioned as distinct, the realities of settler colonialism meant that they slid against each other constantly, in precisely the kind of "frottage" that Keguro Macharia has suggested is constitutive of coloniality itself.[2]

This rubbing and chafing of settler "modernity" and Indigenous "primitivity" informed one of the central discursive preoccupations of the settler state—the problem of people sliding *in* and *out of* time. This dangerous temporal slip could occur in two separate registers and acquired two different names in colonial discourse. The first register was "detribalization," which represented the threat of an African who advanced too quickly into the time of "here and now." As Matthew Carotenuto writes, in Kenya, the establishment of Native Reserves, kipande pass laws, and the forced "repatriation" of poor or unemployed urban Africans all emanated from "a paternalistic state view that African colonial citizenship should be limited to the confines of rural life and carefully managed under the disciplinary oversight of static institutions of 'tradition' and gerontocracy."[3] In this imperial fantasy, "detribalization" occurred when Africans ceased to be under the control of these institutions and lost touch with the Indigenous norms that supposedly governed rural "tribal" life. The detribalized African was a central bogeyman of colonial discourse, blamed for urban crime, political discontent, and—importantly for this study—for all evidence of sexual "deviance" in African men and women. As the official E. B. Hosking stated in a report on the slums of Nairobi in 1930, "It is generally held that though the native in his own reserve is an estimable person of many virtues his detribalised cousin that haunts the towns is the scum of the Colony."[4] While Hosking felt that Nairobi might prove to be the exception to this rule, provided that adequate housing was made available for urban Africans, his description of settler attitudes toward African urbanization points to the ways in which the detribalization narrative annexed time to space—the rural was viewed as safe for Africans because it

was the space of the "traditional" past, the urban as threatening because it was the space of the "modern" present.

For settlers and the colonial state, the solution to the dangerous detribalization of Africans lay in the preservation of "traditional" rural lifestyles: as historian Megan Vaughan writes, "the disruptive changes wrought by colonialism and capitalism could, so it was argued, be contained if only people obeyed their 'traditional' leaders and followed 'traditional' norms."[5] Detribalization presented a threat because it was believed that "primitive" Africans could learn bad behaviors through contact with "modernity." Even more importantly, the detribalization discourse stressed that to move *too quickly* from "primitivity" to modernity was to invite mental instability—the culmination of this discourse is clearly evidenced in the officially adopted explanation of the Mau Mau rebellion as a form of mass psychopathy among detribalized Gikuyu, which I'll discuss in the final chapter.[6] (The alternate spelling "Kikuyu" is also frequently used in both colonial-era and present-day histories of Kenya.) The detribalized native was depicted as essentially an African living out of time—a primitive person living in the space of modernity—and as I will show in this book, the key symptoms of this (fictional) social disorder were sexual and gendered in nature.

While detribalization represented a perilous forward move, its twin threat, degeneration, reversed the directionality. If detribalization implied a too rapid progression into the now, degeneration was the terminology for those "civilized" persons who slipped backward into the past. Again, the primary symptoms of degeneration were sexual. From the mid-nineteenth century, European powers worried about subjects who could no longer contribute to the growth and power of the nation. Those with impotence, neurosis, frigidity, homosexual tendencies, or fetishes threatened the health of the nation, both because their bodies were understood to be in physical decline and because their sexualities did not support the biopolitical goals of the state.[7] Those populations who appeared to be the most fecund—the poor—were also those marked as more "primitive" than the civilized middle class. Thus, especially in the post–World War I era, Western nations increasingly looked for ways to put middle-class men and women back in touch with their "primitive" roots. National parks, gymnasiums, and Boy Scout troops did this work, but so did more diffuse movements like jazz or modern art. All of these artistic and social movements sought to bring the "primitive" space of the colonized world to the metropole: if degeneration was a problem of excessive civilization, then these movements sought to incorporate the "primitive" into the daily life of Europeans.

As scholars like Will Jackson and Brett Shadle have shown, the potential "degeneration" of poor whites (often evidenced by a tendency to interact socially or sexually with Africans or Asians) was a concern of both colonial officials and settlers.[8] But in this book, I'm more interested in a different discourse, one that depicted Kenya as a reparative space where "overcivilized" Europeans might reconnect with their primitive sexual drives. Think back to Taylor Swift and the empty Eden that she evoked in "Wildest Dreams"—a name that in itself taps into Freudian ideas that the primitive "wild" self remains buried in the subconscious of "civilized" minds, making an occasional (but informative) appearance in our dreams. As I explore more in chapter 5, popular representations of Kenya conveyed the sense that this was a space where the subconscious could come to the fore, where frigid and dysfunctional Europeans could tap back into their sexual drives. In fact, this was viewed as absolutely necessary for the settler colonial state to thrive—new generations of settlers must be produced to ensure its continuation.

On its surface, the fear of detribalization/degeneration seems to bely the stated goals of twentieth-century imperialism: to usher colonized populations into modernity. Like most colonies in late-stage colonialism, Kenya was governed through the philosophy of trusteeship—the notion that the colonial power must hold land and resources in trust for a population that was not yet fit for self-rule. Trusteeship envisioned the colonized as wards of the state, recognizing the wards' right to inherit as soon as they should come of age. The premise that the wards would one day grow up and come into their inheritance proved to be a troublesome teleology since European states showed no intention of giving up their imperial holdings.

Here it's helpful to consider how this spatialization of time operated in the peculiar arena of the settler colony, and particularly in the African settler colony, where (unlike in Canada, Australia, or the United States) Indigenous populations were generally not targeted for elimination but rather preserved so as to provide labor for settler farms, mines, and businesses. In settler colonies, minority populations established claims to land, and even to indigeneity, and premised their lifestyles on the notion that they and their descendants were there to stay. Settler states had a clear biopolitical project—to produce more settlers—that belied the notion that land was merely being held "in trust" for a population that was not yet ready to inherit the state. Instead, settlers envisioned a future in which their descendants would continue to own disproportionate amounts of land and wield disproportionate influence in the colony.

Work by Mark Rifkin and Scott Lauria Morgensen has illustrated the need to consider settler colonial sexualities as distinct from those in other kinds of colonial spaces[9]—yet because their work assumes a North American model of settler colonialism, it is not adequate for understanding other kinds of settler colonial states. These include African settler colonies, where Indigenous populations tended to remain numerically superior throughout the colonial period. A recent study by T. J. Tallie brings a queer theoretical analysis to the study of settler colonialism in Natal, another space where settler colonialism was invested in the *preservation* of Indigenous populations (so as to ensure a consistent labor supply) rather than in their elimination. Tallie's study insightfully considers how Nguni peoples were rendered "queer" through the colonial process. "If settler colonialism itself is presented as a form of orientation," Tallie notes, "of making a recognizable and inhabitable home space for European arrivals on indigenous land, then native peoples and their continued resistance can serve to 'queer' these attempted forms of order. In such circumstances, the customs, practices, and potentially the very bodies of indigenous peoples can become queer despite remaining ostensibly heterosexual in their orientation and practice, as their existence constantly undermines the desired order of an emergent settler state."[10]

This project builds on this scholarship, answering the demand to produce studies of sexuality that attend to the specific dynamics of the settler state. However, my research reverses the directionality of these arguments, outlining a case study in which queerness became annexed to the colonizer while a narrative of sexual normativity was ascribed to colonized people. Zakiyyah Iman Jackson has talked about the plasticity of Blackness as a racial construct, its ability to take on any form that will ensure the continuation of white supremacy.[11] While representing a dramatic reversal of the standard narrative of African sexual pathology, the discourse of primitive normativity served the same ends—maintaining the power of the white supremacist state.

What's So Queer about Primitive Normativity?

What does it mean to apply queerness as an analytic to forms of sexuality marked as normative? In other words, how am I deploying the terms normative and queer in this text? I use queerness not to characterize acts or desires or orientations but rather to outline the epistemic regimes that in-

formed the colonial discourses and, in turn, policies that produced racial categories in Kenya. I use queerness not as a device to uncover the "truth" of colonial sexual practices but rather to illustrate how race and sexuality were constructed in relation to each other and in relation to notions of temporality. African sexuality was marked as "normative" to the extent that it was envisioned as appropriate to the evolutionary stage of "primitive" peoples. The behaviors and desires that supposedly characterized African sexuality were also deemed normative in that they were viewed as exclusively heterosexual, reproductively oriented, and absent of "deviant" sexual practices such as homosexuality, prostitution, and rape. However, it was precisely this normativity, this lingering in an earlier stage of (sexual) evolution, that fundamentally marked Africans as Other—as people (to borrow from Rahul Rao's framework) who existed out of time.[12] While the sexual behaviors, desires, and orientations were normative, it was the timescape of African sexuality that was fundamentally queer.

We can make more sense of this seeming contradiction by looking closely at the work of some other folks who have explained how discourses of the queer and normative interweave in surprising ways with the construction of race. We are used to thinking about normativity—and, more specifically, heterosexuality—as the opposite of queerness. At least in academic circles, we also tend to think of queerness as positive, as antiestablishment, even as emancipatory. But when we put race and queerness into conversation, we frequently find that queerness often operates otherwise—as Macharia writes provocatively, "I do not think black and queer play well together."[13] Cathy Cohen's now classic essay "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens" is a case in point. In this piece, Cohen critiques how "queer politics has served to reinforce simple dichotomies between heterosexuality and everything 'queer'" without seeking to understand "the ways in which power informs and constitutes privileged and marginalized subjects on both sides of this dichotomy."[14] In particular, Cohen draws our attention to the way that certain racialized figures become marked as queer despite or even because of their heterosexuality, such as the "welfare queen," a figure "who may fit into the category of heterosexual, but whose sexual choices are not perceived as normal, moral, or worthy of state support."[15] This is an ostensibly straight figure who is nevertheless rendered queer by virtue of the intersections of race, class, and gender. In fact, it's her heterosexuality—her ability to reproduce through heterosexual sex—as read through her race that marks her out as fundamentally queer. Cohen's elaboration of "heterosexuals on the (out) side of heteronormativity"[16] is useful for this study

in that it shows how race can fundamentally reshape how sexualities are oriented toward normativity.

In using queer theory to rethink the relationship between normativity and power, I also build on work by a burgeoning group of Africanist scholars who have theorized queerness as a colonial formation. Marc Epprecht has historicized the emergence of the idea that Africans are exclusively heterosexual, tying it to colonial regimes of power and trends in sexology and anthropology.[17] Specifically, he contests the common narrative (articulated by a number of modern African politicians and religious leaders) that homosexuality was introduced to Africa through imperialism, arguing instead that *homophobia* was a colonial import. Taking a different tack, Neville Hoad has considered how Africans were rendered "queer" through colonial processes. Like Epprecht, he considers the intellectual trends that tied African sexuality to temporal regimes, but he resists the tendency to identify colonial and precolonial African sexual practices as "homosexual," since the use of this language "precisely reproduces the terms of the debate it wishes to end in a landscape of assertion and counterassertion where finding practices that look 'homosexual' to a Western eye has little intellectual or political capital."[18] Instead, he focuses less on identities and more on representations, drawing particular attention to the ways in which nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discourses related the sexuality of "primitive" peoples to "deviant" Westerners. "What the decadent/degenerate shares with the primitive," he writes, "is a position on the fringes of the normative evolutionary narrative."[19]

While I draw heavily on the work of these two scholars, particularly on their attention to the temporal dimensions of the discourses surrounding African sexuality, I diverge in a few key respects. Most obviously, the scholarship that applies queer theory to African studies is heavily focused on southern Africa; by extending our analysis to other parts of the continent, we can develop a broader and deeper understanding of colonial sexual formations. I also expand my examination to consider not only hetero-/homosexuality but also other sexual practices and desires that drew the attention of colonial officials and settlers. As Keguro Macharia notes, "Focusing on the acceptability of homosexual acts and identities leaves unexplored other histories of intimate dissidence and policing."[20] By extending our analysis to claims about not only same-sex desire but also rape, sex for pay, intergenerational sex, solo sex, and other practices outside of the "charmed circle" of sexuality,[21] I am able to accomplish my second goal: accounting for the prevalence of a discourse that tied Kenyan

African sexuality to *both* evolutionary backwardness and normativity. Ann Laura Stoler and Macharia have both observed that the Foucauldian quartet of "the homosexual, the masturbating child, the hysterical woman, and the Malthusian couple" was shaped in relation to a fifth category: the colonized, "primitive" subject.[22] This book explores this relationship, mapping the dialectic relationship between anxieties about degeneration among the most "civilized" populations and fears about the contaminating effect of modernity on colonized peoples.

In his study of queerness in the African diaspora, Keguro Macharia offers another provocation. He asks how the thingification of African peoples impacted their relationship to queerness and normativity, and how it should shape our scholarly approaches to the study of sexuality in African contexts. While queer studies has been primarily interested in sexuality as "the place of subjectification," queer Black studies calls instead for a study that names "theft and commodification, thing-making and gender-undifferentiation. The queerness of the black diaspora," he continues, "would stem from an effort to describe this figuration, which is unaccounted for in sexology's archives: the thing 'severed' from its 'active desire.'"[23] In other words, the desire to find sexual subjects or subjectivities can problematically redirect us from the work of locating and describing racial regimes and how they produced Africans and their diasporic descendants as populations, as generalities, as resources and commodities. As the next section describes, my archival approach largely eschews questions of sexuality subjectivity, focusing instead on uncovering the processes that ascribed a single, shared sexuality to all Kenyan Africans, and showing how it was used to dispossess them.

Method and Archives

This project is rooted in archival research. I conducted research in three key locations: the British National Archives in London, the Rhodes House Archive in Oxford, and the Kenyan National Archives in Nairobi. I also made rather promiscuous use of published primary sources, from ethnographies to memoirs to romance novels. It's worth saying a bit about what these archives are and are not capable of doing, as well as how I utilized them with these limitations in mind.

I approached the archive as a space where I might reconstruct discourses surrounding gender and sexuality as they related to race and power. As

Regina Kunzel puts it, archives are "less depositories of documents than themselves historical agents, organized around unwritten logics of inclusion and exclusion, with the power to exalt certain stories, experiences, and events and to bury others."[24] Colonial archives are great places to find discourses about sexuality. They are often less able to offer information about people's actual sexual desires, practices, and orientations. This is because, as Foucault pointed out, people are likely to enter the archive only at the moment they become infamous, at the moment when their lives brush up against power in exceptional ways.[25] It's also because the people who compiled the archive tend not to be the same people that the archive is discussing and representing. But perhaps most importantly, it's because colonial archives were compiled with an agenda, and that agenda was the maintenance of the colonial state. In short, we're just not likely to get an unmediated, accurate look at the sex lives of African people in a written archive.

There are a number of strategies that I could have used to try to search for data about the sexual subjectivity of Kenyan Africans. For instance, a number of folks have asked me why I did not conduct oral histories for this project. The most basic answer is that the people who experienced the events discussed in most of this book are no longer alive. It would probably have been possible for me to locate folks who were alive during the Mau Mau rebellion, but as a white queer American woman, I did not feel that it was appropriate for me to ask elderly Kenyans about sex and sexuality. (Interestingly, and I think quite problematically, a number of folks along the way have suggested that I could interview present-day Kenyans to gain data about, for instance, anti-Asian sentiments in the 1920s. This seems to me to indicate some of the most egregious ways that the idea of Africa and Africans as unchanging and essential has filtered into the academic consciousness.)

But most importantly, I didn't ask these kinds of questions because part of my argument is that any time we associate *this kind of people* with *this kind of sex* we create the potential to do a certain kind of violence. I'm not interested in telling you what kinds of sex African people *actually had* because I think this is a question that reinforces the racial epistemes that I'm trying to critique. It recirculates the notion of essential racial difference that was introduced by colonists. It also trucks in the same logic that has led several African leaders to proclaim that certain sexual practices (notably homosexuality) are foreign to Africa, and hence cannot be tolerated. Of course, it's possible to talk about the messages that Africans received about sexuality from their cultures, or about sexual practices or orientations that are important and meaningful to specific cultures.[26] But

the discourses that I trace in this book asserted that Africans engaged in a particular set of sexual practices, and eschewed a number of other kinds of sex, and that these preferences were a result not of cultural norms or local histories, but of the essential racial difference of African people. To investigate whether such representations were "true" or "untrue" seems to me to offer this narrative a degree of legitimacy that it does not deserve.

So if I did not approach the archive looking for the "truth" of African sexuality, how did I approach it? My method follows two scholars who have viewed the archive not as a space of absence and incompletion but rather as a subject in its own right, a space of imperfect abundance. I was greatly influenced by Ann Laura Stoler's invocation to examine sources "along the archival grain."[27] This approach is a rejoinder to the social historian's imperative to read "against the grain" of the archive, to read the archive for what is unsaid, for what is left out, and especially for who is silenced. The latter is a valuable and essential reading method that has enabled social histories. But it leaves us in the position of treating the colonial archive as a potential source of "truth." Not only might this truth not be available in archives produced by and for those exerting colonial power, but the search for this truth itself might problematically reiterate some of the empiricist modes of colonialism itself.

Reading *along* the archival grain, meanwhile, is primarily invested in determining how the structure of the archive, its internal logics and overarching frameworks, determine the kinds of evidence that can be found therein. When we read along the archival grain, we approach the colonial archive as a genre, and are attentive to how the rules and norms of that genre shape the kinds of information that are included, as well as those that are left out. As Stoler puts it, there is benefit in "attending not only to colonialism's archival content, but to the principles and practices of governance lodged in particular archival forms."[28] Through the multiyear process of reading this archive, I gradually learned these principles, from how to interpret the annoyed marginalia of a colonial official on a memorandum, to the right way to sign off a letter to the editor of the *East African Standard*, to the fifteen or so words of Kiswahili to insert into your memoir for authenticity's sake. Unlike in Stoler's work, the archive is not the subject of this book; nevertheless, the process of reading along the grain has helped me understand how colonial discourse operated.

I'm also compelled by Anjali Arondekar's work on the colonial archive, which asks "Why does sexuality (still) seek its truth in the historical archive?"[29] I read her as resisting the tendency to look for a better, fuller, more expansive archive, one that will answer all our questions and offer

us the "truth" about the past. Instead, Arondekar is interested in what the elisions and absences of the archive can tell us. She resists the urge to find sexual subjectivity and thinks instead about how the archive assembles a narrative around sexuality that does not necessarily cohere around an individual. Her method "redirects attention from the frenzied 'finding' of new archival sources to an understanding of the processes of subjectification made possible (and desirable) through the very idiom of the archive."[30] She argues that "the critical task lies in crafting an archival approach that articulates against the guarantee of recovery."[31] In thinking about archival research as a project of recovery, we lose the opportunity to meet the archive on its own terms, to adopt a certain critical view of the archive that refuses the premise/promise of complete knowledge or mastery—themselves imperial and empiricist ways of approaching information. Instead, my method embraces the fact that I am telling a partial story, in both senses of the word: the story is incomplete, and it also reflects the topics that I am partial to. Thus, this project retains a certain degree of faithfulness to the archive, even while critical of its forms and limitations.

In the final section of this introduction, I offer a brief overview of the history of colonial Kenya. Readers who are familiar with this history may wish to skip to the next chapter. As I'll show, Kenya's status as a rather strange settler state helped heighten and sharpen the discourse of primitive normativity as white settlers sought a way to present themselves as protectors of African populations even while divesting them of land and liberty.

Kenya: A Strange Settler State

The Kenyan settler state was both typical of settler colonies, in that the state consistently favored the interests and well-being of white settlers over all other populations, and distinctive in that, unlike other Anglophone African settler colonies like Rhodesia or South Africa, Kenya was governed from the Colonial Office in London, where the demands of the settlers had to be balanced against the state's duties as "trustees" of colonized peoples. This is why Kenya was, in the words of the historian John Lonsdale, Britain's "most troublesome African colony."[32]

In 1888, the Imperial British East African Company received its royal charter. The company quickly floundered, thwarted by the lack of transport, the dearth of mineral resources, and the lack of interest in their products expressed by the local population.[33] In 1895, the British government

stepped in, establishing the East African Protectorate (EAP) and taking over the proposed railway project that would stretch from the coast to Uganda. Unable to induce local African populations to provide labor, the government imported indentured laborers from India to build the railroad.[34] By the time the Uganda Railroad was completed in 1901, just under thirty-two thousand Indians had been imported as laborers.[35] After the railway's completion in 1901, roughly seven thousand Indians remained in the protectorate, most becoming traders, artisans, owners of small shops (dukas), and clerks.[36] In this capacity, Kenyan Indians became extremely important to the colonial economy; Desh Gupta estimates that by 1903, 80 percent of the protectorate's capital was in Indian hands.[37] The importation of railway laborers was not, however, the only period of Indian migration; as Sana Aiyar points out, Indians in Kenya retained a connection to their homeland, participating in circular migratory patterns that sent them back and forth across the Indian Ocean.[38] The Indian population continued to grow throughout the colonial period, always outnumbering the other significant immigrant population—the Europeans.

In the earliest years of the protectorate, European migrants came primarily from the South. The first decade of the twentieth century saw a small wave of migration of South Africans (chiefly British South Africans) to East Africa, which M. P. K. Sorrenson accounts for as "a minor repercussion of the Anglo-Boer War and the post-war depression caused by the withdrawal of troops, a shortage of labour in the mines and the slow recovery of the war-torn economies."[39] A smaller migration of Boers occurred in 1907; these migrants tended to settle in the Uasin Gishu plateau, away from the administrative centers of the colony (first Mombasa, and after 1907, Nairobi). Colonists also arrived from Britain; in fact, the most vocal and politically influential Europeans in the colony, including Lord Delamere, Berkeley and Gailbraith Cole, Colonel Ewart Grogan, Lord Cranworth, and Lord Hindlip, emigrated from Britain. Regardless of national origin—whether from Britain, South Africa, or even America—white settlers in Kenya were known as "Europeans," a racial rather than geographic classification.

Kenyan Europeans had a vested interest in presenting a united front. Although there were real differences in social class and national origin within the white settler population, Kennedy notes, "colonists showed great reluctance to demonstrate their disagreements in public debate, preferring instead to resolve such matters through private negotiations between the government and special interest groups such as farmer and other occupational associations."[40] Furthermore, because the white settler

population was so small, class divisions were not as rigorously enforced in social spaces like Nairobi's Muthaiga Club as they would have been in the metropole—a tendency that Kennedy characterizes as "a deliberate rejection of European social values."[41] Thus, he concludes, "If the claim of a homogenous white society was little more than a myth, then, it nevertheless proved an exceedingly potent one" because "by obscuring the genuine divisions between colonists, the myth of homogeneity, even classlessness, eased the social schizophrenia that troubled European immigrants" and provided a sense of racial solidarity.[42]

But what were the divisions between colonists that were papered over through this myth of homogeneity? The first key division was based on social class. While, as Kennedy notes, class divisions were less rigid in the context of the colony, there was nevertheless a consistent fear expressed by both settlers and the colonial government about the growth of a class of "poor whites." In fact, the colonial government actively discouraged the growth of such a group by creating financial obstacles to white settlement in Kenya. The Kenyan government did not offer assisted passage and set minimal capital requirements for settlement in desirable farming areas.[43] Because Kenyan Indians had an established presence as tradespeople, shop owners, and clerks, Kenya offered few employment opportunities for poor whites.[44] Even the major government-sponsored emigration program, the Soldier Settlement Scheme adopted after World War I, was designed to accommodate only the "better class" of migrants.[45] Although the scheme allowed 250 small farms to be distributed to veterans without a capital qualification, the majority of plots were sold to ex-soldiers who met a capital requirement of £500—a requirement that was almost immediately raised to £5000 by Governor Northey.[46] Such restrictions guaranteed that the scheme would recruit a population of "Young Officers and Old Public School Boys"—the target specified in a pamphlet promoting the Soldier Settlement Scheme.[47] Kenya also saw significant immigration by retired civil servants/officers from India and other African colonies: as Kennedy puts it, "The rising rate and progressive bent of income taxes and death duties, the declining number and increasing expense of servants, the spreading influence of technocratic and meritocratic values, the growing power of the working class" in Britain made former officers hesitant to return home.[48] By retiring to Kenya, ex-officers were able to maintain a lifestyle that was increasingly impossible at home.

In Kenya, the small population of poor whites became a matter of public concern far beyond their actual numbers or influence. As I will discuss

more in chapter 4, poor whites were viewed as the most likely to reduce white "prestige" by behaving with either too much "familiarity" or too much cruelty toward non-white populations. As Brett Shadle notes, there was particular concern about poor white men "going native"—taking African wives and bearing multiracial children.[49] There was an ethnic dimension to this division as well: South Africans—especially but not exclusively those of Boer origins—were considered particularly prone to such misbehavior. Many of the earliest European migrants to the colony came from South Africa. Despite the fact that most of these migrants were British South Africans, they tended to be to be lumped in with Boers. Dane Kennedy quotes a colonial administrator's summary of the situation: "English people think that the majority of the lower class Afrikanders [here meaning British South Africans] have all the vices of the Dutch without any of their redeeming qualities."[50] As the administrator's statement indicates, South African origin was frequently conflated with lower class status.[51] In fact, most South African immigrants *were* poorer than British-born immigrants, at least in part because they were able to enter the colony by walking through the borders. Potential immigrants from Britain, meanwhile, had to satisfy a capital qualification as well as pay for their transportation to the colony. Kenyan South Africans tended to congregate together and were not politically influential; only a few families, like the Cloetes, became important figures in the Kenyan political scene. Afrikaners who did not own property and instead worked as farm laborers were deemed particularly suspect.[52] Kenyan South Africans were also associated with the troubled racial dynamics of their home country, an example that Kenyan officials were determined to avoid. The existence of a population of poor whites in South Africa was viewed as causing a number of problems and was to be avoided at all costs. In fact, Europeans who threatened to become dependent on the state were classified as "Distressed British Subjects" and deported from the colony.[53] These measures were largely successful in preventing the growth of a substantial class of poor whites. Yet the specter of poor whites played a disproportionate role in colonial rhetoric.

The other major divergence within the European population was that between settlers and officials. As will be discussed further in chapter 3, Kenya adopted a policy of "Native Paramountcy" in 1923, which declared that the interests of the African majority must be prioritized in colonial policy. The Colonial Office proved a thorn in the side of settler interests, checking some of their more draconian aspirations and maintaining—at least in theory—an interest in the welfare of its African subjects. Yet this

distinction can be easily overstated—many officials were sympathetic to settler interests, and, as noted previously, many of them became settlers themselves on retirement. Settlers also proved adept at advocating for their own interests. Almost as soon as European settlement began, settlers joined together to create organizations that would advocate for their own interests—the most influential being the Convention of Associations, formed in 1910.[54] While settlers consistently pressed for policies that decreased African geographic mobility, robbed Africans of ancestral homelands, and impressed Africans into labor, they claimed to do so in the service of Africans. As Shadle puts it, "paternalism would become one of the defining features of settler thinking: it was both a duty to civilize Africans and emotionally and psychologically pleasurable to do so."[55] Thus, Kenyan settlers presented themselves as trustees of African welfare, even while advocating for policies that actively harmed African people.

What were these policies? First, whites enjoyed disproportionate political power in the colony. Europeans dominated representation in the colony's Legislative Council (or LegCo); in 1919, Europeans elected eleven members to the LegCo, while Asians elected just two members, and Arabs and Africans were represented by a (white) nominated member. While the LegCo members only had the ability to advise the governor on policy decisions, their perspectives were taken quite seriously. There was even the occasional threat of white rebellion, as discussed in relation to the Indian Crisis in chapter 3.

Additionally, a number of discriminatory policies limited African access to land, coerced Africans into working as laborers on white-owned farms, and required Africans to perform communal labor for projects that chiefly benefited white settlers. The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1903 set the stage for an appropriation of African lands by white settlers, allowing Crown lands to be leased to European settlers for a period of ninety-nine years and defining African land rights in terms of occupation.[56] At the time, Indigenous African peoples were recovering from a famine, smallpox, and an outbreak of rinderpest that killed large numbers of cattle; Luise White estimates that these forces killed as much as 70 percent of the population of central Kenya.[57] The decimated population of both people and livestock meant that many areas of grazing land that had historically been used by central Kenyans were unoccupied and, hence, deemed to be up for grabs by the colonial government. Beginning in 1904, the government began moving Africans into "Native Reserves," areas of (usually substandard) land set aside for the use of Africans. Reserves also segregated

Africans into "tribal" populations, solidifying ethnic divisions that were considerably more fluid prior to colonization.[58]

With Africans funneled into Native Reserves, their former homelands were opened for European occupation. Another Crown Lands Ordinance in 1915 defined the reserves as Crown land and prevented Africans from selling this land. This ordinance also gave the governor the power to veto the sale or lease of land in the highlands to nonwhites.[59] Thus, well before the East African Protectorate became the colony of Kenya in 1920, the practice of segregated land ownership had been established in Kenya.[60]

Having established farms in the White Highlands, white settlers needed laborers to work on them. However, both the government and the settlers opposed the South African style of sharecropping (known as "Kaffir farming") on the basis that it would establish a landlord–tenant relationship between white landowners and African laborers. Such a relationship would allow Africans to develop tenant rights to the land. Instead, white farms in Kenya employed "squatted labor": African men and their families were allowed to live on white-owned farms and cultivate their own crops there in exchange for performing a set amount of labor (originally 180 days per annum but expanded to up to 270 days in 1937)[61] on the farmer's land. The practice of "Kaffir farming" was officially banned by the Resident Native (Squatters) Ordinance of 1918, thereby establishing a labor system that Ghai and McAuslan characterize as "involving elements of involuntary servitude."[62] Although a variety of ethnic groups performed waged labor for the European settlers, the farms of the highlands tended to be dominated by the Gikuyu, Nandi, and Kipsigis, with the majority of squatted labor being Gikuyu.[63] By 1930, more than 150,000 Gikuyu were squatting on white-owned farms.[64]

The Kenyan government bowed to settler pressure by establishing a number of measures to control and coerce labor. The "Hut Tax" (first levied in 1901) required African men over the age of sixteen to pay a set tax for each hut they occupied;[65] the tax thereby had the effect of forcing men to leave the reserves and enter into waged labor to pay the tax.[66] A number of Masters and Servants ordinances (imposed in 1906, 1910, and 1916) fined laborers who "deserted" their place of employment before the end of their contracts.[67] As David Anderson points out, the punitive element of Masters and Servants legislation had been eliminated in Britain by the Employers and Workmen Act of 1875: the introduction of Masters and Servants laws in East Africa thus "arose from a deliberate decision to impose a type of legislation that was by then already considered outmoded in

the metropole."[68] The enforcement of the Masters and Servants legislation was enabled by another piece of legislation, the Registration of Natives Ordinance, passed in 1915 but not enforced until after the end of World War I. This ordinance required every African man over the age of fifteen to carry a pass containing identification and an employment record.[69] The pass was known as a kipande, meaning "a piece" in Kiswahili, for the small metal container in which it was carried (usually hung about the neck). Employers signed the laborer's kipande at the end of their contract; if an employee did not receive this signature at the end of his contract, the worker could not obtain work elsewhere.[70] Settlers could take advantage of this fact to silence disputes with their laborers: as Anderson notes, "By failing to sign a kipande, or by noting derogatory remarks on the document, an employer might entrap the worker or prevent him from moving to new employment."[71]

The colonial government also resorted to more direct methods of forcing Africans into waged labor. Most infamously, the Kenyan government required African men to do twenty-four days of unpaid "compulsory labor" each year, based on the belief that such labor had been "traditionally" exhorted by Indigenous leaders; importantly, any African man who had worked for wages during three months of the previous year was exempt.[72] This communal labor was generally used for public works projects such as building roads and bridges. However, in 1919, the Chief Native Commissioner John Ainsworth (acting on the orders of the governor) responded to settler pressure with a circular explicitly exhorting government officials and "Native Chiefs and Elders" to "exercise every possible lawful influence to induce able-bodied male natives to go into the labour field" working for white farmers.[73] Women and children were also to be encouraged to pitch in.

In a multitude of ways, then, the colonial state was set up to benefit white settlers and to control the mobility of Africans, forcing them into coercive forms of labor and denying them access to arable land. Yet, despite all of these advantages, settlers in Kenya still perceived themselves as disadvantaged because they remained under the restraining influence of the Colonial Office. While I don't think that primitive normativity is a discourse exclusive to Kenya, I do suspect that Kenya's peculiar status as a strange settler colony caused primitive normativity to become an especially prominent colonial narrative. Because the Colonial Office maintained that their primary duty was to protect the welfare and interests of Africans (the so-called "Doctrine of Native Paramountcy"), Kenyan

settlers tried to present their claims to authority and power as *beneficial* to colonized populations. They did so in part, I argue, by positioning themselves as trustees of African sexual morality. Settlers presented the rural Native Reserves and white-owned farms as safe spaces where Africans would not be exposed to "civilized vice." They stressed, however, that urbanization, mission education, or political activity inevitably led to detribalization. Not coincidentally, African morals were deemed "safest" in those spaces where Africans served white settler interests most effectively. Keguro Macharia summarizes this dynamic neatly: "The myth of the vice-free, indigenous African became central to colonial governmentality. If contact with the wrong kinds of spaces and foreigners corrupted Africans, the argument went, then colonial powers had an obligation to safeguard Africans by policing their interactions and their movements."[74]

Ironically, then, Kenyan colonialism ascribed sexual normativity to the populations deemed least capable of self-rule, the groups with the least access to power. The groups with the most power, meanwhile, were those whose cultures were deemed most likely to contaminate and damage African sexual normativity. Kenyan discourses thus reversed the usual pairings of normativity/power and deviance/subjugation, but they did so in ways that not only reinforced but actually enabled white supremacy. How can we make sense of this seeming contradiction?

To sort out this puzzle, we need to account for and understand the role played by the notion of evolutionary time in imperial discourses of sexuality. The next chapter, "The Intellectual Roots of Primitive Normativity," provides some background on the intellectual history that allowed the narrative of primitive normativity to develop. In particular, I show how two fields, anthropology and sexology, both revised their notions of the "primitive" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This reevaluation set the stage for the discourse of primitive normativity by tying sexual health to the "natural," "unrepressed" sexuality of "primitive" peoples. I also outline the response by one very prominent anthropologist, Jomo Kenyatta, a mission-educated African leader who would one day become the first president of independent Kenya.

Chapter 2, "Sleeping Dictionaries and Mobile Metropoles: Female (A) Sexuality in the Silberrad Scandal of 1908," tells the story of Hubert Silberrad, a colonial administrator who sparked a major controversy in Britain by taking three adolescent African girls as mistresses. Silberrad offered an interesting defense: he argued that he had not acted immorally, since he had followed local protocol by "purchasing" the girls from prominent

African men. Silberrad's defense points to an important feature of colonial discourse: while scholars of race and sexuality have shown that women of African descent have often been (and continue to be) depicted as hypersexual, in Kenya, colonial authorities argued that Africans viewed women as mere "chattel," and that as such they had no sexual agency at all. Riffing off the work of Hortense Spillers, I interrogate how African women were unsexualized through the rhetoric of "traditional" attitudes toward women.

From its birth at the turn of the twentieth century, Kenya was a colony with two competing groups of settlers. European settlers possessed the most land and power, but settlers from India arrived earlier and maintained much larger numbers throughout the colonial era. Chapter 3, "'Stoop Low to Conquer': Primitive Normativity and Trusteeship in the Kenyan 'Indian Crisis' of 1923," shows how Kenyan politics triangulated discourses of race and sexuality through the colony's major populations: white, African, and Indian. The chapter focuses on a political crisis that occurred in the early 1920s, when Kenyan Indians' demands for political equality with whites came to a head. The notion that Indians practiced deviant sexual behaviors that made them morally unfit to be colonial mentors to Africans formed a central tenet of the white response. Perhaps more surprisingly, Indians responded in kind, not only asserting their suitability to colonize a more "primitive" African race but also maintaining that it was white women, not Indians, who were morally and sexually depraved. As both Indians and white settlers framed their demands within the language of trusteeship, Africans were racialized by proxy as sexually normative, and therefore unready for political participation.

The next chapter, "White Peril: Rape, Race, and Contamination," examines cases of alleged interracial rape in the interwar period. In the 1920s, an official government commission was appointed to investigate the problem of "Black Peril," a term used across colonial spaces to refer to sexual assaults allegedly committed by Black or brown men on white women and children. The commission was prompted by several well-publicized cases where adult male African domestic servants were accused of assaulting white or Indian children. Scholars have long shown how such scares were used as a tool of white supremacy and have stressed that actual incidences of rape were not correlated to the outbreak of Black Perils. However, the Kenyan committee came to a surprising conclusion: not only was Black Peril deemed a rare occurrence in the colony, but in those cases where it *had* occurred, the commission thought white mothers were

to blame. Both settlers and colonial officials advanced a narrative that I term "White Peril,"[75] which accused white women of teaching African men to desire deviant sexual acts by behaving with excessive familiarity toward their domestic servants.

A series of romance novels form the basis of chapter 5, "Queering Settler Romance: The Reparative Eugenic Landscape in Nora Strange's Kenyan Novels." Over the course of her lengthy career, Strange wrote more than fifty romance novels, almost half of which take place in Kenya. This chapter moves the geographic focus away from Kenya to consider how ideas about Kenya as a prelapsarian space traveled to the metropole and beyond. I argue that Strange's novels presented readers with an image of Kenya as a "eugenic landscape," a space that separated fit settlers from those who were not suited to carry on the colonial mission. The vibrant, "primitive" landscape of Kenya reinvigorated "overcivilized" settlers who had lost touch with their primitive sexual drives. Those settlers who were eugenically unfit, however, were eliminated through their interactions with the flora and fauna of Kenya. Strange thus funneled concerns about the "degeneration" of Europeans through narratives of the colony as a reparative space.

The final chapter of the book, "Eating the Other: Erotic Consumption in Anti–Mau Mau Discourse," brings us full circle. Having established that primitive normativity was viewed as an essential feature of "authentic" African life, the chapter shows how this discourse worked to discredit the Mau Mau rebels of the 1950s. In short, contemporaries argued that the deviant sexual practices that supposedly accompanied Mau Mau oathing rituals proved that they were not legitimate Africans. As such, their demands for land and freedom could be ignored.

Together, these chapters illustrate the discursive terrains in which primitive normativity was outlined as well as the ways in which this discourse served the goals of the settler state. By bringing the concept of evolutionary time into examinations of race, gender, and sexuality, we can understand how the normativity could function as a disenfranchising accusation, rather than an empowering affirmation.

NOTES

Introduction

Epigraph: Anonymous, "East Africa Prot: Cont," memo or report, Kenya National Archives [KNA]: AM/1/5 (or 1/1/5), Indecent Assaults, 1920–1944, Room 1, Shelf 269, Box 1, n.d.

1 Shaw, *Colonial Inscriptions*; Kennedy, *Islands of White*; Shadle, *Souls of White Folk*; Anderson, "Sexual Threat and Settler Society"; Anderson, "Master and Servant"; Anderson, "Punishment, Race"; Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*; Jackson, *Madness and Marginality*; Kanogo, *African Womanhood*; Ocobock, *Uncertain Age*.

2 Macharia, *Frottage*.

3 Carotenuto, "Repatriation in Colonial Kenya," 11. See also Ocobock, *Uncertain Age*, 105–12.

4 E. B. Hosking, *Memorandum on the Native Locations of Nairobi*, Oxford: Rhodes House Library [RH]: MSS Afr. s. 633 [Sir Robert Coryndon], Box 5, File 1, c. 1930, p. 10.

5 Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills*, 109.

6 The Gikuyu are one of the largest ethnic groups in Kenya and, along with the Embu and Meru, the group most involved in the Mau Mau rebellion.

7 Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood."

8 Shadle, *Souls of White Folk*; Jackson, *Madness and Marginality*.

9 Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense*; Morgensen, *Spaces between Us*.

10 Tallie, *Queering Colonial Natal*, 7.

11 Jackson, *Becoming Human*.

12 Rao, *Out of Time*.

13 Macharia, *Frottage*, 5.

14 Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," 438.

15 Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," 442.

16 Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," 452.

17 Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa?*

18 Hoad, *African Intimacies*, xxiv.

19 Hoad, "Arrested Development," 137.

20 Macharia, "African Queer Studies."

21 Rubin, "Thinking Sex."

22 Stoler, *Race and the Education*, 6–7; Macharia, "African Queer Studies."
23 Macharia, *Frottage*, 27.
24 Arondekar, "Queering Archives," 211.
25 Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men," 76–91.
26 See, for instance, Kanogo, *African Womanhood*; Davison, *Voices from Mutira*.
27 Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*.
28 Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 20.
29 Arondekar, *For the Record*, 1.
30 Arondekar, *For the Record*, 3.
31 Arondekar, *For the Record*, 4.
32 Lonsdale, "Kenya," 75.
33 Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, 1.
34 Gregory, *India and East Africa*, 51.
35 Gregory, *India and East Africa*, 54.
36 Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, 24.
37 Gupta, "South Asians in East Africa," 110.
38 Aiyar, "Anticolonial Homelands," 989.
39 Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, 65.
40 Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 184.
41 Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 184.
42 Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 186.
43 Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 43.
44 Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 50.
45 For more on the Soldier Settlement Scheme, see Duder, "'Men of the Officer Class.'"
46 Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 56.
47 Kennedy notes that 550 of the 685 nonlocal participants in the scheme were officers and had or subsequently inherited peerages. Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 56.
48 Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 71.
49 Shadle, *Souls of White Folk*, 66.
50 Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 48.
51 Kennedy notes that in Rhodesia, too, Afrikaners "were commonly regarded as the main candidates for poor white status." Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 173.
52 Duder and Youé, "Paice's Place," 269.
53 Shadle, *Souls of White Folk*, 65.
54 Shadle, *Souls of White Folk*, 15.
55 Shadle, *Souls of White Folk*, 4.
56 Ghai and McAuslan, *Public Law and Political Change*, 27.
57 White, *Comforts of Home*, 32.
58 Shadle, "Bridewealth and Female Consent," 241–62. See also Lonsdale, "When Did the Gusii (or Any Other Group) Become a Tribe?"

59 Gregory, *India and East Africa*, 180. Although not explicitly banning Indian ownership of land in the highlands, in practice the ordinance ensured that the highlands would remain in white hands.

60 The ten-mile coastal strip owned by the Sultan of Zanzibar continued as a protectorate.

61 The relevant laws are the Resident Native (Squatters) Ordinance of 1918 and the Resident Native Labourers Ordinance 1937. For a more detailed discussion of this legislation, see Anderson, "Masters and Servants," 465–66; Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 104–22.

62 The legislation established that squatters must work for 180 days out of the year for the land owner in exchange for the right to live and farm on his/her property (later raised to up to 270 days). Ghai and McAuslan, *Public Law and Political Change*, 83.

63 Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 108–10.

64 Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 24.

65 The hut tax was also imposed on widows. As Fiona Mackenzie notes in her study of African women's collective organizing, this fact caused much consternation in 1937 when widows in the Murang'a District began to refuse to pay it. In just three months, 550 women in the district were prosecuted for nonpayment of taxes. Mackenzie, "Political Economy of the Environment, Gender, and Resistance under Colonialism," 249.

66 In her study of the social meanings of currency in Kenya, Wambui Mwangi argues that the hut tax helped establish the notion of an African individual, as opposed to a member of a (tribal) collective: "The hut, then" she writes "was the space of African individuation—the generative place of the subject." Mwangi, "Of Coins and Conquest," 780.

67 Anderson, "Master and Servant."

68 After 1923, however, a court ruled that resident laborers (squatters) were not servants and could therefore not be penalized for desertion. Anderson, "Master and Servant," 465.

69 Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 113.

70 Anderson, "Master and Servant," 464.

71 Anderson, "Master and Servant," 465.

72 The Native Authority Amendment Ordinance of 1920 expanded compulsory labor, making it legal for chiefs/headmen to require another sixty days of labor with minimal compensation. Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley*, 110.

73 Quoted in Gregory, *Sidney Webb and East Africa*, 28.

74 Macharia, *Frottage*, 98.

75 Carina Ray has also used this term, although in a slightly different register: she discusses how prominent West African men mobilized the notion that African women were being abused by white men as a way to reject colonialism. Ray, "Decrying White Peril."