“Big Tales of Indians Ahead:” The Reproduction of Settler Colonial Discourse in the American West

by

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A dissertation accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in History

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University of Oregon

Summer 2023

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: "Big Tales of Indians Ahead:" The Reproduction of Settler Colonial Discourse in the American West

"Big Tales of Indians Ahead" traces the reproduction of settler colonial discourses—sentiments narrated by a settler society about themselves and about the Native American societies that predated them—from the period of colonial history of the seventeenth century to the present day in the twenty-first century. This study argues that the anti-Indian rhetoric that could be found in early colonial EuroAmerican writings, particularly Indian captivity narratives, were reproduced by subsequent settler societies throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the form of settler narratives from the overland trail migrations and various forms of popular culture. In the twentieth century these discourses, heavily influenced by past settler discourses, reached wider audiences through new forms of popular culture—particularly Western genre films and mass-produced works of fiction aimed at younger audiences. Finally, this dissertation tracks the ways in which these discourses are still reproduced and present in contemporary popular culture media and political identities in the American West. From Mary Rowlandson's Indian captivity narrative of the late-seventeenth century to the overland trail settler narratives of the Oregon Trail and the wildly-popular Western films of the mid-twentieth century, Native Americans had consistently been tied to reductive and derogatory depictions in American collective cultural discourses that has tied stereotypes of so-called "Indians" to inherently-racial traits such as savagery, depravity, and violence. This study not only shows that these assertions from a settler population, and their descendants, has been falsely (and thus unfairly) attributed to racialized notions of "Indianness," but also provides a clear and consistent historical timeline that tracks these depictions across centuries and various forms of settler discourses.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deepest and most sincere thanks go to Professor Jeffrey Ostler for his mentorship and friendship throughout my graduate school journey. I am indebted to Professor Marsha Weisiger for her tireless efforts to make my work the best it can be. I also wish to express my appreciation for Professor Julie Weise who was always asking questions of my work that led to its betterment. Finally, Professor Brian Klopotek challenged and supported my work and made me see scholarship in new and engaging ways. For all of my committee members listed here, I am forever grateful to the work and effort you poured into me.

I would also like to thank the faculty members that I worked with in the Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies department at the University of Oregon. Brian Klopotek reached out to me with this opportunity initially and it became one of the defining aspects of my teaching and scholarship. I wish to thank Professors Charise Cheney and Lynn Fujiwara for their mentorship and teaching me how to sit with difficult subjects in the classroom.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank the graduate students who held me up when I needed it, and allowed me to do the same for them. Dr. Tara Keegan and Dr. Nicholas O’Neil will forever be family. I also wish to express my dearest thanks to the group of colleagues that I came to know as friends: Dr. Miles Wilkinson, Dr. John Bedan, Dr. Steven Leone, and Kenneth Surles.

For Henry and Julia

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Chapter One

Introduction

In 1849, American settler Amos Steck wrote in his overland journal of an encounter with a man he referred to as Bull's Tail, whom he described as a Sioux "chief" near the South fork of the Platte river. Amos wrote a letter for the Indian as a sort of pass; "making known to all men that we had passed their village yesterday and that with the exception of begging for whiskey they were very little trouble to anybody, which was signed by our Captain, W. Day."[1] In that same year, German-American settler Hermann Scharmann also detailed an encounter with an unnamed Sioux "chief" near Fort Laramie. The so-called chief presented to Scharmann "a document, signed by the commander of the fort, which stated that the Indians of this branch of the Sioux were not hostile, but most friendly, and that therefore every traveller should avoid insulting them."[2] While incidents of Indians carrying letters to present to settlers along the overland trail routes was not common, they certainly happened. The instance that Scharmann recounts is important, though, for it emphasizes the actions of settlers not to "insult" Indians, rather than on the trustworthiness of the Indians themselves, as most of these incidents seem to involve. For all of the Euro-American criticisms of Indians as uncivilized and illiterate—these instances highlight the ways in which Native people utilized EuroAmerican culture to push back against attempts to degrade Indians. What is interesting about Scharmann's letter, is that it doesn't just say to leave the "chief" alone - but specifically addresses the issue of disparaging

[1] Amos Steck, "Diary of 1849," June 6, 1849, Merrill J. Mattes Research Library Collections. National Frontier Trails Museum. Independence, Missouri. https://www.octa-journals.org/category/merrill-mattes-collection.

[2] Hermann Scharmann, "Scharmann's Overland Journey to California," June, 1849, Translanted by Margaret Hoff Zimmermann and Erich W. Zimmermann, Merrill J. Mattes Research Library Collections. National Frontier Trails Museum. Independence, Missouri. https://www.octa-journals.org/category/merrill-mattes-collection.

discourse against Native people. Much of the history of colonialism, and settler colonialism, has been centered on what settlers did or how Native people reacted. This study examines a less tangible series of interactions; the ideas that settlers promoted about Native people, the words they used to disseminate those ideas—publicly and privately—and the widespread reach of those ideas in broader American cultural consciousness throughout several centuries. This study also examines the ideological underpinnings of a settler discourse—one steeped in settler colonialism and white supremacy—that is less a relic of the past and more of a continuously flowing stream that spans centuries of time. At times the flow swells to ferocity; at other times it slows to a trickle, seeps underground, and rises again when conditions allow. But it never dries up.

The phenomenon of settlers "insulting" Native people, as mentioned in the letter penned by Hermann Scharmann, was part of a much larger process. One of the most pervasive sentiments found in the writings of settlers who journeyed West across the overland trails during the nineteenth century was that settlers were constantly under threat of being attacked by Indians. Yet, settlers often misrepresented Native people in their written accounts by employing an essentialist and derogatory rhetoric that focused on negative (and sometimes completely imagined) characteristics that settlers believed all Indian people shared. Admonishments against Native people were a common thread shared by much of the writings produced on the overland trail migrations. I argue that these remarks, collectively, represent a body of settler colonial discourse—a loose term that includes social, political, and cultural messages that Americans engage in to tell their own stories and the stories of others. This discourse consistently denigrated Native people and upheld white settlers (or their descendants) and has been routinely reproduced through different forms of popular culture from the seventeenth through twenty-first centuries.

At its core, settler colonialism refers to a specific form of colonialism that aims to replace Indigenous societies with settler populations and take ownership of Native lands. Settler colonialism is distinct from traditional forms of colonialism which relied on extracting resources from colonies and distributing them back to the imperial center. Here, the resource is the land itself. While this would have previously been viewed under the umbrella of empire building, Australian historian Patrick Wolfe described this type of colonialism as a distinctive form of colonialism. Settler colonialism is predicated upon, according to Wolfe, a settler population that seeks to eradicate Indigenous peoples—be it through genocidal violence, cultural erasure, confinement to reservations, undermining political sovereignty, or a host of other tactics—and occupy Indigenous lands in what is referred to as the "logic of elimination."[3] Additionally, Wolfe argues that because "settler colonizers come to stay…invasion is a structure not an event."[4] These tenets that define settler colonialism: the "logic of elimination," and that settler colonialism is "a structure, not an event," became the foundational ideas through which Wolfe articulates the ways in which settler colonialism, as a structure, operates.

As settler colonialism as an analytic framework has become more widely used in scholarship, two primary criticisms have emerged.[5] The first is that Wolfe's "logic of elimination" reinforces declension narratives of Native people as having disappeared when in fact the elimination of Native people—through racial projects of state and settler genocidal

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[3] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," Journal of Genocide Research (2006), 8(4), December, 387.

[4] Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 388.

[5] The Fall 2017 issue of the *Journal of the West* was dedicated to exploring ways—good and bad—that scholars had been engaging with, and could continue to engaging with in the future, the framework of settler colonialism in relation to the American West. The Introduction of this issue lays out most of the issues that various scholars raise throughout the issue. See Janne Lahti, "What Is Settler Colonialism and What It Has to Do with the American West? Introduction." *Journal of the West* 56, no. 4 (2017): 8–12.

violence against Native people and assimilationist policies aimed at eradicating Native culture—was never completed. While it is true that an overemphasis on elimination can obscure Native survival, this would indicate a failure in specific pieces of scholarship rather than an indication that the framework was incorrect. Wolfe and other theorists of settler colonialism utilize the "logic of elimination" in describing settler intentions and how those intentions drove actions. In other words, it is important to focus on the "logic" portion of the "logic of elimination" rather than on the "elimination" portion. The other main criticism of settler colonialism as a category of analysis is that it remains—as much of the history of America has—settler-focused. Here again, however, identifying a logic of elimination does not preclude a recognition of Indigenous agency, resistance, and survivance. Furthermore, there is an important distinction between between *centering* settler narratives in a way that celebrates and upholds settler colonial discourse, and using a settler-centered narrative to critically examine the messages that are contained within. This is an especially important distinction for this dissertation, which is centered on settler ideology as expressed through discourse. It is imperative, as part of a true and just telling of the history of America, and the West specifically, to hold front and center that everything that Euro-Americans *did* was fueled by what they *thought*. The "logic of elimination" is not an important construct because it depends on the successful completion of the elimination of Native people and cultures, it is an important construct because this logic was central to the aims and desires of non-Native America. Additionally, viewing the logic of elimination as a structural issue that continues into the present allows scholars to address the ways in which settler colonialism continues to erode Native visibility in public discourse.

Focusing on settler colonial ideologies is especially important given the reproduction of settler discourse in popular narratives. While scholarship has largely embraced changes to

historical narratives that came about through a critical re-examination of American history due to the New Indian History, there are still remnants of settler-centered stories—particularly within subsets of popular Western history—which continue to celebrate and perpetuate the settler narratives that centered settlers in a false mythological social position.[6] The recent best-selling work by David McCullough, *The Pioneers*, subtitled *The Heroic Story of the Settlers Who*

[6] The New Indian History was a late-twentieth century scholarly intervention in historical interpretations of Native people in North America and the American West that were rooted in the perspectives of EuroAmericans and their accomplishments. The New Indian History was the result of recent works by scholars that sought to shift the paradigm of American history to one that included the experiences and perspective of the Native people who had previously been left out of, or minimized within, prominent historical interpretation. For a comprehensive overview by Ned Blackhawk, see Ned Blackhawk, "Look How Far We've Come: How American Indian History Changed the Study of American History in the 1990s," *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 6 (2005): 13–17. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25161992. William Cronon's *Changes in the Land* was one of the most influential early works that challenged the notion of an American Eden and argued that the North American landscapes that early colonial settlers stepped into had been intentionally altered by Native People over centuries or millennia. See William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983.) Richard White also contributed a major intervention into the cultural and political strength of Native Peoples in the Ohio River Valley in *The Middle Ground*—one of the foundational works of the New Indian History. White argued that Indians and Europeans created, and resided in, a "Middle Ground" that existed outside of the "simple" narrative of assimilation and conquest that was commonly used to describe cultural encounters between Indians and Europeans by historians. This "Middle Ground" specifically applied to Algonquin peoples living in the French territory known as the Pays d'en haut, in the Great Lakes region, during the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). In another important work, Pekka Hämäläinen argued in his 2008 monograph, *The Comanche Empire*, that "in the Southwest, European imperialism not only stalled in the face of indigenous resistance; it was eclipsed by indigenous imperialism" and that "For a century, roughly from 1750 to 1850, the Comanches were the dominant people in the Southwest, and they manipulated and exploited the colonial outposts in New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, and northern Mexico to increase their safety, prosperity, and power." This work dramatically asserted the cultural and political power of the Comanche in the American Southwest region and reframed them in terms of empire that resembled more Western notions of power and control. See Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

Brought the American Ideal West, offers a compelling example of this work in action.[7] This work contains settler-centered discourse that has permeated the very fabric of American culture for centuries.[8] It is worth revisiting and re-examining those narratives as an active reminder that they exist, and they do actual work in the form of a racial project.[9] Settler colonialism is as active now as it was in centuries past—particularly in Oregon—as evidenced by the 2015-16 occupation of the Malheur wildlife reserve on historic Burns-Paiute lands and the increasingly visible presence of white militias who have been active in policing Black Lives Matter protests in Portland in the

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[7] David McCullough's work, *The Pioneers*, was a #1 New York Times best seller. Although it received critical attention from academics (the subtitle of the book gives one indication why), the book was widely popular. See David McCullough, *The Pioneers: The Heroic Story of the Settlers Who Brought the American Ideal West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019). One review of the work from National Public Radio journalist Michael Schaub captured a sentiment that was repeated across media; *The Pioneers* felt more like a novel than a work of history. Schaub wrote that "like McCullough's other books, *The Pioneers* succeeds because of the author's strength as a storyteller. The book reads like a novel, with a cast of fascinating characters that the average reader isn't likely to know about; while history textbooks use broad strokes to paint the picture of the early settlers to the Northwest Territory, McCullough takes a deep dive, and does so with assured, unshowy prose. The result is an excellent book that's likely to appeal to anyone with an abiding interest in early American history. Both readable and packed with information drawn from painstaking research, The Pioneers is a worthy addition to McCullough's impressive body of work." Michael Schaub, "*The Pioneers* Dives Deep Into Lives Of Northwest Territory Settlers, " May 8, 2019, National Public Radio. https://www.npr.org/2019/05/08/721352662/the-pioneers-dives-deep-into-lives-of-northwest-territory-settlers.

[8] Historian of the American West Stephen Aron synthesized academic criticisms of the work in the *Journal of the Early Republic* article "Once Upon a Time . . . in Ohio: David McCullough's *The Pioneers* as History and Wishtory." These criticisms center on McCullough's uncritical use of sources—specifically as Aron points out—"Because he sees the Ohio Country and its peoples only through the accounts of his principals, McCullough also views his pioneers as they viewed themselves." Aron also voices frustration that "More needs to be said about the disconnect between academic condemnations and public commendations of *The Pioneers*." This divide between how scholars and the greater public readership of popular histories is at the heart of what Aron articulates as the issue with The Pioneers, that "*The Pioneers* is a prime example of what I call "wishtory," which I define as the history people wish for. It provides a kinder, gentler origin story for American westward expansion that mostly detours around dark and bloody ground to pedestal its heroes on the highest moral ground." See Stephen Aron, "Once Upon a Time . . . in Ohio David McCullough's *The Pioneers* as History and Wishtory," *Journal of the Early Republic* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2021): 233-38.

[9] Michael Omi & Howard Winant refer to the term "racial projects" as a critical part of the process of racial formation. The authors see race as a "crossroads" where "social structure and cultural representation meet." They argue that one does not exist without the other so that there is no simple idea of race if there is not a practice of inequality linked to it. A racial project then does "both the ideological and the practical "work" of making these links and articulating the connection between them." They go on to explain that "racial projects explain what race *means* in a particular discursive or ideological practice." See Michael Omi & Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1988), 124-25.

summer of 2020.[10] These contemporary realities are fueled by the rhetoric of settler colonial discourse.

This dissertation, "Big Tales of Indians Ahead," is a study of anti-Indian racist messages that were reproduced through various forms of popular culture and American consciousness throughout several centuries. The phrase that gives this study its namesake was written by a settler in Independence Missouri in the mid-nineteenth century as her overland party readied themselves to start their arduous journey West. Her mention of "Indian tales" was stated without irony, even though her memoir lacked any truly memorable interactions with Native people. This dynamic of setting up an expectation of encountering Indians, only to be confronted with overwhelmingly peaceful people dealing with displacement, serves as the most apt characterization of the narratives written by settlers traveling West. This study began with an exhaustive survey of settler narratives written during the overland trail migration period from 1840-1860. The consistent messaging about so-called "Indian savagery," countered by righteous settler populations, became the focal point of my attention—but I did not know what to make of it. In my Masters' thesis, *Houses That Move: Indian and Emigrant Interactions During the Overland Trail Migrations*, I recognized that what settlers were saying about Indians was quite different from the actual encounters they had with them in most cases. But, I could not stop this nagging feeling to go back and look at what settlers were saying about Native people. It is no surprise to read that nineteenth-century Americans held racist notions against Native Americans. However, the degree to which these sentiments was expressed—both in ferocity and frequency—kept taking me by surprise and drawing me back to these words. It still does.

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[10] Deborah Bloom, "Oregon State Police Called to Portland Amid Escalating Tensions," August 31, 2020, *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/global-race-protests-portland-idINKBN25S3FH.

In order to focus on the messaging coming out of a collective body of writing, I had to look beyond individual narratives. First, I needed to conduct a sweeping, large-scale survey of settler accounts. Second, in order to look at the history of ideas coming-out of these writings, I had to treat this discourse as an aggregated source. Imagine the Mojave creosote bush that grows in clusters that appear to blanket the landscape with individual bushes, but, in fact, are often parts of the same plant—clones. Every single account written by settlers as they journeyed West represents a unique human life. At the same time, collectively, the messages and rhetoric that came out of this twenty year period have such obvious similarities that it is critical to examine those similarities. Additionally, it is important to focus on the words being used within this discourse. One might say that settlers admonished Native people simply out of fear—but that in itself requires a critical examination of how settler ideologies were central in constructing the history of the United States. I would argue though, that it's not as simple as a product of fear. Aside from recognizing these patterns within the nineteenth-century overland narratives, in the years that I have worked on this project, my research has led me to similar messaging that occurred before and after the initial period (the overland trail migrations) I was examining. Here, the study expanded forwards and backward to connect threads of the same messaging prior to the overland settler journeys and well afterwards. How this discursive rhetoric evolved, and more importantly, how it stayed constant through nearly five centuries is the main focus of this study.

This study engages with multiple cultural texts from different eras of American history. These cultural texts, including Indian captivity narratives from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, overland trail narratives from the nineteenth century, tourism and travel narratives from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as multiple forms of popular culture media including film, fiction, performances, and more, were used to conduct a critical

comparative discourse analysis. I have considered each of these textual sources as a group to constitute a settler colonial discourse—as there were often certain discursive markers that identify each source group (Indian captivity narratives, for example). Each chapter utilizes different cultural texts, but they were approached largely in the same way and with the same question in mind: What have EuroAmerican and American settler discourses revealed about larger settler ideologies regarding Native people in North America, and how were those discourses reproduced across different types of literature and media, and at different eras of American history? Most importantly, this study explores the ways in which the reproduction of anti-Indian sentiments within settler colonial discourses has contributed to persistent settler ideologies about Native people and the history of American settler colonialism into the present. Each chapter connects to, and builds upon, settler colonial discourses that came before. Some of the bodies of discourse relied on in this study have been examined closely by scholars, others less so, but the approach of this study brings multiple sources and topics together into a historical narrative that focuses explicitly on settler discourses about Native people across a comprehensive timespan.[11] Phillip Deloria argued that "the idea of savagery undoubtedly enabled white Americans to exercise multiple kinds of power over multiple kinds of Indians."[12] This statement, in particular, encapsulates the "so what?" question at the heart of this work's importance. While scholars have commented on anti-Indian sentiments within certain bodies of source material—

[11] Indian captivity narratives and early American literature are two topics that have been thoroughly explored in scholarship. For Indian Captivity Narratives, see James Arthur Levernier and Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (New York: Twayne, 1993), Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998), and Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Phillip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018). For scholarship on early American literature analysis, see Richard Slotkin's three-volume series: *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1985), and *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Antheneum, 1992).

[12] Phillip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 9.

Indian captivity narratives, Oregon Trail diaries, or Western genre films, for example—no study has provided a comprehensive historical narrative that is singularly focused on the ways in which settler colonial ideologies have been reproduced in these ways.[13] In short, what settlers had to say about Indians in the West has been touched on in other scholarly works, but that topic—the content and reproduction of settler discourses, and, more importantly, the work that those discourses performs within the racial project of settler colonialism in the United States—is the main focus of this study.

This work is grounded through key pieces of scholarship. These works have framed how I interpret and frame the key issues presented in this work. In the analysis of settler colonial ideologies, this study draws on theoretical work of settler colonialism developed by Italian scholar Lorenzo Veracini. In *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Veracini expanded on Wolfe's foundational article and aimed to articulate greater specificity in discussing settler movements and colonial motivations. To that end he argued that "settler colonialism should be seen as structurally distinct" from more general treatments of settler migrations or other forms of colonialism.[14] In order to effectively articulate these distinctions, Veracini referred to numerous forms of "narrative transfer" in settler discourse which allow for untruths promoted through discourse to become "true," through repetition, in an effort to colonize indigenous spaces—a

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[13] For anti-Indian rhetoric in Indian captivity narratives, see Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative* and Jill Lepore, *The Name of War.* For rhetoric in Oregon Trail narratives, see John D. Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) and Michael L. Tate, *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006). For rhetoric in Western genre film see Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation,* Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places,* and Beverly R. Singer, *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens: Native American Film and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

[14] Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

form of cognitive ethnic cleansing.[15] These modes of narrative transfer worked to relegate Native people to the past as "hopelessly backward" and "unchanging specimens of a primitive form of history," as a means to justify the settlement of Native lands.[16] Different forms of narrative transfer are apparent in the ways in which specific forms of settler discourse actively worked to obscure the relationship between settlers and Native people. Over time, other forms of transfer worked alongside narrative transfer as the settler project of the U.S. West advanced. Namely, "Transfer by Conceptual Displacement" in which "Indigenous peoples are not considered indigenous to the land" occurred as a consequence of "Ethnic Transfer" which occurs "when indigenous communities are forcibly deported" and, in most cases, confined to reservations.[17] Finally, "Transfer by Settler Indigenization" occurs "when settler groups claim current indigenous status."[18] Think, for example, of how quickly Oregonians who had participated in overland settlement claimed themselves to be "native Oregonians" while actual Native people were displaced. These forms of transfer were more apparent as the discourse shifted from active settler projects of the mid-nineteenth century to more complete settler projects of the twentieth century that had already moved Native people out of the way and allowed for the entrenchment of settler nostalgia in non-Native American consciousness. We see these forms of transfer prominently in travel narratives of the late nineteenth to early twentieth

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[15] Veracini's ideas of "transfer" refer to "a more flexible term than, for example, removal"; i.e. it is any one of "a number of strategies that can be deployed vis a vis the indigenous population in order to enact a variety of transfers" in which settlers colonize Indigenous peoples' lands physically or symbolically. See Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 33-51.

[16] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 41-43.

[17] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 35-36.

[18] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 46.

centuries where settler discourse assumes nativist sentiments of indigeneity and relegates Indians to spaces that exist outside of the settler sphere.

The cornerstones of settler colonialism as a conceptual framework, the "logic of elimination," and the specificity of settler colonialism as a distinct form of colonialism are at the heart of this work's examination of the overland trail migrations in general and of the discourse produced by a settler population in particular. Coupling these theoretical structures with the modes of transfer as articulated by Veracini allows one to track the ways in which settler discourse actively works to obscure the relationship between settlers and Indians and to undermine Native sovereignty and claims to land. From a structural standpoint, the theory of settler colonialism highlights the ways in which this rhetoric has been settler-focused, full of logical and factual inaccuracies, and reproduced over and over again throughout four centuries in settler-conceptualized American history. Lorenzo Veracini wrote that the "stories settlers tell themselves and about themselves are crucial to an exploration of settler colonial subjectivities."[19] With that in mind, this work then, perhaps, can best be described as an exploration of settler colonial subjectivities.

Phillip J. Deloria's work on discourses and their ties to ideology has been instrumental in keeping my focus on these discourses as a racial project. The main thread through this work is tracking the anti-Indian settler discourses across time and different forms of media; Deloria's work is the constant interpretive lens in that process. Throughout this study, I use Deloria's framework of ideology as, he wrote, "A way of considering the ways in which our thoughts are socially constructed" and how it reflects "a lived experience, something we see and perform on a daily basis." He concluded by stating that ideologies are informed by stereotypes and, as such

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[19] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 103.

"are not, in fact, true, but, as things that structure real belief and action in the real world, they might as well be."[20] The ways in which non-Native American settlers and their descendants have constructed imagined identities for Native people based on their own ideology throughout centuries of settler-constructed American history is one of the key focal points of this dissertation.

Deloria's work, then, on discourse as the vehicle that carries those meanings of a settler colonial ideology informs the beating heart of this study. Within these broad bodies of writing and media explored within this dissertation, discourse refers to the spreading of ideas informed by settler colonial and white supremacist ideologies. It also refers to the collection of cultural messages that are spread across numerous texts and across time. While those are distinctions I have drawn for illustrative purposes, there is some fluidity in how ideology and discourse overlap or become interchangeable—as Deloria explained in distinguishing ideology from discourse, those "lines are pretty fuzzy."[21] A final note on the articulation of discourse and its importance—particularly as it relates to a foundational idea in this dissertation—Deloria wrote that "at stake in the discursive/ideological formations throughout U.S. history has been the body of accepted knowledge about Indian people, the ways in which knowledge helped constitute individuals and groups as subjects, and the new and old ways in which power was to be applied to Indians and non-Indians alike."[22] The importance, for Deloria, and for this study, then, is that systemic and cultural beliefs (an ideology) that espouse racialized essentialism about Native people when put into action (discourse, say, in the form of reproducing Indian stereotypes)

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[20] Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 9.

[21] Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 10.

[22] Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 11.

reinforces those ideological claims as normative and can culminate in enacting, or justifying, acts of violence against a racialized "other."

Similarly, Robert F. Berkhofer's foundational work, *The White Man's Indian*, informs this study in regard to the ways in which the settler discourses were used to spread a racist ideological campaign that benefitted EuroAmericans and, later, a white American settler population.[23] Berkhofer examined constructions of a so-called "Indian" identity that were forged by non-Native people from the invention of this construction by Christopher Columbus and on through various iterations of mythology and literature. Like Deloria's work on ideology and discourse, Berkhofer's work is important in two critical ways for this study: The first is the way he assembles a historical timeline of evolving permeations of a constructed "Indian" identity (particularly images of the "noble" and "ignoble" savage) and, how those identity constructions in EuroAmerican myth, folklore, religion, and literature were used to control Native people through government policy.[24]

Ned Blackhawk's work is a reminder that these ideologies were backed with violence against Native people and how that violence was often informed by settler-constructed mythologies. The premise of Blackhawk's work is that the narrative of American history "has failed to gauge the violence that remade much of the continent before U.S. expansion" and that American historians have never "fully assessed the violent effects of such expansion on the many Indian people caught within these continental changes." Blackhawk concludes this point stating

[23] Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1978).

[24] Examples of the policies discussed in *The White Man's Indian* include Grant's "peace policy," the reservation system in general, and the Dawes Allotment Act and its effects on Native people on reservations, and John Collier's "Indian New Deal" policies in the Indian Reorganization Act passed in 1934. See Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 166-86.

that "American history is considered a place of comfort, not one of pain; a realm of achievement rather than one of indigenous trauma."[25] Here, Blackhawk is looking back on the construction of a historical narrative—the history of how American history has been told. My intent with this exploration of settler colonial discourses is to see those themes—the centering of settler stories and perspectives at the cost of negating or ignoring Native stories and histories, and the lauding of settler colonial triumphs, again, at the cost of ignoring the trauma inflicted upon countless people and cultures in the history of colonialism in North America—playing out within cultural conversations at different points in time. Blackhawk's argument, that "those investigating American Indian history and U.S. history more generally have failed to reckon with the violence upon which the continent was built" reads to me as a sensible warning, a warning I have done my best to heed.[26]

Richard Slotkin's work provided an excellent tracing of those settler mythos of the American West across a three-volume series that examines the mythology of the American frontier that includes *Regeneration Through Violence*, *The Fatal Environment*, and *Gunfighter Nation*. *Regeneration Through Violence* explores the creation and reproduction of what Slotkin refers to as a "frontier mythology" from the opening of the seventeenth century until the mid-nineteenth century.[27] Here, Slotkin is most concerned with early American literary traditions that inform literary constructions of American Indians and mythic literary constructions of EuroAmerican "hero" archetypes. I primarily engaged with this volume in the exploration and analysis of Indian captivity narratives in Chapter One. Nineteenth-century literature informing

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[25] Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1.

[26] Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 3.

[27] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 4.

frontier mythology, briefly explored in *Regeneration Through Violence*, constitutes the focus of the second volume in this trilogy, *The Fatal Environment*.[28] I found this volume to be particularly helpful in contextualizing the works of nineteenth century American writers, particularly James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving in Chapter Four on popular culture. Finally, *Gunfighter Nation*, perhaps unsurprisingly, explores myths of the American frontier through popular culture forms.[29] Of particular interest to me in this volume was Slotkin's analysis of nineteenth and twentieth century Wild West shows and twentieth century Western genre films that I also examine in Chapter Four. Collectively, Slotkin's work represents an expansive and thorough analysis of the role of American myth-making in a historical and literary context.

Last, but not least, Jean M. O'Brien's *Firsting and Lasting*, while not always immediately relevant to the sources I was researching, was a constant reminder of how settler mythos were created, articulated, and normalized by EuroAmericans.[30] This work, in particular, serves as a call to vigilance, to pay attention to repeating words, phrases, and themes in discourses. For me, that is especially true in discourses in which settler populations make assertions about Native people. It was those nagging attractions to repeated words and phrases as I spent years reading settler narratives that clicked with me as I saw echoes of similar words and phrases in popular culture media and contemporary American cultural and political discourses—particularly about race and indigeneity. One of the most enduring strengths of O'Brien's work is her ability to name such a pervasive rhetorical pattern in settler tellings of American history. The prevalence and meaning of framing American history through a lens of Anglo *firsts* that often correlated to a

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[28] Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*.

[29]Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*.

[30] Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

declension narrative of Indian *lasts* is seemingly simple yet deceptively complicated. However, O'Brien presents this rhetorical strategy throughout her work in a way that the reader likely recognizes they have internalized firsting and lasting to such a degree that it felt almost like a natural component of the English language, rather a product of the Eurocentric and white supremacist ideologies. However, it is O'Brien's secondary concern in her work, which she articulated as "the process whereby non-Indians in the nineteenth century failed or refused *to recognize Indian peoples as such*" [O'Brien's emphasis] that has equally stood out to me as I engage in the work that informed my study of settler colonial discourses.[31]

This dissertation is arranged into four chapters that explore, each in their own way, various bodies of writing or medium of popular culture in order to trace the congruous anti-Indian rhetoric that distinguishes settler colonial discourse. Each chapter builds upon those that came before in order to link this discourse together and ultimately to show how the ideological underpinnings of anti-Indian racism are at the heart of settler discourse. What settler populations have to say about Native people, and what they have to say about themselves by offsetting white America as antithetical to everything Indian, has remained constant to the point that it has been accepted as the story of American identity—particularly in the West. All of the chapters employ archival research of source materials and engage with relevant scholarly literature to definitively show that the rhetoric within this discourse has been reproduced, time and again, in different places and settings, in different eras, and in different contexts. But the effect is a narrow band of messaging that has stayed on point from the colonial era until today. It will be here tomorrow.

The first chapter, "Early Settler Discourse: Indian Captivity Narratives and Exploration in the West, 1600-1850" explores Indian captivity narratives and U.S. exploratory expeditions in

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[31] O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting,* xiv-xv.

the West. Captivity. A terrifying concept to Europeans that was antithetical to the opportunities sought in the English colonies. The Indian captivity narratives that were recorded, nearly as soon as colonists arrived on the eastern seaboard, were powerful documents that filled colonists with both excitement and dread—but they did far more nefarious work than that. That captivity narratives existed in the first place represents a glaring inconsistency with settler discourse of pristine, empty land; an Eden ready to be occupied. But if the newly colonized lands were empty, unoccupied, and existed, for the divine purpose of English colonists to claim them, who was taking these colonists captive? It is no surprise that the Native inhabitants of North America were erased, not only in history, but in the contemporary colonial era in real time as colonists actively worked to ensure the erasure of Indians in writing the history of Anglo "firsts." What is surprising, is the staying power of the derogatory messaging about Native people that came out of those captivity narratives and how consistent those messages were across time and place. The mythology of Indian savagery that was instituted within captivity narratives set into place a blueprint of how European colonists (and later, American settlers) thought about so-called Indians. These narratives were a form of popular culture in their own right and continued on well into the nineteenth century. They reproduced anti-Indian rhetoric that was recycled throughout almost every form of popular culture—and they exported that rhetoric to the rest of the world.

The Lewis and Clark voyages of discovery at the outset of the nineteenth century broadened the world for most Americans. Lewis and Clark took with them their experiences and expectations of dealing with Native people in the East and carried them to the West. In particular Lewis' advice to fellow Americans after an encounter with Chinook peoples in February of 1806 became the ideological map which most settlers would follow. After stating that Americans always operated in good faith towards Indians, Lewis warned that the "treachery of the

aborigines of America" had led to the "destruction of many hundreds of us" and that his men (but really, white Americans in general) must remember that their "preservation depends on never losing sight of this trait in their character, and being always prepared to meet it in whatever shape it may present itself."[32] While these narratives were not widely read until their centennial celebrations renewed interest in the perspectives of Lewis and Clark, the discourse written in the mid-nineteenth century responded to Lewis' words as though they echoed in the minds of all who crossed the plains.

This first chapter explores these earlier writing traditions that contributed to a settler-focused, anti-Indian, discourse through a survey of various source material texts. Indian captivity narratives from early American colonies and early exploratory expeditions to the West—be they scientific or militaristic in nature—shared key discursive components related to how they described interactions with, and observations of, Native people. The rhetoric that was frequently used in these writings to denigrate Native peoples and set up a dichotomy of othering them from settler populations remained fairly consistent throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries and provided a discursive and rhetorical road map that settler populations followed in their own mid-nineteenth century discourse. For all practical purposes the ways in which captivity narratives and official U.S. expeditions described Native people set up a series of expectations about real world interactions that future settler populations may have with Native people, and, in turn, provided a template for how future settlers would describe their own interactions with, and observations of, Indians in the West.

Chapter Two, "Big Tales of Indians Ahead:" Settler Discourse on the Overland Trail, 1830-1890," examines overland trail journals and guidebooks from the mid-nineteenth century

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[32] Meriwether Lewis, Journal, February 20, 1806. https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/item/lc.jrn.1806-02-20#lc.jrn.1806-02-20.01

settler migrations West, and, to a lesser extent, early transcontinental railroad travel narratives that echoed the form and function of mid-century overland trail narratives. It took a lot of work to ignore all of the positive interactions settlers had with Native people and insist instead that Indians were inherently backward, lazy, dangerous, and uncivilized. Of all of the hardships settlers mythologized themselves in overcoming, doing this work may be the one burden that settlers actually carried. Settler-imagined public discourse remembers the following narrative of the overland trail migrations of the mid-nineteenth century: Rugged, determined, and self-sufficient pioneers faced off against hostile terrain, weather, and most importantly, Indians, to settle the lands of the West—at great cost to themselves. The chapter ends by examining the congruities between overland travel during the great overland migrations, and the subsequent overland journeys by rail. Although uninterrupted transcontinental rail travel to West was an intriguing new development after the Civil War, the narratives produced by early rail travelers staunchly followed the blueprint laid out by settler populations that had come before. Many of the travel narratives produced from 1865 until the end of the century reproduced—sometimes to a shocking degree—the anti-Indian rhetoric of the overland trail settler narratives. This is, however, in spite of the fact that rail riders did not face the same challenges that overlanders' had a decade before. This meta-narrative of the settlement of the American West ignores several things. It ignores the role that the State played in supporting settlement to the West in terms of military garrisons positioned along the overland routes and the obvious, but often overlooked, fact that the impetus for these western migrations was a gift of free land available to white settlers.

This narrative also ignores perhaps one of the most egregious falsehoods of the pioneer mythology, that while there were sometimes violent interactions with Native people such

encounters were rare and violence was more likely to have been instigated by settlers against Native people. Most importantly, this narrative erases the overwhelming amount of interactions that were positive between settlers and Native people—often with settlers relying on the generosity and help of Native people. There are two additional things that our pioneer mythology ignores completely: The settler accounts of overland travel are filled with abhorrent racist anti-Indian discourse that glorifies violence against Native people—*and*—the racist rhetoric of those overland accounts reinforced the racist actions of establishing Oregon as a white-only settlement with anti-Black legislation at the core of its founding. How is this a history that settler-descended Americans celebrate?

Most importantly, the second chapter explores the ways in which the anti-Indian rhetoric from Indian captivity narratives and explorative expeditions was reproduced within the settler accounts of the mid-nineteenth-century overland trail journeys to the West. Settler accounts of the Oregon trail settler movements echoed and amplified distorted messages about Indians that were often directly contradictory to their own lived experiences. Chapter two, then, explores both the ways in which this rhetoric was reproduced in the collective discourse of settler accounts as well as the schisms between what settlers said about Indians and the interactions that settlers had with Native people. The valley created between the peaks of these opposing perceptions of reality is inhabited by an idealized mythological settler population that was always just and was always under threat of being murdered by the enemy—in this case, the Native inhabitants of the lands they were settling. While the rhetorical markers of this settler discourse can be found in early forms of writing, it is the application of that rhetoric into such a consistent and definitive body of writing in the overland travel accounts that applied an ideological urgency in creating a mythology that emptied the West of people and replaced them with underserving non-humans or

ruthless killers, and justified settlement by White Americans. This mythology became *the* narrative that was celebrated in most forms of popular culture ever since its inception. From this point on, the discourse solidified during this period was what was reproduced through popular culture and social consciousness in America—for much of a settler population these discursive messages have been accepted as actual history for much of the twentieth century. It has never fully gone away.

The research in this chapter represents a vast survey of settler accounts from the overland trail migrations. While scholarship on the Oregon Trail has looked to the "pioneer" diaries to navigate the lived experiences of transitory settler-Americans, there has been significantly less focus on the way in which settlers wrote about Native people.[33] This chapter is firmly centered on what settlers wrote about Native people and seeks to understand how that language was used to entrench the West in settler colonial ideology. At the same time, this study also explores the implicit arguments that settlers make about themselves in words unsaid; most of the rhetoric they espoused against Indians was a reflection of themselves and their own actions projected onto Native people. This was particularly true in settler projections of violence.

Chapter Three, "Reminiscing Like a Settler: Settler Memory and Pioneer Mythology, 1850-1950," explores the (re)construction of settler memory through late-nineteenth century settler narratives and performative forms of settler discourse. Some settler remembrances were written within just a few years of settlers reaching their destinations. Others were written several decades later as settlers reflected back on their lives. This chapter examines the ways in which

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[33] John D. Unruh, John Faragher, and Michael Tate each explored the written accounts of settlers in their respective works, but their focus was more on the lived experiences of the settler themselves, or of cultural interactions between settlers and Native people rather than detailed discursive analysis of settler writings. See Unruh, *The Plains Across*, John Mack Faragher, *Women & Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2001), and Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*.

the settler discourses related to Native people echoed earlier settler narratives written during the initial overland trail migrations, and seeks to understand how these settler remembrances—alongside performative and memorial settler forms of remembering a nostalgic settler past in the form of late-nineteenth century commemorative trail reenactments and the erection of settler monuments—fit into a reconstructed memory of the settlement of the West at the turn of the twentieth century. The bulk of this chapter explores a unique subset of the overland trail narratives known as remembrances or reminiscences. These sources were written in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century as settlers reflected back on their journeys overland; often through a heavily skewed lens of imperialist nostalgia.[34] As settlers reflected back upon their mid-century travels overland during the end of the century, an imperialist nostalgia took hold of the new narratives that they created—most often known as "remembrances." In these accounts, often written decades after the events described, settlers both lamented the docile nature of Indians who basically handed over unexplored country to them, while simultaneously ramping up the rhetoric of Indian savagery and violence. These narratives were often written amid the backdrop of changing ideas that gripped American consciousness regarding Native People. Early reminiscences written closer to the middle of the nineteenth century through the next few decades often invoked violence against Native Peoples in the West who settlers saw as an obstacle to fulfilling their Manifest Destiny. Settler reminiscences from later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often referred to Native Peoples as having died out, about to die

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[34] "Imperialist nostalgia" refers to a longing, by the agents or benefactors of imperialism, for a pre-empire culture or place that has been forever altered by imperialist structures. See Ronato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia" *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 107-22.

out, or, in some cases, as having to have been "dealt with" in order to satisfy settler ambitions.[35] So, these narratives worked to absolve settler guilt in either case; in the case of Indian lands essentially being free for the taking, or in the case that Indians were such a danger that any violence done to them was justified. As stated previously, the degree to which settler remembrances attributed violence and savagery to Native people went far beyond what had already been a heavily-skewed narrative in the mid-nineteenth century. It was this dynamic of hyper Indian savagery coexisting simultaneously with Indian passivity within settler narratives that remained the tone of settler discourse for nearly the next century.

At the end of Chapter Three I examine a body of travel narratives similar in nature to the rail narratives. The end result is similar—these narratives display a reproduction of rhetoric and themes found in early forms of settler discourse. However, the road to that end looks a little different. Early twentieth century auto tourists undertook their own journeys West under this newly reimagined settler past that largely ignored the role that settler violence played in shifting the power dynamics of American history. These "motor emigrants," as they sometimes called themselves, were the beneficiaries of previous settler projects, but who, in their own discursive reproduction, engaged with forms of narrative transfer that removed the settler from the actions of elimination but are still part of the "logic of elimination." These narratives were written at the time of the discursive shift that occurred amidst the settler memory narratives at the close of the nineteenth century. The narratives of auto tourists exemplify this disconnect—Indians were both everywhere and nowhere in their discourse. Often times, these narratives engaged with

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[35] At the end of the nineteenth century, many EuroAmericans held a belief that Native people were destined to vanish. This trope of the so-called "Vanishing Indian" and EuroAmerican belief in its certainty was, as early as the first decades of the nineteenth century, linked to the ideas that Indian decline was inevitable, and associated with inherent racial qualities that EuroAmericans believed Indian people shared. See Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1982), 3-11.

imperialist nostalgia as they voyaged through the American Southwest and marveled at the remnants of Indian country as though they traveled through ruins of long-dead civilizations. Here, auto tourists promoted themselves as impartial observers to some past devastation that they often failed to acknowledge or took no ownership of. And yet, there were moments in these narratives that reproduced the same anti-Indian vitriol that has been present in every other form of settler discourse we have so far examined.

What is interesting about these settler remembrances, which I have taken care to view separately from overland accounts written at the time, is that they amplify the anti-Indian rhetoric found in earlier discourse and apply an element of violence against Native people that far surpasses that which was articulated at the time of the overland settlement. This amplification of violent rhetoric aimed at Native people occurred at the time in which Native populations were at their lowest points, when Native people had been constrained to reservations, or had genocidal warfare waged against them by the U.S. government and settler militias. This chapter also seeks to bridge the gap between the rhetorical aggression within settler discourse to the reality of a diminished Native presence at the time. Why did the settler narrative insist so forcefully that the savage Indian stereotype was real? The answer, it seems, must have been a subconscious reconciliation with genocide of Native people through a coping mechanism of denial. Americans distanced themselves from their actions towards Native people like never before, while simultaneously insisting that Indians deserved everything they got due to their own savagery. It was in this discursive moment that the U.S. stepped into the twentieth century—and age of mechanical innovation and prosperity that further reinforced to the settler-dominated country that their destiny had manifest.

The final chapter, "John Wayne's Teeth:" The Reproduction of Settler Discourse in

Twentieth-Century Popular Culture, 1900-2020," engages in a vast survey of popular cultural media spanning more than a century. All of these stories have been told before. Popular culture in America has changed in form over the centuries, but one constant function of popular culture has been to retell the settler narrative. In the colonial era this narrative focused on North America as an Eden; an unpopulated land waiting for settlement. Settler colonial discourse rationalized the presence of Native people by stripping Indians of humanity, values, and culture and focusing on a hyper-violent narrative of captivity. Amidst a backdrop of fictional works set in the West and juxtaposed with real life tales of military and scientific expeditions at the start of the nineteenth-century, settler colonial discourse shifted towards justification for active settlement of Indian lands in the West. Of course, the threat of Indian savagery instilled through captivity narratives remained a main component of the discourse but it also highlighted one of the inconsistencies with the settler accounts of settlement—that settler interactions with Native people overwhelmingly disrupted the idea of Indian hostility. For most of the nineteenth century the fears of violence against settler populations was the narrative.

At the close of the nineteenth century, amidst popular conceptions of imminent Indian decline, settlers remembered Indians as the violent savages that they had imagined them to be a generation before. It was this hyper-violent discourse aimed at Native people that became the dominant popular culture narrative in Wild West shows and new forms of entertainment that appeared in the twentieth century; silent films, radio serials, and ultimately talking pictures and television. The narrative of settler societies as rugged, individual pioneers who were preyed upon by savage and violent Indians remained front and center in popular culture depicting the West until the end of the twentieth century.

This chapter effectively picks up where Chapter three left us—at the start of the twentieth century. The discursive model that solidified through settler memory at the end of the nineteenth century was reproduced, over and over again, through various medium of popular culture. This chapter will examine many forms of popular culture: fiction, Wild West show performances, animation, and film, to pull out the threads of settler colonial discourse that are woven throughout these forms of popular culture and which, in turn, weave part of the fabric of American identity throughout the twentieth century. This chapter engages with these sources as textual—focusing on the language they employed and the ideas that such language encouraged. While earlier forms of settler discourse dominated through various medium, none of those writings reached as many people as the popular culture produced throughout the twentieth century. Mythologies about American exceptionalism, rooted in white supremacy and settler superiority, were directly broadcast into American homes and exported globally. If the falsehoods that abound in the settler diaries of the mid-nineteenth century represent the strategy of "tell a lie until it becomes the truth," then the dissemination of settler mythologies through popular culture during the twentieth century were the lie heard round the world. Ultimately, it is the job of this chapter to definitively show the trail of how this discourse has been reproduced over and over, and it is the product of centuries worth of reproducing anti-Indian rhetoric in a settler-centered and settler-dominant narrative.

Conclusion: The Settler Present

Words matter. In contemporary American political rhetoric has reached a fever-pitch where words divide and signal allegiances. I argue that this structure has been built from blueprints that have evolved over hundreds of years. This study focuses specifically on anti-

Indian rhetoric as the discourse of settler colonialism—but the scaffolding of this discourse in terms of "othering" can be applied to any marginalized group. And historically, it often has.

The conclusion of this study is based on the premise of Lorenzo Veracini's most recent work, *The Settler Colonial Present*—whenever that may be.[36] It does not seem to matter if I finish writing on a Tuesday, for there will be another example of this discursive reproduction on Wednesday. Certainly on Friday. Probably again on Sunday. In the conclusion I take a step back and consider the trail of evidence over centuries and contemplate that these messages are still being, not only reproduced by a settler-descended society, but also *absorbed by everyone*. In what is, perhaps, the largest import of this work, I need to show you that this matters. It matters in how settler-descended populations see themselves, and it matters in how they *still* see Native people. Most importantly, it matters in the way that this messaging works to *continue* to harm Native people. Just as the rhetoric of violent Indian savagery was used to fuel and engage in genocide toward Native people in the latter-nineteenth century, the rhetoric of pioneer mythology asserts an ownership over historically—and contemporarily—Indian owned and occupied spaces to shift the balance of power towards Anglo Americans such as the occupation of the Burns-Paiute lands at Malheur in Oregon in 2015-16, or the Dakota Access Pipeline disputes from the years prior, or the President of the United States using "Pocahontas" as a racial slur against Senator Elizabeth Warren during the 2020 election season.[37] The reproduction of this discourse only serves to further continuous erosion of Native sovereignty, prosperity, and basic human rights. All values that the pioneer mythology upholds for itself.

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[36] Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1-6.

[37] Alison Durkee, "Trump Warns He Could Revive "Pocahontas" Slur at Any Time" 2020, *Vanity Fair*. https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2019/08/trump-warren-pocahontas-new-hampshire.

Chapter Two

Early Settler Discourse: Indian Captivity Narratives and Exploration in the West, 1600-1850

Euro-Americans have long been occupied with false notions of Indian savagery and cruelty. From the earliest accounts of contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in the Americas it was clear that Europeans feared and were fascinated by Native Americans. That fascination soon turned to detestation. While the contemptuous nature of European descriptions of Native people has been consistent since the voyages of Columbus in the late fifteenth century, anti-Indian sentiments were solidified within one specific form of writing in Colonial America.[1] No body of writing has been more influential in cementing the idea of Indian savagery in American consciousness than the so-called "Indian" captivity narratives written between the early seventeenth century and the late nineteenth century. While these narratives were promoted as first-hand accounts of harrowing ordeals—and some of them truly were—these works collectively encoded gendered and racialized discourses into the very fabric of early American writing and identity. Wildly popular, sometimes completely fabricated, but always sensational, these narratives reinforced ecclesiastical gender norms that centered on women's purity and vulnerability, and a inverse narrative of Native hostility, savagery, and sexual predation that existed almost entirely in the minds of EuroAmerican readers.[2] Whether the accounts were truly the narratives of women who experienced captivity, an attempt to retell a woman's experience through an intermediary male editor or writer, or a completely fictionalized account whose

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[1] Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 4-7.

[2] Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* (New York: Penguin, 1998), xxvii.

sensationalism was used as a marketing tool to attract readers, all of these accounts shared similar discursive structures and rhetorical strategies in their descriptions of Native people.

As captivity narratives solidified ideas of Indian savagery in the minds of American readers, narratives written during official expeditions of exploration for the United States during the early-nineteenth century recorded those ideas into official reports of the American interior and Western portions of the country. The Lewis and Clark "Corps of Discovery" and the John C. Frémont expeditions of the mid-nineteenth century reproduced, and expanded on, the language used to describe Native people in the context of captivity narratives from the eastern portion of the country—and overlaid those ideas on Native people in the West—that EuroAmericans were often encountering for the first time. This transference of collective past traumatic experiences with eastern Indians onto unknown, unfamiliar, and, according to these government agents, seemingly more uncivilized Native people found in the West, was reflected in many forms of settler discourses of the nineteenth century.[3] Early American exploratory narratives were significant for two reasons; they reproduced the discursive anti-Indian rhetoric that was prevalent in Indian captivity narratives, and, they did so in an official capacity as agents of the United States. Instead of the anti-Indian sentiments expressed so commonly in captivity narratives fading into history, these official government reports codified the anti-Indian messaging that came out of them and, in turn, reproduced notions of Indian savagery. The narratives of John C.

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[3] James Arthur Levernier and Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola explored this issue and wrote that "by the early nineteenth century, the reality of Indian captivity was already a generation or more removed from the consciousness of white Americans living in the East. While frontier warfare continued in the West until well into the latter part of the century, it long since had ceased in the East. Along with the end of warfare came a change in the way Easterners viewed the American Indian. Attempting to discover and define a national identity, white Americans turned to their past, hoping there to find a heritage worthy of what they considered their country's future promise." (167) They continued" "No longer a military threat, the Indian, together with the frontier, was perceived as part of a rapidly vanishing national heritage that needed immediate preservation" and that "consequently, white audiences began romanticizing the American Indian as part of what was perceived to be a glorious historical age." (168) See Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative,* 167-8.

Frémont, in particular, were influential to the glut of overland settlers who traveled West between the 1840s and 1860s. The anti-Indian rhetoric expressed in the writings of U.S. agents further exacerbated conflict with, and violence against, Native people in the American West.

This chapter engages two very different types of writing with the goal of establishing a timeline of the above-mentioned patterns of anti-Indian rhetoric; the Indian captivity narratives of the early colonial period through the late-nineteenth century and United States expedition reports of the early-nineteenth century. Attempting to distill the messaging from different types of writing across generations, centuries, and vast amounts of space reveals overlapping issues of authorship, changing cultural contexts, and possibly incongruent comparative analysis. However, the apparent patterns of anti-Indian sentiments found within Indian captivity narratives and the journals recording expeditions of "discovery" in the nineteenth-century West are worth exploring here—particularly as they connect to the reproduction of settler discourses in nineteenth-century overland trail diaries and beyond.

The first portion of this chapter deals with Indian captivity narratives and relies on a survey of over forty narratives from multiple physical and digital archives.[4] I used these primary sources to conduct a comparative textual analysis that included both comprehensive readings of entire narratives as well as a more targeted approach utilizing key word or phrase searches. An initial exploratory reading of these narratives revealed many similar common words and phrases that were present in later settler discourses—namely the overland trail narratives that served as the impetus for this study. Within that survey base the narratives were scanned for specific terminology linked to settler colonial discourses about Native peoples. The term "Indian" often served as a starting point to weed out those few narratives that contained little-to-no mention of

[4] Many of the standalone narratives were gathered from "The Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captivities at Cornell." Cornell University, http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/garland.html

Indians at all, and, more importantly, to contextualize the tone and tenor in which that narrative discussed Native people generally. Common words or phrases such as “savage”, “violent”, “scalp”, “skulk”, and “treachery” often yielded numerous mentions within this survey group of narratives. The purpose here is to track the historical use of words or phrases rather than to focus on any particular authors. However, a part of that examination must include some analysis of authorship in order to contextualize the meaning of this discourse.

Similarly, the diaries and official reports of two of the most well-known explorers employed by the United States during the nineteenth century left detailed written works that are fraught with Anti-Indian sentiments. The second part of this chapter engages in a comparative textual analysis of the works of the Lewis and Clark “Corps of Discovery” and the reports from John C. Frémont’s expeditions.[5] There are specific words or phrases found within these documents that serve as a discursive bridge between captivity narratives and the overland trail writings of American settlers. These two very different bodies of writing; one written by hundreds of authors and spanning over three hundred years, and the other written by a handful of individuals—acting as official U.S. government agents—in a short span of time on, provide both a macro and micro study of language usage in early America. Ultimately, the connections between these bodies of writing will provide a clear map to connecting discursive patterns found in later forms of settler writings and popular culture production.

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[5] The difference is in the sample size, rather than the scope. The majority of the Lewis and Clark research was conducted using the online database of the Lewis and Clark Journals. See “The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.” *University of Nebraska Lincoln*. http://www.lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu. Similarly, there are searchable online versions of the John C. Frémont expeditions that made these searches manageable. See “The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont.” *The Internet Archive*. http://www.archive.org/stream/expeditionsofjoh01fr/expeditionsofjoh01fr_djvu.txt.

Indian Captivity Narratives

"Indians must be and will be Indians"[6]
- Mary Jeminson, 1758

"To be cast into the power of savages, who, from infancy, are taught hardness of heart, which deprives them of the common feelings of humanity, is enough to intimidate the firmest mind"[7]
- Benjamin Gilbert, 1790.

Captivity narratives were some of the most popular secular writings in colonial America.[8] These firsthand accounts written by settlers informed colonial perceptions of Native peoples in North America but were often antithetical to accurate understandings of Native people. Yet, after a very brief introductory period between Europeans and Native people in the so-called "New World," those colonial perceptions of Native peoples were presented as overwhelmingly negative. Indian captivity narratives were an immediate and codified record of cultural interactions between settler colonists and Native peoples in what one scholar refers to as "contact zones" in North America.[9] While there were many reasons that Native inhabitants of North America took captives from the European colonial populations, the literary narrative tradition on behalf of said colonial population was less nuanced in its response as were the circumstances

[6] James E. Seaver, ed. *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 32.

[7] Benjamin Gilbert, *Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Benjamin Gilbert and His Family Who Were Surprised by the Indians, and Taken From Their Farms, on the Frontiers of Pennsylvania in the Spring*, 1780 (London: James Phillips, 1790), 2-3.

[8] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative,* 14-15.

[9] In *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt defines the term "contact zones" as "the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict." See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 8.

surrounding captivity.[10] The messaging that came out of such narratives included dozens of descriptions of Indians—most of them bad—and the overwhelmingly singular sentiment that Indians were to be feared due to their inherent savagery.

While the individual accounts may be harrowing, captivity narratives collectively reveal a deeper meaning than they do individually. Captivity narratives imprinted imagery in the public consciousness and informed a settler population with expectations that they would encounter Indian people who were hostile. Those inherently racist, deeply cynical, and overtly inflammatory messages about Native people commonly found within captivity narratives are the subject of this chapter. No matter what social, political, or economic conditions changed as English colonies formed a new union in the United States of America, the sentiments found in captivity narratives remained fairly consistent and constant (even if particular words or phrases evolved over time). Therefore, this chapter seeks to show *how* the language used in captivity narratives to demonize Native people was reproduced in other forms of writing produced by settler populations in North America. The collective anti-Indian ideology reflected through captivity narratives and reproduced in settler discourse had real life consequences for Native people across North America who were confronted by anxious colonial settlers convinced of wholesale Indian insidiousness.

Both men and women wrote of horrific violence as well as small acts of kindness on behalf of their captors. However, it was descriptions of violence that lingered on the pages of captivity narratives—striking fear and mistrust of Indians into the hearts of colonial America.

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[10] There were several reasons why Native inhabitants captured English colonials. Two reasons that are most often reflected through captivity narratives were captives taken for ransom—often at the behest of France working with Indians as intermediaries, or as an act of revenge for settler encroachment. However, Native people also took colonial captives to replace lost tribal members, or, in rare cases as a form of slavery (although one that did not preclude a later ransom back to the captive's family or adoption into the tribal unit. See Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative,* 2-8.

Women often wrote of their babies being taken from the breast and scalped or having their heads bashed against rocks or trees. Many wrote of their children suffering horrific injuries or illnesses that ultimately took the life of the child after a lengthy and cruel battle with survival. Men often described seeing their compatriots tortured, dismembered, disemboweled or burned alive (or sometimes, all of the previous afflictions in succession) while they were forced to watch and anticipate their turn at a similar fate. While such descriptions of violence at the hands of Indian captors became literary devices in their own right and were often over-exaggerated, we can be sure that men, women, and children did experience traumatic acts of violence as part of the captivity process. Despite what becomes of the captivity narrative as a work of fictionalized propaganda later on, during the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries the violence described in some of these narratives was quite real, and quite devastating to those who experienced it. Parsing out what was real, and what was made for others to imagine within the pages of captivity narratives has been one of the more difficult but important tasks taken up by scholars studying this issue.

Scholars have long examined Indian captivity narratives as a distinctly American form of writing.[11] European colonists eagerly cataloged their experiences with Native people in the New World as soon as they encountered them. Of course, settler observations of this new pristine wilderness—this Eden—were filtered through a lens of Eurocentrism and white supremacy which drastically impacted their ability to reconcile the mythology of an American Eden with its actual Native inhabitants who went out of their way to ensure that early colonists did not die of exposure and starvation. Almost immediately after first encounters colonists from England

[11] See Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative,* 1-38, Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 71-113, and Andrew Newman, *Allegories of Encounter: Colonial Literacy and Indian Captivities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 1-18.

framed their experiences with Native people as negative and hostile. By the mid-seventeenth century, British European colonists were similarly obsessed and terrified of Indian captivity as they were of witches living among themselves.[12] The parallels between the ways in which superstitious rhetoric proved disastrous and dangerous for people other than colonial leaders in the contexts of witch hysteria in Salem and fears of Indian captivity in the colonies in general are apt. As the fear of witches reflected the fear *within* colonial minds, the fear of Indians solidified as the fear of the *other*; but both of these responses was born of colonials' fear. While the comparison between witch hysteria and Indian hysteria is not particularly helpful outside of a passing interest, it is important to note where the two contexts take different trajectories. Serious fear of witchcraft in North America died out in the eighteenth century while the (often unfounded) fear of Indians and Indian captivity remained a prevalent concern in the minds of European colonists and, later, their settler descendants.

[12] Historian Mary Beth Norton explored the relationship between Indians and colonial fears of witchcraft in the monograph *In the Devil's Snare*. During the infamous witchcraft trials in Salem in 1692, Sarah Osborne offered the following testimony in which she "either saw or dreamed that shee saw a thing like an Indian all black which did pinch her in her neck and pulled her by the back part of her head to the dore of the house." (27) Abigail Hobbs "encountered Satan in the woods (the Indians' domain) near her residence in Falmouth, one of the Indians' chief targets in both the first and second wars. Those who heard her confession readily grasped the connection between Satan and the Wabanakis." (81) Thus began a written association between Indians and servants of the devil, if not the devil himself. This image of the "black man" quickly became normalized throughout the 1692 trials and beyond. Norton questions whether the "black man" merely resembles an Indian—as often stated in testimony—or whether he is inextricably linked to Indianness. She states that "on numerous occaisions seventeenth-century colonists employed the word 'black' to mean 'Indian'." (58) Norton goes on to link Indians and Satan in colonial minds; "The fear of Indians that pervaded the region thus included not just apprehensions of death or captivity but also of torture and dismemberment. In light of the perceived alliance between Satan and the Wabanakis, such suffused dread could easily have been vocalized in what became the commonplace description of the devil's threats to 'tear [the afflicted] to pieces' if they did not comply with his demands. Indeed, in recounting a series of dissection narratives, Cotton Mather explicitly termed the Wabanakis 'Devils,' thus linking the Indians to Satan precisely in this context." (135-6) See Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 27, 81, 58, 135-6.

Scholars place Indian captivity narratives into categories that roughly equate to time periods and contain thematic similarities.[13] Generally speaking, the narratives written during the seventeenth century reflect religious, specifically Puritan, themes of the Indian as a supernatural being that is closer in nature to the realm of satan than pious colonials were to the world of God. Eighteenth century narratives shifted away from religious themes and towards issues of the Indian as a wild savage and the role of the colonist was one of conquering nature and subduing the savage. By the nineteenth century, though, Indian captivity narratives had become well-worn literary ground and were highly fictionalized. In *Women's Captivity Narratives* Derounian-Stodola argues that rather than view these periods as distinct compartments, we should see them as existing during their entirety along a spectrum; some narratives were fact, some leaned toward being "factive", while others leaned towards being "fictive" and others were outright fiction.[14] While their form was following established trends within the genre, these narratives served a new purpose; they indoctrinated Americans into ideologically opposing "the Indian" on the grounds that they were too savage, violent, or brutal to be saved and they must, therefore, be exterminated.

One of the earlier scholars to examine the collective messaging from Indian captivity narratives was Roy Harvey Pearce. In the mid-twentieth century his work on colonial understandings of "the Indian" as an inherently savage being offered a compelling window into the settler mind. In his work *Savagism and Civilization*, he argued that "the colonial concern with the savage Indian was a product of the tradition of Anglo-French primitivistic thinking—an

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[13] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative,* 17-33.

[14] Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, xii.

attempt to see the savage, the ignoble savage, as a European Manqué."[15] That is to say, that Indians were steeped in savagism because they lacked the cultural and religious traditions of Europeans and so they could never rise out of this state. He went on state that "the Indian became for seventeenth-century Virginians a symbol not of a man in the grip of devilish ignorance, but of a man standing fiercely and grimly in the path of civilization."[16] This resulted in a colonial worldview throughout the eighteenth century in which the "savages were inextricably bound in what was to be called savagism."[17] Over the next century the United States issued policy after policy to overcome the state of "savagism" through religious and cultural assimilation and conversion amongst Native nations. Even while those programs—loosely grouped together and referred to as "assimilation" policies—were ongoing settler discourses expressed frustrations that those attempts seemed to achieve unsatisfactory results and only reinforced the notion amongst settlers that "savagism" could not be overcome. One result of this discourse, of course, allowed settlers to logically conclude that violence against Native people was justified. Pearce argued that, at this point:

> Americans who were setting out to make a new society could find a place in it for the Indian only if he would become what they were--settled, steady, civilized. Yet somehow he would be anything but what he was--roaming, unreliable, savage. So they concluded that they were destined to try to civilize him and, in trying, to destroy him, because he could not and would not be civilized.[18]

Here, Pearce was an early academic voice articulating (although not in the language that would become common a half a century later) a connection between colonial and early-American

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[15] Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), 4.

[16] Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization*, 11.

[17] Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization*, 48.

[18] Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization*, 53.

attitudes towards Indians and a justification for genocide. This connection will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter Three.

Pearce had predated his work on Indian "savageness" by specifically exploring Indian captivity narratives. In the article "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative" he argued that "the captivity narrative is interesting and valuable to us, I submit, not because it can tell us a great deal about the Indian or even about immediate frontier attitudes towards the Indian," but because "it enables us to see more deeply and more clearly into popular American culture, popular American issues, and popular American tastes."[19] After reflecting on Pearce's statement —written almost seventy ago—I contend that Indian captivity narratives did, in fact, tell us a great deal about immediate frontier attitudes towards "the Indian" at the time in which they were written, *and*, support Pearce's mid-century analysis of how previous settler discourses influenced "popular American culture, popular American issues, and popular American tastes."[20] In the twenty-first century, captivity narratives still provide readers with *lasting* frontier attitudes towards the Indian and their relationship to cultural ideas about whiteness, settler sovereignty, and racialized discourses about Native Americans continues to evolve.

Some of the most expansive work connecting settler discourses in literature to historical and contemporary American ethos came from literature scholar Richard Slotkin who examined the role of captivity narratives in the mythologizing of the American West in the first of his massive three-volume series, *Regeneration Through Violence*. There, he argued that "printed literature has been from the first the most important vehicle of myth in America."[21] This

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[19] Roy Harvey Pearce, "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative," *American Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1947): 1-20.

[20] Pearce, "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative," 20.

[21] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 19.

sentiment particularly applied to the role of captivity narratives as he continued that "almost from the moment of its literary genesis, the New England Indian captivity narrative functioned as a myth, reducing the Puritan state of mind and world view, along with the events of colonization and settlement, into archetypal drama."[22] Slotkin then went on to formulate a chronology of how captivity narratives reflected social norms in colonial America and the ways in which they were used to further shape colonial percepts of Native people. At first, he claims, captivity narratives were "genuine…first-person accounts of actual ordeals" that were a "product of the New World experience."[23] However, they were quickly used by religious leaders to "express the community's sense of meaning of its experience, to rationalize its actions, and to move its people to new actions."[24] Specifically, "Cotton Mather used the narrative of Hannah Dustin's escape from captivity as the core of a series of revival sermons in 1694, attempting to invoke in the backslidden younger generation the religious consciousness of the Puritan fathers by recounting this myth of the Puritan existence."[25] This last example invoking Cotton Mather—known to be involved in writing, editing, and elaborating upon women's narratives—is particularly illuminating as it casts light on the varied motivations behind, not only the purpose of captivity narratives, but also on issues of authorship.

Who were the writers of captivity narratives and what do these narratives say about their experiences in Indian captivity? The writers of captivity narratives represented the larger population makeup of colonial America. They were Anglo, European-born or descended, women and men from colonial communities. They were also certainly writing to their peers. The earlier

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[22] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 94.

[23] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 95.

[24] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 96.

[25] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 96.

captivity narratives, in particular, say something about the class distinctions of the men and women who wrote them as literacy rates were low in colonial America during the seventeenth century.[26] Clearly, these were deeply personal narratives. However, they worked as cautionary tales about living on a "frontier" so close to "othered" peoples. Yet, even the presumptive purpose of captivity narratives is, in itself, one of cultural significance.[27]

Indian captivity narrative scholars James Arthur Levenier and Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola addressed the complexities related to issues of authorship. They argued that "more often than not the individual captivity narrative constitutes an amalgamation of voices and input, each with its own agenda and design."[28] Because of this, they advised "any investigation of the captivity narratives must, therefore, be text-and-culture-based, not author-based, because authorship is so problematical."[29] Levenier and Derounian-Stodola addressed another issue with authorship, that of ghost-writers, editors, publishers, or other forms of "mediation" of captivity narratives. One issue was authors, editors, or publishers repackaging a singular story and passing it off as the work of multiple authors—as was the case with three women captured by Comanches in Texas in the early nineteenth century. Caroline Harris, Clarissa Plummer, and Sarah Ann Horn all published narratives that were told in the first-person but the three narratives

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[26] Jill Lepore, in her monograph *In The Name of War*, says the following regarding literacy rates in the early American colonies: "In 1660, about 60% of English men and 30% of English women in New England seem to have been literate" (37) - The statistics she cites are from Kenneth A. Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England* (New York, 1974), 13. In her footnote she says of them "these English literacy rates are in no way exact; what they measure is "signing literacy," the proportion of the population that signed documents with a written name rather than a mark." (264) See Lepore, *In The Name of War*, 37, 264.

[27] We know that for centuries Native communities waged warfare on one another which often included a threat of captivity. However, the mere premise central to many colonial-era narratives—that captivity by Native people represents a "fate worse than death"—is an assumption steeped in EuroAmerican cultural values. This informs us not only about the writers of captivity narratives, but the readership as well.

[28] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 11.

[29] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 13.

contained the same information. Levernier and Derounian-Stodola contemplated that this may have been an issue of unscrupulous publishers trying to repackage and resell a singular piece of writing.[30] The other issues that Richard Slotkin addressed earlier is that of men, often religious leaders, exerting influence over these narratives attributed to female authors. In the volume of women's Indian captivity narratives that she edited, Derounian-Stodola noted that of the ten narratives contained in the volume, "at least five of the narratives were edited, written, published, or circulated with ecclesiastical oversight" and that "three other accounts…appeared under the names of, or within the texts by, male writers who wrote with propagandist or pseudo-literary agendas." [31] These issues were exacerbated over time. Roy Harvey Pearce noted the issues of determining authenticity to be difficult and stated that "the problem of authenticity in some of the narratives of the first half of the nineteenth century is hopelessly confused."[32]

Due to the ambiguity of authorship within Indian captivity narratives and the wide spectrum along which authorship exists—from known and verifiable narratives attached to specific authors to known and verifiable works of fiction with many examples falling somewhere in-between—the veracity of these narratives is expected to be questionable, at best. Therefore, for the purposes of this study which seeks not to re-examine the historical accuracies of captivity narratives, but rather, to explore the ways in which anti-Indian rhetoric was first present, and later reproduced, within captivity narratives—issues of authorship or authenticity are of less concern as are issues of collective rhetorical examples. Whether captivity narratives were more factive, fictive, or outright lies set to paper, their effects on colonial, and later, Euro American,

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[30] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 13.

[31] Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, xxvi.

[32] Pearce, "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative," 19.

society were equally tangible. Herein lies the true work done by captivity narratives: sowing mistrust and fear of Indians to such a degree that colonial EuroAmericans felt justified in expressing outward hatred towards Native people.

Statistics for colonials taken into Indian captivity are difficult to determine. Given the span of time that captivity narratives remained relevant and popular it is no surprise that they existed within changing social, political, and demographic contexts. One estimate puts captivity events spanning the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries at around 1650.[33] In their work on Indian captivity narratives, historians Levernier and Derounian-Stodola assert that "conservative estimates place the number of captives taken by Indians in the tens of thousands."[34] While we will never know exactly how many Euro Americans were captured by Native people, we can be sure that for early American colonists in particular the threat of Indian captivity was real.

Of course, the simple capture of EruoAmericans was only the hook of captivity narratives. Readers of captivity narratives were tantalized and horrified by the descriptions of Indian savagery and brutality against whites. Literature scholar Richard Slotkin, using one compilation of Canadian captivity narratives (containing over 750 named captives) asserts that approximately one-third of those taken captive were either killed during captivity, disappeared from record, or "became Indians outright"—meaning they stayed with their captors. On the other hand almost half of the captives were returned to their settlements, either through ransom or other means.[35] This suggests that it was less likely for colonial captives to experience the "fate

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[33] Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, xv.

[34] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative,* 2.

[35] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 97.

worse than death" (this sentiment refers to the belief that sexual violence is likely to be committed against white women captives) than it was for them to experience an act of political capital (being captured by Indians for political leverage, ransom, or to replace tribal members) that was no doubt terrifying and distressing but was also not the death sentence that rhetoric surrounding captivity would lead us to believe.[36] For colonial Americans captivity represented a real threat. However, captivity narratives did not provide an ample explanation of the causes and context of captivity.[37] They also did they recognize that there were other people outside of EuroAmerican colonials that experienced captivity—likely to a far greater degree.[38]

Similar to the ways that contemporary racial stereotypes tell incomplete stories, captivity narratives mainly worked to amplify and distort Indian threats against white European colonists. The actual context of defensive warfare, shifting political boundaries, resource depletion, or land

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[36] Colin Calloway best articulated the trope of a "fate worse than death" when he stated that "from seventeenth-century Massachusetts to twentieth-century Hollywood, Indian captivity has been regarded as a fate worse than death, and western frontiersmen advocated saving the last bullet for oneself to prevent it." - See Colin Calloway, "An Uncertain Destiny: Indian Captives on the Upper Connecticut River" *Journal of American Studies*, 17 (1983), 189.

[37] Historian Lisa Brooks explored the issue of how historians write about Indian captivity in the colonial era. Brooks explores the historiography of Indian Captivity, including works by Jill Lepore, Pauline Strong and Margaret Newell, and points out that we know far more about the relatively small numbers of colonials taken captive by local Indians than we do about the larger numbers of Indians held in slavery or held in captivity themselves. Brooks asserts in her engagement with these scholars that—generally speaking— "scholars often 'neglected or distorted' the 'Native American context of captivity' and that this 'absence' is particularly grievous when considering the degree to which captivity affected Native Americans. See Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*, 5-7.

[38] Margaret Newell explores the topic of Indians enslaved by English colonials and asserts that despite the fact that "the colonists sought Indian workers from the beginning of settlement," that "somehow Indian slavery virtually disappeared from post-World War I scholarship on New England." Yet, she continued, "We still know more about the relatively few Euro-American captives among the Indians than we do about the thousands of Native Americans who served European masters." See Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren By Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 4-5. Additionally, Pauline Turner Strong argues in *Captive Selves, Captivating Others*, that 'in numerical terms, the captivity of English colonists among Indians pales in comparison to the abduction, imprisonment, and enslavement of Indians by the English, and indeed, to the captivity of Indians by Indians during the colonial period." See Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics And Poetics Of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 12.

loss was almost completely absent and was replaced by a narrative centered around violence as an inherent Indian trait. Historian Jill Lepore examined Indian captivity narratives through a lens of war narratives during the early colonial period in America. Specifically, Lepore focused on the rhetoric that came out of the King Phillip's War, or, Metacom's Rebellion, in 1675-76. In *The Name of War*, Lepore contends with some of the more visceral descriptions of violence that are associated with Indian captivity narratives as a feature of wartime reporting in the seventeenth century. Her determination was that the words that colonists wielded against Native people in captivity narratives amounted to "words of war."[39]

Indian captivity was a real threat, to be sure, but one that became less dramatic as Euro-American political and military structures undermined Native Nations' sovereignty and populations. Additionally, even though some captivity narratives recounted actual and horrific violence events perpetrated by Native peoples against settlers, any context for *that* violence, and nearly any context for *all* settler-led violence, was lost in the reproduction of the larger body of settler discourse that included the few "factive" narratives amidst a sea of more "fictive"—if not outright fabricated—narratives. At the same time, perceived threats of Indians continued to be highly exaggerated as time wore on within settler discourses.[40] And it is that work; what captivity narratives led Euro Americans to believe about Native peoples, that is the focus of this chapter.

[39] Lepore, *The Name of War*, ix.

[40] Noted Settler Colonialism scholar Lorenzo Veracini provides insight for these seemingly-conflicting scenarios. According to Veracini, settler discourses required a disavowal of the "violent foundation" of a "settler colonial regime." (84) This disavowal, coupled with other settler "amnesia and nostalgia" (what settler discourses choose to forget, and what they choose to remember) "can be especially interesting for what they reveal in the act of concealment." (89-90) Specifically, this settler amnesia of *settler* violence, coupled with a settler nostalgia for *Indian* violence—specifically in the ongoing reproduction of settler narratives—was a hallmark for settler colonial discourses. See Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 76-90.

The reproduction of settler discourses within captivity narratives worked to denigrate Native people—to cast them as inherently savage, violent, and treacherously deceitful. Exactly how that work was accomplished is an interesting story in itself. Captivity narratives followed a rather tight script. Usually the writer set up a quiet peaceful time before the captivity event which often erupted in chaos within the first few pages of the narrative. From that point on the narrative was usually filled with admonishments about the Native captors that nearly always included some combination of the terms savage, cruel, ungodly, or barbaric. One example comes from a well-known eighteenth-century account which described an ordeal faced by the Johnson family homesteading in New England. During the night Mr. Johnson answered a knock at the door when he witnessed "a crowd of savages, fixed horribly for war." Mr. Johnson was immediately subdued while a very pregnant Mrs. Johnson and her three children were roused from the house into the main room, naked, and huddled together. Before marching the family away from the home, the Indians provided Mrs. Johnson with a gown and the children with some clothing. As they began to march, Mrs. Johnson suffered a fainting spell, at which point one of her captors observed her difficulty and "drew his knife, as I supposed, to put an end to my existence," but instead he cut off pieces of her gown that were hindering her movement. Although Mrs. Johnson understandably had difficulty trudging through the woods at night while late into her pregnancy, it appears that her captors made every effort to minimize her discomfort. They supplied her with moccasins and the children with blankets, fed them three meals a day, and procured a pony for her to ride once they arrived at a village. When she gave birth to her daughter, whom she named Captive, she was allowed to rest for the remainder of the day.[41] Despite a glaring discrepancy between her fear and the actions of her captors, Mrs. Johnson did not acknowledge that the

[41] Susannah Willard Johnson, *The Captive American; Or A Narrative of the Sufferings of Mrs. Johnson, During Four Years Captivity, With the Indians and French. Written By Herself,* Carlisle, 1797, PDF, 10-11, 16.

savagery she expected was never realized. Mrs. Johnson's conviction that she would be the victim of brutal violence was consistent with many captivity narratives and reinforced the notion that Indians were to be feared—no matter whether or not those fears were founded.

Certainly, some of the atrocities detailed were savage, cruel, and barbaric, but these terms were used at least equally, if not more so, as descriptors for Indian people—all Indian people—rather than the acts of violence described. One could argue that different cultural norms related to expressing grief or simply literary trends of various forms of an author's voice could contribute to seemingly out-of-step cultural expressions in a modern context, yet, I interpret these two things together to mean that the purpose here is to follow the script of Native denigration rather than an earnest or accurate description of events. To further evidence the point, the writer oftentimes spends a few pages detailing the early portion of their captivity where they engage with this language intensely focused on horrific violence before inexplicably, and quickly, reconciling their opinion of their captors and moving on to more mundane topics. It is simply difficult to imagine writing about the dismemberment of a loved one to then discuss generalized opinions on the cultural practices of marriage in Indian societies just a few pages later.

The next phase of these narratives often involves a quick departure from demonizing the captors and transitioned to descriptions of connecting with the Native women who were part of the captive group. Many white women expressed sympathy or connections to these women and there was often a shift in their language from "all Indians are cruel" to "all Indian men are cruel". Depending on the length of captivity this may give way to a third phase in which the writer begins to refer fondly, or at least speak of the "fairness" of her captors. However, the degree to which writers of captivity narratives may speak in neutral or positive terms of their captives is

significantly diminished in relation to the negative rhetoric used about Native people in the first third of almost all captivity narratives.

The specific terms used to describe Native people, in particular, followed similarly predictable patterns. The most frequently used marker of anti-Indian rhetoric within captivity narratives involve detailed descriptions of violence that transcended narrative uses and morphed into lurid indulgences that blurred the lines between acts of violence committed by Native people, and Indians who were inherently violent by their nature. Captivity narratives, obviously, center around the violence of being taken against one's own will. However, the violence described in these narratives and the ways in which that violence is ascribed to Native people specifically is worthy of further examination. In a survey of over forty captivity narratives written between the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries almost ninety-five percent of captivity narratives sampled contained descriptions of violence that go beyond the initial captivity event itself.

Descriptions of violence tended to focus on particularly gruesome and specific acts, namely: scalping, torturing, burning alive, dismemberment, disembowelment, skinning, consuming flesh and blood, and "bashing in" the heads of children. Other, more commonplace, ways that colonists died at the hands of Indians—shooting, stabbing, or beating them to death—often received a passing comment from the narrator. But those other methods of brutality linger in these accounts. On one hand, it is hard to imagine the trauma experienced by a person who witnessed such an act and perhaps that accounts for some of the focus on detailing these deaths. However, in the aggregate, the descriptions themselves become obviously formulaic.

The Reverend John Corbly's narrative, reprinted in the anthology *Indian Captivities, Or, Life in the Wigwam* (which begins with a woodcut illustration of Indians dancing around a tree

on fire with victims tied to it, entitled "Torturing a Captive") contains multiple forms of outrageous violence enacted against his wife and five children—but mainly scalping. On the way to church in 1782 Corbly was alerted to the shrieks of his family up ahead and ran to their aid when he wrote that "an Indian ran up to shoot me."[42] The Indian attackers then took a suckling child from his wife's breast and scalped and killed her. They beat, shot, and scalped his wife. As for the rest of the children, he wrote: "my little boy, an only son, about six years old, they sunk the hatchet into his brains, and thus dispatched him. A daughter, besides the infant, they also killed and scalped.[43] His eldest daughter watched from the safety of some trees but was caught and scalped as she tried to escape. The same fate met another daughter but she was not killed in the attack, only left with a piece of her skull missing. Corbly attested that his brief narrative was a "faithful" accounting of the tragedy, but for such a horrific attack so close in proximity to a settlement there is little mention of it in the literature—leading to the conclusion this was likely more 'fictive' than 'factive' to use Derounian-Stodola's terms. There are also interesting gender dynamics at play in this brief narrative. Perhaps due to his calling as a reverend, Corbly displays few hallmarks of masculinity as he recounts witnessing his entire family being killed, at the end of which, he "instantly fainted away."[44] The passivity with which he described the event, the helplessness he felt, and the fainting dead away, are often attributes assigned to women's captivity narratives. If this was indeed a fictionalized narrative, it seems to assume a women's narrative voice rather than a man's which, even in fictionalized accounts and in cases where men were helpless to stop what was happening, was usually filled with overly-dramatic displays of

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[42] John Corbly, "Rev. John Corbly's Narrative." In *Indian Captivities, Or, Life in the Wigwam; Being True Narratives of Captives Who Have Been Carried Away By the Indian, From the Frontier Settlements of the U.S., From the Earliest Period to the Present Time*, ed. Samuel G. Drake (Auburn: Derby and Miller, 1850), 336.

[43] Corbly, "Rev. John Corbly's Narrative," 336.

[44] Corbly, "Rev. John Corbly's Narrative," 337.

masculinity in which men acted heroically and met Indian violence with violence against Native people.

One particularly famous and grim narrative was provided by Doctor John Knight who accompanied Colonel William Crawford on an expedition in 1782 to the Sandusky river in Ohio. After being captured by a band of Delaware Indians following a firefight in the woods, the doctor witnessed one of the party, a "certain John M'Kinley amongst the prisoners…whose head an old squaw cut off" and subsequently kicked around like a ball.[45] The attackers then shoved some English scalps in the faces of the Doctor and Colonel, before setting about the elaborate act of torturing and executing the Colonel. The men were beaten with fists and sticks by "almost every Indian" before they were then stripped naked and bound.[46] The Colonel was told he would be subject to burning and then, as the Doctor described, "The Indian men then took up their guns and shot powder into the Colonel's body, from his feet as far up as his neck. I think not less than seventy loads were discharged upon his naked body."[47] Not satisfied with using a siege's worth of ammunition on this torture, the Indians set about preparing a bonfire from which they took burning embers and placed them on the Colonel's naked body. The Colonel was then scalped, beaten and smothered with burning sticks and coals, until he succumbed to his injuries and his body was left to burn. John Stover also wrote of his experiences as one of the militia who witnessed his comrades killed in captivity. While his prose is less purple than Doctor Knight's, he more or less describes similar events with the following grim addition. He commented on the aftermath of several in the party meeting a fate similar to Colonel Crawford. He wrote that "the

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[45] Dr. John Knight, *A Remarkable Narrative of an Expedition Against the Indians: With an Account of the Barbarous Execution of Col. Crawford, and Dr. Knight's Escape From Captivity* (Printed for Chapman Whitcomb, 1799), 14.

[46] Knight, *A Remarkable Narrative*, 14.

[47] Knight, *A Remarkable Narrative*, 15.

next day the bodies of these men were dragged to the outside of the town, and their carcases [sic] being given to the dogs, their limbs and heads were stuck on poles."[48] Jill Lepore's framing such narratives as echoing the "words of war" hangs like a specter over this narrative, which, despite eliciting sympathy for those who were met with such violent ends also does not shy away from framing the purpose of this expedition, and all those involved with it, as an Indian-fighting militia set out to bring warfare to the Indians on the Sandusky. Somehow though, the notion that the Delaware were defending themselves against an invading force that had already attacked them and utilized such extreme brutality explicitly to send a message to other settler colonists seems to have been lost in the telling of this particular story.[49]

Other lurid descriptions of violence are so horrific that they ensured no sympathy was felt for Indians—whether they actually committed such acts or not. Allegations of cannibalism were closely linked to Indian savagery, which will be examined in a moment. First, we need to explore perhaps the darkest acts of violence that colonial settlers wrote about; the dashing in the heads of infants and children. Beginning with Mary Rowlandson's infamous captivity narrative, descriptions of Indians "knocking," "bashing," or "dashing" in the heads of infants and children has been a common theme in this body of writing. Her sister's child, William, was "knock'd" on the head as he lay wounded during their attack.[50] Cotton Mather carried the mantle of these

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[48] John Slover, "The Narrative of John Slover," In *Narratives of a Late Expedition Against the Indians: With an Account of the Barbarous Execution of Col. Crawford; and the Wonderful Escape of Dr. Knight and John Slover from Captivity, in 1782,* edited by H. Brackenridge, 17-31. (Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1793), 23.

[49] Crawford was killed brutally, and *intentionally*, as retribution for the the Gnadehütten massacre in March of 1782. Although Crawford was not the leader of the militia that led the massacre, Crawford and his militia were captured shortly afterward as they came to support the militia led by David Williamson, who *had* led the attack. The Delaware used Crawford as an example to any others who "intended not only to take their lands but to kill them all." See Jeffrey Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 65-9.

50 Mary Rowlandson, "A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," in *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, edited by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, 12-51. (New York: Penguin, 1998), 13.

atrocities in his sermon that recounted the narrative of Hannah Dustan in 1697.[51] In this account, the Dustan family was overcome by "tawny" Indians who set fire to their dwellings and in the ensuing chaos, methodically slaughtered children by shooting them, and in two particular instances "the salvages [sic] would presently bury their hatches in their brains," and "they dash'd out the brains of an infant against a tree."[52] Elizabeth Hanson, in 1724, wrote of her heartbreaking account of captivity as Indians rushed into her home while her children wailed;

> My maid prevailed with the biggest to be quiet and still; but the other could by no means be prevailed with, but continued shrieking and crying very much, and the Indians, to ease themselves of the noise, and to prevent the danger of a discovery that might arise from it, immediately, before my face, knocked his brains out. I bore this as well as I could…[53]

Of her six children, two were killed and scalped, and the others were separated from her during her ordeal. Her determined statement that she bore this as well as she could is difficult to imagine in terms of actual human suffering. Yet, they appeared, time and again, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Despite how clearly these brutalities are described, some scholars cast doubt on the prevalence of this particular act of violence. In *The Indian Captivity Narrative* Levernier and Derounian-Stodola asserted that the most egregious descriptions of violence were the product of

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[51] There are multiple spellings commonly associated with Hannah Dustan—most notably 'Dustin' or 'Duston.' I have used 'Dustan' because that is how it is listed in the edited volume used for researching this narrative. Additionally, the editor's introduction to the narrative addresses the spelling inconsistencies. I have chosen to remain consistent with that editor's decision. See Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, 55.

[52] Cotton Mather, "A Notable Exploit; Wherein, Dux Faemina Facti from Magnalia Christi Americana." in *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, edited by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, 59.

[53] Elizabeth Hanson, "God's Mercy Surmounting Man's Cruelty, Exemplified in the Captivity and Surprising Deliverance of Elizabeth Hanson, Wife of John Hanson, of Knoxmarsh, at Kecheacity, In Dover Township, Who Was Taken Captive With Her Children and Maid-Servant, By the Indians in New England, in the Year 1724." In *Indian Captivities, Or, Life in the Wigwam; Being True Narratives of Captives Who Have Been Carried Away By the Indian, From the Frontier Settlements of the U.S., From the Earliest Period to the Present Time,* edited by Samuel G. Drake, 113-26. (Auburn: Derby and Miller, 1850), 115.

a calculated campaign to smear Indians. They argued this was "an obvious attempt to engender as much anti-Indian hostility as possible" and in that "these narratives contain highly evocative descriptions of Indian brutalities" in order to achieve that aim.[54] The authors went on to address the issue of infanticide directly; "Usually fictitious, incidents such as these were used to reinforce the racist claim that Indians lacked all feelings of humanity and were therefore deserving of whatever fate befell them at the hands of the United States militia."[55] Historian Andrew Newman reiterates this point—that "representations of infanticide served to vilify Indians, especially, in early national historical romances, to highlight the contrast between good ones and bad ones."[56] Newman examines this particular documentation of violence as one linked to Christian doctrine as laid out in the biblical book of Psalm 137:8-9 in which children are "to be dashed against the stones by our barbarous enemies."[57] This connection between the described act, and the rhetoric used about the "barbarous" enemies fits well within the captivity narrative of which he states that "such braining of Christian babies is a prevalent feature of the captivity narrative genre, increasingly so over the course of its development and especially its expression in fiction."[58] Newman goes on to describe an enactment of this violence in James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* that appears to be based on an account of soldiers witnessing this at the Fort William Henry massacre during the French and Indian War.[59] As with all of these events, factive or fictive, we must allow for some truth within these narratives—including acts of brutal

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[54] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 32.

[55] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 72.

[56] Newman, *Allegories of Encounter*, 67.

[57] Newman, *Allegories of Encounter, 66*.

[58] Newman, *Allegories of Encounter, 66-7*.

[59] Newman, *Allegories of Encounter, 67-8*.

violence. However, it is also crucial to hold the truth that many of these accounts were either highly embellished or contained outright lies that were specifically designed to dehumanize Native people in the minds of colonial America. It worked.

One last expression of Indian violence within captivity narratives served to further remove Native people from civilized people was the act of cannibalism. By the time the Donner party became infamous in Western history and folklore for being white Americans who resorted to cannibalism to survive, colonial settlers had been using the trope of Indians as bloodthirsty cannibals since the voyages of Columbus in the "New World."[60] Some narratives discussed thirsting for blood in the context of a general desire to cause harm, such as in Emeline Fuller's narrative, ghostwritten by her father, in which it was stated that Indians were "Wretches who seemed to thirst for the blood of everyone of us."[61] In other instances, though, the thirst for blood was more literal. Jonathan Carver, an English Captain in the French and Indian War, wrote in his narrative of the 1755 captivity event that "by this time the war-whoop was given, and the Indians began to murder those that were nearest to them without distinction" and that "many of these savages drank the blood of their victims, as it flowed warm from the fatal wound."[62] His narrative was filled with statements attesting to the "savage disposition of the Indians...".[63] Carvers repetition of such sentiments implies a conviction of their veracity and supports Jill

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[60] Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 4-7.

[61] Emeline L. Fuller, "Left By the Indians. Story of My Life," in *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, edited by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, 320-337, 326.

[62] Captain Jonathan Carver, "Captain Jonathan Carver's Narrative of His Capture, and Subsequent Escape, From the Indians, At the Bloody Massacre Committed By Them, When Fort William Henry Fell Into the Hands of the French, Under General Montcalm, In the Year 1757. Written By Himself." In *Indian Captivities, Or, Life in the Wigwam; Being True Narratives of Captives Who Have Been Carried Away By the Indian, From the Frontier Settlements of the U.S., From the Earliest Period to the Present Time,* edited by Samuel G. Drake, 172-78. (Auburn: Derby and Miller, 1850), 174.

[63] Carver, "Captain Jonathan Carver's Narrative of His Capture," 175.

Lepore's interpretation that as a veteran of Indian wars he may have been using the "words of war" which Lepore asserts were often "lies" and that many of those affected by warfare engaged in these words of war as a form of engaging with the traumas they experiences.[64] Finally, Levernier and Derounian-Stodola included the following excerpt from Henry Grace's 1764 captivity narrative;

> I heard them relating their treatment of an Englishman in an Island opposite Fort Dunquesne, which they called fine diversion. The stripped him quite naked, and tying him to a tree made two large fires on each side of him and perfectly roasted him alive, while they danced around him, paying no regard to his moving lamentations; when they had danced till they were almost tired, one of the young Indians ran in between the two fires and cut off his private parts, and put them into his mouth to stop his crying; then they danced round him again, and another Indian ripped his belly open, and then they had another dance, after which another Indian cut out his heart, broiled and ate it, and sucked his blood, while the other two prisoners were tied to trees, and spectators of this dismal tragedy.[65]

The authors then concluded that "whether Indians actually practiced cannibalism made little difference. Anxious to foster the image that Indians were truly beyond the limits of all things civilized, captivity writers were quick to accuse Indians of this practice."[66] As with other accusations of barbarity towards Indians, this strategy seemed successful in connecting Indians as inherently violent beings in the minds of colonial settlers.

While general descriptions of violence that worked to associate Native people with violence and aggression were the most numerous forms of rhetoric used to denigrate Indians in captivity narratives, there were also more specific discursive forms of anti-Indian rhetoric that worked to other Native people. The term "savage," or iterations thereof, was the most

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[64] Lepore, *The Name of War*, ix-xiii.

[65] Excerpted from Henry Grace, *The History of the Life and Sufferings of Henry Grace*. Reading, England: By the author, 1764. See Levernier and Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 67-8, 218.

[66] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 68.

commonly-used descriptor of Native people in captivity narratives—outside of just using the phrase “the Indians.” Native people were routinely referred to as being savages, simply called “savages,” or had the word savage used as a modifier for some other descriptor; savage foes acting in savage ways for example.[67] Within the texts studied in this chapter, the term “savage,” or some variation thereof, was used in over eighty percent of those narratives—often more than once.

Aside from simply calling Indians savages, which was consistently common from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, many narratives found ways to interject savageness into their texts. Mary Rowlandson, early in her narrative, commented on the “savageness and brutishness of this barbarous enemy.”[68] Peter Williamson remarked on the “savage cruelty” of his captors during the French and Indian War in 1754.[69] Mary Smith, in a narrative of her 1814 captivity echoed those sentiments of the and “savage ferocity” and “savage brutality” of her Kickapoo captors.[70] Perhaps none was to be outdone though, by Zadock Steele’s 1790 narrative in which he used over forty variations of the term “savage” to describe his Indian captors; savage

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[67] Historian Robert Berkhofer, Jr., attributes the origins of European and EuroAmerican associations with Indians and savagery to Christopher Columbus’ description during his first voyage of the “Carib” peoples as ‘very fierce and who eat human flesh.’ Berkhofer argues that it is from this passage that fuels the “line of savage images of the Indian as not only hostile but depraved.” This singular concept, of the Indian as “savage,” would, as Berkhofer argued, “dominate so much of White thinking on Native Americans for the next few centuries.” See Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 7, 10.

[68] Rowlandson, “A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson,” 15.

[69] Peter Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty, Exemplified in the Life, and Various Vicissitudes of Fortune, of Peter Williamson,...* 7th ed., With Additions (Dublin, 1766), 24.

[70] Mary Smith, *An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith Who With Her Husband and Three Daughters, Were Taken Prisoners by the Indians, in August Last (1814) and After Enduring the Most Cruel Hardships and Torture of Mind for Sixty Days (in Which Time She Witnessed the Tragical Death of Her Husband and Helpless Children) Was Fortunately Rescued From the Merciless Hands of Savages by a Detached Party From the Army of the Brave General Jackson. Now commanding at New-Orleans*, (Providence: Published by L. Scott, Unknown), 6,8.

men, savage foes, savage pursuers, savage monsters, and so on.[71] Sarah Wakefield's 1862 captivity narrative is noteworthy, not only because for the majority of it she was fairly sympathetic to the Dakota Sioux where she lived with her husband, an Indian agent, but because in just a few pages her rhetoric underwent a dramatic tonal shift. In a brief time she went from referring to Indians as "God's creatures," to "savage creatures," until determining them to be "savage fiends."[72] Once the Indians were determined to be a menace to Wakefield, she went all-in stating that "their savage natures were aroused, and blood-thirsty as wild beasts they raced and tore around, beating crushing, and burning everything they had no use for."[73] A more eloquent discursive bridge connecting inherent Indian violence, savagery, and animalistic comparisons was rarely evident in a single narrative.

The "savage" terminology was not only the dominant denigration within the captivity narratives, but it was subsequently one of the most influential discursive markers in other forms of settler writings. It was also a commonly used descriptor for Native people in wider cultural spheres. The term "savage" was used in the Declaration of Independence as the last example of colonists' grievances against King George III, who, as the declaration stated "has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured [sic] to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions."[74] However, the frequency of its use, in captivity

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[71] Zadock Steele, *The Indian Captive; Or, A Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Zadock Steele, Related By Himself. To Which is Prefixed an Account of the Burning of Royalton* (Montpelier, VT: Published By the Author, 1818), 8-10.

[72] Sarah F. Wakefield, "Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity." In *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, edited by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, 241-313. (New York: Penguin, 1998), 250-1.

[73] Wakefield, "Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees," 251.

[74] Thomas Jefferson, et al, July 4, *Copy of Declaration of Independence*. 07-04, 1776. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159/.

narratives and other forms of cultural discourse, is both indicative of the power of discursive reproduction and repetition. The damage incurred by commonly referring to Native people as savages should be fairly clear—yet in the context of the colonial period in North America this terminology obviously set the tone for how European colonials, and later Americans, thought of and interacted with their Native neighbors. The effects of reproducing this language in the nineteenth century amidst U.S. policies of Native removal and active wars of genocide fought against Native people will be examined in later chapters. What is important to realize here is that at this early stage, the term "savage" became easily interchangeable with the term "Indian" in captivity narratives, and, established a baseline that was strictly adhered to by settler societies in their writing traditions. In this way, the savage rhetoric became circular—feeding itself over centuries. This denigration of Native people as a common descriptor remained a marker of other forms of settler discourse continuing well into the twentieth century and can be seen as one of the main modes of rhetorical reproduction.

A final example of commonly-found anti-Indian rhetoric in captivity narratives was referring to Native people as inhuman or likening them to animals.[75] Again Mary Rowlandson's narrative offers an early example with her referring to Indians as "barbarous creatures," "black creatures in the night,"—a reference to Indians either being demonic entities, the devil himself, or agents of either of the former—and as wolves or "ravenous bears."[76] Peter Williamson in 1754

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[75] Historian Jon T. Coleman examined wolf lore in Colonial America in context to European wolf lore, which had its roots in biblical references to wolves. This precedent to treat wolves as creatures who steal away members of a fold was reflected through Puritan rhetoric where church members were shepherds and Indians were "wolves dressed in sheep's clothing." A more alarming theme among Puritans was the tendency to view Indians as actual wolves, as a way of dehumanizing them. Coleman explored the writings of missionaries in New England and remarked that "English men and women spoke and sang in tones of 'elation and joy,' while Indians bellowed like animals." Another missionary asserted that Indians "act like wolves and are to be dealt withal as wolves." See Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 41-43.

[76] Rowlandson, "A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," 14.

referred to his captors as “inhuman tormentors” and pondered “how vain and fruitless the efforts of one man against the united force of so many! and of such merciless, undaunted, and blood-thirsty monsters…” who “rushed on me like so many tigers.”[77] Cynthia Ann Parker’s famous captivity narrative from 1836 in Texas which served as inspiration for the film *The Searchers* refers to her captors as “red devils” who were “like a hungry beast.”[78] The effects of such rhetoric dehumanizing Indians was made clear by the editor, a Mr. H. Brackenridge, of the John Slover and Dr. John Knight narratives published at the end of the eighteenth century. The narratives contain correspondence from the editor to the publisher, Francis Bailey, in which Brackenridge opens a letter “with the narrative enclosed, I subjoin observations with regard to the animals, vulgarly called Indians.”[79] Even at the time when captivity narratives were at their most popular, the ease with which Euro Americans interchanged anti-Indian rhetoric reproduced in captivity narratives and everyday parlance was apparent. The rhetorical blueprint set up within these narratives was to be followed by other forms of settler discourse throughout the nineteenth century.

Although still popular, at the outset of the nineteenth century, the captivity narrative as it had been known in a traditional sense was in its twilight years. Their popularity throughout the eighteenth century, in particular, helped establish a baseline of expectations for dealing with Indians—albeit one that was rooted in Eastern American traditions and histories with Indian

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[77] Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty,* 18, 16.

[78] James T. DeShields, *Cynthia Ann Parker: The Story of Her Capture at the Massacre of the Inmates of Parker's Fort; of Her Quarter of a Century Spent Among the Comanches, As the Wife of the War Chief, Peta Nocona; and of Her Recapture at the Battle of Pease River, by Captain L.S. Ross, of the Texian Ranger*s, (St. Louis: Published for the Author, 1886), 19, 23.

[79] H. Brackenridge, *Narratives of a Late Expedition Against the Indians: With an Account of the Barbarous Execution of Col. Crawford; and the Wonderful Escape of Dr. Knight and John Slover from Captivity, in 1782,* (Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1793), 32.

peoples. Those expectations were transferred onto Indians in the West and codified into popular imagination by United States government exploratory expeditions at the start of the nineteenth century. As Americans watched the country grow, the words reporting back from the far west codified in official U.S. documents what had already swirled around the cultural consciousness of Americans; Indians were inherently savage, brutal, violent, and dangerous beings.

Nineteenth Century Expeditions Of Exploration

"The best authenticated accounts informed us, that we were to pass through a country possessed by numerous, powerful and warlike nations of savages, of gigantic stature, fierce, treacherous and cruel; and particularly hostile to white men."[80]
- Patrick Gass, May 14, 1804.

"I think the most disgusting sight I have ever beheld is these dirty naked wenches."[81]
- Meriwether Lewis, March 19, 1806.

"Indians appear to be everywhere, prowling about like wild animals"[82]
- John C. Frémont

As the nineteenth-century dawned over the newly-formed republic of the United States of America, all eyes focused to the direction of the setting sun—West. The Lewis and Clark expedition—Thomas Jefferson's project to map out the territories purchased under the Louisiana Purchase—was one of the earliest and best-known journeys into they what then considered the "undiscovered" American West. Two generations later John C. Frémont led a series of expeditions solidifying the overland trails and exploring trails west of the continental divide

[80] Patrick Gass, May 14, 1804. "The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition." *University of Nebraska Lincoln*. http://www.lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu

[81] Meriwether Lewis, March 19, 1806. "The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition." *University of Nebraska Lincoln*. http://www.lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu

[82] Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence, ed. *The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont: Volume 1 Travels From 1838 to 1844* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 604.

terminating in Oregon and California. Each of these left detailed notes that began as travel journals and wound up as official documents published as reports by the U.S. government. While the Lewis and Clark reports were not widely read until a century after their initial production, Frémont's narratives were widely reproduced and read in newspapers shortly after they were written. Contemporary to the time readership aside, both of these sets of narratives captured the cultural attitudes settlers held about Indian people and submitted those attitudes to public record.[83] They also, more importantly, serve as a good measure of the state of discourse at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Much of the scholarly attention to the Lewis and Clark journals have exhausted the on-the-ground details of these expeditions and, to a lesser extent, the relationships (forced or consenting) formed across racial and cultural differences.[84] Additionally, scholars have examined the role of John C. Frémont in the context of the newly-formed West.[85] However, this study remains focused on examining the ways in which the discursive strategies found within the

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[83] The Lewis and Clark journals were first published in 1814, but there is no indication that they were widely read until the centennial of the exploration events at the start of the twentieth century. However, as will be discussed shortly, Frémont's journals were published in the late 1840s as the overland migrations were already underway, yet he garnered considerable attention from his expeditions and quickly became a celebrity.

[84] For comprehensive scholarly literature related to the Lewis and Clark expeditions see Stephen Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); James P. Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, 2002); David Lavender, *The Way to the Western Sea: Lewis and Clark Across the Continent* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

[85] For comprehensive scholarly literature related to John C. Frémont and his expeditions see Andrew Menard, *Sight Unseen: How Frémont's First Expedition Changed the American Landscape* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012). For Frémont biographies, see Tom Chaffin, *Pathfinder: John Charles Frémont and the Course of American Empire* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002) and Steve Inskeep, *Imperfect Union: How Jessie and John Frémont Mapped the West, Invented Celebrity, and Helped Cause the Civil War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020). For his role in genocidal warfare see Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016). For comprehensive reprints of the expeditions see the three volume set by Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence, ed. *The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

narratives produced by U.S. sanctioned exploratory endeavors upheld, reproduced, and contributed to an ever-evolving body of settler colonial discourse, bridging captivity narratives and later-nineteenth century forms of settler discourse such as overland trail narratives.

The repercussions of these exploratory expeditions—both for Native peoples of the West as well as the ability of the United States to establish itself as an imperial world power later in the nineteenth century—cannot be overstated. Historian Ned Blackhawk stressed the importance of certain features of exploration: notes and maps journaled routes and waterways in what he refers to as the "most critical tools of empire," and those who undertook these explorations "controlled the future" and "laid the foundations of empire."[86] Blackhawk continued that "their maps, reports, and journals ultimately carried greater influence than the thousands of beaver pelts and horses ferried to market in St. Louis" and that "by producing the knowledge from which conquest could flow, those who extended American claims in the region became agents for the most violent forms of imperialism."[87] So, the explorative documents "produced the knowledge from which conquest could flow" but within those documents explorers reproduced ideas of Indian peoples that came directly from captivity narratives from the previous two centuries. Ultimately, all of the activity of exploration in the West "precipitated larger disruptions for Native Peoples."[88]

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[86] Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 148.

[87] Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 148.

[88] Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 150.

Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery

President Thomas Jefferson negotiated the purchase of what would become to be known as the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803. This new territory, roughly spanning the interior of North America West of the Mississippi River to the eastern edge of the continental divide, vastly increased the land holdings of the American republic. President Jefferson arranged for a military expedition to explore the Missouri River to its source in the Rocky Mountains and then to find the nearest westward-flowing stream to the Pacific Ocean with the intention of opening a water route suitable for trade and travel from one coast to the other.[89] Jefferson chose his private secretary, Captain Meriwether Lewis to command the expedition, who then invited friend William Clark, a Virginia plantation owner, to co-lead what was called the "Corps of Discovery." The expedition set out from the shores of the Missouri River in mid-May, 1804, and concluded in September, 1806.[90] The "Corps of Discovery" did not accomplish their goal of finding a useable water route to the Pacific, but they did bring back copious notes and maps of the newly-acquired interior of the United States. They also acted as ambassadors—for good and bad—to Native peoples across the continent and in the coastal regions. The ideas and the words Lewis and Clark used to express those ideas about Native people during the Corps of Discovery expedition at the onset of the nineteenth century were reproduced by the overland settler movements forty years later. While those settlers may not have read the words from Lewis and Clark explicitly, the expedition leaders' travel journals, and their official government reports, exemplify a continuity between rhetoric found in Indian captivity narratives, and new rhetorical trends in relation to

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[89] For a comprehensive overview of the origins and planning of the Corps of Discovery expedition in 1803, see Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 1-10.

[90] Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, xv, 250.

Native Americans that seems to have been as closely-followed by overland trail settlers as the maps in their guide books.

At the outset of the nineteenth century, the anti-Indian rhetoric found in settler writings such as captivity narratives was as virulent as ever, but it did undergo some notable evolutions. Explicit religious denigrations mostly fell out of favor and shifted into a more general sense of Indians as uncivilized. The tendency to treat Indians as agents of, or as the devil himself, were overshadowed by Native people being seen less as devils and more as dangerous, uncivilized, and hopelessly savage men. The public and private writings of the "Corps of Discovery" adhered to the existing rhetorical patterns but they also contributed three new forms of anti-Indian rhetoric to the larger body of settler discourse: Indians as thieves, Indians as dirty, and Indians as treacherous.

The most frequently encountered forms of anti-Indian rhetoric found within the captivity narratives of the previous two centuries found a place in the journals of the expedition. As with many captivity narratives, the term "savage," and its many iterations, became synonymous with Indian peoples in the Lewis and Clark journals. There are one hundred fifty nine instances of these terms occurring in the journals of the expedition members. It seems that Indian savagery was as much a concern for Lewis and Clark as it had been for colonial Americans. Violence, while still present, took a back seat within these writings. Lewis and Clark remarked on some observations that were common later in the nineteenth century about Native people—that they appeared warlike, or ready for war—but overwhelmingly the dangers that Lewis and Clark articulated had more to do with Indian treachery and deceit than actual threats of physical violence. For the most part Lewis and Clark appeared to be disgusted by the Indians in (what would become) the Oregon Territory, rather than afraid of them.

Most of the disgust expressed towards Indians in the Lewis and Clark journals centers on cultural practices associated with Indian physicality. The party commented on cultural practices such as ankle binding and head flattening in Chinookan societies, but the most common issue that Corps of Discovery party members wrote about Native bodies was the perceived cleanliness, or lack thereof, of Western Indians.[91] In the Winter of 1805 Joseph Whitehouse wrote of the local Wahkiakum Indians that they were "from their appearance a dirty, indolent sett [sic] of beings."[92] In the following Spring, an entry attributed to both Lewis and Clark in their journals for March 19th, 1806, appeared that expressed some intense sentiments of personal disgust regarding Clatsop women; "I think the most disgusting sight I have ever beheld is these dirty naked wenches."[93] James Ronda examined this disdain for Chinookan women in relation to sexual norms of the Chinookan peoples that Lewis and Clark encountered and concluded that while "sexual relations between village women and men in the expedition had been commonplace" during the winter at Fort Mandan, of which Lewis and Clark remained fairly "muted in their criticism of *those* Indian women," there was "no such reluctance to vilify the coastal women" who they blasted "as promiscuous sellers of their own bodies for trinkets and bits of ribbon."[94] While clearly the depictions of Western Indians as dirty were, at least in part, the product of Lewis and Clark's personal heckles raised by unfamiliar social norms within Chinookan society, the messages about Indian bodies as unclean objects were loud and clear in the expedition discourse.

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[91] Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 179.

[92] Joseph Whitehouse, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/, November 7, 1805.

[93] William Clark and Meriwether Lewis, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/, March 19, 1806.

[94] James Ronda briefly explored the company's comments on Chinookan and other Coastal peoples appearances and cultural customs surrounding states of (un)dress and sexuality. See Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 179.

One of the most pervasive forms of Anti-Indian rhetoric in the Lewis and Clark journals dealt with so-called Indian 'thievery." There were eighty four references within the expedition journals to theft attributed to Indians. Everything from supplies (lead ammunition, tools, instruments, etc) to weapons, horses, mules, and, most importantly, food seemed to be in danger of pilfering. The expedition encountered issues with having Native people "stealing" from them from early until late in the journey.[95] In 1804, Joseph Whitehouse noted of local Indians that "they appear'd to be the most friendly people I had ever seen as Savages, but they will steal and plunder if they can get an opportunity to do so"[96] The issue of theft remained a constant thorn in the side of the expedition and was a consistent source of discontent for the expedition leaders. In July of 1806, Clark mistakenly attributed some missing horses to thievery by some "skulking Shoshones" before he concluded that they had probably just run off.[97] Expedition member Gass escalated Clark's scale and rhetoric when he condemned all Native people between the falls of the Columbia and the coast as a "rascally, thieving set."[98] James Ronda thoroughly examined the issue of theft and concluded that "theft as a means of creating mutually rewarding reciprocal relations was a notion utterly foreign to the explorers. It made far more sense in their world to see river people as crafty traders and cunning thieves."[99] However, the damage done was

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[95] While the expedition did experience theft, there is evidence that these incidents were the result of misunderstandings between expedition members and Native people regarding what constitutes private property and reciprocal gift giving as payment for access to land and resources. James Ronda wrote that "what Lewis and Clark saw as troublesome and potentially dangerous behavior was perceived by the river Indians rather differently. Taking axes, clothing, or rifling through the expedition's luggage probably involved two patterns of behavior not understood by the captains or their men. See Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 171-78.

[96] Whitehouse, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/, September 27, 1804.

[97] Clark, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/, July 7, 1806.

[98] Gass, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/, May 7, 1806.

[99] Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 172.

palpable. Ronda concluded that “the theft of expedition goods and the fear of losing weapons was behind much of the provocative language directed at the Indians. Clark would have found substantial agreement in his range when he branded the Chinookans as ‘thievishly inclined.’”[100] Clearly, the issue of theft was a complicated one for the expedition as the party deliberately stealing a canoe from a Clatsop village.[101] Despite the party’s own thievery of Indian Clatsop property, they branded Indians as untrustworthy in such a way as to tie “thievery” to an inherent trait of Native peoples in the West—a crimson mark that would remain fixed over Indians within settler discourse for the next century. Never, it seems, was the possibility that the exploratory expedition members themselves bore some responsibility for cultural misunderstandings expressed in their narratives, or that their engagement in the same behavior that they criticized western Indians could be problematic.

Thievery was closely connected to another pejorative example of Anti-Indian rhetoric in the expedition writings: treachery. Only four months into the journey, in September 1804, Clark in reference to the Sioux stated that the crew “suspected” the Indians of being “treacherous” and approached them with suspicion. James Ronda mentions one instance, probably in the winter of 1805, in which some Skilloots were invited into camp but wound up with one who “managed to steal Clark’s prized ceremonial pipe tomahawk.”[102] There is another instance in that winter in which Clark made a note in his journal that an Indian “was detected stealing a horn spoon” who was then turned out of camp.[103] In the following Spring, there was an incident in which Clark wrote of himself and Lewis informing Indians in camp “that the next man who attempted

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[100] Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 178.

[101] Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 210-13.

[102] Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 176.

[103] Clark, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/, December 21, 1805.

to steal should be shot."[104] While still not directly linking thievery to treachery, it is clear here that Clark was quite disgruntled over Indians taking his possessions and took these acts personally. Ronda stressed the importance that the theft of food and vital supplies played in demoralizing the expedition. He wrote

> But it was more than a belief in their criminality that led the explorers to view their Indian neighbors with suspicion and sometimes open hostility. During the days at Point Ellice and Chinook Point, the expedition often depended on nearby Indians for food. The Chinooks and Clatsops, accustomed to hard bargains with the whites in the sea otter trade, expected to drive equally hard bargains with the hungry explorers. Lewis and Clark clearly resented paying "immoderate prices" for essential foodstuffs.[105]

Whether it was the stealing of food, and thus putting the party in grave danger, or stealing personal effects, it seems likely that the treachery discussed by William Clark was linked to thievery in some capacity. However, one entry from quite early in the expedition by junior member Patrick Gass complicates this interpretation. In what is perhaps the motherlode of anti-Indian rhetoric put into one sentence, Gass wrote that they expected to find "a country possessed by numerous, powerful and warlike nations of savages, of gigantic stature, fierce, treacherous and cruel; and particularly hostile to white men."[106] No other statement could equally represent the contempt that white America had for Native people at the outset of the nineteenth century, nor predict with such accuracy the how settler discourse would look in the near future.

We know from scholarship that most of what Lewis and Clark experienced as negative or hostile interactions can be attributed to cultural misunderstandings between people from many different nations and the explorers.[107] In one particular journal entry, replicated in both William

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[104] Clark, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/, April 21, 1806.

[105] Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 178.

[106] Gass, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/, May 14, 1804.

[107] James Ronda wrote that the expedition "found many Chinookan customs and practices both incomprehensible and reprehensible." See Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 179.

Clark and Meriwether Lewis' respective journals—after an encounter with Chinook peoples in 1806—became the ideological map which most settlers would follow. After stating that Americans always operated in good faith towards Indians, Lewis and Clark warned that the "treachery of the aborigines of America" had led to the "destruction of many hundreds of us" and that their men (but really, Americans in general) must remember that their "preservation depends on never loosing sight of this trait in their character, and being always prepared to meet it in whatever shape it may present itself."[108] James Ronda argues, though, that the sentiment expressed in this journal entry came largely from Lewis whose ideology regarding Native people had devolved into a "dangerous flirtation with paranoia."[109] Lewis, Ronda argued, was "determined to do everything in his power to undermine any favorable impression his men had on Indians" and that "the central theme of Indian treachery had to be drilled into their minds." The "Corps of Discovery," Rhonda says, "had to be taught to hate" Indians in the West.[110] One problem that came from Lewis' insistence that treachery was tied to Indian thievery was that the same logic did not apply to the thievery enacted by the "Corps of Discovery." The other, larger, and more lasting problem, was that Lewis' strategy of poisoning the well of within the discourse of his party as far as essentialist and derogatory messages about Native people was this intentional propaganda campaign was not limited to the "Corps of Discovery." The discourse written in the mid-nineteenth century reverberated with Lewis and Clark's so-called warning as though it echoed in the minds of all who crossed the plains.

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[108] This entry is attributed to both Lewis and Clark. See https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/, February 20, 1806.

[109] Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 212.

[110] Ronda, *Lewis & Clark Among the Indians*, 212.

John Charles Frémont's Expeditions in the West

Nearly forty years after Lewis and Clark cut across the American West, John Charles Frémont, literally, put his name on the map. Already a seasoned soldier and explorer, in 1842 he set about his first major expedition for the United States surveying the Platte, Sweetwater, and Kansas Rivers from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains.[111] He followed this expedition up with another in 1843-44 and together these surveys solidified the main overland trail route that was already in use during the early 1840s—at the behest of his father-in-law, Senator Thomas Hart Benton, in the process of manifesting Manifest Destiny.[112] The publication of Frémont's official report and maps by Congress not only codified the Oregon Trail on a map, but the serialized publication of his survey narratives in newspapers cemented Frémont as a celebrity.[113] As historian Andrew Menard wrote "by the end of the decade Frémont had become so famous as to be almost invisible as an influence. Hundreds of gold rush diaries would mimic his reports without even bothering to acknowledge them."[114] Francis Parkman, in his famous 1845 narrative *The Oregon Trail,* commented on relaxing one evening while part of a Ogallalla hunting expedition that he sat quietly amidst the temporary lodges of the camp and making crude fireworks out of his copy of Frémont's narrative. "I had in my hand" he wrote "half a dozen squibs and serpents, which I had made one day when encamped upon Laramie Creek, out of gunpowder and charcoal, and the leaves of 'Fremont's Expedition,' rolled round a stout lead pencil."[115] Frémont would go on to be famous in other ways; he ran for President under the

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[111] Menard, *Sight Unseen*, xxvii.

[112] Inskeep, *Imperfect Union*, 41.

[113] Inskeep, *Imperfect Union*, xxi.

[114] Menard, *Sight Unseen,* xxii.

[115] Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail* (E-Bookarama, Kindle Edition), 211.

Republican ticket in 1856 ten years after he led a militia in a massacre of hundreds of Wintu people including men, women, and children on the Sacramento River near modern-day Redding. The encounter was especially brutal with one participant remarking "the order was given to ask no quarter and to give none"and another stating that it was "a slaughter."[116] Frémont was the architect of this particular genocidal engagement—one that would be followed explicitly in the efforts to eradicate Native people in California.[117] However, in the mid 1840s, it was the maps and official reports of his expeditions—co-written by his wife, Jessie Benton Frémont—that gained Frémont his fame among the throngs of American settlers headed west.[118] Some of the most well-known settler emigrants of the 1840s, including Francis Parkman and Brigham Young, carried Frémont's maps and reports.[119]

While there is no argument that part of the appeal of Frémont's work to American settlers was the detailed maps and reports he produced which aided in their own migration journeys West, there is also no doubt that those reports carried the anti-Indian rhetoric found in captivity narratives and the reports of the "Corps of Discovery" to new audiences at a time when their use as anti-Indian propaganda was most effective amidst the mobilization of the mass-migrations West. Based on a survey of Frémont's first two major expeditions—the 1842 expedition to South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, and the expedition to map the Oregon and California trail systems

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[116] Madley, *An American Genocide*, 46-7.

[117] Bejamin Madley wrote that "During the next twenty-seven years, massacres like this became all too common in California. Encirclement, surprise attack, an initial barrage of long-range small-arms fire, close range attack, and executionary noncombatant killing would become a kind of unwritten tactical doctrine in California Indian-hunting campaigns. The Sacramento River Massacre was the prelude to hundreds of similar massacres and ultimately an American genocide." See Madley, *An American Genocide*, 47.

[118] Inskeep, *Imperfect Union*, xxiii.

[119] Menard, *Sight Unseen,* xxi.

in 1843-44—it is clear that Frémont's entrenchment within settler discourse was not unique.[120] This study argues, instead, that the rhetoric that Frémont promoted—matched with his later actions in the wanton killing of Indians in California—"met the moment" so to speak in terms of the tone and tenor of American settler movements' sentiments regarding Native people in the mid-nineteenth century.

Like his predecessors, Lewis and Clark, John C. Frémont's reports contained a wealth of anti-Indian discourse. Also like the Lewis and Clark journals, the most numerous mentions related to Indian "savagery" (or, simply referring to Native people, interchangeably, *as* savages), Indian violence (including an almost obsessive pattern of describing Indians carrying scalps, taking scalps, and arrows piercing both bodies and inanimate objects), and Indian thievery. While the instances of Frémont using derogatory rhetoric about Native people were nowhere near as frequent as they were in the journals of Lewis and Clark (Menard remarked on the lack of Indians in general in Frémont's writings, that he "deliberately pushed them to the background—and then out of the picture altogether" as he focused on his official tasks; the scientific findings and the mapping of the land) the discourse he did engage with was pointed and self-assured. There was little doubt what Frémont thought of Indians in the West.

Frémont attributed violence, savagery, and thievery to inherent traits that all Native people carried. Almost all of the mentions of Indians stealing from his expeditions were in regard to horse theft, and much of that was Frémont passing on second-hand information as opposed to Indians stealing *from* him, but rather, noting that Indians stole horses in general. However, when it came to the so-called "Digger" Indians of the Great Basin that he encountered in his 1843-44

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[120] This study primarily uses reprints of the first two expedition reports in the edited volume by Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence. See Jackson and Spence, ed. *The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont: Volume 1 Travels From 1838 to 1844*.

expedition, Frémont became quite specific in his admonishments. In one entry he wrote that "in comparison with the Indians of the Rocky Mountains and the great eastern plain, these are disagreeably dirty in their habits. Their huts were crowded with half-naked women and children, and the atmosphere within anything but pleasant to persons who had just been riding in the fresh morning air."[121] In another he remarked that "from all that I heard and saw, I should say that humanity here appeared in its lowest form, and in its most elementary state."[122] Frémont's observations about the bodies of Native women (there are dozens of mentions of this in his journals) point back to James Ronda's analysis that Lewis and Clark were continuously befuddled and disturbed by Native women in the West. Later in the entry first mentioned above, Frémont wrote that "we were somewhat amused with the scanty dress of one woman, who, in common with the others, rushed out of the huts on our arrival, and who, in default of other covering, used a child for a fig leaf"[123] This almost lighthearted anecdote—including the reference of biblical iconography—seems somewhat out of place with the usual seriousness and (sometimes) thinly-veiled hostility that Frémont usually leveled at Indians, but it remained consistent with the confusion and discomfort that exploratory expeditions—particularly from the "Corps of Discovery"—had expressed about Native bodies. Specifically, Native women's bodies.

When it came to the issue of Indian, and particularly "Digger" Indian, treachery, Frémont remained all business in his demeanor. The index of the edited volume of his expedition reports lists an entry for "Treachery of Digger Indians" that contains no actual information—only stating that their treachery was known. Treachery, it seems, is another inherent quality Frémont

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[121] Jackson and Spence, ed. *The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont*, 559.

[122] Jackson and Spence, ed. *The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont*, 702.

[123] Jackson and Spence, ed. *The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont*, 559-60.

attributed upon Great Basin peoples. In one of the more inflammatory entries, he expounded on the circular evidence regarding Indian treachery, stating "This morning the camp was thronged with Klamath Indians from the southeastern shore of the lake; but, knowing the treacherous disposition which is a remarkable characteristic of the Indians south of the Columbia, the camp was kept constantly on its guard" and commented that his group remains "vigilant in guarding against treachery and violence."[124] Despite that vigilance, the group was attacked by Klamath people in the night who killed three of Frémont's men.[125] The next day Frémont and his men found evidence of that treachery in the form of weapons found on a dead attacker that were believed to have come from a group of Indians that the party had traded with days earlier. Frémont's anger was so great that he vowed to "square accounts with these people before [he] left them" and in his retributive violence against the Kalamath, that he hoped to "create a cautionary tale" as historian Tom Chaffin noted was a "study in the violent consequences that befall those who ambush an exploring party."[126]

The attack by the Klamath, which enraged both Frémont and his notorious friend Kit Carson to the point that they spent the next few days stalking and murdering Klamath men and women, likely reinforced Frémont's notions of Klamath Indian treachery.[127] However, it is important to remember that he referred to the Klamath, and other Native people (all of them south of the Columbia, in fact), as treacherous *before* this event. Frémont had made it clear that he already believed Indians (most, if not all, of them) to be inherently treacherous. Interestingly, what was absent in the analysis of this "evidence" of treachery within all Indian people based off

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[124] Jackson and Spence, ed. *The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont*, 558.

[125] Inskeep, *Imperfect Union*, 137-8.

[126] Chaffin, *Pathfinder* 310-11.

[127] Inskeep, *Imperfect Union*, 138-140.

of the actions of one group was the notion that Frémont's men embarking on a mission of extreme violence to send a message did not carry the same racial connections as it had with, say, the Delaware's who had done so three-quarters of a century before.It is safe to say, though, that what is important at this point is that American settlers, poised to embark across the West, seemingly no more questioned the veracity or origins of reports of so-called Indian "treachery" than Frémont himself had—it had become a fact in their minds. Both the Lewis and Clark and the John C. Frémont writings had helped solidify that idea into an accepted truth by stating their own unwavering beliefs about Native people.[128] Those beliefs entered into a larger body of settler discourse where they reproduced and thrived amongst settler populations who had everything to gain from accepting lies about Indians as truth.

Conclusion

The Indian captivity narratives of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries built upon sentiments that EuroAmericans had expressed since first encountering Native people in the Americas. However, this body of settler discourse quickly took on a life of its own that targeted specific ideas about settler encounters with Indians that relied on essentialist, racially-attributed qualities that applied to all Native people in the East. The problem, much as is the case with contemporary discourses about race in the United States, was not so much that colonists noted cultural differences with the inhabitants of North America whose lands they were encroaching

[128] Historian William G. Robbins specifically included the Lewis and Clark expedition reports in his examination of a host of activity in Oregon that fed the interest and desire for settlement in the nineteenth century. He wrote that "for the Oregon country, the odd miscellany of of explorers, governors, field governors, factors, fur-brigade leaders, and occasional freebooters produced a corpus of writing that hinted at the larger market prospects of the region, the 'inevitability' of the decline of the native population, and glowing descriptions of the area's potential for 'progressive' people who would bring civilization to the shores of the Columbia." See William G. Robinson, *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 51.

upon, but rather that the meanings of those cultural differences were almost always negative, and assumed to belong inherently to Indians who could not escape what was perceived to be their nature. The main issue, above whether or not any specific narrative was true, was that settlers used instances of stealing or violence with *some* Indians, to apply to *all* Native people, as part of a racial ideology. When EuroAmerican settlers stole from or cheated Indians, or American settlers seeking retributive violence against Indians that was as horrific as any violence suffered onto settlers at the hands of Indians, those instances did not inspire the same racial ideology tying the acts of a few with the character of an entire group of people. Those cultural meanings, in settler societies, through two centuries of reproduction in captivity narrates, ultimately became one process through which EuroAmericans accepted as fact a racist ideology about Native Americans.

The discourse examined within this chapter established the discursive baseline of the settler movements West. While captivity narratives continued to be produced throughout the entirety of the nineteenth century the rhetorical blueprint set up within these narratives was followed by U.S. explorations for expansion. Starting with the "Corps of Discovery" expeditions, and continuing with John C. Frémont's expeditions across the southern Western mountain regions, the rhetoric found in official U.S. government reports reproduced and solidified what Americans assumed; Indians remained the inherently savage, brutal, violent, and dangerous beings described in captivity narratives. Now, after being met with official agents of the United States government, Indians in the West—according to a growing body of settler discourse—were also treacherous thieves. Together, these four themes—Indians as savages, Indians as violent, Indians as thieves, and Indians as treacherous beings—would dominate the settler discourse for

most of the nineteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth century, these discourses would be used to justify genocide against Native people.

Chapter Three

"Big Tales of Indians Ahead:"

Settler Discourse on the Overland Trail, 1830-1890

"Herds of bisons frequent many portions of the region; and savages, cruel, treacherous, and cunning, hang upon the rear of these roving bands, or hover around the emigrant's encampment, at night, like wolves prowling about the fold of the flock."[1]
- J. Quinn Thornton, 1846

"Big tales of Indians ahead"[2]
- Elizabeth Lee Porter, 1864

When Elizabeth Porter wrote "Big tales of Indians ahead" in 1864 near Fort Kearny, she could not have imagined how well these words conveyed the collective spirit of how settlers wrote of Native people. Her assertion that there were "big tales" of Indians incoming was preceded the day before by "considerable talk of Indians" among emigrants in camp.[3] Despite the promise of some newsworthy events involving Native people at this early point in her journey, nothing of consequence happened in the following days. In general, Porter had little to say about Native people. She mentioned some tribes by name (Pawnee, Sioux, Bannock, for example) and simultaneously asserted that Indians congregated along the trail to beg from settlers and to trade with them. Despite suffering many deaths and births in their company, this moment of heightened excitement due to a fantastical event that failed to come to fruition represents the climax of Porter's narrative. This Indian anti-climax was not only true of Porter's

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[1] J. Quinn Thornton, "Diary," 1846, Merril J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/diary-of-j-quinn-thornton-1846.

[2] Elizabeth Lee Porter, "Iowa to Oregon, 1864," in *Covered Wagon Women*, Vol. 9, ed. Kenneth L. Holmes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 19.

[3] Porter, "Iowa to Oregon, 1864," 19.

trail narrative, but rather extends to collective discourse from nineteenth-century settler narratives in general.

Two sentiments pervade the writings of settlers who journeyed across the overland trails to the West during the nineteenth century. The first is that settlers were constantly under threat of being attacked by Native people; and the second is that settlers were solely responsible for their successful two-thousand-plus mile overland journeys through hard work, determination, and rugged individualism with no assistance from, or, in the absence of, the state. In both cases, settlers misrepresented these issues—intentionally or not— in their written accounts. Most of what we know about the overland trail migrations to the West are the result of scholarship studying the day-to-day endeavors of the settlers who cut through Indian country to reach their destinations. We know from this scholarship that settlers exaggerated the dangers they faced from Native people.[4] The largest dangers were accidents and disease, or, getting lost and dying of dehydration. However, those dangers were realities of life in nineteenth-century America hounded emigrant travelers across the country, having nothing to do with Indians at all. Furthermore, Native people had far more reason to fear disease or violence in Indian Country than settlers did. We also know that the state provided invaluable support for settlers along the

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[4] In *The Plains Across* Unruh observed that between the decades of 1840 and 1860, Indians killed 362 emigrants (this is the term that Unruh uses) while emigrants killed 426 Indians. These figures are significant for two reasons; first they demonstrate that Indians had more to fear than settlers, and second, that out of the total number of emigrants who traveled the overland trail to Oregon (just over 53,000, with another 200,335 going to California), the 362 deaths at the hands of Indians represents less than 1% of the total number of emigrants. This exemplifies one of the key distortions in the settler discourse in which settlers feared that they were about to be attacked by Native people despite extremely rare *actual* acts of violence perpetrated by Native peoples against settlers. See Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 185.

trail and, oftentimes, free land at the end of it.[5] Portions of the trail were protected by military fortresses and the troops that manned them traveled the roads used by settlers.[6] At the height of overland travel, the roads in-between military forts were thick with settler trains—there were few instances in which settlers were long outside of contact with one another. We know these realities of the overland trail migrations. However, the written settler record indicates almost the exact opposite of these things that we know to be true—crafting a mythological West where innocent settlers were preyed upon by furious Indians who, as a result of perceived racial inferiority, were too savage to control their bloodlust or to embrace civilized culture.

How does one contend with the falsehoods proliferated within the body of settler writings? It is not as though individual settlers were lying intentionally (although that may have been sometimes true)—rather, it seems that the settler discourse reproduced a racialized ideology

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[5] Historians have, over the past generation, become increasingly interested in examining the role of the state in the building of the American West. For a more thoroughly fleshed out examination of the processes of state formation in the West—including the colonial origins of these processes in the "Old Northwest." See Bethel Saler, *The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015) as well as specific case studies of nineteenth-century state formation in California, Oregon, and Nevada. See David Alan Johnson, *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon and Nevada, 1840-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Finally, Richard White argued that"[t]he American West, more than any other section of the United States, is a creation not so much of individual or local efforts, but of federal efforts." (57) As White puts it, rather than American pioneers carving out the West for settlement, "the armies of the federal government conquered the region, agents of the federal government explored it, federal officials administered it, and federal bureaucrats supervised (or at least tried to supervise) the division and development of its resources."(58) See Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own:" A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 57-59.

[6] Historians John Mack Faragher and Robert Hine, in their textbook, *The American West: A New Interpretive History,* argued that "Pioneers did not go unaided" in the settlement of the West.(159) *The American West* text focuses on how the federal government was actively engaged with laying the infrastructure for settlement through Lewis & Clark's and Fremont's exploratory expeditions and to the increasing entanglement of scientific entities to state agencies such as the Corps of Topographical Engineers throughout the early half of the nineteenth century. (185-91) Hine & Faragher argue that Fremont's journals of the 1840s were written with the intent to "communicate the fact that an American move to Oregon was in full swing and that the government was behind it 100 percent." (191) In this case, "behind it" refers to the state's ideological support for settlement and to the state's financial backing of those expeditions that opened up the West for settlement—as exemplified by guidebooks and maps printed on the state's dime. (191) Despite this engagement with the issues of the role of the state in the West, there has yet to be any substantial analysis of the issue within settler colonial discourse. See Robert V. Hine & John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 159, 185-91.

(entrenched in white supremacy) that was unconsciously upheld by a settler population. Given the vivid rhetoric of violence—Indians capturing women and murdering children; a common theme in captivity narratives (and later echoed in other settler writings)—one cannot blame settlers for being anxious. One can, however, be critical of how the history of the American West has been centered around the experiences of settlers whose opinions of Native people were taken at face value despite clearly being rooted in settler colonial and white supremacist ideologies. I suggest, then, that we need to think differently about the Oregon Trail, specifically, and the character of overland settlement to the West, generally, and find a new way to tell these stories.

This chapter argues that anti-Indian rhetoric from Indian captivity narratives and explorative expeditions was reproduced within the settler accounts of the mid-nineteenth-century overland trail journeys to the West. Accounts of the settler movements along the Oregon and California trails echoed and amplified distorted messages about Indians that were often directly contradictory to the lived experiences of the authors. The argument here is twofold: First, countless numbers of strikingly similar trail narratives, in the aggregate, reveal a deeper context when examined collectively as they do individually—just as captivity narratives had done. These narratives provide insight into how settler populations saw themselves in relation to Native Americans, and as such, this body of literature is a prime example of how settler-colonial discourses informed settler-colonial ideologies in the nineteenth century. Second, this discourse worked to erase, distort, or obscure, settlers' relationship with Native peoples. Specifically, I argue that settler discourse employed rhetoric that was itself a racial project, which centered the settler in whatever issue was at hand and racialized certain traits across all Indian groups in the United States broadly, and the West in particular. Ultimately, settler discourse upheld and contributed to an evolving "pioneer" mythology—one steeped in white supremacy—that was

representative of a settler colonial ideology, and one that continues to permeate contemporary American social and cultural consciousness.

An obvious question, then, is who is a settler? This is both a simple and an incredibly complex question to answer. At the time of European colonization of North America, all colonists were settlers. Every subsequent generation of colonists, into the newly-formed American Republic, were settler descendants. Any person who emigrated to America from elsewhere was and remains a settler. For the purposes of this study, a settler is any person who was not a Native American—even if they were born on North American soil after colonization. It refers to a person who settled Indian lands themselves, or lived on previously settled Indian lands.

Of course, settlers were not such a monolithic cultural group as the discourse they left behind suggests, or as they are examined here. Some overland settlers were first-generation emigrants from a variety of European nations. Their stories are often upheld within as the historical voice of the West, and some will be discussed later in this chapter. But what of non-white settlers? What of enslaved African Americans? Certainly they could not move about of their own volition. What about recently-freed formerly enslaved African American settlers? Recent scholarship examining so-called settlers of color has shown that in the post-Reconstruction period African-American freedmen sought the same opportunities out West as their white countrymen. Black settlers, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, settled in towns in Colorado, Montana, and other western states.[7] Here they navigated new forms of anti-

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[7] Historian Anthony Wood argues that the "American West is a settler colony" in which Black settlers were witting participants. Dispossessed themselves, and searching for a "home," Wood argues that "Black settlers played active and self-aware, and, at times, contradictory and dissenting roles in settler expansion." See Anthony W. Wood, *Black Montana: Settler Colonialism and the Erosion of the Racial Frontier, 1877-1930* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 2-8.

Black racism from white settler populations, as well as the intricacies of negotiating multiple Native nations and cultures. While Black settlers faced exclusion and potential violence from white settlers—in what historian Anthony Wood refers to as the "whitening of the West," they could also exacerbate existing hostilities with Native people over land dispossession.[8]

Historian Shirley Ann Wilson Moore contends that from the perspective of Native people, the distinction between white settlers and settlers of color was more complicated than a Black / white binary that commonly was used in Anglo-American racial thinking in the nineteenth century. If a person of color were on Indian land as an enslaved person, they may have been seen as an extension of the occupying settler. Indians may have recognized that settlers of color were different in ideology to white settlers, but the impacts on Indian land and resources were essentially the same.[9] This is in no way an attempt to diminish the particularly intersecting struggles that settlers of color faced in the West, nor a lazy attempt to lump settlers of color in with white settlers. In terms of the written body of sources that comprise the settler discourse examined here, though, I must note that overland trail settler narratives from self-identifying people of color were for all intents and purposes wholly absent from the collections of settler accounts that made up the pool of research materials that constitute the sources contextualized in this chapter. Most likely the absence of written narratives from settlers of color can be explained

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[8] Wood further argues that white settler groups decided who were "legitimate" settlers in an attempt to leave settlers of color out—providing examples from Oregon exclusionary laws. See Wood, *Black Montana*, 12-17. He goes on to argue that while settlers of color faced racial violence and exclusion from white settlers, they also contributed to the system of Native displacement; "Black settler colonialism fundamentally relied upon dispossession of Indigenous lands and engaged a politics that underpinned the elimination of Native peoples." See Wood, *Black Montana*, 9.

[9] Moore argues in *Sweet Freedom's Plains*, that "Native Americans often regarded blacks as just another kind of white person who was," in the words of archaeologist Todd Guenther, "part of the American culture that was sweeping across the plains despoiling an ancient way of life and destroying everything and everyone that stood in the way." and that "Moreover, black people often held the same negative attitudes toward the indigenous peoples they encountered and sometimes joined their white counterparts in committing horrific acts against them." See Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains: African Americans on the Overland Trails, 1841-1869* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 132-33.

by incredibly low literacy rates in the mid-nineteenth century for African Americans as a result of being bound by the shackles of slavery—individually and systematically.[10] However, it is also important to note that the dearth of sources reflects the racial subjectivities of the nineteenth century, in and out groups as they relate to who is a settler, and most importantly, how those in and out groups are determined in terms of inclusivity or exclusivity of how settlers are remembered. While settlers of color did exist as the nineteenth century settler movements marched on, their stories have all but been left out of the mythology and actuality of settler narratives—what Anthony Wood refers to as a form of "colonial erosion."[11] This, in itself, upholds the tenets of settler colonialism and continues the racial project of cultural erasure.

This leads to the question—who were the authors of settler discourse during the overland trail migrations? Much as was the case with authorship of Indian captivity narratives during the colonial and early American eras, the writers of overland trail narratives during the mid-nineteenth century represented a smaller subset of the population who were literate and had the wherewithal to undertake the journey—including all the costs and supplies associated with it—and had enough energy left over to keep records. Some narrated their experiences as a pastime, some narrated their journey with a specific reader in mind, a particular family member or loved one. Still others wrote with an intention of monetizing their experiences in the form of a guidebook that could be sold to future overlanders. While we can never know how many overland trail experiences were written down, we know that the surviving number of these accounts is a mere fraction of the sheer numbers of individuals who crossed the continent in the

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[10] Shirley Ann Wilson Moore addresses the "paucity" of written sources from black settlers thusly; "Because many (if not most) black overlanders could not read or write, their experiences have been preserved in the oral tradition passed down through generations of family members." See Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains*, 15.

[11] Wood, *Black Montana*, 12.

nineteenth century.[12] By 1860, hundreds of thousands of EuroAmerican settlers had shared the overland trails with fortune seekers headed to gold strikes from the world over.[13] While the settlers traveling overland in the mid-nineteenth century may have been from diverse immigrant communities, the writers of overland trail narratives shared a privileged access to literacy that, in the mid-nineteenth century, was largely associated with class and wealth. So, why should this small group of settler writers speak for American attitudes about Indians? This study does not assert that a small group of settler writers *should* speak for American attitudes about Indians, but rather, simply that they did. Those writers of settler narratives—regardless of their class or economic position—continued the reproduction of anti-Indian rhetoric that was common in public discourse.

At its core, this chapter critically examines the reproduction of settler mythology through settler colonial discourse. Settlers wrote a mythologized *history* of themselves at the very same time that they were *enacting* the settler colonial project of the overland migrations. Employing the largest survey of settler accounts from the overland trail migrations performed to date, this chapter, then, explores both the ways in which this rhetoric was reproduced in the collective discourse of settler accounts as well as the dissonance between what settlers said about Indians

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[12] The *Platte River Road Narratives*, one of most thorough accounting of existing overland trail narratives, compiled by Merrill J. Mattes, contains descriptions of nearly 2100 narratives which are all housed at the Merrill J. Mattes Library at the National Frontier Trails Museum in Independence, Mo. See Merrill J. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives: A Descriptive Bibliography of Travel Over the Great Central Overland Route to Oregon, California, Utah, Colorado, Montana, and Other Western States and Territories, 1812-1866* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,1988). While other narratives must surely have been found and donated to archives across the country (while researching at the NFTM, I witnessed two such incidents in which families brought their settler ancestor's diaries to the archive for preservation) this remains the best accounting of existing overland trail settler narratives.

[13] John D. Unruh, in *The Plains Across*, provides cumulative numbers for overland travel to Oregon, California and Utah during the 1840-1860 period at just shy of 325,000. See Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 119-120. If we generously imagine that the numbers of known narratives have risen from the almost 2100 printed in the *Platte River Road Narratives* has grown to roughly 3250 in all archive holdings across the U.S., that means that, at best, roughly ten percent of overland travelers kept a written record.

and the interactions that settlers actually had with Native people. This discourse illustrates the ways in which settlers distorted—through negation, erasure, or misrepresentation—their relationship with Native peoples and, in the process, created their own regenerative mythology during the nineteenth century.[14]

The primary source material in this chapter was supplemented with research already conduced from several archives with a survey of over sixty trail narratives to conduct a comparative critical discourse analysis similar to that employed in the research of Indian captivity narratives in Chapter One. This survey maintained the continuity with the previous chapter in examining anti-Indian rhetoric, focusing on issues or language related to Indian "savagery," "brutality," dishonesty, hygiene, and violent propensities. Two categories of analysis were added into this survey that had not been present to such a degree in early research—Indians as "treacherous," and Indians as thieves. Collectively, settler accounts serve to demonstrate the intentions of a settler population and will formulate the bulk of primary research in this project.

Apart from archival research, this study utilizes several published narratives. Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail,* one of the most well-known overland trail accounts, chronicles Parkman's explorations in 1846.[15] The 1849 diaries of Vincent Geiger and Wakeman Bryarly, who together found adventure en route to the gold fields of California, have been published collectively as one volume.[16] Joel Palmer's *Journal of Travels* includes several detailed

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[14] The bulk of primary sources used in this chapter were mined from the main repository of settler accounts is the Merrill J. Mattes Research Library housed at the National Frontiers Trails Museum in Independence, Missouri. This collection includes upwards of two thousand original manuscripts and thousands of printed accounts of overland trail migrations. With the exception of newly-discovered manuscripts, this single collection is the most complete archive of settler accounts and is more than sufficient to provide enough narratives to serve as the largest source base to be used in any single work on the overland trail.

[15] Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, ed. Mason Wade (Norwalk: Heritage Press, 1971).

[16] Vincent Geiger and Wakeman Bryarly, *Trail to California: The Overland Journal of Vincent Geiger & Wakeman Bryarly*, ed. David M. Potter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

interactions with Indian peoples on the plains and in Oregon.[17] The enticingly titled *Surviving the Oregon Trail* contains the 1852 accounts of Mary Ann and Willis Boatman, who also traveled to Oregon and had both good and bad encounters with Indians along the way.[18] These widely-read, and numerous lesser-known, volumes are sources of invaluably detailed descriptions of emigrants' experiences along the overland trails.

In 2011, historian Sarah Keyes stated that for the past 30 years "no scholar has taken the Overland Trail seriously."[19] With very few exceptions, this sentiment rings true. What we do know of the overland trail migrations comes from the past generation of scholarship that has employed a social history framework to highlight the lived experience of emigrants who undertook the journey and, often to a less successful degree, Native Americans whose political, social, and economic structures were most impacted by these migrations.[20] Even more so than the work done on Indian captivity narratives, this work has tended to focus on the "on the ground" histories of the overland settler migrations—often through a settler-focused lens.

The most oft-cited scholarly work on the overland migrations is John D. Unruh's comprehensive monograph *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60*. Published posthumously in 1979, Unruh's work on the overland trail migrations sought to engage with material that had become "a veritable 'folk literature' of one of

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[17] Joel Palmer, *Journal of Travels: Over the Oregon Trail in 1845* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1993).

[18] Mary Ann and Willis Boatman, *Surviving The Oregon Trail: 1852 As Told By Mary Ann and Willis Boatman and Augmented with Accounts by Other Overland Travelers,* ed. Weldon Willis Rau (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2001).

[19] Sarah Keyes stated this in an interview conducted by William Deverell. See William Deverell, "Our American West," March 31, 2011, *Huntington Verso: The blog of The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens*. http://huntingtonblogs.org/2011/03/our-american-west/.

[20] Key pieces of historical scholarship examining the overland trail migrations of the mid-nineteenth century include Unruh, *The Plains Across*, Faragher, *Women & Men on the Overland Trail*, and Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*.

the nations' great achievements" with a "comprehensive analytical and interpretive" focus.[21] The result was a wealth of statistical data regarding overland migrations, including estimates for the number of emigrants headed to both Oregon and California, and statistics for Indian and emigrant deaths at the hands of one another. Unruh observed that between the decades of 1840 and 1860, Indians killed 362 emigrants (these are the terms that Unruh uses) while emigrants killed 426 Indians.[22] These figures are significant for two reasons; first they demonstrate that Indians had more to fear than settlers, and second, that out of the total number of emigrants who traveled the overland trail to Oregon (just over 53,000, with another 200,335 going to California), the 362 deaths at the hands of Indians represents less than 1 percent of the total number of emigrants. This exemplifies one of the key distortions in the settler discourse in which settlers feared that they were about to be attacked by Native people despite extremely rare *actual* acts of violence perpetrated by Native peoples against settlers.

Unruh's work is perhaps most widely cited for his interpretation of violent encounters. Indeed one of the most important contributions from *The Plains Across* was its assertion that Indians were not usually the aggressors toward defenseless emigrants. While Unruh himself addressed numerous ways in which Indians and emigrants interacted amicably with one another, historians have tended to engage with Unruh's close attention to the numbers of deaths of both Indians and emigrants and this has obscured larger issues in the historiography of the overland migrations: namely that emigrants and Indians were frequently in contact with one another in amicable meetings, and, more importantly, that interpersonal violence is perhaps not the most important lens through which we should view the overland trail migrations as it obscures the

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[21] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 4.

[22] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 185.

actual relations of Native people and settler populations and diminishes the losses Native people suffered as a consequence of colonialism.

Another key piece of Overland Trail historiography, also published in 1979, was John Mack Faragher's study of families during the overland migrations entitled *Women & Men on the Overland Trail*. The strongest contribution of *Women & Men on the Overland Trail* was the focus it placed upon the ways in which women and men on the overland trail *shared* the experience as reflected through their writings, and the ways in which the shared experience broke down along gender lines. Faragher described overlap between the diaries of men and women in the themes of “practical matters, health and safety, and natural beauty” but maintained that women tended to be more concerned about issues relating to the cohesion of the family and interpersonal relationships, while men were “concerned with violence and aggression—fights, conflicts, and competition, and most of all hunting.”[23] Faragher observed that during the fur trade the majority of people traveling west across North America were men.[24] Yet, by the mid-nineteenth century “women constituted 15 to 20 percent of all emigrants.”[25] Faragher further noted that as the first decade of the overland trail migrations rolled into the second, women and families continued to increasingly undertake the trip west, even in the midst of the gold fever that struck the country between 1849 and 1852.[26] This point highlights and helps to fill a gap in how we have historically thought about the trail: there has been little separation between those emigrants

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[23] Faragher, *Women & Men on the Overland Trail*, 14.

[24] Faragher, *Women & Men on the Overland Trail*, 34.

[25] Faragher, *Women & Men on the Overland Trail*, 34.

[26] Faragher, *Women & Men on the Overland Trail*, 35.

traveling overland to seek their fortunes in the gold fields and those who were most likely to be a part of Faragher's study—families who sought to settle the new territories in the west.[27]

A more recent work by historian Michael Tate, *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails,* closes the near thirty year gap of significant historical work on the overland trail migrations since *The Plains Across*. Tate's study draws on the detailed analysis of *The Plains Across* but looks more closely at the on-the-ground interactions of different ethnic and cultural groups occupying the spaces where the trails overlapped with (and imposed themselves upon) Indian Territory. Like Unruh, Tate argues that violent encounters between Indian people and American emigrants were rare and that instead of a "contested meeting ground" the overland trail was a "cooperative meeting ground."[28] Tate explores the role of emigrants' anxieties and concludes that while captivity narratives were partially responsible for those anxieties, a larger "spirit of romanticism" was disseminated through art, music and literature.[29] Tate's interpretation of violence appears to echo that of John Unruh as he argues that anxiety caused by rumors of Indian attacks left emigrants in a constant state of vigilance that was more predominantly harmful to the well-being of emigrants than actual instances of Indian attacks.[30] Tate further argues that "the great majority of people who voiced so much alarm about American Indians had never experienced any direct contact with them."[31] The survey of emigrant diaries that are the basis for this study clearly shows that emigrants consistently continued to project hostility onto

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[27] The gendered lens of families on the overland trail also exemplifies one of the key issues related to settler colonialism; namely, that families sought to establish settlements that were regenerative of their lives back east—a situation considerably different from individuals traveling to the gold fields and one that will be examined in this dissertation.

[28] Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 233.

[29] Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 4-5.

[30] For American anxieties caused by rumors of Indian attacks, see p. xiii-xiv, for the tolls on emigrants caused by constant vigilance, see Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 10.

[31] Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 4.

Indian people in spite of experiencing overwhelmingly positive interactions with them—this exemplifies one of the critical distortions reflected in the settler discourse.

There is a rich historiography concerned with the mythology of the West that informs aspects of this study. Henry Nash Smith's 1950 work, *Virgin Land*, offers an interesting (albeit dated) perspective that places agricultural ambitions at the heart of the collective national consciousness of the West, and, as such, views much of its supporting evidence through that lens.[32] The issue of Jeffersonian agrarianism as the justification for state formation sets up a conversation that spans generations of historiographical discourse with Smith on one end of the spectrum, historians mentioned above who explore other aspects of state formation, and settler colonialism studies authors, at the other.[33]

While Smith's *Virgin Land* offers a good starting place for an analysis of myth-making in the West, Richard Slotkin's massive three-volume study comprises the bulk of material on the subject that this project engages with.[34] Slotkin focuses on the themes of violence and the frontier in the mythology of the West as they present themselves in numerous forms of cultural production—from captivity narratives to dime novels and, later, to films and television. In the first volume, which sets the framework for the series, Slotkin argues that "the first colonists saw in America an opportunity to regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation" but that "the means to that regeneration ultimately became the means of violence,

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[32] Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), Chapter 11.

[33] Smith argues that the "policy of the government" to prevent the lands in the West from becoming overpopulated and "fall into the depravity of crowded Europe" should focus on "fostering agriculture and removing all impediments to westward expansion." Smith, *Virgin Land*, 128. On the other end of the spectrum are scholars—namely Patrick Wolfe—who responded indirectly (but on point) to Smith's framework and asserted that in the American West "agriculture does not fully explain thirst for land." See Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 385.

[34] This comprehensive trilogy includes (in order of publication) Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*, and *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*.

and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the new American experience."[35] While Slotkin argues that American identity and character were regenerated through violence, I would argue, that the repetitive reproduction of settler discourse, too, had a regenerative quality in reinforcing a mythological pioneer identity, particularly in the West.

The theory of settler colonialism constitutes the larger framework for this exploration of settler discourse. Patrick Wolfe, the architect of settler colonialism as an analytic framework, asserted that settler colonialism is "inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal."[36] Wolfe's articulation here, known as the "logic of elimination"—in which Native people need to be eliminated; politically, culturally, symbolically, or potentially (but not necessarily) physically, throughout the process of settler colonialism—is considered one of the field's underpinnings. However, while the "logic of elimination" has been criticized by some scholars—particularly by indigenous scholars who have argued that focusing on this logic diminishes acts of Native resistance, and others who have argued that the "logic of elimination" is an inadequate framework since that logic was never fully realized—there are other aspects of Wolfe's framework that have received less attention and are cogent to this examination of settler rhetoric.[37] Wolfe observed that "settler-colonial discourse is resolutely impervious to glaring

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[35] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence,* 5.

[36] Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 387.

[37] Historian Jean M. O'Brien raised both of these issues in a 2017 article in which she argues, in relation to acts of Native resistance, that there is "embedded in the logic of elimination" the "possibility of slippage between the *intent* of settler colonialism and its tangible outcomes, which carry the *implication* of extinction." She concludes that "while Wolfe's article gives us powerful tools of analysis for thinking about the ongoing relations of domination and the *logic* of elimination as an *aspiration* for the colonizer, it offers us fewer explicit angles on the historicism of Indigenous resistance and survival." See Jean M. O'Brien, "Tracing Settler Colonialism's Eliminatory Logic in Traces of History," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 2, (June 2017), 251.

inconsistencies."[38] After reading hundreds of overland trail narratives, I believe we should take this a step further and assume that settler narratives were not only impervious to glaring inconsistencies, they *relied* upon them to make real the things settlers were so convinced of.

Italian scholar Lorenzo Veracini, in his concise 2010 work *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview,* argues that "settler colonialism should be seen as structurally distinct" from more general treatments of settler migrations or other forms of colonialism.[39] One of Veracini's main concerns in *Settler Colonialism* is deconstructing the ideological processes that drive settler populations engaging in settler colonialism by identifying and naming particular structures. One of these key structures that Veracini employs, known as modes of "transfer," is based on James Belich's concept of "mass transfer" which refers to "the capacity of shifting substantial clusters of people across oceans and mountain ranges."[40] Veracini identifies twenty-six types of "transfer" in which settlers colonize Indigenous peoples' lands physically or symbolically. Here, transfer refers to "a more flexible term than, for example, removal;" i.e. it is any one of "a number of strategies that can be deployed vis a vis the indigenous population in order to enact a variety of transfers."[41] Within the settler discourses of the nineteenth century, these modes of transfer worked as a means to justify the settlement of Native lands in the West.

In particular, the modes of "narrative transfer" and the "transfer by conceptual displacement" are directly applicable to the settler colonialism of the West in the mid-nineteenth century. The first form of narrative transfer relegates Native people to the past as "hopelessly backward, as unchanging specimen[s] of a primitive form of humanity." The second form of

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[38] Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 396.

[39] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 3.

[40] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 33.

[41] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 33.

narrative transfer occurs “when a “tide of history” rationale is invoked to deny legitimacy to ongoing indigenous presences and grievances.” An example of this form of transfer is the inevitability assumed with the “vanishing Indian” trope. The final applicable form of narrative transfer occurs when settlers assume indigeneity on indigenous lands.[42] This last example of the three forms of narrative transfer, in this case, leads to the “transfer by conceptual displacement” which occurs when “indigenous peoples are not considered indigenous to the land and are therefore perceived as exogenous Others who have entered the settler space at some point in time and preferably after the arrival of the settler collective.”[43] We can see this reflected in twentieth-century settler colonial remnants where Oregon “Natives” reset the clock to the nineteenth century and refer to their settler descendants as “first generation” inhabitants. Both of these conceptual cornerstones of settler colonialism; the logic of elimination and the specificity of settler colonialism as a distinct form of settler migration and of colonialism, are key elements of settler colonialism theory that inform this study. However, it is Veracini’s work with narrative transfer that is at the heart of this work’s examination of the overland trail migrations in general and of the discourse produced by a settler population in particular. Veracini argues that the “stories settlers tell themselves and about themselves are crucial to an exploration of settler colonial subjectivities.”[44] This work then, perhaps, can best be described as an exploration of settler colonial subjectivities.

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[42] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 41-42.

[43] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 35.

[44] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 103.

Anti-Indian Rhetoric in Settler Discourse

The discursive elements from settler writings from the previous two centuries continued to be reproduced in the settler narratives of the nineteenth century. The main holdovers from captivity narratives—that Indians were savage and violent beings—continued to be main rhetorical themes in the body of overland settler accounts. The objectification of Native people as inhuman—as beasts or hyper-savage men—that was explored previously continued as well. While religious themes, such as Indians as devil-worshippers or supernatural entities, were less common, they were still occasionally present. Finally the rhetorical trends that had gained prominence in the early-nineteenth century U.S. expedition reports, that Indians were dirty, thieving, and treacherous, were amplified within the body of settler discourse produced during the overland settler movements in the mid-nineteenth century. Indian savagery, violence, treachery, and deceit occupied the collective consciousness of the overland settler narratives—to the point of hysteria. The obsession with Western Indians' cleanliness was obviously less a concern for settlers' safety, and more a way to differentiate the Indian from the settler—a way to other the "uncivilized" Indian. While actual readership of any particular settler narrative may have been low at the time, these narratives were shared by word of mouth by the thousands of settlers who traveled the overland trail routes over two decades. In this way, the wagon train became a more economic vehicle for anti-Indian settler colonial rhetoric than captivity narratives delivered in a colonial American church sermon ever were.

Newspapers had long been a vehicle for disseminating settler rhetoric in colonial North America.[45] While local newspapers had been printing portions of settler accounts in the American colonies in the form of captivity narratives since the seventeenth century, these accounts found wider readership during the nineteenth century. The opening of the trails west to Oregon in the 1840s coincided with the so-called "pennypress revolution" in which "urban newspapers reached out to the common reader with an emphasis on crime, scandal, and other topics designed for mass appeal."[46] Between 1830 and the end of the century, readership grew to new heights in urban areas, and filled in the gaps between rural and urban spaces so that, according to historian John M. Coward, "By 1890, the United States had more than 1,600 daily newspapers with a combined circulation of nearly 8.4 million. In addition, almost every town and village in America had its own weekly paper--almost 9,000 in 1880."[47] Newspapers played a crucial role in connecting parts of the country with the western "frontier"—and usually that meant that just as had been true for captivity narratives, the more sensational the better to sell newspapers. Newspapers also facilitated a critical transition in settler discourse from reprinting captivity narratives to printing individual accounts of settler journeys West. The combination of a press that favored sensationalism over true veracity in reporting accounts of Indian violence, the press situating itself as a voice of authority, the widespread availability of newspapers throughout

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[45] Historian John M. Coward, in *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press*, argues that during the colonial period, newspaper authors were "openly suspicious of Indians or plainly racist" and that these "journalists did not merely reflect such racial sentiments; like European and colonial writers, they created Indian representations in language and then used their papers to amplify and promote these representations throughout the colonial period." (30-31) This was particularly true as captivity narratives were printed in whole or part in local papers, and as "reports of Indian violence dominated colonial news of Native Americans in the eighteenth century." See John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 18, 30-32.

[46] For example, the New York Tribune had ten thousand readers in 1841 and forty thousand readers by 1860. See Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 13.

[47] Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 13.

the nineteenth century, and the inclusion of stories represented as personal accounts of settlers' experiences with Indians on the overland trails, resulted in newspapers becoming a dominant, and trusted, platform to uplift settler voices.[48] Just as the newspaper reporters saw little reason to "consider the Native side of issues," wider readership saw even less so as Americans increasingly saw Indian lands in the West as opportunities for individual and collective growth of the country.[49]

Nearly four decades after the Lewis and Clark expeditions cut across the continent, overland trail guidebooks reproduced essentialist notions of inherent "Indian-ness" with an air of authority. The gruesome descriptions of so-called Indian savagery that predominated captivity narratives in the previous two centuries shambled, corpse-like, into the consciousness of nineteenth-century Americans and were reproduced in new forms of settler discourse. While guidebooks could help ease the burdens of trail navigation for settlers, their pseudo-anthropological descriptions of Indians were incredibly influential on settlers' preconceptions of Native people.

Rhetoric utilized in early nineteenth century U.S. exploratory reports were particularly influential to writers of trail guidebooks.[50] Perhaps, it was the official quality of those reports that these writers sought to emulate in order to lend an air of authority to their guides. Or, it could have been that there was some awareness that the tensions detailed in the Lewis and Clark or Frémont expedition reports about Indian "treachery" could be capitalized into a focal point.

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[48] Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 13-14, 18.

[49] Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 18.

[50] Thomas Farnham referenced the Lewis and Clark expeditions in his guide book in relation to place names along the Oregon Trail. Additionally, he reprinted an abridged expedition report from Lieutenant Charles Wilkes as the last several pages of his guide book. See Thomas J. Farnham, *An 1839 Wagon Train Journal: Travels in the Great Western Prairies and in the Oregon Territory (*New York: Greeley & McElrath Tribune Buildings, 1843), 92, 100-108.

Intentional or not, these issues—the authoritarian tone of guide books filled with distrust of Indians—coupled with an emphasis on the rhetoric of Indian violence and savagery from captivity narratives combined into an effective selling point for trail guidebooks. As a result, guidebooks seemed to push the limits of "fictive" descriptions of Indian people.

Some guidebooks were intentionally written as such, while others began as trail journals that were subsequently turned into guidebooks. In either case guidebooks contained important information that many overland travelers relied on. These guides informed travelers about varying aspects of life on the trail, from the essential goods to bring on the journey, the best route to take, distances between landmarks, and how to navigate hazards, to anecdotal tales of encounters with hostile Indians. Guidebooks varied tremendously in quality and accuracy as they expressed the personal opinions of their authors and were occasionally penned by charlatans whose primary concern was guidebook sales.

Hosea B. Horn wrote a brief overland guide that provided detailed descriptions of the terrain and features of the plains and the trail to California.[51] Horn converted his accounting of trail distances and observations of landscapes into a guidebook at the suggestion of friends and family after arriving in California in 1850. Horn states, in the preface, that guides were frequently carried by overlanders who relied on their accuracy—an issue that Horn took particular issue with as he commented on how unreliable most guides were.[52] While Horn's guide has little to say about the Native inhabitants he surely must have encountered on his

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[51] Hosea B. Horn, *Horn's Overland Guide, From the U.S. Indian Sub-Agency, Council Bluffs, on the Missouri River, to the City of Sacrament, in California; Containing a Table of Distances, and Showing All the Rivers, Creeks, Lakes, Springs, Mountains, Hills, Camping-Places, and Other Prominent Objects; With Remarks on the Country, Roads, Timbers, Grasses, Curiosities, Etc.; The Entire Route Having Been Tracked by a Road-Measurer, and the Distances From Place to Place, and From the Missouri River, Accurately Ascertained. With a Complete and Accurate Map.* (New York: J.H. Colton, 1852).

[52] Horn, *Horn's Overland Guide,* iii-iv.

migratory journey across their lands, the guide is indicative of another aspect of settler colonial societies—free market capitalism. Inspired by other guidebook writers, Horn's economical accounting of distances was marketed towards emigrants who wanted a straight-forward guide to ensure that they were always on the right path to the West. A capital venture at its heart, Horn embraced economic strategies that were ahead of the times compared to most other guide books. Roughly ten percent of his guide featured a section named "business advertisements" which listed service-oriented businesses, merchants, and traders emigrants should visit along every section of the emigrant road.[53] That Horn referred to these as business advertisements, and not merely his suggestions of reputable businesses, insinuates that he was compensated by their inclusion in his guide.

Lansford Hastings wrote one of the most-trusted guidebooks used by emigrants after 1845.[54] Hastings, in *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California,* introduced his readers to sensational encounters with Indians right away. In one early section, in which Hastings and a member of his party, Mr. Lovejoy, were taking in the grandeur of emigrant names carved into the stone of Independence Rock, the men were approached by a group of Indians with "the most hostile attitude" who rushed the settlers with "the greatest vehemence" and "uttering the most terrific and demonic yells." When the two settlers presented their firearms, the Indians became friendly and extended their hands in greeting. However, Hastings and Lovejoy then attempted to mount their mules, which again excited the perceived hostilities of the Indians. Hastings and Lovejoy dismounted, and Hastings recounted that "everything around us, appeared now, to indicate nothing but immediate torture, and ultimate death, to be inflicted by merciless

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[53] Horn, *Horn's Overland Guide,* iii-iv.

[54] Lansford W. Hastings, *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932).

savages."[55] What follows this portion of the account is a lengthy diatribe of insults inflicted upon the two men; someone even physically struck Lovejoy (Hastings asserts he was spared this due to the Chief's favor, but no explanation for this was offered). After more than a day of these hostilities, the two were then marched back to their encampment at which point Hastings was able to communicate to the Chief that Hastings' men would "shoot and kill them." At that point, the two men were allowed to return to their camp.[56] Hastings' guide book thus acts as a bridge between the Indian captivity narratives of the previous century, and the discursive pattern found within many overland trail settler narratives, in which initial fears about Indian attacks seemed to overshadow amicable, but potentially misunderstood, encounters with Native people and settlers assumed they were about to die horribly, yet found themselves only inconvenienced and left to their own devices. Of course, Hastings' account of the event was far more dramatic, but therein lies the point and the problem. Hastings' guidebook, and the way in which he frames interactions with, and sentiments about, Native people influenced throngs of settlers who literally traveled in his path. Hastings' admonishments against Indians continued as he also denigrated Native people west of the Rocky Mountains in ways similar to those found in the Lewis and Clark narratives. In one section, he wrote of Chinooks that, "a more villainous and treacherous race of thieves, can scarcely be found." Even when Hastings was trying to impart to settlers the usefulness of Western Oregon tribes, he concluded that they "are not entirely free from little pilfering, and low treachery, to which all Indians are, more or less addicted."[57] Hastings' guide—more frequently referenced in overland trail narratives by name than any other guide—was highly influential in

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[55] Hastings, *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California*, 11-12.

[56] Hastings, *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California*, 12-15.

[57] Hastings, *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California*, 59-60.

setting the fearful expectations that droves of emigrants carried with them as they journeyed west.

Thomas J. Farnham's account, *An 1839 Wagon Train Journal: Travels in the Great Western Prairies and in the Oregon Territory,* published in 1843, is one example of a member of a wagon company whose duty was cataloging the journey, which he later published as a guide book.[58] Two issues set Farnham's guidebook apart from others: first, the sheer amount of narrative content within this dense guide is impressive, and, second, the amount of space this guide allocates to giving detailed descriptions of various Indian nations along the overland routes is on a scale that dwarfs any other. Farnham's observations and comments about Native people, while steeped in essentialist rhetoric, are not as immediately denigrating than one might expect. One section on Plains Indian groups (in which Farnham includes Native groups from the Southeast and other eastern portions of the country) consists of mostly neutral, but some complimentary—albeit misguided—assertions of Native people along racialized lines. The Comanche, he stated, whose "terrible charge" and "unequaled rapidity with which they load and discharge their fire-arms" made "their enmity more fearful than that of any other tribe of aborigines."[59] However, when it came to the "Kanza" Indians, Farnham was less amicable, as he stated that Kansas were "notorious thieves" who went around "almost naked" and were as "filthy as swine."[60] As was typical of other settler sentiments, Farnham's views on Native people degraded the further west he traveled. The Paiutes, he claimed, were the "least intellectual Indians known" who "eat roots, lizards, and snails" and whose heads were "white with the germs

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[58] Thomas J. Farnham, *An 1839 Wagon Train Journal: Travels in the Great Western Prairies and in the Oregon Territory (*New York: Greeley & McElrath Tribune Buildings, 1843).

[59] Farnham, *An 1839 Wagon Train Journal*, 7.

[60] Farnham, *An 1839 Wagon Train Journal*, 14.

of crawling filth!"[61] Finally, of the so-called Snake Indians, Farnham stated that "these Indians are more filthy than the Hottentots" and that they "eat the vermin from each other's heads!"[62] More than any other single guidebook, Farnham's guide instructed emigrants in cross-cultural expectations and interactions with numerous Indian groups along the overland trail routes rather than on the logistics of safely navigating the hazards of the road.

Finally, U.S. Army Captain Randolph B. Marcy turned his 1859 trail narrative into a guide book that included best routes, first aid suggestions, and a slew of other helpful information for travelers.[63] Marcy's guidebook *The Prairie Traveller* continued the Indian essentialism of earlier guidebooks and its assertions are a return to the fear-stoking rhetoric from captivity narratives. However, Marcy's rhetoric undergoes a discursive shift where he overlays what he "knows" about Indians of the East onto tribes in the West. In a section entitled "The Wild Tribes of the West," Marcy opined that while Indians from the Atlantic coast "inflicted the most inhuman tortures upon their prisoners," they did not "violate the chastity of women." This was, of course, all to set up to suggest while the tribes of the West did not "inflict upon their prisoners prolonged tortures" they would "invariably subject all females that have the misfortune to fall into their merciless clutches to an ordeal worse than death."[64] The effects of this rhetoric on the imaginations of settlers as they set off on a six-month, two-thousand mile journey across Indian Country cannot be overstated.

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[61] Farnham, *An 1839 Wagon Train Journal*, 55.

[62] Farnham, *An 1839 Wagon Train Journal*, 72.

[63] Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: The 1859 Handbook for Westbound Pioneers* (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006).

[64] See Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler*, 195-6.

While guidebooks had wide-readership appeal among overland emigrants, Individual settlers reproduced the essentialist, mistrustful, and racist anti-Indian rhetoric in their trail narratives during the mid-nineteenth century overland migrations in ways that echoed earlier discourse. Indian "savagery" continued to be a common theme of settler discourse during the overland trail migrations. In a survey of over sixty narratives, nearly a third used some iteration of the term "savage" to refer to Native people—oftentimes, simply using savage as a synonym for the word "Indian."[65] For example, during an 1849 Army deployment Captain Howard Stansbury described a Sioux encampment being prepared for relocation during which he described its inhabitants as the "wild untutored savages of this then unknown region"[66] By the time of the overland trail migrations West, referring to Indians as "savages" was old hat—an oral and written tradition with more than two centuries of history behind it. While these mentions were common in the settler narratives of the mid-nineteenth century, it was a most-common practice to compound the degradation of so-called savagery by white Americans by coupling it with Indian violence.

Perhaps more than any other vehicle for spreading the settler discourse of the trails, it was word of mouth sharing of second, third, or infinite-hand retellings of Indian depredations by individual settlers that kept the reproduction of anti-Indian discourse in real time. This was also a way that those who were not literate, or otherwise have the means to keep a written narrative, were able to participate in the processes of reproducing anti-Indian rhetoric within settler

[65] I conducted research for this project initially in person at the Merrill J. Mattes library in Independence, Missouri. However, since that time they have begun to upload portions of their collection—seemingly at random—into word-searchable pdfs on the Oregon California Trails Association (OCTA) website. See the digitized Merrill J. Mattes collection; https://www.octa-journals.org/category/merrill-mattes-collection.

[66] Captain Howard Stansbury, 1849, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/journal-of-captain-howard-stansbury-1849.

discourse. There are countless instances documented within the written settler narratives in which authors cite hearing of Indian violence or other offenses against settlers from other overland parties—either on the trail itself or at any of the numerous military forts stationed along the trail routes. A particularly damning story was related in the narrative of G. W. Thissel in his 1850 account. On June 6th, he wrote of an incident he had learned about which supposedly occurred in the camp his party had bivouacked in at "Squaw" Creek, off the Platte River near Fort Laramie:

> This is the ill-fated camp where James Crockett, of Arkansas, while en route *for* Oregon in 1847, shot and killed an inoffensive squaw. The Indians at once sent the squaws to the mountains, and in less that twenty-four hours the train was surrounded by more than than three hundred Indians, demanding the man who had killed the squaw. There were only fifty white men in the train, and they could go no farther.[67]

At first, this seems a rare instance of settlers acknowledging that Indians had been provoked in a very specific manner. Usually these stories leave out the part about settlers murdering Indians and focus only on the Indian response—with hardly ever an indication that said response was justified. Thissel's retelling does not go so far as to acknowledge justice due to settler provocation, but it does at least state that this even began as such. However, the rest of his retelling is far more exemplary of what parts of these tales were often detailed in their recounting to other settlers:

> After three days of parleying with the Indians, to save the entire train, Crockett was surrendered to them. With yells of triumph the savages dragged him from the camp. In plain view they danced and yelled with hellish glee, torturing their victim with all the means known to savages of the forest. Then they skinned him alive, and when the spirit had left the body, and they could inflict no more pain, they tied his remains to a wild Indian pony and turned it loose on the plains. Then the Indians let the train proceed unmolested.[68]

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[67] G. W. Thissell, Journal, 1850, "1850 to California," Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/journal-of-g-w-thissell-1850.

[68] Thissell, "1850 to California."

The details that are highlighted here, the cruelty and suffering inflicted upon the settler (who, remember, had murdered a Native woman,) are indicative of the ways in which settler stories of Indian misdeeds were reproduced along the trail itself. Even though Thissel included within this story that there was some settler agency involved in the decision to give up their party members (a detail that could, and often was, easily omitted to exaggerate the idea that settlers were innocently preyed upon by Indians capturing their party members) the take away here is—and certainly was in 1850—a return to the idea of the Indian captivity being a "fate worse than death" which was to be avoided at all costs.

Settler anticipation of Indian violence—being subjected to it, or finding the opportunity to inflict it—was a common theme within settler discourse. An early settler narrative written by Alfred J. Miller in 1837, in which he kept a collection of annotated water color drawings, described how Native people in the West would set out on the "war path" when wronged. "Blinded by rage and ungovernable passion" he wrote "they now become dangerous." "Revenge;" he continued, "is one of their most powerful incentives to action, overtopping reason and exciting to the uttermost their savage appetite for blood. They never stop to ascertain whether the party they meet is the aggressor, but kill right and left with indiscriminate slaughter."[69] The settler admonishment against violent Indians was often unforgiving and without nuance. It was common for settlers to determine one tribe or another to be seemingly-promoted to "most violent"—often at random—but usually with Pawnee or Sioux Indians targeted. Joseph Warren Wood wrote in 1849 that "We are in the Pawnee country. They are a warlike tribe & have many warriors. They had better beware how they approach us in a warlike manner, for the finger

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[69] Alfred J. Miller, "Captions of the Watercolors Written by Alfred J. Miller," 1837, 43. Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/captions-of-watercolors-by-alfred-j-miller.

of many an emigrant itches to pull a trigger at their dusky forms."[70] Four years later a Mrs. E.J. Goltra wrote in her journal that her party was "now in the Pawnee nation which is said to be the most troublesome tribe of Indians on this end of the trip." [71] Joseph C. Terell commented in 1852 that the Sioux were the "most warlike Indians on the continent."[72] Native people were frequently accused of acting out violent hostilities on settlers. A late settler narrative written in 1864 by Jefferson Garland Mahan posited that "The Indians are committing horrible acts along here, robbing and murdering emigrants" and that "There have been hundreds fell victims to these savages."[73] The settler narratives of the overland migrations abound with this suspicion of Indians, with a willingness to engage in violence—regardless of many of these same diarists recounting positive interactions with Native people.

The language that settlers used to describe Indians was a telling indication of how deeply entrenched their animosity toward Indians had become—particularly when it came to dehumanizing Native people. While the previously-discussed Colonial-era trends of referring to inhuman beasts—in particular, wolves—remained present in nineteenth-century settler rhetoric, the most common manifestation of othering Native people in the West was to characterize them as dirty—often to the point of stripping away their humanity.[74] This was particularly true of the

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[70] Joseph Warren Wood, "Journal 1849," May 23, 1849, A137, Folder 1, Accounts of Journeys to the Pacific Northwest, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

[71] Elizabeth J. Goltra, "Elizabeth Goltra Papers," May 10, 1853, A34, Folder 2, Accounts of Journeys to the Pacific Northwest, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

[72] Joseph C. Terrell, "Overland Trip to California in '52 With Extracts From My Old Diary," 1852, 83. Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/joseph-c-terrell.

[73] Garland Jefferson Mahan, "Garland Jefferson Mahan's Diary: Trip to Montana by Oxen Train from Cole County Missouri, Age 25 Years, April 18, 1864 - July 20, 1866," July 15 1864, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/diary-of-garland-jefferson-mahan-oxen-train-from-cole-county-missouri.

[74] See Coleman, *Vicious*, 41-43.

Western Basin peoples, often referred to derogatorily as "diggers" or "root diggers" in reference to their reliance on tuber roots as a food source.[75] In an early narrative from 1836, Reverend H. H. Spalding noted in a letter to his family that "as we pressed west the Indians became more wretched and filthy. The women have a small covering about the loins, the men are entirely naked, with no appearance of shame."[76] Over a decade later Samuel Suffrins described the inhabitants of the Western Basin as "a dirty brood of half starved root digger Indians."[77] Descriptions such as these were entirely commonplace within the settler narratives of the overland trail migrations with "dirty" and "filthy" being the most oft-used descriptors. Commenting on the physical perceived lack of cleanliness of western Indians occurred alongside of commenting the perceived "savagery" of a collective Indian character—but both contributed

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[75] The term "digger" as a pejorative for Western Basin Native peoples has a long history that has been studied by scholars. Gregory Smoak attributed the origin of this term to early-nineteenth century fur trappers in the Far West who "saw only the most obvious of social distinctions—the ownership of horses—and lumped together the mounted bands as 'Snakes' while the foot-going bands were derisively called 'diggers.'" See Gregory E. Smoak, "The Newe (The People) and the Utah Superintendency," in Dale L. Morgan, (Dale Lowell), Richard L. Saunders, and Gregory E. Smoak. *Shoshonean Peoples and the Overland Trails: Frontiers of the Utah Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1849-1869* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2007), 46. The more common understanding of the term refers to people in arid regions digging for root tubers—"White Americans called them 'Diggers.'— noted John Faragher who added "the fact that the term rhymes with the racial slur for Black people was entirely intentional." See John Mack Faragher, *California: An American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 16. Ned Blackhawk, in an article reexamining the anthropological work of Julian Steward, remarked that it was settler notions of Indians as static entities in time—a notion which continued as the field of Anthropology developed throughout the early twentieth century—helped to "legitimize the dispossession and impoverishment of the Native peoples in the [Great Basin] region." Much as terms such as "savage" led settlers to conclude that Indians had to be eradicated because that so-called savagery could not be tamed, the notion that "digger" Indians only searched for food in one way—let alone a way in which they were not tied to EuroAmerican conceptions of land use—became a rhetorical device that worked to keep Indians stuck in a static past that was outside of civilization and modernity. Thus, such rhetoric was a tool of dispossession for Great Basin peoples. See Ned Blackhawk, "Julian Steward and the Politics of Representation: A Critique of Anthropologist Julian Steward's Ethnographic Portrayals of the American Indians of the Great Basin" *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1997), 64, 75-77.

[76] Reverend H. H. Spalding, 1836, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/letters-of-reverend-h-h-spalding-and-mrs-spalding-1836.

[77] Samuel Suffrins, 1849, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/samuel-suffrins-october-31-1849.

to an relentless strategy of othering Native people that was an effective and permeative propaganda campaign.

White settler women tended to write just as sharply of Native people in their narratives as white settler men did. Elizabeth Lee Porter, whose narrative provided the title of this study, wrote numerous entries about Indians begging for food in camp.[78] Clarissa Shipley, in 1864, lambasted the “reds in camp, squaws begging bread for the papooses” that “they would beg all we have if we would give it to them.”[79] In that same year, Mary Louisa Black commented on the Arapaho that entered her camp were “exhibiting all the characteristics of Natives” which, in her opinion, meant that they traveled in “gangs" and continuously hounded her party.[80] Ruth Shackleford exemplified settler suspicions of Indians throughout her narrative as she repeatedly attributed any empty settlements or structures to the occupants being “run off” by Indians if they were intact, or having been “burned out” by Indians if they were not.[81] Not all narratives contain this language, but it is surprising how many do. In a sampling of one collection of published women’s diaries, each of the five narratives contained some form of Indian essentialist or blatantly racist rhetoric.[82] The incongruity between lived experiences of settlers regarding Native people and the discursive character of settler narratives is a common artifact of overland writings—and a marker of settler colonial discourse.

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[78] Porter, “Iowa to Oregon, 1864,” 19.

[79] Clarissa Elvira Shipley, “A Trip to the Idaho Mines, 1864,” in *Covered Wagon Women*, Vol. 9, ed. Kenneth L. Holmes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 42.

[80] Mary Louisa Black, “Seven Months on the Oregon Trail, 1864,” in *Covered Wagon Women*, Vol. 9, ed. Kenneth L. Holmes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 60-67.

[81] Ruth Shackleford, “California By the Mormon Trail, 1864,” in *Covered Wagon Women*, Vol. 9, ed. Kenneth L. Holmes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 19.

[82] Kenneth L. Holmes, ed., *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters From the Western Trails, 1864-1868* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

One of the main rhetorical holdovers from earlier settler discourses was a general sense of Indians being untrustworthy. Accusations of Indian thievery were common, as were general assertions that Indians were "treacherous"—often with no qualifier given as to the nature of their supposed betrayal. Amongst all the other forms of rhetoric used against Native people within settler discourses, Indians as deceitful (and particularly as treacherous,) seems to be the fuel that fanned the flames of genocide against Native people towards the end of the nineteenth century. By far the most common manifestation of the idea of Indians as deceitful in settler discourse came in the form of Indians as thieves, or thieving. Indian thievery and Indian treachery were hallmarks of earlier U.S. expeditionary narrative discourses that ran rampant throughout the settler narratives as EuroAmericans pushed further West in larger numbers.[83] While the merits of those accusations from Lewis and Clark and, to a lesser extent John C. Frémont, were arguable, the accusations of Indian treachery in overland settler narratives rarely included any context that would deter the argument that by the early 1840s, "treachery" had become a essentialist and racialized quality attributed to Native people regardless of the actions of any particular individual or group.

Complaints about Indian thieving predominated the overland trail settler narratives. One such account from 1849, written by Felix Negley, related that his party "had a visit from 12 Pawnee Indians, who came in to beg and I suppose to steal if they got a chance, for they have the name of being greatest thieves of all Indian tribes."[84] Another, from further West in the next year described an interactions with Shoshones who "beg for everything they see they are a lousy dirty

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[83] As explored in Chapter One, both the Lewis and Clark and John C. Frémont expeditions often commented on theft by Indians and so-called Indian treachery.

[84] Felix Negley, May 10, 1849, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/diary-of-felix-negley-to-california-in-1849-and-return-to-pittsburgh-by-water.

set of fellows and will steal any thing they can lay their hands on."[85] Of course, Indians stole goods from settlers, however, there were several reasons for theft. While some instances surely are accounted for through thefts of opportunity, oftentimes Native people "stole" from settlers who misunderstood the reciprocity of "Indian trading" or who simply refused to participate in paying tribute in return for passing through Indian lands.[86] According to a common theme in the overland trail settler narratives, when Indians stole from settlers it was because Indians were inherently predisposed to theft. But, white settlers also preyed upon and stole from settler parties. One particularly critical account came from a piece of correspondence from an unknown author from 1849 which was reprinted in the Missouri Courier in 1850. The author, upon arriving at a settler encampment of Mormons near Salt Lake City, wrote of being "disappointed" by what he thought were an "Abused people" who had been "falsely accused of all manner of crime when in the states." His tone changed quickly though, as he went on to describe that the emigrants he encountered there would "steal, rob, and beg worse than the worst Indians" and who had "resorted to all manner of devices to induce emigrants to stay with them, for no reason but to steal and beg from them."[87] While some settler narratives did acknowledge that theft was rampant from whites, or even whites dressed as Indians, the impression left by the rhetorical footprint places this solely on Native inhabitants of the West—usually with no apparent

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[85] Henry W. Starr, 1850, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/diary-of-henry-w-starr-1850.

[86] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 167-70.

[87] Author unknown, Reprinted in the Hannibal Missouri Courier, January, 1850. Available through the Merrill J. Mattes collection online at the end of the Beeson Townsend account. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/beeson-townsend.

consideration of nuances based on culture or ideas of land use, management, ownership, or settler provocations.[88]

Settlers also felt that Indians deceived them by avoiding detection—in practical terms a good strategy given the propensity for settler violence against Indians. Indians as sneaky or "prowling" (and later, in settler reminiscences, as "skulking") were other common descriptors of Indian deception within settler narratives. Henry Starr and his party, while in the vicinity of the Humbolt river in 1850, noted that "We are now in the Root Diggers territory they are a diminutive dirty thieving part of Creation there were numbers prowling about our camp last night and to night we again see them prowling about but they have stolen nothing from us yet but almost every day we see men who have had their horses stolen."[89] Joseph Terell, in 1852 posited that the deaths of his party's livestock was "caused by prowling Digger Indians, the lowest beings in the scale of humanity without a doubt. They would, from the willows, shoot arrows into cattle."[90] In some cases, settlers' convictions of inevitable Indian attacks led to a near-giddy hope that violence would occur. Lester Hulin's 1847 narrative makes several references to his party being preyed upon by Indians who menaced their animals, stole their horses, and ultimately attacked a woman in their party. Hulin claims that one Indian was killed and made clear that his team often lay in waiting for Native people, but found that the "prowling Indians are as hard to find as the deer."[91] Dr. William Thomas, in 1849 noted a similar sentiment; "These Indians (the Root Diggers) are a cowardly race and will do you no possible injury unless they can do it

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[88] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 193-95.

[89] Starr, 1850, Merrill J. Mattes Collection. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/diary-of-henry-w-starr-1850.

[90] Terrell, 1852, Merril J. Mattes Collection. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/joseph-c-terrell.

[91] Lester Hulin, "1847 Diary of Applegate Trail to Oregon" September 29, 1847, MSS FAC 612, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California.

sneakingly, and one man can keep 50 of them at bay."[92] One particular settler narrative, written by J. Quinn Thornton in 1846, captured the many forms of anti-Indian rhetoric that have been discussed so far, but introduced the additional element of "treachery." He wrote that "herds of bisons frequent many portions of the region; and savages, cruel, treacherous, and cunning, hang upon the rear of these roving bands, or hover around the emigrant's encampment, at night, like wolves prowling about the fold of the flock."[93] In this entry, Thornton connected Indian savagery with deceit and likened them to animals while also accusing them of vague treachery—an aspect of nineteenth-century settler discourse that was common and confusing.

So-called Indian "treachery" was the peak of settler distrust against Native people within the context of settler discourse. Whatever context for specific acts of Indian treachery articulated in U.S. expedition narratives—such as the Lewis and Clark of Frémont expedition journals—was lost in the collective discourse of overland trail settler narratives. The idea of a specific treachery quickly turned to a general sense of inherent Indian treachery that existed wholesale within Native people and it was that sentiment that was reproduced throughout the rest of the nineteenth century settler discourse. In some cases, the rhetoric focused on specific Indian groups—seemingly without any evidence save for a general sense of "knowing" said treachery. Upon entering Pawnee territory Merwin Kingsbury Hammond commented that "they are a treacherous and thieving tribe."[94] Stewart B. Eakin, shared William Clark's suspicion of the Sioux after encountering a party near Fort Laramie when he wrote that "some of them traveled a few miles

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[92] Dr. William Thomas, "Diary," 1849, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/diary-of-dr-william-thomas-1849, 13.

[93] J. Quinn Thornton, "Diary," 1846, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/diary-of-j-quinn-thornton-1846.

[94] Merwin Kingsbury Hammond, "Merwin Kingsbury Hammond Diaries," May 9, 1852, BANC MSS 99/242 cz, Western Americana Collection, Special Collections, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

with us but they showed no signs of trouble but we kept a close watch on the treacherous beings."[95] Dr. William Thomas also commented on the Sioux in his narrative, stating that "Two of our bridles were actually gone stolen by the Indians yesterday evening they were permitted to come into our camp. They are a treacherous race and will pilfer anything they can lay their hands on."[96] Garland Mahan's assertion of Indian treachery was exemplary of many settler narratives on the subject, offering a short and decisive admonishment after his meeting with Native people, simply stating "They were the Crow Indians and are very treacherous."[97]

In other cases, the rhetoric applied Indian treachery more broadly to all Native people. The diary of James Meline from 1866 offers a good example; he wrote

> The trouble appears to be that these Indians have not been thoroughly whipped. They despise the whites and their government, for they cannot understand that we should not chastise them if we have the ability to do it. Their successive massacres have been rewarded with treaties and presents. … force strong enough to subdue them is sent out, they immediately sue for peace, and, of course, it is granted them in spite of all their treachery.[98]

The spirit of Meline's grievances resonated with many white settlers after the midpoint of the nineteenth century. Here, treachery amped up the hostility against Indians who now had been seen to be taking something away from white settlers. Meline expressed frustration that the Indians had not been more harshly punished for transgressions against settlers in a sentiment that tacitly confessed to the benefits of whiteness for settlers—Indians should be punished,

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[95] S.B. Eakin. "A Short Sketch of a Trip 'Across the Plains'," June 2, 1866, AE 52, Accounts of Journeys to the Pacific Northwest, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

[96] Thomas, "Diary," 20.

[97] Garland Jefferson Mahan. Diary, 1864, "Missouri to Montana and 1866 return from Montana to Missouri," Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/diary-of-garland-jefferson-mahan-oxen-train-from-cole-county-missouri.

[98] James F. Meline, "Two Thousand Miles on Horseback, Santa Fe and Back," 1866, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/two-thousand-miles-on-horseback-by-james-f-meline.

EuroAmericans should be rewarded. This happened largely during the shift of power in the West—where the more that white settlers acted out aggressions at Native people, eroding that historical power structure, the more white settlers felt that Indians had engaged in treason. Meline imagined a frustrating cycle of the government giving to what he saw as unreasonable demands by Indians, further exacerbating the same problems. He continued:

> Were we to do otherwise, and give them no quarter, there would be a cry of cruelty and oppression that would deafen Congress and the country; and yet year after year, the dreadful farce goes on. Whenever our friends, the savages, run short of powder, lead, and blankets, they have an inexhaustible store-house from which to draw. They are not at all embarrassed. They step down to the Plains, plunder a few wagons, murder a few emigrants—a force is sent after them—they sue for peace—have a treaty, with its usual accompaniment of presents—get what they want—and begin over again when they see fit. Some eight thousand of them have been for the past two months at Laramie "negotiating" - and it is supposed the treaty will cost the Government more than half a million of dollars.[99]

Herein lies the ultimate damage done by this rhetoric—White settlers imagined most of the negative things they applied to all Indians, and in doing so they eventually convinced themselves that Indians were too violent, too savage, and too treacherous to allow them to exist. Treachery, as had happened long before with savagery, had become racially-tied to all Native people. As the nineteenth century wore on and settlers reached their destinations—getting about the business of settling, as it were—they increasingly advocated for genocide against Native people that they saw as an obstacle to completing the settler projects in the West. This was particularly noticeable in settler discourse as settlers rooted themselves to previously-occupied Indian lands and started to reflect fondly on the act of settlement through a lens of nostalgia that softened white settler violent ambitions and amplified imagined threats of Indian savagery.

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[99] Meline, "Two Thousand Miles on Horseback, Santa Fe and Back," https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/two-thousand-miles-on-horseback-by-james-f-meline.

There was some awareness that the anti-Indian rhetoric in settler discourse, at the time, acted as propaganda and was exaggerated. Most of the commentary on this issue, interestingly enough, came from first generation European settlers. German-American settler Hermann Scharmann wrote of the complicated relationship between Native people and the U.S. government in his memoir. While he used the term "savage" as interchangeable with "Indian," his narrative leaves a few complicating impressions on readers. In one section, he commented generally that "I experienced real regret at having to leave these savages who appeared to me to be more civilized than many so-called civilized men."[100] First, his narrative was translated from his native German language, and despite using the term "savage," the contextual clues from his writings indicate this is possibly a play on the word as this quote suggests multiple meanings who "savage" can refer to.

While some settlers pushed back against this rhetoric, there are documented incidents in which Native people, themselves, showed an awareness of the rhetoric settlers used to describe them, and articulated the trouble it caused for Native people and communities. American settler L. Down Stephens' 1849 narrative mentions that the so-called "Snake" Indians did not like the name that so many white settlers used to describe them and he refers to them as "friendly."[101] Other settlers wrote more specifically of Indians carrying letters. Joseph Henry Merrill described an encounter in which a group of Shoshones came to his camp for dinner. He wrote that "after supper they wished to smoke the pipe of peace with us; we assented and they gave us letters

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[100] Scharmann, "Scharmann's Overland Journey to California," June, 1849.

[101] L. Dow. Stephens, "Life Sketches," 1849, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/l-dow-stephens-life-sketches-1849.

directed to Fort Hall as an indication of their trustworthiness…"[102] Again in 1849, American settler Amos Steck wrote in his overland journal of an encounter along the Platte River with a man he described as a Sioux "chief" named Bull's Tail. Amos wrote a letter for the Indian as a sort of pass to other settlers; "making known to all men that we had passed their village yesterday and that with the exception of begging for whiskey they were very little trouble to anybody."[103] In that same year, Hermann Scharmann detailed an encounter with an unnamed Sioux "chief" near Fort Laramie. The so-called chief presented to Scharmann a letter "which stated that the Indians of this branch of the Sioux were not hostile, but most friendly, and that therefore every traveler should avoid insulting them."[104] John D. Unruh discussed Indians carrying so-called "Begging papers"—assuring settlers that certain Indians were safe trading partners—but this phenomenon of settlers "insulting" Native people was part of a larger process.[105] One of the most pervasive sentiments found in the writings of settlers who journeyed West across the overland trails during the nineteenth century was that settlers were constantly under threat of attack from Indians. Yet, settlers often misrepresented Native people in their written accounts through essentialist and derogatory rhetoric that focused on negative, and sometimes completely imagined, characteristics that settlers believed all Indian people shared. These acts of Native resistance to settler denigration came at the height of the settler movements West, as record-numbers of settlers trespassed onto Indian lands. These handful of incidents in which Native people used the written word of the "civilized" American culture indicate a simple,

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[102] Joseph Henry Merrill, "Diary," 1849, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/diary-of-joseph-henry-merrill-a-trip-to-california-with-his-father.

[103] Steck, "Diary of 1849," June 6, 1849.

[104] Scharmann, "Scharmann's Overland Journey to California."

[105] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 169-70.

yet heartbreaking, ask from Native Americans in the West; that settlers not insult Indians while they engage in a settler project aiming to displace them from their ancestral homes. Between 1849 and 1850, the tide of settlers traveling West swelled from over forty-five thousand to nearly a hundred thousand as "gold fever" took a hold on the American population.[106] As the wave of settlement crested over the next decade and the waters receded, Indian complaints of settler rhetoric, along with other forms of sovereignty and political power, were swept back into an ocean of settler colonial domination.[107]

Settler's Settling: The Role of Settler Colonial Discourse in Settlement

Once settlers were in the act of settling the land they had sought and traveled so far to reach, how did their discourse reflect changes in the ways that they saw the state, or Native people who were now, in essence, their neighbors? Settlers quickly moved to replace themselves as the indigenous inhabitants of the newly-settled West; particularly in Oregon—in what Veracini refers to as "transfer by conceptual displacement."[108] As soon as Oregon was an American territory, political organizers envisioned it as a "pure white" territory that utilized a version of popular sovereignty to encode anti-Black laws into the first Oregon constitution and uphold those restrictions at the time of statehood in 1859.[109] There is little doubt that Oregon as a settler

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[106] Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 120.

[107] Between 1850 and 1860 the number of settlers traveling West each year increased steadily from nearly one hundred thousand per year in 1850 to nearly three hundred thousand in 1860. See Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 120.

[108] Veracini asserts that "transfer by conceptual displacement" occurs when "indigenous peoples are not considered indigenous to the land and are therefore perceived as exogenous Others who have entered the settler space at some point in time and preferably after the arrival of the settler collective." See Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 35.

[109] Kenneth R. Coleman, *Dangerous Subjects: James D. Saules and the Rise of Black Exclusion in Oregon* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2017), 154-7.

destination was successful nineteenth century racial project that benefitted whites and did its best to restrict, or remove, nonwhites.

In her 2011 monograph, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, Anne Hyde asserts that by the beginning in the 1850s, the "West that had operated through trade and personal relationships—that saw people through war, diplomacy, and peace—had developed into a violent squatter nation."[110] Specifically, in the transition from territory to statehood in Oregon, it was the federal government that legitimatized squatters to the status of settlers through the Donation Land Act.[111] Local Oregon militias who, in 1847, enacted vicious retributive killings of Cayuse people for the Whitman massacre sparked "a broad Indian war that would last for nearly a decade."[112] Ultimately local militias depended on the support of the United States Army to suppress the Indian Wars that were a direct result of settler encroachment in the Pacific Northwest—with thousands of Native people being slaughtered in the process.[113] While the territories of the Pacific Northwest may have had a moment of settler self-governance, that moment was as quick as the flash of a camera—yet it was exactly that brief moment caught in the stasis of a photograph that settlers employed as evidence of their larger truth—despite the fact that in

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[110] Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-186*0 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 410.

[111] Coleman, *Dangerous Subjects*, 143-8.

[112] Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 405-7.

[113] It may be that distortions of the role of the state in settler discourse stem from reflections of what the settler population wished were so. The relationship between settlers and the state in 1850s Oregon were often contentious as settlers blamed the federal government for the Indian wars by failing to suppress Native people who were continuing to fight for their lands upon which the settlers believed they had staked legal claims to through the federal government. Of course, this highlights another omission that is obvious in hindsight — that in being granted legal ownership of lands to settle from the federal government the settler cannot claim to have acquired those lands through any kind of independence. See Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 425-7. Additionally, historian Gray H. Whaley explicitly discusses how, during the so-called "Rogue River Wars," "the colonists of southwestern Oregon clamored for federal troops to secure the area." Whaley argued that, in response, the U.S. built fortified locations near the Oregon/California border to protect settlers. See Gray H. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee: U.S. Empire and the Transformation of An Indigenous World, 1792-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 196.

merely two decades the federal government had built enough infrastructure in the West in the form of railroads, telegraphs, and military forts to render the idea of an independent settler sovereignty inconceivable.[114] But, as Hyde keenly points out, it was not evident at the time to settlers or anyone else that the United States would become the dominant power in the West until the scales had already tipped in their favor by the second half of the century.[115] This adds a layer to the settler discourse; were distortions in the settler discourse the product of settlers' imagination that reflected how they *envisioned* their place at the American frontier, or were those distortions a reflection of how they truly *perceived* the balance of power on the ground *at that moment in time and place*?

The rapid influx of white settlers into the Pacific Northwest in the mid-nineteenth century upset complex relationships and politics among Native nations. Quickly, a cycle was established in which it became impossible to extricate white settler aspirations for Indian removal—including enacting violence against local Native people, Indian raiding on settler populations, settler reciprocity for violence, and Native retribution.[116] So-called "Indian Wars" in the West were commonly fought by local settler militias working with U.S. military forces and regardless of the stated justification for any one incursion, as a whole these were wars waged against Native people as part of the settler colonial project in the West. The infamous Whitman massacre in 1847 resulted in a retributive war—the Cayuse War—against Indians in Oregon but was used as justification for Indian violence with far-reaching effects; settlers in California directly associated

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[114] Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 410.

[115] Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 17.

[116] Historian Marc Carpenter argues that "the cascades of reciprocal violence that became "Indian Wars" often began with individual acts of racially charged violence that some pioneers thought of as their right." His article in the Oregon Historical Quarterly details some of these incidents that led to broader Indian wars in the Pacific Northwest; namely the Rogue River and Yakima wars. See Marc James Carpenter, "Pioneer Problems: 'Wanton Murder,' Indian War Veterans, and Oregon's Violent History," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 121, No. 2 (2020): 159-62.

the killing of the Whitmans with enacting retributive violence against local Native people in the gold fields.[117] The so-called "Ward massacre" in 1855 was used as justification for, and the impetus of, the The Shoshone War; this assumes that the raid against the Ward party occurred in a vacuum and was itself not a response within the cycle of settler and Indian responses to one another.[118] Finally the Rogue River War (actually a years-long span of conflicts from roughly 1850 - 1856), too, was blamed on Indian violence against settlers—despite almost no evidence for this and detailed evidence of a campaign of violence waged against people of the Rogue River Valley in Oregon and California.[119] This war, too, had wide far-reaching implications for further calls to violence.[120] The violence in Oregon was directly used as a call to action against Native people—all Native people—in California as evidenced through the 1853 editorial by the *Yreka Mountain Herald*

> Now that the general Indian hostilities have commenced, we hope that the Government will render such aid as will enable the citizens of the North to carry on a war of extermination until the last red skin of these tribes has been killed. Then, and not until then, is our lives and our property safe… Extermination is no longer even a question of time—the time has already arrived, the work has commenced, and let the first white man who says treaty or peace be regarded as a traitor and coward.[121]

[117] Benjamin Madley details specific grievances the Cayuse had which led to the Whitman massacre, but this event stood as steadfast evidence to settlers of Indian violence and savagery. See Madley, *An American Genocide*, 74-7.

[118] Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 251-3.

[119] Historian E. A. Schwartz attributes several factors to the origins of what became the Rogue River War. For years predating the actual war there were settler-led campaigns of violence including a highly publicized rape of a Native girl, and settlers justifying violence against Indians as a means to contain them to their reservation. Ultimately Schwartz finds the heart of the conflict in political rivalries in the West. See E. A. Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War and Its Aftermath, 1850-1980* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 67-8, 69-90. Historian Gray Whaley frames these tensions more critically as part of a "genocidal culture" in Oregon in which "newcomers had already decided that the Natives were irredeemable savages" and organized militias to engage in violent conflict with the Native inhabitants. See Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee*, 191, 194-200.

[120] Madley, *An American Genocide*, 221.

[121] *Yreka Mountain Herald* "Extra!," August 7, 1853, quoted in Madley, *An American Genocide*, 221.

Each of these “wars” contained specific nuances, yet collectively these are just a few examples of what ultimately amounted to wars of genocide waged against Native people by a settler population and the U.S. government.

It was clear that underneath all of the violence in the Pacific Northwest in particular, and the larger western region in general, white settlers held a desire for, and an assumption of the inevitability of, the violent removal of Native people. As the overland trail migrations morphed into a settler-delivery system terminating in the West, settlers who had reached the end of their journeys and went about the act of settling increasingly justified the eradication of Native people. Murderous sentiments against Native Americans seeped into American cultural discourses as settlers increasingly called for genocide throughout the second half of the nineteenth century while, at the time, settler militias and U.S. armed forces answered the calls for genocide by conducting warfare against Native Nations.

Discourse Rides the Rails: Early Transcontinental Railroad Narratives, 1860-1910, or, The Plains Rushed *Over*

The completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 opened up new modes of travel for Americans. Early rail travel to the West offered the same sense of adventure that Americans had come to associate with the overland settler movements but with more creature comforts and less danger. It was also more expensive—opening a class divide in rail travel that was wider than in previous modes of western travel. Of course, both the “adventure” and the “danger” of overland travel meant the same thing to overlanders: the threat of Indians. Early rail riders often invoked the overland trail migrations in their narratives—sometimes reproducing the language found within those narratives almost word-for-word. They also grappled awkwardly

with a newly-visible juxtaposition; on the one hand they very much wanted to see the Pioneers they so admired in themselves, while at the same time many commented on being able to bypass Indians, if one so chose.[122] One Oregon Trail reminiscence, written in 1906 by B.F. Nichols, directly called out rail travel as distinct in terms of the severity of dangers faced while riding inside trains: "Those who now cross the continent on swiftly moving trains with [a] palace car, or pullman sleeper, can form no true conception of the trials and dangers that beset the early pioneers, who blazed the way for the future development and civilization of this Northwest Country."[123] This was a feature, not a bug, of early transcontinental rail travel. In one of Samuel Bowles' early railroad guides, he compared an 1868 railroad journey across the plains to a stage journey along a similar route just three years earlier. "The then long-drawn, tedious endurance of six days and nights running the gauntlet of hostile Indians was now accomplished in a single twenty-four hours, safe in a swiftly-moving train, and in a car that was an elegant drawing-room by day and a luxurious bedroom at night."[124] That rail travel combined comfort and safety with a

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[122] The subtitle of this section, "The Plains Rushed Over," is a reference to Elliott West's 1998 work on the Colorado gold rushes in which gold seekers, as West described, rushed *to* the gold strikes out West in Colorado, but in the process. they rushed *over* the lands occupied by Native Americans. West also uses the same lens to view how America's collective attention has been focused on what was rushed to rather than what was rushed over in the historical tellings of silver and gold rushes. I used this as a reference as early rail riders were eager to arrive at destinations out West, but also to avoid what they saw as the tumult of crossing Indian territory(ies). See Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), xvii.

[123] B. F. Nichols. "Across the Plains in 1844: Reminiscences of Oregon," Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/reminiscences-of-oregon-b-f-nichols-1844, 2.

[124] Samuel Bowles, *Our new West. Records of travel between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean. Over the plains—over the mountains—through the great interior basin—over the Sierra Nevadas—to and up and down the Pacific Coast. With details of the wonderful natural scenery, agriculture, mines, business, social life, progress, and prospects ... including a full description of the Pacific Railroad; and of the life of the Mormons, Indians, and Chinese. With map, portraits, and twelve full page illustrations* (Hartford, Ct., Hartford Publishing Co.; 1869), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/gri.ark:/13960/t5k960k0f, 47.

touch of the perceived danger from hostile Native people was not lost on veterans of the overland trail migrations or early railroad riders.

Early rail riders were not as much settling the frontier as they were reaping the benefits of settled plains and vast Indian country(ies) that were-well into the process of being controlled by the federal government. These travelers utilized the transcontinental railroad not as a tool of discovery, but one of established transportation that existed within the political scope of United States sovereignty. The discourse found in rail travel transitions between Lorenzo Veracini's "Narrative Transfer" forms that mid-century overland narratives were steeped in, to "Transfer by Conceptual Displacement" in which "Indigenous peoples are not considered indigenous to the land" and "Transfer by settler indigenization" which was characterized by nativist sentiments where the settlers became first-generation Americans—an idea prominent in political ideologies of the Nativist movements of the same era.[125] It is not surprising then, that the rhetoric produced from traveler narratives along railways were similar to those produced by earlier settler movements. However, it is rather surprising just *how* similar many of these narratives were.

Before the eastern and western portions of rail were connected at the Golden Spike ceremony in Utah in 1869, settlers used the railways to travel as far west as possible. Demas Barnes, in 1866, surveyed his land holdings in the West utilizing a network of railroads, stage coaches, and horses to traverse the land in-between his mining holdings. His narrative, like others before, claimed an authentic truth of his "plain statement of the country as it is." And, like others before him, the more adamant that his narrative was truth, the more bombastic his tales were of native people. Barnes let out all of the stops in his descriptions of native people- particularly of those described as "Digger" Indians. In one entry he wrote "Speaking of Indians

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[125] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 35, 46.

—of all the filthy, stolid, degraded wretches I ever saw or heard of, these different tribes of the Diggers are the worst. They live on mice, grasshoppers, lizards, snakes, seeds, roots, and what they can beg of the white travelers. They infest every station. They sleep flat on the ground without even a stone or a brush covering. They cultivate nothing…" before concluding that "They are not human."[126] Barnes' assertion that the newly constructed settler spaces of train stations have been "infested" by Native people is an important example of the discursive shift towards the nativism inherent in Veracini's transfer of conceptual displacement.[127] Instead of settlers infesting Native lands and laying railroad track across the ground, it is Indians who were infesting settler spaces.

Just as overlanders had done before, railroad travelers began writing guides suitable for publication. And, just as with the guides produced earlier in the century, these tended to reproduce notions of Indian essentialism with an air of authority. Samuel Bowles turned his 1865 trip across the plains to the West into two published narratives; one was a general travel narrative and the other was a comprehensive guide for rail travel in the West. Interestingly, the more general narrative is filled with political commentary on how to solve the "Indian Problem" as Bowles wrote "We know they are not our equals; we know that our right to the soil, as a race capable of its superior improvement is above theirs" and continued by suggesting that "If the tribes would go and submit peaceably, well and good; they would not, use the force necessary to make them…"[128] This sentiment mirrors what historian Jeffrey Ostler described as the U.S. Government's strategy, or "plan B," for dealing with Indians who would not cater to demands

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[126] Demas Barnes, *From the Atlantic to the Pacific, overland. A series of letters by Demas Barnes, describing a trip from New York to San Francisco, thence home, by Acapulco, and the isthmus of Panama* (New York, D. Van Nostrand, 1866), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/yale.39002014612114, 66-67.

[127] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 35.

[128] Bowles, *Our New West*, 157-58.

forced upon Native peoples by the government—If you won't comply you will be destroyed.[129] Bowles concluded by stating that "This the best and all we can do. … is killing him, — and all we can do is to smooth and make decent the pathway to his grave."[130] In the same year that this narrative was published, Bowles also published a much more tame guide to railroad travel that includes barely any mention of Native people, save for a nod in his introduction where he gives "thanks, indeed, to the Indians, of whom all sentimental travelers have a holy horror."[131]

Of all the rail travel guides of the late-nineteenth century, none was more well-known or considered as comprehensive as George Crofutt's *Great Trans-Continental Railroad Guide*. And, like most other well-known and highly-regarded overland guides that had come before it, Crofutt's guide was ruthless in its essentialist descriptions of Native people—often referred to as "savages" and accused of murdering settlers "with impunity" throughout.[132] While it is true that the *Great Railroad Guide* did offer a comprehensive detailing of train routes, schedules, and associated costs, it also contained an equally exhaustive commentary on Indian peoples and what the author considered their inherent habits. While this was standard fare for guides, what stands out more was the degree to which Crofutt also weighed in on the "Indian Problem." After a lengthy diatribe on this subject, Crofutt concluded "that the speediest, most effective and economical method by which to end our Indian troubles, and render our natural foes quiet and peaceable, is to offer a reward for their head, as some governments do for the heads of the wild

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[129] Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 4.

[130] Bowles, *Our New West*, 158.

[131] Samuel Bowles, *The Pacific Railroad—Open: How to Go: What to See. A Guide for Travel to and Through Western America* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), 6.

[132] George Crofutt, *Great Trans-Continental Railroad Guide ... Over the Union Pacific Railroad, Central Pacific Railroad ... From the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean …* (Chicago: Crofutt & Eaton, 1870) http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hb0n0s, 18.

beasts that trouble them."[133] A railroad narrative may seem an unlikely place to find discourse championing Native genocide, and yet, the violence aimed at Native people in Crofutt's rhetoric was asserted within the context of increasing animus within settler narratives as settler populations began to look back on their settler projects through a nostalgic lens that both increased their perception of Indian propensities for violence but also diminished the settler's role in enacting violence against Indians. This too, occurred during the height of so-called Indian wars waged by the United States in the West. Both the anti-Indian discourse, and actual physical violence against Native peoples, enacted by Americans, only got worse as the nineteenth century wore on.

Conclusion

It took a lot of work to ignore all of the positive interactions settlers had with Native people and insist instead that Indians were inherently backward, lazy, dangerous, and uncivilized. Of all of the hardships settlers mythologized themselves in overcoming, doing this work may be the one burden that settlers actually carried. Our public discourse remembers the following narrative of the overland trail migrations of the mid-nineteenth century: Rugged, determined, and self-sufficient pioneers faced off against hostile terrain, weather, and most importantly, Indians to settle the lands of the West—at great cost to themselves. This narrative ignores several things. It ignores the role that the State played in supporting settlement to the West in terms of military garrisons positioned along the overland routes and the obvious, but often overlooked, fact that the impetus for these western migrations was a gift of free land available to white settlers. This narrative also ignores, perhaps one of the most egregious falsehoods of the pioneer mythology,

[133] Crofutt, *Great Trans-Continental Railroad Guide,* 47.

that while there were sometimes violent interactions with Native people; those encounters were rare, violence was more likely to have been instigated by settlers against Native people, and most importantly, this narrative erases the overwhelming amount of interactions that were positive between settlers and Native people—often with settlers relying on the generosity and help of Native people. There are two additional things that our pioneer narrative ignores completely: The settler accounts of overland travel are filled with abhorrent racist anti-Indian discourse that glorifies violence against Native people—AND—the racist rhetoric of those overland accounts reinforce the racist actions of establishing Oregon as a white-only settlement with anti-Black legislation at the core of its founding. It is hard to imagine that this is a history that non-Native America celebrates, yet the next generation of settlers, and their descendents, did indeed celebrate this history through a lens of nostalgia that further exaggerated Native violence and softened the violence that white settlers were directly responsible for.

Chapter Four

Reminiscing Like a Settler: Settler Memory and Pioneer Mythology, 1850-1950

"And as that was at the time a perilous and dangerous trip which none but those who were possessed with the strongest character of a pioneer, and frontier spirit, could chance, risk, or subject themselves - much less a wife and five children, the eldest twelve, and the youngest seven months old. Nevertheless my eye was Westward. I had collected all information I could relative to the long journey across the American Desert. The wilderness of solitude except for the howling of the wolves and horrid cries, screams, and blood chilling yelling of the savage Indians."[1]

- Enos Ellmaker, Settler Reminiscence

"at that time the hole country was full of Indians and no won new when they ware safe, for we all knew that they was trechrous and was liable to scelp you at any time that they got a chance, So every boddy had to go armed and be on the watch all the time"[2]

- Daniel Giles, Autobiography

From the 1840s on, settler rhetoric in the Western United States continued to flaunt its most oft-used boogeyman—the savage Indian. While settlers en route to the West during the overland trail migrations of mid-century had to contend with actual Native people, this was less the case as the century wore on and Native people were confined to reservations, and new forms of travel allowed settlers and their descendants to pass through the interior of the country far more quickly. And yet, despite less contact with Native people, settlers continued to produce narratives lambasting Indians. At the same time, former settlers (now well-settled into the act of settling the West) reflected back on their mid-century travels and wrote narrative memoirs that skewed the collective story of settlement in favor of a pioneer mythology—laden with settler nostalgia—and demonized Native people as inherently violent and savage. Other forms of settler

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[1] Enos Ellmaker, "Autobiography: Memoirs of Overland Journey From Iowa to Oregon in 1853, via Fort Boise, Umatilla and John Day Rivers, Crossing Cascade Mountains," MSS FAC 589, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California, 9.

[2] Daniel Giles, "Autobiography," CB G391, Accounts of Journeys to the Pacific Northwest, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 14.

memory emerged that were performative; Wild West shows, settler trek reenactments, and monuments to settling the West all contributed to a collective mythology about how the West was won. These recreations of settler memory in the West were performed by a settler society at the same time that actual genocidal wars were waged against Native Americans. Finally, with the availability of automobiles increasingly possible for Americans in the early twentieth-century, a new form of an old performative settler tradition—auto tourism—embraced the mythologized pioneering aspects of settler nostalgia and created another body of settler discourses in the narratives that early auto tourists published from their travels. The connective tissue through all of these issues was anti-Indian rhetoric in various forms of settler discourse. Ultimately, the lies repeated by settlers were taken as truth and used as justification for large-scale, genocidal, violence against Native America—and these lies remained the so-called "truth" of the history of the American character for the remainder of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries.

Settler memory refers to a collective reimagining of the role of settlers in displacing Native people during settlement of the U.S. West. While the sentiment of impending doom of the "Vanishing Indian" was in the forefront of many American settler's discourse, others sought a more active part of this process and espoused the idea that Native people were too savage or violent to be tamed, and so they had to be destroyed.[3] It put the entire onus of genocide onto Native people—rather than the insatiable settler desire for Native land. Part of that reconstruction of memory was influenced by settler nostalgia. Here, a settler society disavows any historical participation in, or contemporary recognition of, settler violence against Native people or the

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[3] Historian Brian Dippie argued that "Extermination as policy was unthinkable, but a fully rounded version of the Vanishing Indian won public acceptance after 1814." He continued, "Indians were doomed to '[utter extinction' because they belonged to 'an inferior race of men…neither qualified to rise higher in the scale of being, nor to enjoy the benefits and blessings of the civilized and Christian state.'" Here, Dippie is referencing documents produced during the 1st session of the 20th Congress in 1828. See Dippie, *The Vanishing American,* 10-11.

dispossession of Native people and yearns for a time—heavily influenced by that settler reimagining of a mythological past—in which Natives and settlers lived alongside one another. One died out, and the other flourished. In this version of a mythologized past, the setter present can be enjoyed because the settler did nothing (that wasn't deserved) to the Indian. Both of these veneers are simultaneously as thick as the varnish that coats the crafted faux-wooden structures of ride queues in Disneyland attractions—impenetrable to the effects of time and the elements—yet is also as thin as mirrored glass though which settler societies, if they ever cared to look, can see reflected back at them their participation in affecting the dispossession and murder of Native occupants of the West whose lands settlers laid claim to.

Despite admissions of settler violence in response to mere rumors of Indian hostility, despite regaling readers with heroic tales of joining Indian-fighting militias, somehow the connection between settler violence and Indian declension was just…absent.[4] This chapter explores those aspects of settler memory—the remembering, the forgetting, the disavowal of an Indigenous past—throughout the latter-half of the nineteenth century. The settler colonial discourses from settler remembrances written in the second half of the nineteenth century often reproduced the anti-Indian rhetoric from earlier settler narratives but with even more vigor and hostility. By the end of the century, settlers had reconstructed a historical memory in which two opposing ideas exist: Indians faded into the background with no explanation, or Indians were subdued through violence and removal to reservations. The result of settlers reconstructing their cultural memory was one that erased settlers' role in genocidal violence and provided a sterilized

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[4] Jeffrey Ostler noted that "to the extent that Americans identified specific causes for Native disappearance, they focused primarily on disease and alcohol and contended that inherent racial deficiencies made Indians vulnerable to these forces." See Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 378.

mythology of Indian weakness and pioneer strength that twentieth-century settler-descended American cultural consciousness relished.

Settler Memory and Overland Trail Reminiscences

The main era of overland settlement journeys waned by the opening of the 1860s. Beginning almost immediately in some cases and decades later in others, settlers began reflecting back on their overland travels and producing memoirs. Often called reminiscences, these narratives frequently intensified the anti-Indian rhetoric found in other narrative forms. Instead of recognizing that the anxiety these settlers may have experienced towards Indians at the time was inflated, many reminiscences amplify the distortion of overstating Indian hostilities. Heavily distorted by settler nostalgia, in which settlers lament a pre-colonized West while omitting their own violent actions which helped to form this new West, these narratives created a historical and cultural record of settlement which contained a huge cognitive blind spot.[5]

Settler accounts from the latter-nineteenth century often contain such blind spots. Two main themes stand out in settler remembrances as far as Native people were concerned. The first was that Indians embodied much of the disparaging rhetoric so far examined in this study; Indians were thought to be violent, treacherous, cunning, and sneaky. These traits were even more pronounced when viewed through a lens of passed time and were, as they had been increasingly in the centuries before, tied to a racialization of Indians. The second theme that filled settler remembrances is that when details were provided, they were written in a way that

[5] The term "imperialist nostalgia" was first named by Renato Ronaldo in his article "Imperialist Nostalgia" in which he describes the concept as follows: "My concern thus resides with a particular kind of nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed. Imperialist nostalgia thus revolves around a paradox: a person kills somebody and then mourns his or her victim." See Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," 108.

was entirely vicious, filled with utter animosity, and seething with absolute contempt for Native people. The first observation suggests that settlers, when writing to an audience of fellow settlers, felt little need to contextualize their claims of Indians' propensity for violence—no matter how misguided these claims may have been—they simply were accepted as truth. However, the detailed descriptions of Indian violence, when provided, were highly theatrical and designed to shock the reader. These descriptions were often bombastic and clearly existed to illicit an emotional response in the reader—or perhaps to work through a mixture of trauma and guilt that surely must have been present in the psyches of early settlers—that insisted on dehumanizing Native people and presenting them as inherently violent. This message was what mattered most.

The discourse found in settler reminiscences written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was often as inflammatory and incendiary towards Native people as were accounts written mid-century. These narratives allowed settlers to tell their readers in more depth about issues that mattered to them in a way they did not do in their original journaling—in this way these narratives offer an insightful window into what mattered to settlers. What overwhelmingly came from this was that settlers wrote reminiscences that were filled with depictions of violent Indians. These narratives were constructions of settler memory and settler nostalgia. Settler Memory refers to "how and what settler societies remember, forget, and disavow regarding colonialism and Indigenous peoples."[6] The first component, remembering, is obvious but it is the other two components in the above definition that help round out the world in which settlers reconstructed for themselves at the end of the nineteenth century. Built as much on forgetting and disavowing as it was remembering, the settler memory of the nineteenth

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[6] Kevin Bruyneel, *Settler Memory: The Disavowal of Indigeneity and the Politics of Race in the United States (*Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), xi.

century was an informative step for how non-Native Americans saw themselves in the twentieth century—a century rife with conflict, accomplishments, and change.

Settler nostalgia, in which settlers long for a past (and a country) that they themselves helped to destroy through the erasure of Native cultures, political structures, and actual people, was a critical part of constructing this new settler memory. Generally, this looks something like a settler lamenting the days when animals roamed free and Indians were a noble people who tended the land. Other versions may focus on the Eden myth (the notion that North America was an unoccupied, biblical Eden, waiting for EuroAmericans to claim as their destiny) or the Noble Savage myth in which Indians live in harmony with nature—content with savagism and unaware of civilization.[7] Two good examples of settler nostalgia came from settler reminiscences. The first, from John Corydon Bushnell's narrative, encompasses a general settler nostalgia. He wrote

> Sixty eight years ago the whole country from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean on the west, was dominated by the Indian. Not a white habitation, after we crossed the Missouri River until we reached the Willamette Valley. Thousands and Tens of Thousands of Buffalo roamed the Platte River Valleys and adjacent valleys. What changes time makes. Now that whole country is settled with prosperous people, and happy homes, while pioneers—the first settlers of Oregon are fast passing away and soon will be a people of the past. The buffalo has gone and the Indian has gone. No one will ever know what this beautiful land has cost in human lives, suffering, in property. It is beyond computation.[8]

In this remembrance, Indians (as well as bison) are simply "gone," and it was the "first settlers of Oregon" who were imminently due to expire. It is clear that Bushnell had forgotten or disavowed any role that the settlers themselves may have played in this new world shaped by settler colonialism.

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[7] Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 18-21.

[8] John Corydon Bushnell, "Narrative: memoirs of Overland Journey From Missouri to Oregon in 1853, Via South Pass, Fort Boise, Malheur River, Across Cascades to the McKenzie River as Part of the 'Lost Wagon Train of 1853'," MSS FAC 586, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California, 23.

The second example of settler nostalgia came from the remembrances of Benjamin Franklin Nichols, who emigrated to Oregon in 1844 with his father, but who would later go on to become an "Indian fighter" in the Cayuse War and an Oregon State Legislator in 1882 and 1893.[9] In *Across the Plains in 1844: Reminiscences of Oregon*, serialized in the *Laidlaw Chronicle* in 1906, Nichols lamented the loss of buffalo in North America. He wrote that "Every man in our train who had a horse and a gun was anxious to engage in an a chase and kill one of the big old monsters." Then, without a hint of irony, added "Oh what a shame that our Government was so slow in protecting those noble animals and preventing their extermination."[10] The forgetting and disavowal of the actions of his own party in this statement are staggeringly frustrating, yet, they aptly expose the level of disconnect that much of settler memory had from the actual historical events concerning the settling of the West. Much of American history has been constructed this way, but the construction of historical memory as it relates to the settlement of the West, the settlers themselves, and the Native people from whom the West was taken, relied upon a series of historical untruths constructed by the settler populace that specifically constructed the New West through violence and force.

The collective effects of time on settler memory and influence from popular cultural conceptions about threats posed by Indians to settlers appeared to skew perceptions towards fantastic recollections of violence from Indians that rivaled early Indian captivity narratives. Several issues contributed to this. First, captivity narratives were republished as anthologies in

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[9] Nichols served in two Oregon State legislative bodies, first in Wasco County in 1882, and then in Crook County in 1893. See *Chronological List of Oregon's Legislatures* Compiled by Legislative Administration Committee Service, 2008. https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_engagement/Reports/Chronological.pdf, 119, 149.

[10] B. F. Nichols. "Across the Plains in 1844: Reminiscences of Oregon," Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/reminiscences-of-oregon-b-f-nichols-1844, 6.

the mid-nineteenth century and showed a renewed readership and interest in those stories. Second, popular culture and performative acts of settler remembrance further distorted the historical truths of the frontier—exaggerating Indian violence and erasing settler violence—leaving settlers with false historical memories that few cared to challenge. Third, pervasive beliefs in a "vanishing Indian" mythology encouraged settlers to "look back" at what *had* happened while disregarding what *was* happening as far as Native North America was concerned.[11] Together these issues cumulated in settlers reimagining their place in the future of America—one in which they had braved the wilds of the frontier due to a pioneer mythology, defeated hostile Indians (who were both simultaneously defeated militarily but also sort of just went away because that was the inevitable fate of Indians,) and looked to the future with this as their story.[12] That story became the dominant narrative in popular culture for most of the twentieth century. That story also ignored the fact that Native people did not disappear and ignored the settlers' role in bringing Native erasure to the brink. The increase in rhetoric that painted Indians as hostile and violent towards settlers, while ignoring acts of settler violence, further fueled settlers' thirst for and active genocidal violence against Native people in the mid-nineteenth century. Notions of the Vanishing Indian trope within settler reminiscences written late in the nineteenth century disavowed complicity in settler violence against Native peoples that contributed to declining Indian populations. Both forms of rhetoric described here did actual

[11] I use the idea of the Vanishing Indian in a similar way to how Brian Dippie approached his work in *The Vanishing American*. Dippie articulated that his concern was "not with the historical reality—the actual number of Indians, the actual cases and extent of population decline—but rather with the Vanishing American as a constant in American thinking." See Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, xi.

[12] Historian Michael Witgen refers to this as "the American fantasy at the midpoint of the nineteenth century" that included the "two faces of savagery—brutality and nobility" that both "explained the disappearance of the Native peoples of North America, and the triumphant rise of the United States." See Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 9.

and conscious work to uphold settler ideologies and denigrate Native people into a monolithic racial group that stood in the way of Manifest Destiny.[13]

The rhetoric found in settler reminiscences followed established patterns forged in earlier forms of settler colonial discourse. Captivity narratives, which had been wildly successful in the late seventeenth century and the entirety of the eighteenth century, saw a renewed interest in readership during the latter half of the nineteenth century.[14] Some of these were contemporary to the time narratives, written as a result of borders conflicts with the Comanche in Texas or stemming from disputes with the Sioux as overland settlers trespassed across Indian Country, but the majority of popular captivity narratives were older narratives that found new readership in printed anthologies. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, in *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, argued that over the course of the nineteenth century, the revitalization of the Indian captivity narrative was an attempt to reconstruct a historical past from Americans in the East.[15] She wrote that "No longer a military threat, the Indian, together with the frontier, was perceived as part of a rapidly vanishing national heritage that needed immediate preservation" and that "consequently,

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[13] Philip Deloria explored the ways in which "discursive/ideological formations throughout U.S. history has been the body of accepted knowledge about Indian people" and "the ways in which knowledge helped constitute individuals and groups as subjects, and the new and old ways in which power was to be applied to Indians and non-Indians alike." I used this quote in the Introduction of this study, but I've reproduced it here as a reminder of its importance. See Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 11.

[14] James Arthur Levernier and Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola argued that "As the frontier moved westward, a number of narratives were also published in the local histories of Midwestern towns and states." They continued "Previously published narratives were sometimes reprinted as local histories or completely rewritten and passed off as new accounts." See Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative,* 169.

[15] Specifically, she argued that "By the early nineteenth century, the reality of Indian captivity was already a generation or more removed from the consciousness of white Americans living in the East. While frontier warfare continued in the West until well into the latter part of the century, it long since had ceased in the East. Along with the end of warfare came a change in the way Easterners viewed the American Indian. Attempting to discover and define a national identity, white Americans turned to their past, hoping there to find a heritage worthy of what they considered their country's future promise." See Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 167.

white audiences began romanticizing the American Indian as part of what was perceived to be a glorious historical age."[16] I argue that this process occurred simultaneously in the West as settlers reconstructed the historical and cultural memory of settlement and pioneering in the West.

One of the most memorable examples of the power that Indian captivity narratives held over nineteenth-century white Americans was the account of Cynthia Ann Parker.[17] This narrative of a young girl taken by Comanche peoples who adopted her in the 1830s captured people's attention like few other later captivity narratives. Her story was told by author James DeShields in his 1886 publication of *The Story of Her Capture*. The narrative, with its thirty-year time gap between the actual events and their re-telling by a third party, was heavily skewed against Comanche peoples and explicitly violent—particularly in its description of the event that led to nine year old Cynthia's capture. DeShields wrote that "The Indians, artfully feigning the treacherous semblance of friendship, presented that they were looking for a suitable camping place…at the same time asking for a beef to appease their hungry."[sic] He continued "Not daring to resent so formidable a body of savages, or refuse to comply with their requests, Mr. Benjamin F. Parker went out to them, had a talk and returned, expressing the opinion that the Indians were hostile and wanted to fight." Benjamin's brother Silas, then, went out to talk to the Indians, "and was immediately surrounded and killed, whereupon the whole force—their savage instincts aroused by the sight of blood—charged upon the works, uttering the most terrific and

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[16] Levernier and Derounian-Stodola, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 168.

[17] Cynthia Ann Parker, mother of Quannah Parker during her time among the Comanche, remains a visible figure—particularly in Texas history where she has taken on a mythical status locally second only to the Alamo. There is much to unpack in her story, and the telling of it, in the context of Texas specifically that lies outside of the scope of this study. Instead, I use this example to illustrate the influence of a wildly popular narrative with an obviously problematic authorship and the long-lasting effects of how DeShields cast certain events in said narrative. For context of the mythology of the Parker captivity narrative and escape, see Paul H. Carlson and Tom Crum, *Myth, Memory and Massacre: The Pease River Capture of Cynthia Ann Parker* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2010), 3-8.

unearthly yells that ever created the ears of mortals."[18] Here, DeShields engaged with all of the tropes common in captivity narratives from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; general Indian savagery, bloodlust, treachery, deceit, and describing them as inhuman beings. As DeShields further detailed atrocities—one man "stripped, murdered, scalped and" and Cynthia's mother, Mrs. Parker, "stripped, speared and left for dead"—DeShields completed the cycle of titillating readers with gruesome death scenes and fixating upon violence against white settler women.[19] The Parker narrative, enshrined in Texas history as a triumph of white settlement over Indians as much of the narrative details her "recapture" by military officials after the 1860 Pease River massacre and her (again, forced) return to white society, was not only popular and influential in the late-nineteenth century. This narrative—and in particular DeShields *telling* of this narrative—was directly inspirational to the 1956 John Ford classic Western film, *The Searchers*.

In their exploration of the Parker narrative, the myths surrounding it, and the historical memory of the Pease River Massacre, co-authors Paul H. Carlson and Tom Crum point to important issues regarding settler memory and the (re)telling of settler/Indigenous history. Carlson and Crum, in *Myth, Memory and Massacre*, argued that "Folklore" has clouded the collective memory of historic events in Texas surrounding the recapturing, or rescuing, of Cynthia Ann Parker in the 1860 massacre at Pease River and that the significance of these events gets inflated or deflated depending upon the scale (local vs. national) of their telling. They wrote:

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[18] James T. DeShields. *Cynthia Ann Parker: The Story of Her Capture At the Massacre of the Inmates of Parker's Fort; of Her Quarter of a Century Spent Among the Comanches, As the Wife of the War Chief, Peta Nocona; and of Her Recapture at the Battle of Pease River, by Captain L. S. Ross, of the Texian Rangers* (St. Louis: Printed for the Author,1886), 13-14.

[19] DeShields. "Cynthia Ann Parker: The Story of Her Capture," 15.

> The story of the Battle of Pease River and the 1860 capture of Cynthia Ann Parker is a small one, but it is significant in big ways. It shows how myths loom large in the state's collective memory, it demonstrates the need for a past more usable by a wider range of Texans, and it illustrates how careless errors and simple failure to corroborate evidence play into sustaining mythology, enhancing folklore, and affirming collective memory.[20]

The same could be said of the so-called "Whitman Massacre" in Oregon. Yet both of these events were influential to the spread of settler discourse (The murder of the Whitmans was directly referenced in many settler reminiscences and the Parker narrative for reasons discussed above) but these were also, on a national scale, insignificant events relative to their mythological tellings. The Parker narrative, especially, ignored the role that settler violence played in the events of the Pease River massacre—more commonly referred to as the Battle of Pease River—in which a detachment of soldiers wiped out an Indian encampment, leading to the recapture of Parker. Carlson and Crum argued broadly that "Although Indian atrocities were rarely neglected when accounts of Anglo-Indian warfare were related, the occurrences of Texans' brutality and barbarism were winnowed from most reports and thus eventually forgotten."[21] More specifically, they wrote: "Comanches were not the only raiders in Northwest Texas… some, perhaps much, of the supposed Comanche raiding activity was actually the dirty work of white thugs, desperados, and thieves falsely identified as Native Americans. Regardless, whites struck back against Indians, attacking Comanche, Kiowa, and Wichita camps in Texas."[22] The authors concluded that "Settlers were scared. They were also angry, and this time they would not let the raiders go unpunished."[23] And this, the use of force against Native people whom settlers imagined (correctly or not) to be hostile against whites in order to strike first, was a critical part of the

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[20] Carlson and Crum, *Myth, Memory and Massacre*, xvi-xvii.

[21] Carlson and Crum, *Myth, Memory and Massacre*, xv.

[22] Carlson and Crum, *Myth, Memory and Massacre*, 12.

[23] Carlson and Crum, *Myth, Memory and Massacre*, 23.

actual history of Western settlement but a lacking cognitive connection in the greater settler psyche. Settler colonial narratives promote violence as one-sided with Indians always as the aggressors, with deeply racial connotations while ignoring white violence. As we will see shortly, this pattern of retributive violence against Native people at the hands of settlers was a common form of settler discourse in overland trail reminiscences.

One of the more enlightening forms of settler discourse came in the form of narratives of overland trail journeys written decades after the fact by the settlers who resisted their travels through memory. Starting in the 1860s, and continuing on for decades thereafter, so-called "settler reminiscences" were narrative accounts written by the original settler, or their descendants, based either on memory or using an original trail diary as reference. These narratives often made a more literary flow to them and, as one would imagine, allowed the author to fill in any gaps in historical truth with imagined details—this was particularly true when examining how this body of discourse described Native people.

Not all reminiscences discussed Native people. Some even describe positive interactions between settlers and Indians.[24] However, those that did admonish Indians for violence and depravity tended to linger on those topics in deeply dark detail. While these narratives were likely written either for public consumption or for family members to preserve the memories of these original settlers to the West, the impulse to paint oneself in a heroic light while casting darkness onto all of Native North America seemed too strong a pull to resist for many. The passage of time and the cultural entrenchment of previous settler colonial notions of Native

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[24] While conducting research within numerous settler reminiscences, it was an uncommon, yet, present sentiment where settlers described Native peoples in neutral or positive ways—usually to the effect of "the Indians are friendly." Such descriptions usually corresponded with settlers who actively interacted with Native people. Of course, some narratives address Native people along a spectrum of "friendly" to "savage" to "hostile" and any particular narrative can contain a variety of these sentiments.

people combined into a toxic mixture in many settler reminiscences that heightened the rancor of anti-Indian rhetoric in ways that equalled early captivity narratives. One particularly apt example of this came from the reminiscence of Benjamin Franklin Nichols, who wrote of the anxieties that settlers carried with them across the plains: "the women suffered not alone from bodily toil and over work, but from anxiety and fear, as well, not knowing at what moment the train might be attacked by Indians, the men murdered, the women and children killed or carried into captivity. To be made an Indian prisoner was more dreaded than death."[25] This example encompasses sentiments that were common first in colonial Indian captivity narratives as well as nineteenth century overland trail journals, yet, in the context of the remembrance, it reveals how essentialist notions of Indian violence and savagery were distilled into casual talking points—there is nothing to substantiate these claims, they were made with a cultural understanding that it was so.

The specific lineage of these ideological messages shows that the hundreds-of-years-old historical pattern of anti-Indian rhetoric was necessary and instrumental in making these messages seem to be of common sense to nineteenth-century settlers and their descendants. Furthermore, the added filter of time, when overlaid upon these narrative structures, served to "smooth out" the jagged edges of missing data—here referring to the disconnect between rhetoric of Indian violence and historical realities of settler-inflicted violence against Native people—resulting in a glossy narrative that settled into the minds of former settlers at the end of the nineteenth century. This narrative, propelled into the twentieth century, went something like this: Indians were inherently violent and savage and could not be trusted, and so they must be destroyed and certainly did not deserve the lands they occupied. At the same time, Indians

[25] B. F. Nichols. "Across the Plains in 1844," 2.

appeared to be, and were destined to be, disappearing through some unseen force—disease, certainly, but also, as Manifest Destiny argued that settlers were destined to occupy North America, Native people were also destined to disappear from it. The missing piece, of course, were deaths resulting from military and civilian violence—*genocide*—waged against Native people as part of a multi-tiered strategy that involved cultural erasure through land loss, religious and cultural indoctrination through assimilation programs, and open warfare. Settlers were active participants in some of this, and complicit in all of it. That is the piece that went missing in the collective memory reconstruction that occurred in the latter-nineteenth century narratives.

Reminiscences detail an important fact of the spread of settler colonial discourse. During the overland trail migrations settlers often relied upon word of mouth to anticipate and track conditions on the various road systems. Reminiscences reveal how critical this word of mouth communication was to disseminate settler colonial discourse as it related to asserting Indian hostility. One instance simply asserted "Tis said the Indians often raid the wagon trains. They kill and scalp the men. steal the horses and make off with the women."[26] Over and over again, original settler diaries, and later, settler remembrances, detailed how much of their information about Indian threats came from rumors heard along the trails from other settlers.

Fear of Indian violence was widespread in these narratives, and in the minds of their authors. This particular form of rhetoric held a strong connection to the tradition of colonial Indian captivity narrative writing in which bombastic tales of Indian savagery languished over detailed descriptions of brutal and violent acts to elicit fear in readers. This tradition stayed alive and well within the tales of settler remembrances. Ellos Ellemaker wrote on anticipating Indian attacks, "Again we did not know the moment that our train would be massacred or tortured by

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[26] Orlin Graves, "Pusey Graves: A Forty-Niner," 1924, MSS FAC 1615-1646, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California, 4.

the wild savages of the desert."[27] There was an air of certainty and true fright in his imaginings of Indian violence. Despite the fact that none of these instances occurred, a short while later he continued with such imaginings; "We were on the Plains and in the Desert and our lives were at stake, the Indians were prouling [sic] on all sides. And if we failed to get through we new [sic] too well what the consequences would be, as the summer was well nigh spent, cold, starvation, and butchery by the savages."[28] Edmund Green, in his reminiscence, also detailed an imagined horror that never came to be, but which was terrifyingly descriptive. He wrote that "We started off in good spirits notwithstanding the predictions of Judge McElroy, a frontiersman, that the Indians would have our scalps before we were half way across the plains" before concluding that "All this with the thought of being far from home and friends, and the danger of an attack from the Indians at any time and with no shelter from the rain stamped itself indelibly on my mind as one of the most terrible nights I ever experienced."[29] This unrelenting fear, described by so many settlers at the time of their journey and, sometimes, decades afterwards shows the presence and space these imagined scenes occupied within the settler psyche. It is no wonder, yet equally inexcusable, that settlers convinced themselves that they must strike first at their perceived enemies before they found themselves victims. However, their devotional belief in their impending victimhood was as misplaced as their justifications for violence against actual Native people in the West.

So many incidents of settler violence against Native people stemmed from these rumors heard from other settlers that Indians had been, or were imminently thought to become, violent.

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[27] Ellmaker, "Autobiography," 11.

[28] Ellmaker, "Autobiography," 15.

[29] Edmund Green, "Reminiscence of a Pioneer," Merrill J. Mattes Collection, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO. https://www.octa-journals.org/merrill-mattes-collection/reminiscence-of-a-pioneer-edmund-green-1849, 25.

In these instances, settlers quickly formed impromptu militia groups and attacked Native people based, almost exclusively, on rumors. One such incident was detailed by Phillip Augustus Marquam in his reminiscence of his 1849 trip to California. He wrote "While we were on Middle Creek we discovered that an old man from Canada had been murdered by the Indians who threw his body into the river… so we raised a company of about 30 men and went out to punish them running them into the mountains and killing several of them."[30] Incidents like these are common in settler reminiscences. B.F. Nichols, whose remembrance was explored earlier, wrote of a similar instance in which news of an Indian raid "flew over the little settlement like wild fire and Cornelius Gilliam who was at that time engaged to be married to Miss Crawford, on hearing of the Indian raid went with all speed to the scene of the battle" where he "at once started in pursuit of the Indians. He followed them beyond the white settlements and into their own country and succeeded in killing all but one or two of the party."[31] (18) More often than not the rumors settlers heard which put them on guard against Indian attacks never materialized in actual Indian hostilities. One reminiscence of a trip in 1850, whose author was not named, detailed several instances in which they heard rumors from another train company having come from California: "They also informed us that the Indians were hostile, one man had been killed, and we should be on our guard." The team then "corralled" the train and stood guard. As the author wrote "We all felt soon we would be attacked, and made arrangements accordingly" and "From What we could learn from the Californians we were liable to be attacked by the Indians at any time. On examination it was found that not half a dozen of our men were prepared for an attack." He

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[30] Phillip Augustus Marquam, "Dictations and Biographical Materials," BANC MSS P-A 151-159 FILM (152), Western Americana Collection, Special Collections, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 3-4.

[31] B. F. Nichols. "Across the Plains in 1844," 18.

continued: "That night we lay on our arms and when the first alarm came we were ready to meet the savages."[32] For all of this concern, no Indian threat ever presented itself to the company. Yet, the power of the rumor mill was strong, as Samuel Handsaker's narrative shows from his 1853 overland trip, in which he received word near Fort Laramie of Indian hostilities. He wrote "I cannot vouch for the truth of this report, but presume there is some truth in it."[33] If settlers were unyielding in their belief that there was "some truth" in trail rumors, the publication of settler discourse and anti-Indian rhetoric in newspapers dismissed any doubt to them in the veracity of settler truths.

The proliferation and dissemination of settler remembrances themselves was almost exclusively due to newspapers. The influence of newspapers only continued to grow into the latter-nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Newspapers were often a direct conduit for settler reminiscences—printed in serialized portions in local newspapers across the country.[34] One such reminiscence, printed in 1925 in *The Argonaut*, reflected back on the then ten year old author, who remained unnamed, after her father had not returned to camp after searching for a lost pony. Mustering the language common in early trail narratives, she wrote that "I knew well that if a train did not overtake father that the treacherous Indians would kill him."[35] Settlers B.F. Nichols and Samuel Handsaker, whose reminiscences were detailed above, also published their

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[32] Unknown Author, "From Lake Erie to the Pacific - An Overland Trip in 1850-51," MSS HM 50455, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California, 34-5.

[33] Samuel Handsaker, "Autobiography," MSS FAC 590, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California, 25.

[34] John M. Coward tracked the rise in newspaper readership during the nineteenth century. Readership exploded during the "prennypress revolution" of the 1830s, with readership in one New York paper, the Tribune, jumping from ten thousand in 1841 to over forty thousand by 1860. "By 1890," he wrote, "the United States had more than 1,600 daily newspapers with a combined circulation of nearly 8.4 million. In addition, almost every town and village in America had its own weekly paper--almost 9,000 in 1880." See Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 13.

[35] Unknown Author, "Crossing the Plains in 1852," May 23, 1925.

reminiscences in newspapers. Edmund Green, in his reminiscence, detailed an experience in Northern California in which he and his party were solicited by a newspaper to tell their stories of pioneering. He wrote "While we were camped there, the editor of a small paper came out from Sacramento and took our names and addresses and a short sketch of our trip, which article was published in the Sacramento paper and afterwards in the *New York Tribune*. From that article our friends in the East learned of our safe arrival."[36] The cumulative effect of serialized publications of settler reminiscences and the connections they brought to small communities and settler nostalgia during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries cannot be overstated.

One form of settler colonial rhetoric that appeared prominently, and specifically, in settler reminiscences were notions of what historian Jean O'Brien referred to as "firsting" and "lasting." O'Brien's work examined the concept in New England but its application is widely adaptable to settler and Indigenous contact zones in which white settler history is often predicated on emphasizing the first (white person, building, "civilized" cultural event) to exist Native-held spaces. White settler "firsts" often correspond with an Indian "last" which signify the declension narrative associated with Native North America.[37] These two discursive patterns reinforce the shifting cultural and political balances away from Indigenous societies and towards Euro-American white settler societies. While less visceral than much of the dramatically violent rhetoric about Native people, "firsting" and "lasting" continued to be a prevalent form of settler colonial discourse that furthered to entrench settler identity in historical narratives about in and out groups. In 1841 settler Joel Walker claimed that his wife was the "first white American woman in Sacramento" and that his daughter "Louisa was born in region January 14th, 1841, the

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[36] Green, "Reminiscence of a Pioneer," 30.

[37] O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, xii-xv.

first white child born in Oregon of American parents."[38] In 1849, Edmund Green claimed that the group he traveled with were the "first Pioneers of '49."[39] Basil Nelson Longsworth, in 1853, exclaimed as he came upon an Umatilla Indian Agent building in Oregon that "This is the first frame building I have seen since I left the states."[40] This statement is obviously and ironically false as he had previously visited military forts along his journey that contained framed officer's quarters. Daniel Giles, in that same year, declared himself to be "the onley [sic] white boy in the country."[41] The consequences of this rhetoric was that it undermined Indigenous claims to land occupancy by ignoring the simple fact that the lands these settlers were occupying contained structures and had people—entire societies—living there. This is literally that missing piece of information that eludes settler logic of reconciling that they could not be the first inhabitants of a place in which they had to push other people out of. The subtext of settler "firsting" is that they were the first people to *matter* as far as settlers were concerned. In the context of settlers and Native people, who mattered was largely influenced by racial ideologies. Once this false memory of being the first inhabitants of the West is established, settlers can begin "transfer by settler indigenization" in which settlers can claim "*current* indigenous status," for example, as becoming "Native" Oregonians.[42] Which is exactly what they did.

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[38] Joel P. Walker, "Narrative of Adventures Through Alabama, Florida, New Mexico, Oregon & California" BANC MSS C-D 170 Transc. Western Americana Collection, Special Collections, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 8.

[39] Green, "Reminiscence of a Pioneer," 28.

[40] Basil Nelson Longsworth, "Memorandum: Diary of an Overland Journey from Ohio to Oregon, via South Pass, Fort Boise, The Grande Ronde, and Columbia River." MSS FAC 591, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California, 56.

[41] Giles, "Autobiography," 19.

[42] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 46.

As with other forms of settler rhetoric, the discourse of the late-nineteenth century was filled with notions of Indian essentialism. While perhaps less-immediately perceptible as destructive as rhetoric accusing Native people as being hyper-violent savages, this particular marker of settler discourse was entirely pervasive at almost every point in European colonial and American history leading up to the late late nineteenth century and continuing well into the late twentieth century. Settlers, in their reminiscences, so often remarked on the supposedly inherent nature of Indian peoples in ways that are obviously dismantled under the slightest critical view—yet these statements were traded, given, and taken as currency amidst the America settlers' cultural spheres in the West. One needed only to mention the nature of Indians to another settler, particularly one who had actually emigrated to the West in mid-century, for the message to be understood clearly. Indians were savage. Indians were cruel. Indians were violent. Indians deceived settlers.

Daniel Giles, who settled in Coos County with his father in 1853 at age sixteen, wrote an autobiographical reminiscence of his experience as an Oregon settler. Giles' family opened a store for miners along the Applegate River, which he often tended by himself when his father was away on supply trips. During one of these periods, he detailed becoming good friends with a local Native brother and sister. Giles would hunt and practice shoot with the boy, and was close enough with the sister for her to confide in him about an alliance between local tribes to unite against settlers and "kill all whites."[43] The sister was worried that Daniel would be harmed, and this set into motion an epic tale of him leaving the store and traveling south where he encountered groups of militia, soldiers, and hostile Indian warriors. Despite Daniel's numerous and apparently easily-established friendships with young Native people throughout his narrative,

[43] Giles, "Autobiography," 22.

his language about Indians in general fell into familiar tropes as he described the "savage disposition of Indians."[44]

Giles told several tales of close calls, harrowing escapes, and all-out-combat with Indians in his narrative. In one early instance crossing the North fork of the Smith River in southern Oregon Giles was ambushed by a supposed Indian sniper on the far bank of the river. Daniel wrote "the bulet [sic] or peace of lead as it proved to be pased [sic] over my right shoulder so near my head that I felt the forse [sic] of the shot"[45] Giles was able to hide in the brush and escape after nightfall. In another instance he wrote extensively about a group of Indians who had befriended him but his "pet Indian" companion warned him that they were trying to kill him.[46] Over several pages he describes their attempts to capsize him in a canoe on the river, hit him with blunt instruments from which he, once again, escaped.[47] Giles' account contains much more to investigate in relation to larger patterns of settler violence outside of these incidents but these interpersonal stories—supposedly written by a sixteen year old boy who easily befriended young Native men and women—are a good reminder that despite good personal interactions with Native people settlers were often quick to reduce entire Native populations to the most base components of caricature portrayal pulled from settler colonial discourse.

The language that settlers used to describe Indians was a telling indication of how deeply entrenched their animosity toward Indian people was and how little it had to do with the actions of Indian groups themselves. Indians were commonly referred to as thieving, skulking,

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[44] Giles, "Autobiography," 25.

[45] Giles, "Autobiography," 17.

[46] Daniel Giles referred to a young Indian boy who had been captured by another tribe and had one of his eyes gouged out to prevent him from escaping captivity as his "pet" Indian after his group of settlers adopted the boy. From that point on the boy served as a guide throughout the rest of Giles' narrative. See Giles, "Autobiography," 55.

[47] Giles, "Autobiography," 49-55.

murderous, and treacherous. Derogatory statements about Pawnee, Sioux, Shoshone, Nez Perces, Chinook, so-called Snake or Digger Indians, or any other numerous groups were often similarly asserted and accepted as fact by settlers and continued the work put into motion through Meriwether Lewis' warning for Americans to always be on guard around Native people. However, it seemed that the more settlers wrote of Indian violence, the more they also wrote of their own violent actions against Native people. In one such reminiscence, a Mrs. S.D. Evans described her 1863 trip from Nevada to a family farm in Oregon. The journey led her and her hired guide, "Whiskers," through a "wild and uninhabited country, where thieving, murderous Indians skulked ready to murder any unprotected party they should fall in with." Mrs. Evans' account concludes with a scene in which Whisker's instincts about anticipating an Indian attack were realized in a quick, bloody, and well-coordinated fire fight. After killing all of the Indians and saving Mrs. Evans, Whiskers scalped the only Indian whose head (and scalp) was not destroyed by gunfire.[48] Rather than writing with disgust at her guide acting out the same savagery for which she denigrated Indians, Mrs. Evans' account coolly described Whiskers' decision to scalp their attackers as though it were natural. Reminiscences often revealed settlers' unprovoked propensity for violence against Native peoples, as exemplified in James Rinehart's retelling of an encounter his party had with Indians who had tried to steal some cattle: "six men started on horseback and four on foot, all anxious to kill Indians." James later commented that "two of the footmen lost their enthusiasm and thirst for the redman's blood and returned to camp."[49] In Susan Minerva Weaver McAbee's reminiscence of her 1852 overland trip she

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[48] S.D. Evans, "A Trip From Washoe, Nevada, To Douglas County, Oregon in 1863," CB Ev16, Accounts of Journeys to the Pacific Northwest, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon Eugene, Oregon, 1, 5-6.

[49] See "The Lewis Rinehart Family" Louis Barton, *Spencer Butte Pioneers: 100 Year son the Sunny Side of the Butte 1850-1950* (Eugene, Spencer Butte Press, 1982), 31.

detailed an incident in which an Indian was caught trying to steal a horse. At first her description of the event seems to turn away from common patterns within settler discourse as the man in charge of the party refused to shoot the Indian, despite the party's pleas to do so. Instead, they bound the man and kept him in camp for several days torturing him with threats of violence at the mouth of an enormous dog. McAbee wrote "I had a big Newfoundland dog that hated Indians as he hated no other thing. Mac placed my dog to guard the Indian. And they lay there all through the night stretched out, facing each other. The Indian with his eyes closed and the dog jealously watching for the least movement. Mac told the Indian if he moved the dog would tear him to pieces and I think the Indian believed him."[50] Ultimately, they returned the man to his community who were grateful and offered a pony in return. The company captain refused this gift because "He was afraid the pony had been trained as a decoy and would lead our horses back to his own village."[51] The casual and sometimes gleeful way that these narratives describe inflicting violence against Native people is characteristic of rhetoric written in reminiscences around the turn of the twentieth century.

Some settlers delighted in their tales of Indian fighting—both on and off the overland trail. Some detailed skirmishes that occurred along the journey to the West, and others went on to enlist in settler militias to continue fighting Indians once they arrived and were entrenched in the processes of settling.[52] Joel Walker, who enlisted in the Army after fighting Indians out East early in the nineteenth century, carried his readiness to mete out violence to Indians during his time in

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[50] Susan Minerva Weaver McAbee, "Reminiscences," BANC MSS 99/227 cz. Western Americana Collection, Special Collections, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 6.

[51] McAbee, "Reminiscences," 7.

[52] For a detailed history of settler participation in Indian fighting militias in the Pacific Northwest, see Marc James Carpenter, "Pioneer Problems: "Wanton Murder," Indian War Veterans, and Oregon's Violent History" *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 121, No. 2 (2020): 156-185.

Oregon in the 1840s. He wrote in his reminiscence of traveling up to Oregon from the Sacramento Valley in 1843:

> we were met by a large number of Indians who pretended to be friendly, but killed a good many of our horses. The next day we returned the favor by killing a good many Indians. We then resumed our journey and saw no Indians until the next day, when they came within a hundred yards of our camp and killed a mule. We killed more Indians. They followed and annoyed us greatly from that time until we crossed the Umpqua River region. They would neither fight us nor leave us.[53]

One must consider whether the decision to respond to violence against livestock with violence against human beings played into the inability of these Indians to leave the party be. Many others took up the mantle of fighting Indians in the West. Samuel Handsaker volunteered to fight against Indians in 185 as a member of the Oregon Mounted Volunteers in the Umpqua and Rogue River valleys. He commonly referred to the Native people there simply as "savages" and, ultimately, took some pride in helping to rid the West of Indians. He wrote in his reminiscence; "In June 1856, we subdued the Indians, taking them under heavy guard to a reservation on the Siletz River, near the Pacific Ocean, and remnants of those tribes are still there."[54] He later went on to detail payment and a settlement made from Oregon Legislature in 1901 to compensate the volunteers for this service.[55]

Daniel Giles, whose autobiography was described earlier, was one of the settlers who regaled tales of genocidal violence. Young Giles' account is rife with spelling errors which will be reprinted in this examination of his narrative without further comment. Oftentimes he made a point to differentiate "revenge" killings against settlers—a tacit acknowledgment that whites often started this cyclical violence. In one such instance—in which Giles was the subject of a

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[53] Walker, "Narrative of Adventures," 10.

[54] Handsaker, "Autobiography," 6.

[55] Handsaker, "Autobiography," 6-9.

supposed sniper attack—the precursor to that violence was a settler attack against local Indians as Giles wrote:

> The reason that Indian tried to kill me was as we had lurned in Cresant Citty that a few days before some packers had camped thare and had shot kild an Indian that they had found in thare camp in the morning when they drive up thare mules, as they had left the camp alone while they had gon after them. They claimed that the Indian was trying to steal something and this Indian was seaking reveng, and I came near being that revenge."[56]

In another incident mentioned previously—the lengthy tale of canoe pursuit and escape—was the result of some more nefarious settler hostilities. Near the Coquille River, Giles' party was approached by "a man" who "reported that the Indians had shot arowes at the faryman and was in thare war paint and was singing thare war songs and he was sure that they would kill the faryman before morning if the men did not go to his rescue."[57] So, of course, that's what they did. With twenty-five to thirty armed men, they surrounded the Indian town and attacked at daylight—killing fifteen men and two women and wounding several more—engaging with the "Indians" who "did not try to fight at all. Giles wrote of the incident, "if it had not bin for the river, I doe not think that thare would have one Indian man got away from that town alive."[58] Giles did not seem to recognize the severity of wiping out an entire Indian settlement, only reminiscing that "thare was none of the white men hurt" and the effects this had on other settlers, namely the attack "caused the Indians to seak for reveng and was was the cause of the death of several white men after wards."[59] Ultimately, the end of Giles' narrative concludes with the statement that he, like many of his western settler brethren, joined a militia to fight Indians. "The

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[56] Giles, "Autobiography," 18.

[57] Giles, "Autobiography," 46.

[58] Giles, "Autobiography," 47.

[59] Giles, "Autobiography," 47.

Indians of Southern Oregon had unighted there forces and taking the warpath and was killing the whites men women and children whare ever they could catch them, and destroying property whareever they could" he wrote, and "so I enlisted as a volintere and went to the Front. Was in about all the battles fought with the Indians in Southern Oregon in that war."[60] Daniel Giles' transition from overland traveler to settler squatting Indian lands to active participant in Indian Wars in the West was by no means an uncommon one. Neither was his engagement in acts of genocide—before, during, or after—his time in militia service.

Another instance of revenge violence came from the reminiscence of Basil Nelson Longsworth, who emigrated to Oregon in 1853 and wrote his reminiscence from memory the following year. His lengthy description of a tense and ultimately violent encounter started, as so many of these stories did, with a rumor of Indian violence as his party traveled past Scott's Bluff and towards Fort Laramie in Wyoming. Longsworth wrote that on June 16th, "we were startled with the report that the Indians had killed a large number of cattle, some emigrants, and nine of the soldiers of the fort, and that four hundred warriors were camped near the river and were determined to murder every emigrant on the road."[61] Yet as his train awaited others to come up behind until they numbered "forty or fifty wagons and perhaps one hundred men" who were armed and prepared to clear the road ahead "on arriving there we found everything quiet…"[62] Here's what they determined later had happened:

> The evening previous a large number of Indians desiring to cross the river in a skiff belonging to a white man—he being engaged in ferrying emigrants—refused, when they took the skiff by force, when he swam the river and applied at the fort for protection. The commander sent the Sergeant and three men to take possession of the skiff. They

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[60] Giles, "Autobiography," 65.

[61] Longsworth, "Memorandum," 27-8.

[62] Longsworth, "Memorandum," 28.

> swam the river, took the skiff and crossed the river. While in the river one of the Indians fired at the officer, the bal passing near his ear; he returned to the fort and Commander ordered twenty men to cross the river and take the eight Indians prisoners, who were offenders, and if the Indians would not give them up to take their chiefs which were present and bring them to the Fort. The soldiers went to their wigwams and demanded the Indians, when the Indians took their arms and commenced hiding behind their huts in a menacing attitude. The officers then told them that if another Indian left this he would order the soldiers to fire on the, The Indians continued to leave when the soldiers fired and killed four Indians and wounded two more. They then tool two chiefs prisoner and carried them to the fort. When the Indians left, and as far as we could ascertain, resolved to have revenge by destroying the fort.[63]

Ultimately, like so many other second hand rumors of Indian violence, the truth turned out to be be far less-nefarious than settlers imagined in terms of Indian people targeting them for senseless violence. Yet somehow, in this reckoning of the truth, settlers were unmoved by Indian violence often being reactive and retribution for violence committed by settlers or the military on settlers' behalf.

Settler's Settling: White Supremacy, Land, and Genocide

Once settlers settled into the life of settling Oregon they took on many different occupations; shop keepers, industrialists, lawyers, farmers, politicians, and members of local militias. Many sought the availability of land—a gift from the federal government—as igniting their desires to come to Oregon.[64] At both ends of that transaction—the giving and the taking—there were limits on what type of pioneer could benefit. While the Donation Land Act was available to white settlers throughout the 1840s until the end of the 1850s, early Oregon territorial laws and the first constitution had other limiting factors about who could dwell legally

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[63] Longsworth, "Memorandum," 28.

[64] Settler Ezra Meeker, in his reminiscence of an 1852 migration to Oregon specifically cited the availability of free land as the deciding factor in his destination. He wrote "Besides, if I went to Oregon the government gave us 320 acres of land, while in Iowa we would have to purchase it." Ezra Meeker, *The Ox Team of the Old Oregon Trail: 1852-1906* (Indianapolis: Self Published by the Author, 1906), 21.

within the territory. A series of Black exclusion laws were enacted in Oregon, starting in 1843, with some of them becoming later codified in the first Oregon Constitution drafted in 1857. While some legal parameters were set to stop the extension of slavery into the West, others, such as one law enacted in 1849 which stated that "it shall not be lawful for any negro or mulatto to enter into, or reside" in Oregon, were clearly designed to reserve the settlement of Oregon for white settlers.[65] While attempts to codify strict Black exclusion in Oregon were never formally adopted, the first territorial constitution written in 1857 reserved any rights in the territory for white settlers, as outlined in Article II, Section 6 which states that "No Negro, Chinaman, or Mulatto shall have the right of suffrage" and in Article XVIII, Section 4 which states that:

> No free Negro, or Mulatto, not residing in this state at the time of the adoption of this constitution, shall come, reside, or be within this state, or hold any real estate, or make any contracts, or maintain any suit therein; an the Legislative Assembly shall provide by penal laws, for the removal, by public officers, of all such Negroes, and Mulattos, and for their effectual exclusion from the state, and for the punishment of persons who shall bring them into the state, or employ, or harbor them.[66]

These exclusions, written by the settlers themselves, make clear that Oregon was to be reserved for white settlement specifically. The narratives that these settlers wrote in the later nineteenth century echoed the sentiments found in legal and government documents. Missing, of course, in the debate over who should be included or excluded from this land, was the acknowledgement that it was Indian land, and that stolen land itself was specifically what drew these settlers to the West in the first place.

Oregon settlers left little to imagination when they discussed larger issues of race in the settlement of the West and, in the process, inextricably linked settlement, Indigenous land, and white supremacy. Phillip A. Marquam, whose father owned slaves when he was a boy and who

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[65] For details on Oregon anti-Black exclusion laws, see Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains*, 43-4.

[66] https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/constitution/Documents/transcribed-1857-oregon-constitution.pdf

later became a lawyer in Oregon, opined about race policy in Oregon in his reminiscence. He wrote "On the Chinese question, I feel that for the present we would be just as well off without them as with them" and concluded by stating that "I don't believe in bringing in a race of people that are not needed and besides that it is better to have the country settled by white people."[67] Settler memory, however, disavows the obvious exclusion in the series of "problems" (the "Negro," "Chinese," and "Indian" "problems" that white supremacy concerned itself with solving during the nineteenth century) what Psychologist Joel Novel referred to as the "white problem."[68] If the "Indian problem" refers to what white Americans do about Indian people near white settlements and the "Negro problem" refers to what do white Americans do about African-Americans having political participation and power in the United States then the "white problem" refers to white America creating both of those other so-called problems. Essentially the white problem is racism itself, and the systems of disposition of people of color created through white supremacy directly created in terms of other racially-linked "problem."

Benjamin Franklin Nichols, whose reminiscence was mentioned previously, began with a heartfelt dedication "to that great pioneer and public benefactor, Marcus Whitman," and detailed a conversation about Oregon settlement at a public event. He wrote "At the Pioneer Reunion held at Portland, Oregon, in 1898, the question was asked: 'What motive impelled the people to face so many dangers and privations to come to Oregon?' General Lish Applegate found, what he supposed to be, an answer to this question." Nichols continued that Applegate "assumed the answer to be found in the history of the migration of the Caucasian people from the East to the West, beginning in Asia and crossing Europe to England; over the Atlantic to America, and

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[67] Marquam, "Dictations," 9.

[68] Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 11.

thence; across the Plains to the Pacific Ocean" before he concluded in his own voice that "While this disposition to migrate westward is unconquerable; and while it may, and doubtless, did have its influence… I think the greatest incentive was the hope and expectation of receiving large grants of land from the Government."[69] Of course, receiving large grants of land from the government was only available to white settlers so, in this case, both Nichols and Applegate were correct. Perhaps Samuel Handsaker was most open transparent about the benefits settlers reaped from Indian lands gifted to settlers by the government in his reminiscence when, at the end of his narrative he concluded with this thought: "Every little way we see the house and farm of a settler, who has come from the East to the 'far west,' to receive a fortune at the hands of 'Uncle Sam.' and having got it, he appears content and happy. I reached Oregon City today, just in time for dinner."[70] It is no surprise that these men, once actively settling Indian lands in Oregon, would go on to defend those settler investments. Handsaker fought in the Rogue River War, Nichols fought in the Cayuse War, served as the Sheriff of Polk County, and as a member of the Oregon State legislature.

One of the most astonishing accounts from settler reminiscences came from Robert Thompson's narrative in which he addressed issues of land—particularly who should or should not have access to land—in a way that was steeped in Lorenzo Veracini's "Transfer by conceptual displacement." In this mode of transfer, "Indigenous peoples are not considered indigenous to the land and are perceived as exogenous Others who have entered the settler space" and specifically that "this type of transfer allows for the possibility of discursively

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[69] Nichols, "Across the Plains in 1844," 2.

[70] Samuel Handsaker, "Diary of Samuel Handsaker: Oregon Trail 1853," MSS FAC 590, Huntington Library, Pasadena, California, 34.

displacing indigenous people to the exterior of the settler locale."[71] In his telling of this story, Thompson admits to squatting on Indian land in Oregon. He was confronted about paying for his use of the land by the Native occupant, to which he replied in a lengthy series of quips that began thusly: "I asked him what right he held to this land. His answer was he had always lived there. I asked him if his fathers and mothers lived there. Yes, he said. Whom did his father buy the land from? Well, he said his father didn't buy the land, and after a series of questions of this kind he finally settled back to tell me the story of his people."[72] The story, as related by Thompson, was this:

> He stated that his people formerly lived on the East side of the Cascade Mountains. They had become very numerous - so much so, that they had eaten up all there was in the land. They had killed off all the game and had destroyed and eaten up all the roots and berries so that the supply wasn't sufficient for them. They knew the country on the west side of the mountains was teeming with game, roots and berries and after building a council among their people they determined that they would send an application to the people on the west side, to see if they could come over there to hunt. The result of this was a failure as far as they were concerned…This concluded until their people succeeded in killing off all the other tribe west of the mountains. [73]

Thompson responded that "After hearing his story I turned on him and told him that I found that he and his forefathers had stolen the country by killing off the rightful owner (unintelligible) three canoes would hold what was left. And if I paid anybody, I should (unintelligible) hunt up some of these people that went down the river in these three canoes."[74] Seemingly without irony, when pressed for payment to an Indian for squatting on his land, Thompson turns the tables on

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[71] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 35.

[72] Robert R. Thompson, "Dictation - Captain R. R. Thompson," BANC MSS P-A 111-120 FILM (117) Reel 14 Western Americana Collection, Special Collections, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 8.

[73] Thompson, "Dictation," 8-9.

[74] Thompson, "Dictation," 9.

the Indian interpreting his story of inter-tribal conflict as one of environmental degradation and total warfare. Thompson then has the indecency to overlay a settler colonial and genocidal framework over the Native person's motivations as an attempt to undermine his land claims--despite the fact that this is exactly the origin of all setter land claims in North America. Using a tactic in which the settler has claims to indigenous lands (here, resembling Veracini's narrative transfer IV in which "settlers are also indigenous peoples" in "an attempt to deny a particular ontological connection linking indigenous peoples to their land.") the settler has become Native, and has been subjected to harm by being asked to compensate a land owner (in his view) for his settling of said land.[75] The settler discourse, then, more openly than ever before, advocated for or justified the commencement of genocidal violence against Native people in the West.

The rhetoric that settlers used to describe Indians in the West was not without real-life consequences for real-life Native peoples. At the same time that former settlers were writing their reminiscences of the settlement of Native lands in the West, white supremacist ideologies, capitalist concerns, and settler colonial discourses fueled acts of widespread physical violence against Native peoples in the region. Genocide.[76] Centuries of blaming indigenous Westerners for all of the brutal acts of violence that European colonists, EuroAmerican pioneers and imperialists, willingly participated in but projected fully onto Indians accumulated into actual

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[75] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 42-3.

[76] This study accepts the use of the term genocide in relation to Native North Americans during the nineteenth century. While it has historically be a topic for debate, I feel that such debate has worn out its welcome and prevents us from reconciling our past. The United Nations definition of Genocide makes clear that the United States, and civilian militia members and settlers have fulfilled the five criteria necessary to justify the label of genocide. Those criteria are: A) Killing members of the group; B) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; C) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; D) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; E)Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. For more see the U.N. statement on genocide: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml#:~:text=To%20constitute%20genocide%2C%20there%20must,to%20simply%20disperse%20a%20group.

acts of violence aimed at erasing entire bloodlines of people. As historian Brendan C. Lindsay stated in his monograph, *Murder State*, the "imagined experiences" settlers had with Indian hostilities planted a "seed of destruction" in early settlers and that "this hatred and fear of Indians and greed for the lands they occupied made genocide palatable and possible."[77] Lindsay pondered that all EuroAmericans in the nineteenth century "were people with hearts like stone, born killers who settled all of their disputes with blood."[78] He continued:

> yet when it came to fearsome, savage Indians, they seemed capable of many terrible exceptions…settlers, soldiers, and miners were able to kill infants, slaughter defenseless women and children in their homes, rape women and young girls, starve entire villages into death and disease, execute prisoners without trial, and murder dozens of people at a time to avenge the loss of a single cow or horse.[79]

Historian Benjamin Madley provided an extensive examination of violence against Native Californians in *An American Genocide*. In one particular example he detailed an attack on a Wintu village by John C. Frémont and his expedition company in early April, 1846.[80] One member of his party remembered "the order was given to ask no quarter and to give none"and another stating that it was "a slaughter."[81] Madley used this example as a blueprint for genocidal violence in the West. He wrote:

> During the next twenty-seven years, massacres like this became all too common in California. Encirclement, surprise attack, an initial barrage of long-range small-arms fire, close range attack, and executionary noncombatant killing would become a kind of unwritten tactical doctrine in California Indian-hunting campaigns. The Sacramento

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77 Brendan C. Lindsay, *Murder State: California's Native American Genocide, 1846-1873*. (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 11.

78 Lindsay, *Murder State*, 44.

79 Lindsay, *Murder State*, 44.

80 Madley, *An American Genocide*, 43-5.

81 Madley, *An American Genocide*, 46-7.

> River Massacre was the prelude to hundreds of similar massacres and ultimately an American genocide.[82]

Madley estimated that upwards of one thousand Wintu were slaughtered in the attack; neither men, women, nor children were spared in what he referred to as "one of the largest but least known massacres in U.S. history."[83] There is little doubt that the violence settlers and the United States government inflicted upon Native people in the West—particularly in California—constituted acts of genocide. While increasingly-heated and fantastically incorrect anti-Indian rhetoric in settler discourse spread throughout the nineteenth century may not have explicitly *caused* these acts of violence, they existed—word and deed—inextricably linked with the ideology of white supremacy in a toxic cultural sphere that non-Native Americans have never confronted directly or thoroughly.

The genocidal violence that settlers and the military enacted against Indians in California was neither unique, nor restricted, to that state. Many of the violence that occurred in Northern California was carried out by Oregon settler militias, as part of ongoing skirmishes that were inspired by the Whitman Massacre in Oregon Territory and the Cayuse War.[84] There is evidence that violence in the gold fields of California themselves in 1849 was carried out by settlers from Oregon who then looked to militia and military support to enact genocidal campaigns abasing Native peoples in California and at the Rogue River in Oregon.[85] Even if we separated the settler-led conflicts in California in the early 1850s and in Oregon in the mid-1850s and considered them wholly distinct, the conflicts themselves contained the same patterns. In the lead

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[82] Madley, *An American Genocide*, 47.

[83] Madley, *An American Genocide*, 48.

[84] Madley, *An American Genocide*, 76-77.

[85] Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee*, 194-205.

up to the Rogue River War in Oregon, settlers used anti-Indian rhetoric to stoke fear and aggression in support of militia violence aimed at removing Indian people from lands that could be settled by EuroAmericans.[86] Further distinctions could be made in the specific causes of the Nez Perces War of the 1870s or the massacre of the Lakota Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1890, but these acts of violence against Native nations and peoples shared some commonalities as well.[87] Whatever specific events caused tensions between EuroAmerican settlers, settler militias, the U.S. government, and Native peoples in the West becomes irrelevant when looking at patterns of all-out-war waged against Native people in the second half of the nineteenth century. To some degree, these so-called "wars" were initiated by settler encroachment into Indian lands backed by militia or U.S. military violence. While the genocidal warfare carried out in the goldfields of California may have been an early example of such violence, to assume that makes California violence against Indians wholly unique misses the fact that all over the West during the second half of the nineteenth century, settlers and the U.S. government worked in coordination to support settlement of Indian lands—often by waging all-out-war against said Indians. As Elliott West wrote in his latest work, *Continental Reckoning*, "Events in California, while especially tragic, were predictive of what would happen across the West during the thirty years after the discovery at Sutter's Mill."[88] Depending on where one draws the lines of genocidal intent in wars waged against Native people, one could argue that the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill was not

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[86] Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War and Its Aftermath*, 43-55.

[87] For an examination of the Nez Perce War, see Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 123-136. For an account of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, see Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism From Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[88] Elliott West, *Continental Reckoning: The American West in the Age of Expansion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2023), 50.

predictive, but rather, that these incidents were part of a larger system of state-sponsored violence against Native people in support of the settlement of Indian lands.

Ned Blackhawk referred to the "glaring absence"…"still missing from most narratives of American history are clear and informed analyses of our nation's indigenous peoples."[89] Even more glaring, as detailed by historian Jeffrey Ostler, is the contemporary absence of America's role in intentionally destroying Indigenous cultures, histories, and claims to land, in our own reconstruction of a mythologized settler history.[90] Ostler argued that "U.S. officials developed a policy that 'wars of extermination' against resisting Indians were not only necessary but ethical and legal."[91] This sentiment, regarding an official policy and military position, is corroborated by the settler reminiscences above where settlers, seemingly tired of dealing with Indians at all, resorted to obscene acts of violence over small inconveniences as described by Brendan Lindsay and illustrates the combined and concerted efforts of civilian militias, individual settlers, and the U.S. military personnel in engaging in genocidal warfare against Native people—particularly in the American West.

Performing the Ideology of Settler Memory: The Vanishing Indian, The Mythical Pioneer

From the last third of the nineteenth century onward settlers, and later, their descendants, participated in performative acts of settler remembrances. Original settlers from the overland trail migrations embarked on commemorative overland trips that, over time, were continued on by their descendants. In the case of Mormons in Utah, specific hand cart reenactment journeys

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[89] Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 2-3.

[90] Jeffrey Ostler states "There is almost no recognition that U.S. officials established a policy of exterminating Indians who opposed their will, that the 'just and lawful war' clause of the Northwest Ordinance meant genocidal warfare." See Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 381.

[91] Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 4.

have become a way for modern Mormons to connect with their (idealized) past. Simultaneously, settlers and their descendants erected monuments to individual settlers and to larger settler movements—making physical the new settler histories steeped in pioneer mythology and absolved of any guilt over the defeat of Native North America. Each of these acts has a distinctive history, but they also represent a larger movement towards establishing a collective settler memory of the nineteenth century—one in which the role of Indians as well as settlers was heavily distorted.

Performative public expressions of settler colonialism continue into present day America. Every July 24th, Utahns celebrate the entry of Mormon settlers into the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847. This commemorative holiday, known as Pioneer Day, began on the tenth anniversary of that date and continues to the present.[92] The celebration culminates in a procession through town of a wagon train reenactment in what is known as the "Days of '47" parade. In a 1912 photograph of the "Days of '47" parade, the sun shines down through clear skies. The participants are dressed in nineteenth-century garb—including wide-brimmed hats or bonnets to protect from the sun—and sit atop reproductions of period wagons pulled by oxen and horses. The riders and trail master hold their heads high; there is not a weary looking soul among the bunch.

The purpose of this holiday is to celebrate the wider history of Utah settlement. The perfectly straight line of wagons on a smooth road with their spotlessly-clean riders was a far cry from what those 1847 settlers would have looked like as they walked, not rode, into the valley. It

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[92] Historian Steven L. Olson cataloged three main objectives that Pioneer Day in Utah provide specifically to the Mormon community; 1. They reveal Mormon ideas "about themselves as a religious and social group, 2. They "reinforced the nature and meaning of Mormon social organization and cohesion, and 3. They "create and preserve a strong consciousness of the Mormon past." See Steven L. Olson, "Celebrating Cultural Identity: Pioneer Day in Nineteenth Century Mormonism" *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996-97), 161.

is unlikely that any of them would have had horses pulling wagons, since horses were less common and far less hearty than oxen—the preferred beast of burden. Rarely would the wagon master have held a rifle over his shoulder as he walked along the head of the train. Settlers often wrote of having their weapons nearby in anticipation of Indian attacks at certain points along the trail, but the idea that rifles were carried while walking 10 or 20 miles through the desert for an entire day's travel is laughable. This display of armament is a symbolic display of settler violence and conquest of Native peoples rather than a historically accurate depiction of overland travel. Yet in 1912, the people of Salt Lake City who lined both sides of the avenue for as far as the eye could see did not seem to have cared less about these historical inaccuracies; indeed as much as they celebrated their forebears, they undoubtedly saw something of themselves, of their own history, in this event. An examination of this photograph through the lens of settler colonialism reveals that it is exactly in the distorted mythologies disseminated through settler discourse that people find meaning. While other reenactments focus on the hardships of the journey, the emphasis of this celebration for settler-descended Utahns was (and is) on the "winning" of the West—the celebration of settlement itself.

Mormons in Utah have a particularly specific form of overland trail reenactments built into their religious cultural ethos in the form of hand cart trekking. Beginning in 1849—two years after the Mormon settlement in Utah's Great Salt Lake region—Mormon pioneers began commemorating and reenacting the history of their 1847 emigration.[93] Over time, what began as reenactments of settlement by nineteenth century settlers themselves has developed into a living-history program for Mormon youth. In these (sometimes quite brief, other times significantly

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[93] Melvin Bashore explores the over 150 year history of these reenactments, including their contemporary significance as youth activities, in his article—including photographs from several eras of reenactment. See Melvin L. Bashore, "Handcart Trekking: From Commemorative Reenactment to Modern Phenomenon" *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (2018) Article 5, 1-31.

lengthy) performances young Mormon men and women guide a hand cart over a piece of ground that can be historically-associated with an original overland trail route, or a piece of ground that serves as an analog—complete with various obstacles. The history of Mormon handcart trekkers began as a strategy devised by Brigham Young to bring Mormon emigrants to the Great Salt Lake without the high costs, relatively speaking, with wagon outfits. This strategy also placed an emphasis on community and emigrants working closely together to survive.[94] This history is reflected in the modern hand trek reenactments as the stated purpose in these endeavors, according to informational pamphlets available from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints itself on the subject, is that "Treks provide powerful opportunities to strengthen testimonies, build unity, do family history, and learn core gospel principles Treks can also help youth learn about who they are and what they may become. Treks that focus on gospel principles that the pioneers exemplified will have lasting impressions on the youth." These principles include; faith, obedience, charity, sacrifice, and "preserving through adversity."[95] It is clear though, that in the historical context, these trek reenactments are mostly concerned with narrowly celebrating the lived experience of Mormons engaged in the act of handcart traveling—any larger historical context is forgotten. Other companies—to this day—offer more secular-focused reenactments. The American West Heritage Center in Wellsville, Utah, offers hand cart trek reenactments that promise "Most importantly, through the trek experience we witness the marvel of individual growth, the wonder of collective courage, as well as the development of

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[94] Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 52.

[95] https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/inspiration/activity-pioneer-treks?lang=eng, 1-2.

precious unity and acceptance within groups."[96] This object is obviously distilled from the more-religiously themed goals of the Mormon treks, but ultimately suffers the same historical limitations as those reenactments. These kind of reenactments had roots in an earlier tradition in which original settlers commemorated their mid-nineteenth century overland trail trips with memorial trips—often just as a form of recreation—but that also focused their celebrations on their own histories.

In the mid-twentieth century to more recent years, settler-descended adventurers have revised the tradition of publishing their narratives created during commemorative overland journeys to satisfy readers' nostalgic notions of travel during this 'simpler time.' In 1972, Gregory Franzwa published a modern guidebook for those who might wish to undertake their own overland journey along historic nineteenth-century routes. *The Oregon Trail Revisited* begins with a reflection on space exploration and contextualizes that with explorers of the past. George Hartzog Jr., then director for the National Park Service, wrote in the foreword that "In recent years we Americans have enjoyed the excitement of watching men conquer the thresholds of outer space. Through the magic of modern communication, we have witnessed the first human excursions to the moon." He continued "Perhaps because of these wonders, it is difficult to comprehend that just over a century ago Oregon and California seemed as remote as the moon does today. Americans once ventured to the western edge of the continent as they now do into space. But they did not merely pause and return. They stayed and populated the land" he concluded "and they helped to build America."[97] The comparison between traveling to the moon

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[96] See Author Unknown, "Willie Handcart Experience Pioneer Handcart Treks: HANDBOOK FOR TREK LEADERS," 10/21/2021, *American West Heritage Center*, https://www.awhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Willie-Handcart-Trek-Handbook-Revised-Oct.-2021.pdf, 4.

[97] Gregory M. Franzwa, *The Oregon Trail Revisited* (St. Louis, Mo.: Patrice Press, 1972), xvii.

in the twentieth century and Oregon in the nineteenth century gives me pause. That, only a few years after the U.S. landed humans on the surface of the moon, Hartzog's connecting of these ideas speaks to the extent to which an American settler-descended population conceptualized such a connection and the power of settler colonial ideology that imagines anything that exists is there for the taking. Perhaps a revision of this study—fifty years from now—might draw more direct comparisons as we see modern nation-states vying to settle the surface of the moon. (In fact, fifty years is likely grossly overstated for ambitions of settling the moon.) Through the entirety of the guidebook Franzwa references the Lewis and Clark and Frémont expeditions, reproduces text from well-known nineteenth-century trail guidebooks from Joel Palmer, Thomas Farnham, and Langford Hasting, as well as numerous settler narratives. Although nearly all of the ethnographic information about Indians comes from the historical sources he quotes, Franzwa does little to contextualize those settler voices from the past. As it stands, Franzwa's guidebook serves a similar purpose as guidebooks written over a hundred years before—to arm settlers (now tourists) with the knowledge they need to safely undertake this overland journey. The main difference, aside from the mode of travel (the author suggests a pick-up truck with four-wheel drive which is "as much a part of the American West as cowboy boots" he exclaims), is that this overland trail journey—the one a reader might undertake—would be solely for the purpose of entertainment and leisure, heavily laden with nostalgic notions of early pioneering.[98]

Nearly two decades after the publication of Franzawa's *The Oregon Trail Revisited,* William Hill published *The Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today*. The work is part popular history of the historic overland trail, and part guidebook for contemporary (to 1989) overlanders looking to undertake a commemorative journey of the trail for themselves—the latter based on the

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[98] Franzwa, *The Oregon Trail Revisited, 68.*

author's personal experiences. Most of the historical information in this text was contextualized through Unruh's work in *The Plains Across*, but also includes reproductions of Frémont's maps, portions of nineteenth century guidebooks, and excerpts from three settler diaries from the 1852-53 years. The two sections that showcase Hill's contribution to modern guidebooks are one that shows side-by-side comparisons of historical sketches of landmarks and sections of road alongside contemporary photographs of the same locations from the author's travels, and a lengthy section detailing museums and historical points of interest such as military fortifications or trading posts that twentieth-century travelers can visit.

While Hill's combination of historical narrative and guidebook is an updated version of guidebooks of the past, it remains a good example of the entrenchment of romance and nostalgia in popular works regarding the overland trail. At the beginning of the guide section, he tells the reader that "the rolling parries are almost gone, covered over with the trappings of civilization and burgeoning population growth, but with a little imagination, there are still a few places where they can be experienced." Continuing on, he states "as one gets further into some of the sections of western Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon, the trail can still be seen and experienced in its natural setting."[99] One can bicker with Hill's definition of "natural" in relation to existing portions of the trail as most have been altered in various ways either for the purposes of demarcation or preservation, or they exist on privately-held lands that are inaccessible, but this portion highlights the sense of settler nostalgia that is present in this work and Franzawa's *The Oregon Trail Revisited*. This settler nostalgia is more directly evident in what Hill has to say about Native people in relation to the overland trails. While Franzawa's guidebook included many references to Indians from his chosen historical sources, only one of Hill's three chosen

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[99] William E. Hill, *The Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1989), 4.

narratives briefly mention Indians. The 1853 narrative from Velina Williams in which she described some cattle stock that "stolen from herds passing through the country by the Indians and turned over for goods to the traders" whom she says "were usually French Canadians, with Indian wives and half-breed families" who were "consequently on good terms with the Indians."[100] Hill does not discuss how or why he chose these three narratives to excerpt in his work, but after reading hundreds of overland settler narratives, the brief mention of Native people in just one of those narratives does not seem representative of the patterns I have studied. This choice, the exclusion of dealing with even historical commentary on Indians with any depth, is indicative of Hill's treatment of the issue in his guidebook. In the same early section where he romanticized the remaining parts of the trail that remain in a "natural" state, Hill provided his only commentary on Native people. "As for the Indians," he wrote, "they, too, have been driven from most of the lands they first inhabited. Fortunately, there has been a resurgence of interest in their native culture. By timing your trip right, you can visit nearby reservations and attend some of their celebrations."[101] Hill's exclusion of who drove people from their ancestral lands coupled with a romanticized sense that the resurgence in "their native culture" negates Native land loss and active campaigns to erase that very same culture—culminating with an advertisement for settler-descended Americans to go visit a reservation as an entertainment spectacle—represents a most degraded approach to guide modern Americans in navigating cross-cultural relations with modern Native peoples.

In 2015, American adventure and travel author Rinker Buck published *The Oregon Trail: A New American Journey*. The journey at the heart of this story is one that Rinker and his brother

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[100] Hill, *The Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today*, 55.

[101] Hill, *The Oregon Trail: Yesterday and Today*, 3-4.

Nick undertook in 2011 in which they traversed as much of the remaining Oregon Trail roads as possible from Missouri to Oregon in a reproduction nineteenth-century covered wagon. The narrative, a healthy mix of humor, adventure, and history, won considerable praise upon publication and, for a very brief moment, reinvigorated interest in the overland trail migrations of the mid-nineteenth century.[102] Rinker's trail narrative appears to have been informed by similar processes as his other notable published works, a desire to see if he and his brother were up to the challenge, but also informed by a sense of nostalgia for difficult travel adventures they undertook with their father when they were young boys. As Rinker wrote midway through the narrative, "An apparition was riding with me across the trail. At critical moments of the trip I was flooded with memories of my father, and reflexive comparisons of our adventure now and our covered wagon trip to Pennsylvania in 1958."[103] The personal connections between themselves and their larger family helped contemporary readers connect to the brothers' contemporary tale of overland trail reenacting. However, *The Oregon Tail*—number one New York Times bestseller, according to the book's cover—invokes nostalgic sentimentality that goes beyond the author's familial ties. The work is not remarkable because of what it *is*, but more so because of *when* it was made. To Americans at large, and particularly in the Western region, people still like to see themselves reflected in a mythologized pioneer identity. *The Oregon Trail: A New American Journey* is just the latest example to reach wide readership.

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[102] In one interview with the author, he focused on the connection readers were making to his story around the idea of returning to simpler times. He ended the interview by stating "And believe me, America, just take that smartphone and throw it in a river. You don't need it." See National Public Radio, "2 Brothers And A Team Of Mules Tackle The Historic Oregon Trail," June 28, 2015. https://www.npr.org/2015/06/28/418211092/2-brothers-and-a-team-of-mules-tackle-the-historic-oregon-trail.

[103] Rinker Buck, *The Oregon Trail: A New American Journey* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 191.

Perhaps nothing solidified certain pioneer mythologies in the cultural sphere than the physical monuments erected to remember, at first, the overland trail journeys and then, later, the pioneers themselves. In the decades after the mid-century overland trail migrations, individual settlers, their descendants, and settler societies began to mark certain specific locations of trail routes with plaques and historical markers. Sometimes these monuments marked an otherwise invisible grave site, and in others, points of particular interest to settlers such as landmarks or easily missed portions of former overland trail roads. By the early twentieth century, though, these monuments had become larger and often depicted either individual settlers, or, as was the case on the campus of the University of Oregon, monuments depicting a general settler—an anonymous individual who captured the spirit of pioneering.[104] These physical monuments of settler colonialism, often containing subtexts of white supremacy, marked the land in the part followed by settlers from East to West and remain physical manifestations to settler memory.

Historians Lisa Blee and Jean O'Brien, in their work on reconstructions of memory and monuments of the Native man Massasoit, argued that "monuments to settler colonialism ought to be part of the conversation about the place and meaning of historical monuments in general."[105] This work was written amidst the "controversies" surrounding American reckoning with tearing down monuments to the Confederacy—mostly in the South—which had become hot-button political and cultural issues. Certainly, these statues that were overwhelmingly erected during the twentieth century by Pioneer organizations (and during the same period of time in which

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[104] Marc Carpenter researched the history of the Pioneer statue on the University of Oregon campus and produced a report to the university suggesting its removal on the grounds that the financial benefactors and sculptor of the statue had intentions that this monument held white supremacist ideological significances. See Marc James Carpenter, Report on "Reconsidering The Pioneer, One Hundred Years Later," https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/OH/Documents/Fellow2019MarcCarpenterReconsideringThe%20Pioneer.pdf, 2-7.

[105] Lisa Blee and Jean M. O'Brien, *Monumental Mobility: The Memory Work of Massasoit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 5.

organizations such as the Daughters of the Confederacy were erecting public monuments to the Confederacy) represent the ongoing work of settler colonialism and the persistent reimagining of settler memory well-past the time of Western settlement. Historian Cynthia Culver Prescott, in her work *Pioneer Mother Monuments*, documents the history of early so-called "Pioneer Mother" monuments that were erected in the late nineteenth century (for example, in San Francisco), and then the "remarkably similar statues of white women in sunbonnets striding westward" which "appeared throughout the United States in the 1920s and 1930s."[106] Prescott's work details American's connections to, and susceptibility to believing in, the "myths of American exceptionalism and individualism enshrined in these pioneer monuments."[107] This mirrors the use, throughout this study, of what I refer to as "pioneer mythology" and the monuments that Prescott tracks—over 185 of them, spread across the United States—is a grand example of how the work of settler colonialism in the form of the "mythical frontier narrative" is "literally enshrined across U.S. towns and highways" in the present.[108]

On the Road Again: Settler Discourse in Early Automobile Narratives, 1900-1970

After the onset of the twentieth century, a new technology emerged that promised the individualism and autonomy of a horse or wagon with the modernity of mechanical engines: the gas-powered automobile. While the initial costs of owning early automobiles were great, those costs quickly were leveled into a range where the machines gained a foothold in American

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[106] Cynthia Culver Prescott, *Pioneer Mother Monuments: Constructing Cultural Memory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 4.

[107] Prescott, *Pioneer Mother Monuments*, 5.

[108] Prescott, *Pioneer Mother Monuments*, 5.

markets during the interwar period.[109] Even so, early adopters of automobile travel often saw the technology as one linked to tourism—an extension of tourism programs promoted by railroads beginning a generation earlier. Early westing by auto occurred amidst a backdrop of nostalgia for the mid-century overland migrations. In the late nineteenth century original overlanders produced memoirs, or "Reminiscences," which remained popular until well into the twentieth century. These narratives, separated from the travels they described by decades, often characterized the worst anti-Indian rhetoric found within settler discourse. During the same period, Wild West Shows, such as those made famous by Buffalo Bill, disseminated their own brand of settler discourse that skewed historical relationships between settlers and Indians and took those messages on tour across the U.S. and abroad. It was in the shadow of these narratives, reminiscences often published in serial format in local newspapers, and wild west shows spreading settler discourse all across the country, that early automotive western journeys dwelt.

While the settler vision of Indian disappearance at the close of the nineteenth century was not realized, due in large part to resilience of Native people themselves, Indians continued to loom large in auto-tourist accounts of travel in the West. The writers of these narratives were less-so the settlers of generations before them who had, either passively or actively, worked within political and legal frameworks to displace Native people from their lands. Like early railroad riders, travelers in the twentieth century were beneficiaries of a settler project that had at the very least effectively confined Native people to the point that travelers could ignore them, or know exactly where to seek them out. Indians were everywhere—and nowhere—and sometimes they were both in early auto touring narratives that continued to reproduce settler discourse about Indians from a space that was increasingly reserved exclusively for a settler society.

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[109] John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 101, 146-7.

Many early auto tourists were quite aware of the legacy of nineteenth-century overland settlers and saw themselves deeply connected to them. Frederick Van de Water's 1926 cross-country auto tour was awash with pioneering nostalgia and began with the family forming a "company," led by a "Commodore" and with a designated "Engineer" who drove their Ford from New York to San Francisco. The company named their vehicle—in an obvious reference to nineteenth-century overland conveyances—"The Uncovered Wagon."[110] The family's narrative was rife with terms that echoed pioneering mythologies and notions of early overland emigration, referring to themselves as native Americans (small "n",) and motor or automobile emigrants. That the family saw early American pioneers and settlers in themselves was apparent, not only in the terms they used to refer to themselves, but particularly in the following passage:

> The tan stretches of sand, the dusky patches of sage, the false frost of alkali through which the rejuvenated trails lead have not changed. Long miles of prairie still lie as bare, as untamed as when the first covered wagons lurched across them. Rubber tires now stir the dust through which the ox teams plodded. We saw the land the emigrants trekked across. We felt the heat that blistered them. Pounding along at twenty-five miles an hour, we looked out through dust on the dry desolation that they crossed.[111]

While the family may have seen themselves as modern iterations of the original pioneers, they stopped short of assuming theirs was an exactly shared experience when it came to one important issue. "We, too, smelled the aromative [sic] scent of the sage. We saw the mirage spread on the road ahead its pool of blue water that soaked away into white alkali, but privation, pangs of thirst, dread of Indians were not ours."[112] Van de Water's auto narrative is one that illustrates the entrenchment of pioneering nostalgia that marked many of similar narratives penned by early auto tourists.

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[110] Frederic F. Van de Water, *The Family Flivvers to Frisco* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1927), 21.

[111] Van de Water, *The Family Flivvers to Frisco*, 171-72.

[112] Van de Water, *The Family Flivvers to Frisco*, 172.

Other narratives were more overt in their connection to the overland settler migrations and expeditions of exploration from the nineteenth century. John Faris' 1930 narrative, *Roaming the Rockies*, begins by quoting famed nineteenth-century mining engineer and philanthropist John Hays Hammond in his introduction to the West: "Buffalo Bill and his contemporaries brought law and order into that great territory which once swarmed with Indians and 'bad men'."[113] The sections of his narrative that are focused on travel routes continuously referenced nineteenth-century expeditions of explorations—particularly from his numerous mentions of Lewis and Clark, and, to a lesser extent, John C. Frémont.[114] Most notably in this narrative, Faris goes on to provide quasi-ethnographic sections on the historic inhabitants of the West of whom Buffalo Bill supposedly tamed. In particular, Faris framed much of his self-professed knowledge of Indians through a lens of ethnocultural superiority and imposed notions of superstition onto Native people and their spiritual beliefs. When discussing Yellowstone National Park, he wrote that "Not only was the original of the Cody Road an Indian trail, but more of the routes now followed in the Park were known to the Indians. To many of them, however, the park region was unknown territory. They spoke of the country as 'The Burning Mountains.' Some gave it a wide berth because of superstitious fear."[115] Then, when discussing the scouting of a pass near Glacier Park in Montana, Faris wrote of the Blackfeet, that "This was their [the Blackfeet] chosen playground, especially by day; at night they preferred to be on the plains where they were not affrighted by strange sounds that they thought were made by evil spirits that sought their

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[113] John T. Faris, *Roaming the Rockies: Through National Parks and National Forests of the Rocky Mountain Wonderland* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1930), 5.

[114] Most of his mentions of Lewis and Clark are in the context of overlaps between his routes and theirs—pointing out specific spots in which the Corps of Discovery made camp. See Faris, *Roaming the Rockies*, 11, 45-6.

[115] Faris, *Roaming the Rockies*, 10.

undoing."[116] He continued on, stating that "The Blackfeet knew of such a pass, but superstitious fears made them unwilling to guide a party there."[117] There is not evidence to suggest that any superstition kept the Blackfeet from intimately being familiar with lands they occupied, but a larger issue with Faris' suppositions about Native people's superstitions was that he framed most of his discussions about Native people in this way. Additionally, what Faris attributes to superstitions among the Blackfeet is exemplative of a larger issue of framing Native religious or spiritual beliefs as "superstitions" which worked to delegitimatize cultural significances of Native groups all over North America.[118] Coupled with the propensity of celebrating settler mythologies in his narrative and a general lack of any qualifications which would lead him to make these assertions, Faris appears to be an unreliable narrator on the nature of Native people in the West. However, the connections to dubious settler discourses from the past continue throughout his narrative. In one particular section, Faris wrestles with Indians adapting to modern capitalist strategies and what he believes to be inherent notions of Indian-ness:

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[116] Faris, *Roaming the Rockies*, 50-51.

[117] Faris, *Roaming the Rockies*, 53.

[118] Blackfeet author and Historian Rosalyn LaPier details an exchange from the early twentieth century where a clergyman "complained that the federal government did not stop the Blackfeet from 'publicly parad[ing] their devilish idolatry and superstition for the admiration and amusement of a large audience of white people'." The context here was Blackfeet tribal members performing for white tourist audiences on the reservation while the white, Christian, Father Carroll describes Blackfeet spiritual practices as "superstitious." In this way, any Native person from any time or place in American history could have been described as being "superstitious" simply because they held spiritual or religious beliefs outside of Christianity (itself a religion entrenched in superstitious belief). See Rosalyn R. LaPier, *Invisible Reality: Storytellers, Storytakers, and the Supernatural World of the Blackfeet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 52. Additionally, historian Sherry L. Smith details the work of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century photographer Walter McClintock and his experiences among the Blackfeet. Smith argues that McClintock "treated their [Blackfeet] religion with respect and care, even attempting to legitimize Indian religion by drawing comparisons to Christianity." However, Smith uses this example to illustrate a larger issue; early American ethnographers and anthropologists framed Native cultural and spiritual beliefs comparatively with EuroAmerican religious beliefs which ultimately shaped their analysis of Native spirituality. See Sherry L. Smith, *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans Through Anglo Eyes, 1880-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 80, 11-17. In both of these examples, the problem of EuroAmerican spiritual and cultural beliefs influencing their (outsider) views of Blackfeet beliefs is readily apparent.

> When travelers pass—somehow the Indian seems to know the difference between a tourist automobile and that of a native—the inevitable sellers of pottery are in evidence. Yet there is a difference in this region; instead of rushing up when it is known that prospective buyers will pause, the Indians build booths of piñon branches by the roadside and sit placidly from morning until night.

Faris finishes this passage by wondering "Are these roadside merchants keener than their brothers in other places, or are they lazier?"[119]

Irene Paden's 1943 overland auto touring narrative, *The Wake of the Prairie Schooner*, is another of many that invokes the century-old type of wagon that was emblematic of the nineteenth century settler migrations. This narrative also replicates the form and function of trail guidebooks at the centennial mark of the beginning of those earlier narratives. This includes moments where she reproduces, almost verbatim, what was said of Indians in those nineteenth-century overland narratives. Paden goes about her narrative by stating as fact about Native people the very things emigrants during the nineteenth century wrote about them. She refers to the "unbiased accounts of dozens of emigrants who encountered them [the Indians]."[120] In one section she asserts notions of Kanza culture, describing different modes of dress for Kanza men and women, but ultimately her narrative upholds old tropes about Native people in the West. "When white men," she wrote, "camped near them [the Kanza] the amiable aborigines arrived early and stayed late. The travelers," she continued, "could have borne up better under these social calls if they red brothers had not been extremely filthy and crawling with vermin."[121] Continuing her use of emigrants as unbiased observants, she commented on essentialist notions of what settlers considered to be inherent traits of Indians, stating "their natures ran the gamut of

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[119] Faris, *Roaming the Rockies*, 190.

[120] Irene D. Paden, *The Wake of the Prairie Schooner* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), 40.

[121] Paden, *The Wake of the Prairie Schooner*, 40.

human characteristics, from the arrogant Sioux to the animal-like root digger of Nevada."[122] Paden's failure (intentional or not) to contextualize outright anti-Indian racism of the nineteenth-century places her contribution to settler discourse squarely in-line with other forms of anti-Indian rhetoric at the time, deeply entrenched in a nostalgia that assumed veracity in settler's narratives while positing with authority essentialist notions of Indian people for the sake of pleasure seekers—relegating Native people to tourist curios.

Many of the auto tourism narratives from the first half of the twentieth century used the inclusion of Native people in this way—as a spectacle to see, another roadside attraction—while adhering to formulaic patterns styled after earlier overland guidebooks and racist depictions of Native people and cultures. Ivan Woolley began his narrative of a journey that took place in the first decade of the twentieth century, but may have been written as far later as the 1940s, with a history lesson of the Barlow Road which connects The Dalles in Oregon, hugging up close to the base of Mount Hood, to Oregon City. Frequently in his trip along the Barlow Road, Woolley discussed Indians in ways that echoed those from the mid-nineteenth century who established said passage. At one point he writes of an incident in which a motoring tourist wanted to take a picture of a resident of the Warm Springs Reservation who had come to the road to pick berries, a seasonal practice that pre-dated the Barlow Road. The subject of the photo, a young Native man, declined and when the tourist leaned out of a moving car window to try and get a picture anyways "but before he could get his eye focused on the finder a young buck slapped the camera out of his hand. He retrieved it from the dust with little damage but no picture."[123] This incident,

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[122] Paden, *The Wake of the Prairie Schooner*, 40.

[123] Ivan M. Woolley, *Off to Mt. Hood: An Autobiography of the Old Road*. (Eugene: Oregon Historical Society, 1959), 25-26.

one of many in Woolley's narrative, demonstrates how much so-called "Indians" were an attraction for early auto tourists.

Finally, some motorist narratives were much more bold and literal in their reproduction of settler discourse that echoed the worst of nineteenth-century anti-Indian rhetoric. Winifred Dixon was so excited about the adventures that awaited her in the Southwest that she remarked on having been supplied with a map of all Indian reservations by the AAA. However, Dixon's experience, as relayed in her 1920 narrative, *Western Hoboes*, was one that could have easily been produced 80 years before. She wrote, of the Pueblo Indians that her party had heard they "differed from other Indians, being gentler and more peaceably inclined than the Northern races. We were not such tenderfeet as to fear violence, scalping, or sudden war-whoops from ochre-smeared savages" and went on to state that this put her in a state that was "a little expectant, a little keyed to apprehension."[124] Here, Dixon's fears appear to be making light of settler anxieties about Indians during the nineteenth century, yet, in her jest, she invokes the same tired rhetoric of the violent, savage, and inherently cruel nature of Native people. The joke is not that settlers felt fear, the joke is that Dixon doesn't *have to* as the landscape that she traveled had either cleared or contained Native people. Readers today cannot know Dixon's intentions in her jests, but whatever the reasoning behind such joviality did not interfere with her disparaging Indians and Mexicans in her narrative. As she traveled away from the more rural pueblos to urban areas in New Mexico, she described the demographics as such: "New Mexico, it must be remembered, is more Indian and Mexican than American by a proportion of three to one, and includes a sprinkling of negro and Chinese. The Indian lends a touch of the primitive; the Mexican brings

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[124] Winifred Hawkridge Dixon, *Westward Hoboes: Ups and Downs of Frontier Motoring* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 150.

Spain into the picture."[125] She went on to describe Mexicans as "gregarious" and "like their occupations, their recreations are primitive. They have their own dances, where the men sit on one side of the room and the girls, giggling and shoving, at the other, until some bold swain sets the ball rolling. Then it does not cease to roll, fast and furious, till morning, often ending in some tragic fray, where a knife flashes."[126] Lest the reader not understand the degree to which she detests so-called "Mexicans" in New Mexico, the caption under a photograph of a man wearing a wide-brimmed hat and serape, one foot kicked back against the wall of an adobe structure, his face turned to the camera as though the photographer had surprised him, reads "Against a shady wall, all bit too lazy to light the inevitable cigarette, slouches, wherever one turns, a Mexican."[127] Dixon's narrative features racist sentiments against Native and Mexican-descended peoples that rival those of the pioneers she laments.

While most of the early auto narratives examined here reproduce some form of earlier settler discourses—either in their engagement with settler nostalgia or outright reproducing racist sentiments about Native people or other people of color—at least one auto tour account provided room for growth on how its author viewed Native people. Zephine Humphrey's 1936 travel narrative, *Green Mountains to Sierras*, begins with the author reproducing pioneer mythology but transitions quickly to her seemingly honest (or, at least, consistent) reflections on historical injustices against the Native people she encounters and discusses in her account. *Green Mountains to Sierras* begins with nostalgic notions of pioneering as Humphrey writes, "Perhaps, without knowing it, we were from the beginning caught by a wave of the pioneer spirit forever

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[125] Dixon, *Westward Hoboes*, 164.

[126] Dixon, *Westward Hoboes*, 164-5.

[127] Dixon, *Westward Hoboes*, 164.

washing from East to West."[128] At one point, her nostalgia echoes with a well-known piece of uniquely Western literature. As her company were caught up in an opening ceremony for a new airport in Oklahoma, she described how the 'pageant' "illustrated the entire history of locomotion in Oklahoma. "First came the Indian on foot," she wrote, "dragging a primitive sled; then an Indian on a pony. After him, a covered wagon drawn by rangy mules; and, following that, a bigger and better wagon drawn by horses" until the march of progress reached the dawn of the automobile." She went on, stating "Then came the quaint old Ford, an original first model, a real museum piece. Then other cars, growing gradually more modern."[129] This description of a destined forward progression of technology that stands in for American modernism echoes Frederick Jackson Turner's language in his frontier thesis, in which "The buffalo trail became the Indian trail, and this because the trader's "trace;" the trails widened into roads, and the roads into turnpikes, and these in turn were transformed into railroads."[130]

But early on in the narrative, that settler nostalgia became conflicted with the author's realizations that the historical truths of Native people in North America were more complicated than she had realized. Early on, while near the Catskills in New York, she exclaimed "The Indians must have loved it. The Indians! Here in New York, as we loitered along the Susquehanna, I began to catch vanishing glimpses of elusive tawny figures and to feel a noble national background opening deep, deep into the past. There was something mystic about the experience," she continued, "something never conveyed by the books I had read and the talks I had heard on the wrongs of the Indians."[131] Here the reader sees Humphrey wrestling with

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[128] Zephine Humphrey, *Green Mountains to Sierras* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., INC., 1936), 18.

[129] Humphrey, *Green Mountains to Sierras*, 59.

[130] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: H. Holt, 1921), 14.

[131] Humphrey, *Green Mountains to Sierras*, 20.

tensions between her own nostalgic notions of Native people and American landscapes and the history that divorced those people from said landscapes. After visiting Albuquerque, New Mexico, she commented that Indians were "the only true Americans."[132] In Santa Barbara, California, after reading accounts of Native people at the missions, she wrote that "European history seemed stale and sordid. It had a musty smell" and that "Feeling as I now did about Indian culture, I winced and burned at the revelations of high-handed spoilation [sic] on the part of the white man. Treachery too and cruelty."[133] That she refers to the treachery and cruelty of the "white man" while some of her contemporaries, and certainly a good number of her former countrymen, used those same words too often in defining the character of all Native people was a profound moment in this body of discourse. This instance also reverberates with the romantic sentimentality that defines Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* and the powerful draw the novel had on tourists coming to visit the mission in Santa Barbara.[134] Even Humphrey's transformative "epiphany" after reading about Indians at the mission echoes the national effects of *Ramona*. Historians Damon B. Atkins and William J. Bauer, Jr., wrote of *Ramona* that "the novel's popularity brought national attention to the condition of Mission Indians, but it did so by popularizing powerful and inaccurately idyllic images of Spanish and Mexican California as a counterpoint to the harshness of the American era."[135] This analysis of the cultural impact of

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[132] Humphrey, *Green Mountains to Sierras*, 86.

[133] Humphrey, *Green Mountains to Sierras*, 120.

[134] While Humphrey's narrative does not mention the novel *Ramona* by name, cultural historian and geographer Lydia DeLyser discusses the popularity of *Ramona* at the time that Humphrey toured to California, and the use of imagery and themes within the novel to promote tourism to Santa Barbara during that time. See Dydia DeLyser, *Ramona Memories: Tourism and the Shaping of Southern California* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), x-xiii.

[135] Damon B. Akins and William J. Bauer Jr., *We Are the Land: A History of Native California* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 176.

Ramona seems to be reflected particularly clearly in Humphrey's narrative. Despite the credit that Humphrey deserves for setting herself apart from the throngs of early-twentieth century settler-descended Americans who made no effort to grapple with the realities of government and settler-inflicted harm on Native communities and cultures, her early articulation is one that is exemplary of contemporary settler moves to innocence and settler fragility.[136]

As Americans embraced the automobile and settler tourism, they did so increasingly in vehicles that were named after infamous Native leaders, political groups, or Indian associations.[137] Indian Motorcycles, referred to as "America's Pioneer Motorcycle, were first developed and sold in the United States in 1900.[138] According to Darwin Holmstron, author of dozens of popular histories of various motorcycle and automobile works, the company name "Indian" was chosen amidst a cultural atmosphere influenced in the late-nineteenth century—particularly by Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows.[139] Early in the company's history, they specialized in racing bikes whose model names signified technical aspects of the motorcycles (for example, the first two models, more motorized bicycles than motorcycles, were named the "single" or "twin" after their engine specifications.) By the 1920s the models were designed

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[136] In particular, two forms of settler fragility as examples of settler moves to innocence associated with liberal-leaning political and personal identities include these forms: 1. "Even though the Indians didn't deserve what we did to them, the damage is done and there is nothing we can do to right the wrongs that have been done to them" (We should all move on and forget the past, and Indians should get beyond their victimization) and 2. "We are all one people now" (The settler state and all its attendant privileges must prevail). See Dina Gilio-Whitaker, "Settler Fragility: Why Settler Privilege Is So Hard to Talk About," (2018). https://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2018/11/settler-fragility-why-settler-privilege-is-so-hard-to-talk-about.html.

[137] There is also a considerable historical pattern of civilian and military aviation craft named after North American indigenous groups.

[138] Tod Rafferty, *The Indian: The History of a Classic American Motorcycle* (New York: Quadrillion Publishing, 1998), 6.

[139] Darwin Holmstrom, *Indian Motorcycle: America's First Motorcycle Company* (Beverly, MA: Quatro Publishing, 2016), 17.

more as daily riding or touring motorcycles and took on names that were often associated with settler ideas about Indians. The “Scout,” “Chief,” and “Big Chief” models were introduced in 1923 and remained the flagship models of the brand until the company’s closure in the early twenty-first century.[140] In 1949 the “Arrow” model was added to the lineup of vehicles.[141] Finally, the in 1950s, two last models were added that bore Indian-associated names; the “Brave” model was released in 1953, followed by the “Apache” in 1957.[142] These models, all produced under the company name of Indian, lent associations—real or imagined—to Native people that were not as prevalent as, say, the American Motor Company’s Ford Bronco clone, the AMC “Scout.” Here putting the manufacturer before the model makes these associations clear: The “Indian Scout,” the “Indian Chief,” the “Indian Arrow,” the “Indian Brave.”

Automobile manufacturers utilized similar naming strategies. The Pontiac division of General Motors were examples from the early twentieth century while more names entered into the canon of vehicle names in mid century; the Ford “Thunderbird" and Pontiac’s line of “Chieftain,” “Star Chief,” and “Super Chief” autos flooded American markets. These traditions continued well into the late-twentieth century with the Jeep “Cherokee,” “Grand Cherokee,” and “Comanche” models. In the mid-twentieth century, American Motors Company acquired Jeep and began the company’s foray into Indian-themed automobiles. While traditional Jeeps had been known under models such as the CJ-5 and CJ-6, or the Jeep “Willys” made famous throughout the second World War and the Korean War, 1974 saw the introduction of the Jeep

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[140] Rafferty, *The Indian*, 42,46,48.

[141] Rafferty, *The Indian*, 100.

[142] Rafferty, *The Indian*, 134.

"Cherokee."[143] The "Cherokee" body frame was also introduced in an upgraded "Wagoner" option, and in 1975 the platform was tuned into a pickup truck sold under the "Pioneer" model.[144] In 1986, the "Wagoner" also offered a pickup offshoot model named the Jeep "Comanche," which was an improvement on the smaller 1970s AMC "Cowboy" pickup.[145] Apparently, Jeep was keen under AMC to play both Cowboys *and* Indians. These references were, of course, steeped in mythological "nobility" of Native people rather than savagery and violence. However, they also exemplify that Indian history at the end of the nineteenth century, as far as settlers were concerned, was also up for grabs and settlers did with it what they wished —whatever served their purposes. However, the use of Native associations with motorcycles and automobiles as not confined strictly to brand or model names; American vehicle manufacturers used Native associations in marketing their products to American consumers. Even non-Indian themed vehicles were marketed using Indian imagery. One advertisement for the 1956 Ford station wagon included the pun "Why Ford tops the 'tote-'em' Poll!" in its battle versus station wagons made by Chevrolet to indicated to customers which car could haul the most folks.[146] In 1958, De Soto Motors, in their advertising highlighting the carrying capacity of station wagons, shows a white nuclear family unit including a Mother and Father, five children, and an all-white poodle. Two of the young boys are dressed as Indians with headdresses and what looks to be an all-white buckskin garment, pointing guns at one another. The ad copy reads "Room for the whole darn tribe!" The descriptive text under the photographs states that "there's heap plenty

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[143] Marc Cranswick, *The Cars of American Motors: An Illustrated History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2012), 242.

[144] Cranswick, *The Cars of American Motors*, 243.

[145] Cranswick, *The Cars of American Motors*, 289-90, 146.

[146] Heon Stevenson, *American Automobile Advertising, 1930-1980: An Illustrated History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008), 204.

room in a new De Soto wagon—room for a tribe or a teepee! And look how much more De Soto gives you for your wampum!" Again, in the mid-twentieth century, a settler-descended population took whatever parts of history and used it for its own gains. Within the context of the text throughout this De Soto advertisement, it is difficult to not see the the final statement—"Without reservation, a De Soto is your best station wagon buy"—as anything other than an intentional mockery of the confinement of Native Americans to reservations while coyly showing a white suburban family playing Indian in their new De Soto wagon.[147]

Conclusion

At the close of the nineteenth century, non-Native Americans had become convinced of two particular ideas: that Native people were imminently due to disappear, and, that along with them the availability of open and free land meant the demise of the American frontier as well.[148] Neither of those things happened. Native people continued to exist despite the best efforts of competing colonial powers and then the United States government and elements of its citizenry, the "logic of elimination" which could have manifest the "vanishing Indian" trope of the late-nineteenth century was never fully realized. As for the frontier—as much as one can measure the physical decline of something that was imaginary to begin with—if it is synonymous with expanding our national boundaries we can view the expansion of U.S. imperialism of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an extension of the frontier. If, however, it is synonymous with available land how do we negotiate the fact that the last of the Homestead Acts

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[147] Stevenson, *American Automobile Advertising*, 205.

[148] As explored earlier in this chapter, Brian Dippie explores the first notion in *The Vanishing American*. See Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 10-11. Frederick Jackson Turner, in "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," argued the second point. See Turner, *The Frontier in American History,* 22-4.

was in effect until 1986?[149] In a harmonious settler habitus there could not be savage Indians and brave pioneers inhabiting "empty" lands. There could not be a closing frontier while the Government enacted imperialist ventures to gain new land or continuously-available lands through the Homestead Acts until well into the twentieth century. Settler memory helps settler societies to smooth over all of these jagged obstacles to logical inconsistencies in an actual accounting of settler history in which Indian lands were only empty due to eviction and warfare. Anxieties about the closing of the frontier were the product of a settler society that had built its worth around the idea of an open frontier—a version of the "white problem" discussed earlier.

The anti-Indian rhetoric spread in settler discourse in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries continued similar patterns in its hostility towards Native North America that had been present in discourse since the late-sixteenth century. The difference was that while political, cultural, and demography shifts in North America had fundamentally changed and shifted in favor of white American settler colonists at the close of the nineteenth century, the rhetoric had not changed to meet that reality. Indians were still the boogeyman in the minds of settlers and their descendants—blamed for the ills of white America—yet in real and practical terms Native people were facing dramatically reduced populations due to generations of disease and genocidal warfare, political and cultural losses due to assimilation programs, and land loss due to the reservation systems and forced removals. The end of the century rhetoric also set the tone for the century to come—one in which technological advancements made the spread of settler discourse—like the print and penny press revolutions bore—expand on a scale unimaginable to early Americans.

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[149] "Homesteading by the Numbers," nps.gov https://www.nps.gov/home/learn/historyculture/bynumbers.htm (accessed December 6, 2018).

At the onset of the twentieth century, settler memory exemplified a settler nostalgia-laden America in which Native people were remembered only as the savages they were imagined to be. There was a softening of historical violence conducted by settlers and reframed to be placed solely on the shoulders of Indians—Indians mysteriously vanished because they were too savage to be civilized. Throughout the first decades of the twentieth-century there was a revitalization of settler discourse framing Indians as violent savages—particularly in popular culture which had become a vehicle to reproduce cultural anxieties from previous centuries in a way that distanced the settler from the messaging. At the same time, non-Native Americans treated Indian history, like the land itself that settlers had stolen, as fair game for settler memory to reconstruct. Depictions of the Noble Indian, the softened, sanitized and nostalgic view of Indians, gained popularity and tracked directly alongside depictions of the violent savage.

Chapter Five: "John Wayne's Teeth:" The Reproduction of Settler Discourse in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Popular Culture, 1900-2020

"No, a human rides a horse until it dies, then he goes on afoot. A Comanche comes along, gets that horse up, rides him 20 more miles... and then he eats him."[1]
- Ethan Edwards, *The Searchers*, 1956

"Well, sir, your Apache rides a horse to death and eats him and steals another. I mean the horse is just mobile food. I've chased them when they made fifty miles a day on horse and foot. And hell, they can live on cactus, go forty-eight hours without water. I mean one week of that would kill your average trooper."[2]
- Al Sieber, *Geronimo: An American Legend*, 1993

For over four hundred years, foreign invaders have reproduced narratives that denigrated Native people in North America to justify a seemingly never-ending series of settler desires. Liberty, autonomy, economic prosperity, land, and power—the list of needs, wants, and desires, of a settler society seems limitless. While some forms of settler narratives examined earlier in this work were considered popular culture—particularly Indian captivity narratives—the popular culture that was produced in the last decades of the nineteenth century (fueled by improved literacy rates and new technologies that allowed for cheaper printing of written works) reached far larger audiences that at any other point in American history. As popular culture was increasingly commodified in the twentieth century, the reach of settler discourses within media continued to grow. "Popular culture" is a nebulous term—it encompasses a vast network of intertwining media, messages, and mythologies, each with their own complex histories that are beyond the scope of any one work to fully explore. This cannot be, and by all means is not, a definitive history of popular culture. Recognizing that, this chapter is an exploration within this

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[1] John Ford, dir. *The Searchers (*1956; New York, NY: C.V. Whitney Pictures, 1956. MP4 Video, 1080p HD.)

[2] Walter Hill, dir. *Geronimo, An American Legend* (1993; Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1993. MP4 Video, 1080p HD.)

broad cultural production of media—it will pick and choose from corners of popular culture both familiar and seemingly dark. Ultimately the history of settler discourses in popular culture leads to a focus on film due to its ability to spread discourses far and wide in ways that published fiction does not seem to be able to achieve in the twenty-first century. Yes, the movies retold the same lies to audiences that other forms of popular culture—other forms of settler discourse—had created and spread—but they made the lies bigger. It is still happening.

Popular culture media from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries followed specific patterns depicting Native Americans. These patterns remained fairly consistent in their engagement with anti-Indian rhetoric across generations—despite continuous changing political and cultural conditions—leading up to a re-envisioned historical memory at the onset of the twentieth century that was steeped in mythologies of rugged individualism (the pioneer myth) and Indian declension.[3] The so-called "Indian Problem" was left, in the psyche of white America,

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[3] Historian Richard White critiqued this over-arcing settler narrative; he stated "The notion that the West was something we settled, rather than conquered, pervades American storytelling and iconography." See Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," in *The Frontier in American Culture*, James R. Grossman, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1-2. Film and Media Studies scholar Alexandra Keller commented on the role of popular culture—specifically Western genre film—has been present in the myth-making of the West. Keller explored the "variety of ways that contemporary Westerns construct historical discourses," and, she wrote, "constructions that occur even when the film claims merely to entertain, and constructions that veer from the historical 'truth,' even when the film claims to be getting at such veracity." See Alexandra Keller, "Historical Discourse and American Identity in Westerns since the Reagan Era," in *Hollywood's West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History*, Peter C. Collins and John E. O'Connor, eds. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2005), 239. Finally, Historian Carter Jones Meyer and literary scholar Diana Royer examined the ways in which a "highly corrosive process known in academic circles as cultural imperialism" undermines Native cultures as "non-natives, enamored of the perceived strengths of native cultures, have appropriated and distorted elements of these cultures for their own purposes, more often than not ignoring the impact of the process on the Indians themselves." The authors go on to quote an interview with Native singer, songwriter, and artist activist Margo Thunderbird on how this process of cultural imperialism acts through the production of popular culture as well. Thunderbird said "They came for our land, for what we grew or could be grown on it, for the resources in it"—including cultural resources—"they stole these things from us," she said, "and in the taking they also stole our free ways and the best of our leaders…And now, after all that, they've come for the very last of our possessions; now they want our pride, our history, our spiritual traditions. They want to rewrite and remake these things, to claim them for themselves. The lies and thefts just never end." See Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, "Introduction," in *Selling the Indian: Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures*," Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001), xi.

back in the nineteenth century, and the future was one in which America was a playground for settler-descended peoples. Throughout the century the stereotypes of Native people were reproduced time and again in popular culture depictions. Native film scholar Beverly Singer refers to a different "Indian problem"—one in which the loss of control over depictions of Indian peoples to non-Native Americans has resulted in a significant problem for all Native people in the U.S. and beyond. Singer proposes to combat this "Indian problem" a simple "Indian solution" in which Native people regain control of the narrative who they are and how they are portrayed in media and larger public discourses.[4]

Using a wide survey of various popular cultural media from roughly a hundred and twenty year period of time, this study demonstrates continual reproduction of settler colonial discourse in the form of anti-Indian rhetoric the origins of which date back to colonial America. As technological advancements in storytelling were developed throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, the rhetorical strategies about Native Americans within settler discourses shifted. As visual media came to dominate storytelling, settler discourses moved away from overtly *telling* their audiences the ways in which Indians were savage, brutal, violent, and uncivilized (although this practice certainly did continue). Instead, they began *showing* their audiences that this was true simply by visually depicting Native people as so. There was less emphasis on saying that Indians were violent and should be feared, when showing them as such—for example, the horde of relentless Indian attackers pursuing the white travelers in John Ford's *Stagecoach*—was just as, if not more, effective in solidifying the association of Indians as violent savages in viewers' minds. While the narrative of settler & Indian relationships changed in the twentieth century to accommodate late-nineteenth century reimagined settler mythologies

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[4] Singer, *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens,* 1-3.

and memories, the anti-Indian rhetoric displayed in twentieth-century popular culture media upheld and reproduced settler colonial discursive narratives of Indian savagery and pioneer piety consistent with centuries-old discursive forms. In the case of film media, there was the new twist on reproducing this discourse: showing instead of telling.

This chapter examines the reproduction of settler colonial discourses in American popular culture from the late-nineteenth century to the early-twenty-first century. Broadly speaking, it examines some well-known forms of popular culture media such as fiction and film but I have also explored the ways in which Native people have been depicted in some lesser-known areas of those broad forms of media. The chapter opens with a recap of fiction and narrative media from the nineteenth century and briefly explores how those messages were reproduced in early twentieth popular culture that set the tone for the popular culture created throughout the century. Next, we will turn to settler discourses spread through children's media in the form of animation, young adult fiction, and performative entertainment such as scouting organizations and theme parks. The chapter will then return to an exploration of film, largely from the Western genre, to explore how film-makers and advertisers used visual media to reproduce and amplify distorted messages about Native Americans that were spread to larger audiences than at any point in history. As with other forms of racial messaging, some of these discourses have become less-overtly hostile during the latter-twentieth century, but they are still as, if not more, damaging in their positioning as racial "truths" shown on screen. Movies still lie about Indians, and the lies are still effective.

Early Settler Colonial Discourses in Popular Culture, 1800-1920

The messages about Native Americans in twentieth century popular culture underwent a shift in response to the violence enacted against Indians in the nineteenth century. At the onset of the twentieth century Indian populations were at historically low levels and the predominant attitude among white Americans was that they would die out completely.[5] In depicting Indians in popular culture, though, for most of the twentieth century Native people were treated as though they had died out completely. Therefore one of the most noticeable shifts in settler colonial discourse was to treat Native people as an already disappeared race. In the pursuit of this depiction, settlers were reimagined into having played no role in that population decline through genocidal violence and the dominant, reproduced, image of Indians became one in which Indian "savagery" was immortalized—a single image stuck in time. The tension between heroic white settlers and savage Indians with whom they could not live with, or docile "noble savages" with whom they could enlist to help overcome Indian savagery, was the enduring rhetoric in the latter-nineteenth century.

It was clear that the stories told in the twentieth century were looking back on the past. This was not an issue the settler-descended population contemporarily faced in any real way, this was repeating a glorious war story over and over again. The narrative went like this: Indians

[5] Population numbers for Native people are difficult to ascertain. Based on the 1910 U.S. Census Report (which also lists past census report totals) Native population numbers were often based on estimations and throughout the nineteenth century give an incomplete picture of populations due to territorial expansion. In the nineteenth and mid-twentieth century Native population numbers were distorted due to problematic blood quantum criteria. According to the 1910 census report, best estimates for total Native population numbers in the U.S. were 248,253 in 1890, 237,196 in 1900, and 265, 683 in 1910. See the 1910 U.S. Census Report, Reprinted April 1915 and April 1918. "1910 Census: Volume 1. Population, General Report and Analysis." Census.gov, October 8, 2021. https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1913/dec/vol-1-population.html., 11. Brian Dippie comments on both "actual" population numbers in post-turn-of-the-twentieth-century America and why those numbers are difficult to ascertain, but also on perceptions of more contemporary Native American visibility and why those notions that rely on increased representation in media, scholarship, and public cultural spheres are more important than simple statistics of population numbers in determining Native American resiliency—particularly after the targeted campaigns of genocide and cultural erasure. See Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, xv-xvii, 345-351.

were so savage that they were a threat to white settlers at all times, except when they were friendly (usually because they recognized white military dominance), and, because of the unresolvable conflict of Native savagery and settler civility, Native People disappeared. There was no discussion of conflict in any substantive way, the violence was broadened to the point where it became about white vs. Indian, and there was also no admission that the "thing that made them die out" was genocidal violence enacted by white settler militias and U.S. military forces. This truncated and simplified story of settler and Indian conflict was the dominant narrative in popular culture depictions of Native people throughout the twentieth century. Within this middle part, Indians were shown as one of two ways: the brutal, ultra-violent savage, or the helpful, friend of settlers (a mythologized recipient of the "friends of the Indian" abolitionist type of nineteenth-century Indian advocacy). In many narratives these two depictions could be offset against one another. Towards century's end, the friendly Indian trope was used as a kind of apologist attempt to not portray Indian people as inhuman monsters. But neither depiction treated Native people as *actual* people. Neither did either serve Native people, each mythologized depiction of Indians upheld settler colonial discourse, settler memory, and white supremacy.

But there was another theme in the discursive themes of twentieth century popular culture. Settler fear. The same fear of Native people that nineteenth-century settlers, and their earlier descendants, had felt palpably as they actively settled Indian lands and recorded in their diaries, reminiscences, and other forms of settler discourse, remained present in more contemporary discourse. Only here, the fear was of the dead. The trope of Indian ghosts, targeting settler descendants for retributive violence from beyond the grave, became a common trope within horror literature and film, but it was also reproduced in more mainstream popular media content. One interpretation of this trope proposes that this was the result of a population that had not dealt

with the trauma of committing genocidal violence and the fear of Indian ghosts was both an admission of guilt and an unconscious fear that settler descendants would be held responsible for these acts.

Published works of fiction were influential in the discursive attacks on Native Americans prior to the twentieth century. This study briefly engages with some well-known nineteenth-century works of fiction that were foundational to establishing pattens of anti-Indian rhetoric, and the scholarship that has contextualized them.[6] Yet, as with other forms popular culture, in the engagement of early forms of literature, and the discursive patterns they upheld, my aim is to look beyond the analyses of scholars to parse the ways in which these works are considered part of the same cultural ether that also contained the various examples of settler discourse examined in previous chapters.

Some of America's earliest writers of fiction set the tone and tenor about American settler-colonial anxieties related to Native Americans. Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne helped establish an American writing tradition that was steeped in early settler discourses about Indians. Washington Irving, most famous today for the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (a work that perfectly exemplifies this small town, eighteenth-century New England village aesthetic that is associated with the genre) and *Rip Van Winkle* which exists in a rich history of American folk lore, was by trade an essayist, poet, and historical writer. Both of these works were included in the serialized collection of essays and short stories entitled *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*. published between 1819-20. Also present in that collection was the essay *Traits of Indian*

[6] For a general overview of early American literature in context to American identity and myth, see Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence* and Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*. For analysis of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, see Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*. For analysis of James Fenimore Cooper's and Washington Irving's work, see Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*. For analysis of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, see DeLyser, *Ramona Memories*, Faragher, *California*, and Akins and Bauer Jr., *We Are the Land*.

Character in which Irving boldly but incorrectly claimed that traits settlers perceived to be associated with Indians were inherently related to their race or were adaptations to their environment, such as one would see in animals in nature. In the opening of the essay he wrote

> THERE is something in the character and habits of the North American savage, taken in connection with the scenery over which he is accustomed to range, its vast lakes, boundless forests, majestic rivers, and trackless plains, that is, to my mind, wonderfully striking and sublime. He is formed for the wilderness, as the Arab is for the desert. His nature is stern, simple, and enduring, fitted to grapple with difficulties and to support privations. There seems but little soil in his heart for the support of the kindly virtues; and yet, if we would but take the trouble to penetrate through that proud stoicism and habitual taciturnity which lock up his character from casual observation, we should find him linked to his fellow-man of civilized life by more of those sympathies and affections than are usually ascribed to him.[7]

Right out of the gate, Irving engaged with stereotypes reproduced through settler discourses: that the character of the "savage" is inherent, that Indians are naturally designed to live in their environment (despite evidence available even then that Native Americans greatly adapted their environments to suit their needs), and tropes of Indian stoicism.[8] The irony found within *Traits of Indian Character* is that at its core Irving argued that Indians had been mischaracterized by whites and hopelessly disrupted by colonialism. Irving stated that "In discussing the savage character writers have been too prone to indulge in vulgar prejudice and passionate exaggeration."[9] His argument that Indians deserved better was not supported in the ways in which he, himself, wrote about Indians.

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[7] Washington Irving, *Complete Fictional Works of Washington Irving (Illustrated),* Apple E-Books, 471.

[8] Richard Slotkin places this era of Irving's works—the more historical and anthropological leaning works after 1820—as being influenced by and in dialogue with those of James Fennimore Cooper. Irving, Slotkin wrote, "regarded himself as the spokesman of American culture; his fiction tended toward the manufacture of 'fake-lore'—stories based on European models, offered as samples of Indigenous popular culture." See Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*, 119.

[9] Irving, *Complete Fictional Works,* 476.

Certain fictional works from the nineteenth century were so influential in their cultural discourses about Indians that they are worth mentioning here. James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel, *The Last of the Mohicans* (the middle novel in the *Leatherstocking* trilogy,) was instrumental in reproducing multi-generational nostalgic notions of Indian savagery and pioneer providence. Richard Slotkin, in *The Fatal Environment*, wrote that Cooper made "contributions to the mythologization of American history;" the first in that "he puts the Indian and the matter of racial character at the center of his consideration of moral questions" and second, that "he represents the historical process as essentially a violent one."[10] He concludes that Cooper's use of Indianness as a historical devise in his fiction was "a deliberate and rather elaborate fabrication of 'myth' for fictional purposes."[11]

Historian Michael Witgen, in *An Infinity of Nations*, studied Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1855 epic poem, *The Song of Hiawatha* in the context of "vanishing Indians and the fantasy of a wild and unpeopled continent."[12] Witgen connected these two articulations of settler colonial discourses—the vanishing Indian and the American Eden—to a third issue: the ways in which settler societies absorbed cultural messages that reinforced perceptions about themselves that they already believed as true. In particular he wrote of the popularity of Longfellow's poem shortly after its initial publication; he argued that "the most likely explanation for its popularity is that the epic poem articulated a story about the fate of Indian peoples that easily tracked onto what most Americans thought they knew about their history."[13] Interestingly, Witgen considered Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* and Cooper's *The Last of*

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[10] Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*, 88.

[11] Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*, 94.

[12] Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 8.

[13] Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 9.

the Mohicans to be canonical in America's creation mythology—texts that relied upon, and reinforced, what "most Americans thought they knew about their history."[14]

Similarly, Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, published in 1884, was an enormously successful and influential piece of literature that reimagined the landscape, and residents, of the West through a lens of settler romanticism. Ramona built upon nostalgic descriptions of early California as described in Richard Henry Dana Jr.'s memoir of California, *Two Years Before the Mast*, published in 1840. In some ways, *Ramona* can be seen as a fictionalized reminiscence of Dana's 1840 *Two Years Before the Mast*. Jackson's novel picks up immediately in the romanticism of Dana's description of early California in which Spanish missions are places of cultural and religious reform for inherently lazy and savage Indians. *Two Years Before the Mast* employs over seventy descriptions of Indians and includes comments on inherent Indian qualities as lazy and savage. But the world in which these Indians exist in the memoir—mission grounds where they are "gently enslaved" by Friars—is described serenely with Indians fulfilling self-betterment by quietly working on the grounds. *Two Years Before the Mast* begins with the statement "Thus began the white settlement of California" and shortly goes on to paint the following picture for readers:

> The Indians in the immediate vicinity of a mission were attached thereto by a sort of gentle enslavement. They were provided special quarters, were carefully looked after by the priests, their religious education fostered, and their innate laziness conquered by specific requirements of labor in agriculture, cattle raising, and simple handicrafts. It was an arrangement which worked well for both parties concerned. The slavery of the Indians was not unlike the obligation of children to their parents; they were comfortable, well behaved, and for the most part contented with the rule of the friars, who, on their side, began to accumulate considerable wealth from the well-directed efforts of their charges.[15]

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[14] Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 321.

[15] Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*. Digital Fire, Kindle Edition, 14.

Here Dana presented such a flattened image of colonization in California that it is difficult to imagine a more settler-centered whitewashing of history. Yet, this was a romanticization that resonated with settler populations in the nineteenth century.

Ramona exists in this idyllic world, just outside of the mission grounds. Imagine, though, that while the Indians are still often discussed (well-over three hundred mentions)—they are depicted as meek creatures; noble savages—their presence in the novel serves to uphold a romanticized adoration of Mexican culture that has been wronged by the United States in the aftermath of the Mexican American War. There are descriptions of laziness and thievery, but almost all are attributed to the American government and the theft of land—from Mexican land owners. But the viewpoint of the protagonist is nearly indistinguishable from a white American settler. The land-owning Señora Gonzaga Moreno whom "the Holy Catholic Church had had its arms round her from first to last" represents the landed elite in the historical aftermath of the Mexican-American war.[16] The character of Ramona is a half-Indian orphan whose life becomes linked to a California Native man. One theme of the novel is Ramona's husband's tribe being forced off their land.[17] Meanwhile, the relationship between Mexican landowners and Indigenous lands was problematic "The lines marking off the Indians' lands were surveyed, and put on the map of the estate. No Mexican proprietor ever broke faith with an Indian family or village, thus placed on his lands."[18] While *Ramona* substitutes the antagonists of the nineteenth century from Indian to the United States, the story of a righteous agricultural society overcoming both the

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[16] Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona*. Digireads.com Publishing, 2011. Kindle Edition, Location 119.

[17] Historian John Faragher explores the way in which this family story is referencing the historical forced removal of the Luiseño people from coastal Southern California to the interior and how Jackson centered this historical narrative through the lens of family drama hoping that it would reach wider readership. See Faragher, *California*, 255.

[18] Jackson, *Ramona*. Kindle Edition, Location 1062.

savagery of local Indians and its defiance of a state aggressor situate it squarely as a commentary steeped in settler colonial discourse and pioneer mythologies. While Dana's account was directly mentioned in nineteenth-century settler reminiscences, *Ramona* was published amidst that period of settler discourse production. It was wildly popular immediately after being published and continued to sell well for decades.[19] These two pieces of writing were highly popular and influential pieces of settler colonial discourse at the onset of the twentieth century as popular culture underwent new technological innovations allowing for greater speed and farther spread of delivery.

More so than any specific work of fiction, though, so-called "Dime Novels" acted collectively as a form of anti-Indian and Pioneer Mythology propaganda as much as they had as a form of popular entertainment. In the early twentieth century the dime novel—in its serialized format and its simplistic stories of right (the settler) and wrong (Indian savagery)—transitioned easily into new formats. Serialized radio programs utilized the uncomplicated story-telling aspects of dime novels and adapted them to newly available technology to American homes. The western themed radio programs of the first part of the twentieth century were steeped in a settler nostalgia that likely appealed to older Americans—perhaps themselves former settlers. However, these programs also lent themselves well to compelling narratives for children, drawn to the gripping weekly cliffhangers faced by their favorite radio heroes. These programs transitioned almost seamlessly into broadcast television serials early in midcentury.

The forms of popular culture from the nineteenth century evolved alongside of new technologies to continue on in new forms in the twentieth century. Motion pictures, first commercially introduced to American audiences at the end of the nineteenth century, became an

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[19] DeLyser, *Ramona Memories*, x-xi.

effective and pervasive disseminator of settler colonial discourses throughout the twentieth century.[20] However, the proliferation of radio receivers in U.S. households in the early twentieth century introduced these discourse into the homes of the American people. As radio grew more popular and accessible (until it was largely replaced by television in the post-war era of middle-class prosperity) it became a highly influential messenger of settler discourses as a counterpoint for American families. While these technologies were new and exciting, the messages broadcast through them were not.

In the later nineteenth century Wild West shows, famously exemplified by "Buffalo Bill" Cody, recreated a re-imagined "history" of western settlement in ways that were as problematic for Native people as they were beneficial for settler populations.[21] As these shows traveled around the country (and later, the world) disseminating false historical narratives with live actors under the guise of historical realism coupled with prevalent cultural notions of Indian erasure compelled settlers and settler descendants with ease to accept a historical vision of themselves in which they had played no part in Indians' troubles. These mobile, large-scale productions employed hundreds of people (including Native American performers) and included elaborate sets and live animals. The spectacle created by the shows' creators, famously as in the case of Buffalo Bill Cody, were an immensely popular form of entertainment. Many shows employed so many Native actors that there was often a separate "Indian Camp" that housed them on tour—a

[20]Andrew Brodie Smith, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians: Silent Western Films, American Culture, and the Birth of Hollywood* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 4-5.

[21] Historian Richard White articulated this as an "inverted history" in which "His spectacles presented an account of Indian aggression and white defense; of Indian killers and white victims; of, in effect, badly abused conquerors." See Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," in *The Frontier in American Culture*, James R. Grossman, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 27.

space that was open to visitors and became an exhibit attraction in itself.[22] Although there was a significant representation of Native Americans in the shows, the historical narrative of actual events was skewed towards a settler perspective and there was no concern of representing Indians in any way other than those that served a settler audience, and these shows provided an early settler performative space—one that relied on fantasy as much as historical reality in their recreations of settler memory.

Scholars have explored the role of Wild West shows as "contact zones" between Native American performers and white audiences as a way of understanding Indigenous participation in what was first and foremost a white American form of entertainment.[23] Philip J. Deloria argued in *Indians in Unexplained Places*, that the contact zones of Wild West shows offered Native performers a chance to assert their own modernity and to see the world beyond the confines of reservations on their own terms.[24] While it is true that Wild West shows could afford Native performers some level of autonomous economic opportunities and the argument that, in doing so, where an example of Native people exercising agency, the inclusion of Native performers had other, less celebratory, effects on settler cultural perceptions of Native people as a whole.[25] By employing Native performers in a show that skewed history to a decidedly settler-based

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[22] Linda Scarangella McNenly details the makeup of some of the more famous Wild West Shows—notably those by "Buffalo Bill" Cody, "Pawnee Bill," and the Miller Brothers—in the first chapter of her monograph. In particular she notes the "Indian encampments" that each of these shows used to house their Native performers but that were often open to and visited by white audiences who came to see "famous" Indians such as Sitting Bull as much as they did to see a portrayal of an "authentic" Indian community. See Linda Scarangella McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows: From Buffalo Bill to Euro Disney* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 21-38.

[23] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, x-xi.

[24] Deloria, *Indians In Unexpected Places*, 68-9.

[25] Deloria argued that aside from being an inauthentic portrayal of cultural practices, Indians in Wild West shows were "self-consciously cast as dangerous antagonists, captured now within an Anglo narrative of conquest and settlement." See Deloria, *Indians In Unexpected Places*, 58.

perspective, one that always included depictions of Indian violence towards settlers, content creators of Wild West shows retained complete control of the historical narrative of the American West as presented to their audiences.

Many Wild West shows included portions of the show that acted as purported depictions of historical events in addition to the spectacle of real life Indians. Linda Scarangella McNenly reported that a common component of these shows fell under the topic of historical reenactments which included "reenactments of significant battles or famous attacks, such as the Battle of Little Bighorn or the attack on the Deadwood stagecoach; at the very least, an attack on an emigrant train or settler's cabin."[26] As we have seen in other forms of settler colonial discourse, the claims of historical authenticity of these shows often reflected discursive elements that reimagined historical narratives in favor of a settler habitus—and kept the shows packed.[27] In Buffalo Bill's 1885 show tour, it was the inclusion of "Sitting Bull 'the killer of Custer,' who drew in the crowds" and that a "camp of Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Sioux, and Pawnees created an atmosphere of impending danger…" for white audiences while the show "closed with the dramatic 'Attack on Settler's Cabin'."[28] In his 1903-06 tour of Europe, Cody inserted as the last act the infamous "Battle of Custer."[29] The specific inclusion of this depiction of historical reenactment left a century-long connection between Europe and performative reimagining of the West.

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[26] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 23.

[27] McNenly notes that "the framework of the show was based on discourses of the savage and vanishing Indian, the frontier, heroic individualism, and progress." See McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 26.

[28] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 25.

[29] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 27-8.

Gordon "Pawnee Bill" Lillie entered the 1885 ring of Wild West spectacle with his own show after having previously been a supplier of Pawnee actors for Buffalo Bill's show.[30] Pawnee Bill sold himself through suggestions of authenticity, referring to himself as the "White Chief of the Pawnees" and his show, entitled "Pawnee Bill's Historical Wild West Exhibition and Indian Encampment," explicitly used the encampment of his Pawnee performers as a selling point.[31] Pawnee Bill's show featured "reenactments" of generic events such an attack on a stage coach and something entitled "Horse Thief."[32] Additionally, there was a depiction of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, an event in which a Utah militia murdered an emigrant train in defiance of Mormonism. The militia employed some Paiute people to undergo the raid as an attempt to mask the attack as an Indian massacre.[33] It is not clear which version of this story was present in Pawnee Bill's show—an Indian massacre of settlers, or a white militia masquerading as Indians to massacre Mormons entering the Great Salt Lake region.[34] Lillie complemented his show's revisionist history with a new venture—the 1930 opening of The Old Town and Indian Trading Post in Oklahoma. Motor tourists could stay in one of the fifteen available cabins while they explored the "Native village with replicas of Pawnee dwellings and 'towering teepees of the Cheyennes, Comanches and Kiowas, the bark houses of the Seminoles and Potowamies, and the

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[30] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 29.

[31] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 30.

[32] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 30.

[33] This strategy of whites disguising themselves as Indians to deflect blame onto Indigenous people for settlers' acts of violence is similar to that explored earlier in this chapter by Paul H. Carlson and Tom Crum in their examination of the Pease River Massacre. See Carlson and Crum, *Myth, Memory and Massacre*, 12.

[34] Amateur historian and prolific writer Will Bagley details the complicated interwoven narratives around this massacre that included white Mormons and local Paiute allies as well as where these different versions of the stories laid blame—often squarely at the feet of the Paiute. However, Bagley did state that "young whites disguised in paint and feathers and a small band of native freebooters rushed from ambush to murder the terrified women and children." See Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 5, 175-190.

historical Pawnee Council House and mud lodges'."[35] Here, as was the case with other Wild West show creators who ventured into Dime Novels or early film-making, Pawnee Bill furthered the spread of settler colonial discourse and pioneer mythology outside of the confines of the Wild West show—further evidencing that settler colonialism is a process, not an event.

The Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Real Wild West show began in 1905 as a fairly generic clone of Buffalo Bill's show that included Native performers in an Indian camp that was a main spectacle. The show reenacted such events as an "Indian attack on a wagon train" and in later European tours included an Indian attack on settlers building a cabin (which was then burnt by the hostile Indians) and "an Indian ambush on settlers in the Grand Canyon," and finally, "an attack on an emigrant train crossing the Plains."[36] After 1915 though, the brothers "attempted to redefine Wild West shows by presenting a new view of the West based on ranchers rather than celebrating the 'conquest of the Plains,' as was the case with the Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill shows," however, "this new narrative did not resonate with audiences because no "imaginative literature" about ranchers existed, as it did with frontiersmen such as Buffalo Bill."[37] This highlights the ways in which settler colonial discourse and pioneer mythology were critical to the success of these settler memory-making spectacles—without those elements that reflected their imagined re-constructing of history through a settler lens there was little interest for white audiences.

By the 1920s Wild West shows waning popularity coincided with gaining popularity of silent film. The content producers of Wild West shows, embracing the new technologies, adapted

[35] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 32.

[36] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 32-3, 35.

[37] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 33-4.

their storytelling arts into the world of film. Many of the most popular Wild West show creators went on to make films in the western genre.[38] Philip J. Deloria, in *Indians in Unexpected Places*, articulated the problem with Wild West shows using Native actors and characters was "not simply that Indians danced, sang, and dressed for white audiences but that they were self-consciously cast as dangerous antagonists, captured now within an Anglo narrative of conquest and settlement."[39] The same was true of Indians in Western genre films in the twentieth century.

While these early films were silent, there were many that depicted modern western film themes entrenched in pioneer mythologies. However, just as in Wild West shows, these Native actors were not allowed to represent their own cultures, they were used as props to uphold settler stories. Nor were they allowed to be the stars of these pictures. Even before speaking roles were technologically possible, white actors were placed front and center in stories that included real native people.[40] Just as Wild West shows were influential to early film, the narrative serialized structure of dime novels evolved into different trajectories—specifically in young adult serialized fiction.[41] These stories also evolved to adapt to the new technology of radio where the short form of storytelling proved effective for American audiences. Eventually, these would evolve again to adapt to television.

All of these continuing forms of settler discourses carried on their rhetoric into the early portions of the twentieth century. As literacy rates improved in the United States, the simplistic stories of pioneer mythology found new consumers in younger audiences. In the first third of the

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[38] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 37.

[39] Deloria, *Indians In Unexpected Places*, 58.

[40] Singer, *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens*, 14-16.

[41] Mark Connelly, *The Hardy Boys Mysteries, 1927-1979: A Cultural and Literary History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008), 30.

twentieth century, old forms of story telling were re-purposed to new audiences. The serialized-storytelling of dime novels transitioned well into new technologies—as had been the case with radio serials. By the 1930s these programs would be more specifically marketed to children. There were also new genres of fiction to explore; comic books and young adult action-adventure serialized fiction borrowed heavily from the themes and formats of dime books. As older technologies became less popular and cultural emphasis on all things “new” and “progressive” newer forms of narrative delivery were born—but the content of those discourses still contained heavy doses of settler colonial themes.

“Lil’ Settlers” I: Settler Colonial Discourse For Kids in Animation

By the 1930s, short form storytelling had been refined into an art of reductive stereotypes. This was apparent in few places like it was in animated short films created between 1930 and the 1970s. Early animation was noticeably racist—awash in anti-black, anti-Asian, and later (particularly in the 1950s), anti-Mexican depictions and discourses. But they were always and consistently engaging in Anti-Indian settler colonial discourses as well. For children growing up in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s (as I did), the discourses of those short stories from half a century before were not disconnected in time. These cartoons were arguably more accessible and visible later in the twentieth century than when they were produced due to syndication and the prevalence of Saturday morning cartoon festivals.[42] The broadcasting of syndicated animated films in the later-twentieth century opened a flood of anti-Indian rhetoric into any home with a television set where those messages were largely absorbed by children—messages that were both

[42] This study of animation was based largely off of the filmographies by studio found in Leonard Maltin’s *Of Mice and Magic* monograph. I surveyed thousands of short animation titles to select for anything that was connected to the American West or Indians. These lists can be found in Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 357-466.

abhorrently racist and despicably violent. Either non-Native children, who normalized the messages that were constant and desensitizing, or Native children for whom these messages could be confusing or depressing, internalized these messages. Neil Diamond, the director of *Reel Injun*, began his documentary by stating that he, along with his friends, were "raised on cowboys and Indians…we cheered for the cowboys…we never identified with the Indians we saw onscreen." He continued later in the film by saying "As a Cree Indian kid watching the movies I didn't realize it was me Bugs Bunny was killing offscreen." Ojibwe film critic Jesse Wente also talked in *Reel Injun* about the effect that these animated films had on him as a child. Wente said: "Those images [of Indians being killed] do shape people's opinions and I think they put it at odds a bit for me. You know when you're a kid and you're trying to play cowboys and Indians…and if you're an Indian kid, well, doesn't that mean you're going to lose all the time?"[43] While animation shorts may be cast off as juvenile or silly—"good clean fun" as they used to say—these messages were not benevolent. There was harm in children, Native and non-Native alike, in their absorption and internalization of these messages.

Early animation shorts, no matter what studio produced them, included some common depictions of Native people. One of the first elements of this era was that Indians were often portrayed as anamorphic creatures; cats, monkeys, bears, mice, etc. This was also often true of the cartoons' heroes. Yet, there was a historic association of Indians being likened to animals in settler discourses that sets those characters aside from, say, Mickey Mouse or Mighty Mouse. In particular, we have already discussed the association of Indians within settler discourses as wolves: animals that were cunning, deadly, and sneaky.[44] These animated shorts often included

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[43] Neil Diamond, dir. *Reel Injun* (2009; Montreal, Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 2009. MP4 Video, 1080p HD.)

[44] See Coleman, *Vicious*, 41-43.

other, more overt, depictions of Indians as animals or having animal-like qualities that was connected specifically with them being Indian. Indian people were often shown snake-like, with their bodies slithering around obstacles to get closer to settlers. This is an obvious reproduction of the Indian as "sneaking" or "skulking" from settler discourses. One oddity that pops up in animated shorts that I have not seen elsewhere are depictions of Indian sprouting wings and flying. Without additional cultural context for this very specific depiction, on its face this is a form of dehumanizing Native people and depicting them as having super-or-extra natural features, likening them to animals, or mysticizing them with magical powers. In this particular example, all three of these things are accomplished.

A prominent depiction commonly featured in animated shorts was the Indian village. This was usually introduced with a singular "chief" character sitting outside of a teepee before cutting to large groups of Indians in headdresses dancing in circles around a bonfire waving tomahawks. Sometimes they are already "war-whooping" and other times they get called out to go to war against a wagon train at which point they take up the "war-whoop." Another common depictions are that Indians speak with "brutish" language skills—varying anywhere from broken English to a series of "ugh" declarations. This trope is connected to Indian savagery (as opposed to civility) in their perceived death of language use. However, while this type of broken English was sometimes employed within settler narratives from the nineteenth century, it was far more common in audio/visual media than it was in written narratives. Finally, most of these stories abruptly end with a horde of Indians closing in on a group of settlers or a singular hero, only to be thwarted at the last minute by something entirely trivial. A punch that lands against hundreds of Indians, a rock that comes crashing from out of nowhere, a hero ascended into the heavens. The message is that for all of the threat Indians were shown to pose, they ultimately posed no

threat at all. It’s hard to know if this message, specifically, was intentional or one expressed unintentionally through popular culture content creators who were steeped in settler nostalgia and memory.

There were several major studios producing animated shorts between the 1930s and 1960s. This study examines five of those: Terry Toons, Walter Lantz, Warner Brothers, Paramount Studios, and Walt Disney Studios, who all engaged in reproducing Indian stereotypes. Terry Toons was one of the most prolific studios producing animated shorts that prominently featured Western genre themes with their own spin—they often depicted Indians with grotesque facial features like enormous, bulbous noses. They were also the studio that most-embraced the notion of Indians sprouting wings—either out of their heads or their backs—and flying away from settlers, or towards them in large groups prepared for war. The first use of this trope was in the 1933 short, *Oh Susanna*, in which an Indian scout sees a group of settlers crossing the desert and returns to the village—where all of those in residence are singing and whooping—and tells them the location of the settlers. At this point warriors of the village sprout wings and fly off to attack the settler trains. They chase one off a cliff before the short abruptly ends.[45] In the 1938 short, *The Last Indian*, a voice-over narration of the short provides a quasi-anthropological detail of supposed facts about Indians in the West. The short began with a group of Indians flying in the sky using their headdresses / feathers that were maybe a part of their head, as they circled one another before two of them break off from the rest to rub noses and grunt “ugh” at each other while the narrator explained “the people flew because they liked to do it, it was easy, nothing to it.” From there the narrator explains the settling of the West thusly as then "came the crafty two-faced pale face, [who] took advantage of the Red race” and “from their own land they were

[45] Frank Moser, dir. *Oh! Susanna* (1933; New Rochelle, NY: Terrytoons, 1933). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Re8Au3WY3kQ.

banished until all but one had vanished." As with the previous short, this one ends abruptly with an Indian acting insane, jumping in a modern automobile, and driving away across the desert.[46] Finally, in *Injun Trouble* from 1951, a group of Indians sprout wings and ambush a miner (an ex-Confederate miner, Colonel Pureheart) in the desert who is quickly saved by Mighty Mouse, who swoops in to save the day (as he was known to do) by beating up all of the Indians. In a particularly interesting piece of this, as Mighty Mouse punches the Indians they all fly into a boulder, get squashed, and turn into coins with Indian heads printed onto them—Indian Head pennies, presumably. The miner then uses these coins and his mined gold to pay off the mortgage on his Virginia plantation house where he sits outside dressed in his finest, drinking lemonade with his donkey. It may have been best when Terry Toons abruptly ended their shorts rather than having them re-vitalize the Confederate South with gold and coin made from dead Indian bodies.

Walter Lantz studios was another major producer of animation shorts in the first half of the twentieth century. Walter Lantz studios particularly had a penchant for titling their shorts riffing on the name Sioux. The Walter Lantz Sioux seem to have mostly lived in Arizona (as evidenced by signs posted outside of the villages) and almost all in contemporary times but the Indians are dumb and ugly and stuck in the past—always living in dirty villages. The 1940 short, *Syncopated Sioux,* showed Indians at their most depraved: children being born in poverty, teepees saying "Scalp Treatments - Prices Cut to the Bone", cats for sale, frumpish women with several children and the Indians all look ugly and act stupid. As was typical for shorts at the time, the plot is that these Indians see settlers crossing the desert (this time, again, in a modern automobile) and they send a message to the village which immediately takes up singing, dancing, and whooping around a bonfire before going off to attack the settlers. As was the case with many

[46] Connie Rasinski, dir. *The Last Indian* (1938; New Rochelle, NY: Terrytoons, 1938). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXSOMEBnYc0.

of the Terry Toons releases, this story has no real end. As the Indian horde descends on the automobile pioneers they exclaim “There hasn’t been any Indians in these parts for twenty years!” before racing away. The Indians give chase in a nonsensical montage that ends abruptly.[47] Two years later, in *Boogie Woogie Sioux*, another Southwestern Sioux trading post is broiling under a heat wave and the Chief admonishes the “rainmaker” with a series of “ughs.” Eventually a traveling charlatan (an Indian in a white suit and a bowler hat) named “Tommy Hawk” drives through the town and convinces the chief he will bring relief with rain. In this pursuit, he sings a jazz-inspired song (backed by his band, “The 5 Scalpers” while engaging with brutish English (“Me makum rain…”). Despite Tommy Hawk’s lack of skills as a rain maker, the spirits are apparently so happy with his song that it does indeed rain and all of the young Indian women come out and dance in it. The short ends with the conclusion of the song.[48]

In the 1950s and 1960s, Paramount Studios produced a number of Popeye shorts that featured Indian depictions. In one of the earliest, the 1948 short *Wigwam Whoopee*, Popeye is one of the Pilgrims arriving on the Mayflower. Rather, Popeye follows behind in a rowboat. Once in the New World, Popeye finds an Olive Oil Pocahontas bathing in a waterfall and immediately pursues her. A fight ensues and Popeye kisses her while she's unconscious, somehow signaling that they are now in love. The kiss, however, is witnessed by her father, the Chief, who tries to scalp Popeye while he's asleep but Olive Oil Pocahontas implores him—in broken brutish English—to leave Popeye alone. When the Chief ignores her, Popeye pops a can

[47] Walter Lantz, dir. *Syncopated Sioux* (1940; Universal City, CA: Walter Lantz Productions, 1940). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmpHIA3I0WI.

[48] Alex Lovy, dir. *Boogie Woogie Sioux* (1942; Universal City, CA: Walter Lantz Productions, 1942). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJMVuiJvGTY.

of spinach and proceeds to beat up the entire Indian village.[49] Retellings of the Pocahontas / John Smith mythology were common themes in animated shorts at this time. In another mythological revision of America's settler past, the 1951 short *Pilgrim Popeye* depicts Popeye in the New World who, after a fight with a turkey he is trying to hunt in contemporary times, imagines himself as a Pilgrim at first thanksgiving. In the flashback, the turkey eats spinach and becomes an eagle while Indians have captured Popeye and are doing a war whoop dance around a bonfire. The turkey saves Popeye and Popeye doesn't kill him in response.[50] While these may sound ridiculous, to young audiences they reinforced a separation between the very real violence that settlers committed against Native peoples and set up a narrative in which Popeye is, at best, a white savior who can coerce Indian women to love him, and, at worst, as much a victim of violence during the colonial period as anyone else—even the turkeys are on his side.

Warner Brothers produced some of the most enduring and prolific animated shorts that reproduced a host of settler discourses in the twentieth century. In the 1936 short, *Westward Whoa!*, we see a wagon train circled up with settlers having a dance. In this cautionary tale based on the *Boy Who Cried Wolf*, some settler children "want to play Indians" but the adults warn them "Be careful the Indians don't getcha." As the kids play and run around yelling for help with their pretend Indian personas, they are admonished by the adults who scold them "some day an Indian will get you and cut off your head." Of course, a truly scary looking Indian with a menacing, distorted grimace, comes out from behind a tree and roars at the kids, chasing after them. They cry for help but the settlers think they are playing and at that very moment, a horde

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[49] Izzy Sparber and Thomas Johnson, dir. *Wigwam Whoopee* (1948; Miami: FL. Famous Studios, 1948). https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xd85l8.

[50] Sparber, Izzy and Al Eugster, dir. *Pilgrim Popeye*. 1951; Miami: FL. Famous Studios, 1951. https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5uttu5.

of Indians attacks the train. The kids actually help in fending off the Indian attackers and at the very end, one of the settlers sneaks up behind the kids, gives a war whoop, and they jump out of their skins and go and hide.[51] The 1938 short, *Johnny Smith and Poker Huntas*, showcases Warner Brothers' take on the John Smith and Pocahontas mythology. In this version, the portrayal of pre-contact Indians is one of utter depravity. An Indian village is shown as teepees in rows along a paved road, signs that say "Beer and Wine" and "Pool" hang above as cars cruise along in a confusing mash up of early auto tourism and drunken Indian tropes. An ugly Indian woman rides a donkey with a "papoose" on her back and then another papoose on the donkeys back showing a half-donkey half-human baby in it. An Indian scout warns the village of the Pilgrims' arrival—using the word "ugh" multiple times. The Indians immediately attack the pilgrims, capture Smith and tie him up for execution. He is saved by Pocahontas and the film cuts to a a mailbox that reads "Mr. and Mrs. John Smith" outside of a Tudor style house. We see the couple on the couch reading *The Last of the Mohicans* and Pocahontas says, motioning to the book, "oh yeah?" as the camera pans over to show several babies, half of which have feathers in headbands and are doing war-whoops.[52]

Warner Brothers famously produced some of the most blatantly racist animated shorts depicting Native Americans. In *Scalp Trouble*, from 1939, Donald Duck and Porky Pig are stationed at a military fort in the West. Porky Pig first sees an Indian attack coming and starts screaming "Injuns! Indians are coming! Redskins!"As the soldiers start shooting at Indians, one of the Indians drinks a bottle of "Four Roses Firewater" and breathes fire into the wall of the fort.

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[51] Jack King, dir. *Westward Whoa* (1936; Los Angeles: CA, Leon Schlesinger Studios, 1936). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u89Xw6mWARQ.

[52] Tex Avery, dir. *Johnny Smith and Poker-Huntas* (1938; Los Angeles: CA, Leon Schlesinger Studios, 1938). https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3ofkcc.

At this point the short revels in showcasing total war against the Indians. A soldier has a sign next to him that says "Me:, Them:" as he sings a version of the minstrel show tune "one little two little three little Indians" he shoots and makes tick marks next to the "Me" column. At nine little Indians killed, an Indian makes it over the wall and the soldier hits him in the head and says "ten little Indians Boys!" The short ends when Porky Pig is cornered, about to be scalped, until Daffy Duck swallows a bunch of bullets and Porky wields him like a machine gun—defeating all the Indians.[53] In the infamous 1938 short, *Injun Trouble*, a wagon train heads west into "Injun Joe's Territory." Porky Pig, a scout for the wagon team, is sent ahead to "lookout for Injun Joe." He comes to a sign that says "Boundary Line: Paleface Keep off lawn. Injun Joe"—which, of course, the wagon train ignores. Enter "Injun Joe" who is seen walking directly through the middle of mountains and trees that break and transform to accommodate the hulking Indian form. Joe screams at a grizzly bear and defeats animal traps by chomping them with his equally sharp teeth. Ultimately, Joe attacks the wagon train (here the script deviates—instead of a horde of regular-sized Indian attackers, we see one inhumanly-sized large Indian attacker). The settlers circle up and Joe single-handedly attacks. He eats bullets, chews them up, and spits them out in the form of a bomb that goes off in the center of the circled wagons. Joe then faces off with Porky until a deranged settler comes tickles him into submission.[54] This short was remade, largely in name only, in the nonsensical 1969 version of *Injun Trouble*, in which Cool Cat is driving a car across the desert who is then pursued by an Indian on horseback who starts

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[53] Robert Clampett, dir. *Scalp Trouble* (1939; Los Angeles: CA, Leon Schlesinger Studios, 1939). https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3uycuj.

[54] Robert Clampett, dir. *Injun Trouble* (1938; Los Angeles: CA, Leon Schlesinger Studios, 1939). https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2ib3xv.

whooping. The Indian turns to camera and says "Injuns always yell like that when they're mad."[55] According to this logic, Indians in animation, television, and film, were *always* mad.

Walt Disney was neither the originator of the cartoon short, nor the most prolific studio producing content in the early-to-mid twentieth century. However, they would ultimately be the most dominant animation studio and media company in the world by century's end. The Walt Disney short animated films produced between the 1920s and the 1980s contained numerous titles related to the Western genre. For the most part, these animated shorts upheld some aspects of highly-gendered pioneer and cowboy mythologies, but they rarely engaged directly with Indians. There were a few notable exceptions. The first was *Pioneer Days* produced in 1930. In this short, Mickey and Minnie Mouse are traveling West in a covered wagon that is surveilled from a distance by anthropomorphized animals standing in as Indians. The Indians go back to their village and give a "war-whoop" which starts all the Indians dancing around a bonfire before setting out to attack the wagons. The Indians attack en masse, sneak up and light wagons on fire, and kidnap Minnie Mouse. Mickey pursues her back to the Indian village where he fights and defeats the Indian Chief and saves Minnie.[56] Not only is this short representative of a stock storyline that many studios utilized in the early-to-mid twentieth century, but it also reproduces many of the anti-Indian stereotypes found in historical settler discourses: the "war-whoop," Indians as sneaky, Indians kidnaping (white) settler women—and one that was most common yet stealthy settler truths—that the fear of Indians was overblown because settlers would always overcome them.

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[55] Robert. McKimsom, dir. *Injun Trouble* (1969; Burbank: CA, Warner Brothers Animation, 1969). https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2ib6p3.

[56] Burt Gillett, dir. *Pioneer Days* (1930; Burbank: CA, Walt Disney Productions, 1930). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSoecMqf-_w.

These themes would all be reproduced and amplified in the 1945 Disney short, *Californy 'Er Bust*. This short tells the story of a wagon train traveling West across the plains. The voice-over narration breaks from tranquility when it states "we were spotted by them thar pesky Redskins." An Indian scout sends up smoke signals to the Indian village—the smoke forms the words "Ugh" in a series of repetitions. As the Indians attack the settlers on the plains, one of the Indians gets his feather shot off his hairband and begins to froth at the mouth and growl "Ugh" before he lays on the ground and slithers like a snake towards the settlers. The narrator again interjects with "Why, I was knockin' 'em off like flies" - as a settler marks his wagon with a stamp indicating he's killed another Indian (twelve in total!) "and another Injun bit the dust."[57] The contemporary lead in on the Disney channel for this cartoon (featuring a video narration by Leonard Maltin) tries very hard to make the case that the depictions of Indians are really a spoof of Western genre films, and they aren't a caricature of Indians at all, but rather, as Martin quips, "a caricature of a caricature" before concluding that "If you don't take anything in the cartoon too seriously, I think you'll have a good time."[58] The problem is that while possibly a spoof, these depictions still contribute to the reproduction of the same settler discourses they are claiming to spoof. Additionally, the child audience would have been in the dark about this being a parody. This is no subversion of these tropes—it is merely a reproduction of them. It's not a particularly good time.

Walt Disney also produced some of the most memorable, and problematic, depictions of Native characters in their full-length animated films. Most notably, the supporting Native characters of Neverland in the 1953 film *Peter Pan* and the 1995 film *Pocahontas* included

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[57] Jack Kinney, David Hand, and Ben Sharpsteen, dirs. *Californy'er Bust* (1945; Burbank: CA, Walt Disney Productions, 1945). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4mD0Nb1ROY.

[58] Kinney, Hand, and Sharpsteen, dirs. *Californy'er Bust*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4mD0Nb1ROY.

stereotypes of Native people that represented both the ignoble and the noble savage mythologies. In Peter Pan, the "Indian Princess" character, Tiger Lily, was kidnapped by Captain Hook to lure Peter Pan into a trap. After Pan rescues Tiger Lily, fulfilling the White Savior trope, the Indians, including the Chief character who smokes a peace pipe with Pan while speaking broken English and the entirety of the Indian village dance and whoop around a bonfire while singing "What Makes a Red Man Red."[59] The English visitors—the Darling family—are all dressed up with war paint and imitate the war whoops. In the film, children are shown reproducing settler colonial stereotypes about Native people, while children in the mid-twentieth century watch and absorb those same anti-Indian discourses. Like many of the Disney films—particularly full-length films—Peter Pan was based on existing fiction. Disney can use this as a distancing tool—they are merely drawing on existing material that they are not responsible for creating (in this case the depictions of the Indians already existed in a work of fiction).[60] However, they chose to reproduce this discourse to the world a half-century after it was first introduced to readers.

The same can be seen in 1995's *Pocahontas* animated film in which the source material is an even murkier nebulous cultural idea about the world's most famous "Indian princess."[61] Pocahontas was very much a product of its time—produced during the mid-nineties revisionist movement about Native people in which the pendulum swung heavily away from depictions of the ignoble savage to depictions of the noble savage. In Disney's version of this well-trod story, Pocahontas is reimagined as a young Disney princess finding love in the settler John Smith who

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[59] Clyde, Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson and Hamilton Luske. dir. *Peter Pan* (1953; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1953.) MP4 Video, 1080p HD.

[60] For a more detailed exploration of the depictions of Indians in Peter Pan, both in film and the original piece of fiction, see Sarah Laskow, "The Racist History of Peter Pan's Indian Tribe" *Smithsonian Magazine*, (2014) https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/racist-history-peter-pan-indian-tribe-180953500/.

[61] Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg. dir. *Pocahontas (*1995; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1953). MP4 Video, 1080p HD.

simultaneously becomes her savior from her overbearing father—the Chief Powhatan voiced by Native actor and activist Russell Means. The film gets the full Disney treatment through a spiritual guide to Pocahontas and her people via “Grandmother Willow” (a sentient tree) and a raccoon sidekick named “Meeko.” While the film attempted to show Native people as whole and decidedly civilized (or at least NOT as violent and savage killers), what it actually did was romanticize the story of a young Indian girl forcibly married to a European settler while reproducing stereotypes about Indians as, if not magical being themselves, adjacent to supernatural and spiritual beings and realms. Still, not entirely human.

Additionally, philosopher Eleanor Byrne and literary theorist Martin McQuillan examined how “The project to erase historical specificity whilst claiming to represent it is most clearly outlined though in the songs sung by Ratcliffe and Powhatan as their respective sides prepare for battle.” They argue that "Disney turns a highly uneven history of colonial genocide into a lesson about the stupidity of war based on mutual tribal or ethnic ignorance” as “Ratcliffe’s and Powhatan’s sides repeat almost identical accusations against one another:”

> Ratcliffe sings, ‘Here’s what you get when races are diverse / Their skins are hellish red, they’re only good when dead’;
>
> While Powhatan sings, ‘This is what we feared, the paleface is a demon / The only thing they feel at all is greed.’
>
> Both songs unite to repeat the same refrain, so that opposing sides sing in unison, ‘They’re savages, savages, barely even human, [...] we must sound the drums of war.’[62]

The authors continue that “the insistence on equivalence of antagonism in each group resists any notion of colonial history and universalises prejudice and hostility irrespective of cultural, political and economic concerns” and concludes that Disney’s Pochahontas “demands that Native Americans share responsibility equally, insisting on an ‘evenness’ in the massacres that

[62] Eleanor Byrne and Martin McQuillan, *Deconstructing Disney* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 109.

would follow the arrival of the Jamestown settlement."[63] Disney, through its role as a world-renown producer of popular culture content, was specifically responsible for reproducing settler discourses and Native stereotypes over the course of a century. Just one company, one story-telling entity. At some point, what matters is not who wrote and originated these stories and tropes, but who chooses to reproduce them.

In an advertisement for the upcoming Disney film, *Peter Pan & Wendy*, to be released on April 28th, 2023, directly to their streaming platform Disney+, the Indian princess Tiger Lily can be seen as a dusky shadow alongside of the Lost Boys. The background characters, literally, stand in the background atop a mountain rising out of the sea but the image harkens back to the movie posters for old Western films in which Indians are depicted as small, faceless figures who, while standing so far in the background as to appear ever-present but not immediately threatening, are recognizable by the feather in their hair (as Tiger Lily is presented here) or the bow and arrow or tomahawk in their hands. It appears that Disney will choose to reproduce tired cliches each generation until the end of time. The degree to which the Walt Disney company has been responsible for producing popular culture content aimed at children cannot be overstated and it continues on—perhaps more fervently than ever before. But Disney's influence has always been, and continues to be, most effective in reaching younger audiences. Another form of popular culture aimed at older children were works of fiction, specifically serialized works of fiction, known as young adult fiction.

[63] Byrne and McQuillan, *Deconstructing Disney*, 110.

“Lil’ Settlers” II: Settler Colonial Discourse For Kids in Young Adult Fiction

Young Adult fiction was a popular genre of popular culture from the mid-twentieth century that remains popular today. While western-specific genre settings fell out of favor and were replaced by stories with science fiction or general adventure or exploratory themes, the presence of themes related to Native Americans remained an odd artifact within these stories. Most of the following examples came to me as accidents—I was not looking for examples of anti-Indian rhetoric explicitly (the exception here was the *Little House* books). Yet, over the years of tracing discursive threads across forms of popular culture, I found these examples time and again. During the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown for most of 2019-2020, I found myself turning to all sorts of distractions. One of those was a revisiting of the 1960s young adult mystery series *Alfred Hitchcock and The Three Investigators*. This opened up a treasure trove of settler nostalgia aimed at young readers in the twentieth century.

Mark Twain’s beloved *Tom Sawyer*, first published in 1884, featured the villain “Injun Joe” whose savagery was inherently connected to his Indianness. When Joe seeks retribution for past injustices, he invokes his Indian heritage; “The Injun blood ain’t in me for nothing.”[64] That “Indian blood,” by Twain’s logic, of course included a propensity for violence and a gleeful attraction to killing in general, and scalping in particular. At one point Indians in the novel were described as “By and by they separated into three hostile tribes, and darted upon each other from ambush with dreadful warwhoops, and killed and scalped each other by thousands. It was a gory day. Consequently it was an extremely satisfactory one.”[65] Twain went on to say “They were prouder and happier in their new acquirement than they would have been in the scalping and

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[64] Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Apple E-Books), 139.

[65] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 220.

skinning of the Six Nations" before he concluded that "We will leave them to smoke and chatter and brag, since we have no further use for them at present."[66] This is one of those rare instances in which popular culture content producers inadvertently tell a truth in their deceptive discourses about Indians—Indians will be used for the purpose of advancing settler colonial white supremacist ideologies, with little regard for what happens to said Indians in the process. While not a serialized novel, this is one of the earlier novels targeted to younger audiences. The themes and style of Twain's nineteenth-century writing remained popular until well into the mid-twentieth century when they inspired adventure books aimed at younger audiences.

Generations of young Americans know the character Laura Ingalls Wilder and her stories of living in the "Little House on the Prairie"—perhaps the original young adult serialized fiction series. Whether from the original series of books written by Wilder inspired by her family's own settler journey across the plains in the second half of the nineteenth century, or from the popular tv adaptation in the later twentieth century, Wilder's stories captured the imagination of white Americans. These books mostly explored the world through the lens of a settler child, and, as such, largely focused on what other settlers were doing. However, there were frequent mentions of Indians throughout the series—usually stemming from her "Ma" and "Pa". Older consumers may have been caught in the settler nostalgia through which these stories are framed. Certainly, younger fans were inspired by the courageous and precocious Laura Ingalls who regaled readers with stories of her father, "Pa" Ingalls, playing as an Indian fighter as a boy. In the first book in the *Little House* series, *Little House in the Big Woods*, (first published in 1932) Pa tells her of a story where "I began to play I was a mighty hunter, stalking the wild animals and the Indians. I played I was fighting the Indians, until the woods seemed full of wild men, and then all at once I

[66] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 221.

heard the birds twittering good night. It was dusky in the path, and dark in the woods."[67] Pa's play fighting of Indians passed down to his children. In *Little Town on the Prairie*, the seventh book in the *Little House* series, Laura and her sister Carrie played a game where they were American colonists fighting for Independence alongside Daniel Boone against the British and Indians. When it came to Indians from real life, though, the fun and games took a dour turn. "Ma" Ingalls was known for her disdain of Native people. In the same story there is an exchange between Ma and Pa, narrated through the lens of their daughter. Pa remarks on Ma's preparation of drying and preserving corn; "That's an Indian idea" he says, "You'll admit yet, Caroline, there's something to be said for Indians." Ma replies "If there is… you've already said it, many's the time, so I needn't." Young Laura commented on this exchange by saying "Ma hated Indians…"[68] The *Little House* books, far more so than the television series, normalized a hostile multi-generational nostalgia for Native Americans even if the main voice of the series held no particular animosities towards Indians.

One of the earliest transitions from dime novel to young adult pulp fiction was the *Tom Swift* series which ran in forty titles published from 1910 until 1941.[69] The premise of these adventure novels was that Tom Swift, a young tinkerer and inventor obsessed with science, explores the world on his motorcycle or custom airship of his own invention. The emphasis of modernism and science is offset immediately by Indians stuck in the past. The first run of *Tom Swift* novels was filled with references to Native people that directly replicated earlier forms of settler discourse. In the Swift novels, Indians are brutish, lazy, and dangerous, and entirely

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[67] Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House in the Big Woods* (Distributed Proofreaders Canada) Kindle Edition, 23.

[68] Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little Town on the Prairie* (Distributed Proofreaders Canada) Kindle Edition, 75.

[69] A complete list of Tom Swift novels can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Tom_Swift_books.

common. In a collected volume of the first twenty-five novels, published between 1910 and 1922, there were over three hundred mentions of Indians.[70]

The early *Tom Swift* novels included highly racialized depictions of Indians and other ethnic "others." The treatment of non-white characters, and specifically any Indigenous characters, reads like a greatest hits of settler grievances about Indians from the previous two centuries. In one story, *Tom Swift in the Caves of Ice Or, The Wreck of the Airship*, local Indians are accused of being beggars: "we can't give away our supplies. Go hunt food if you want it, ye lazy beggars!"[71] Many of the tropes of Native Americans; treacherous and skulking beings, were overlaid onto Indigenous peoples in Central and South America, Africa, and India (as Tom's home-made airship could carry him to exotic locales far outside of the eastern states region that he called home). In *Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle Or, Daring Adventures in Elephant Land*, Swift describes how his friends "kept up a hot fire whenever a skulking black form could be seen."[72] In *Tom Swift in Captivity Or, A Daring Escape By Airship* (the title itself a nod to earlier settler discourses), the author comments as Swift's group encounters Indigenous South Americans that "now that Tom looked a second time he saw that the man was not as black as the other drivers—not an honest, dark-skinned black but more of a sickly yellow, like a treacherous half-breed."[73] Finally, in *Tom Swift and His Great Searchlight Or, On the Border For Uncle Sam*, the author invokes the trope of Indians as animals—"Those Indians climb like cats."[74] The titles

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[70] For the survey of Tom Swift novels I used a ebook version of the first twenty-five novels. See Victor Appleton [Howard R. Garis], *The Tom Swift Megapack: 25 Complete Novels* (Wildside Press, LLC., 2012). Kindle.

[71] Victor Appleton [Howard R. Garis], *The Tom Swift Megapack: 25 Complete Novels* (Wildside Press, LLC., 2012). Kindle, 661.

[72] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack,* Kindle, 864.

[73] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 1078.

[74] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 1658.

of these stories themselves were entrenched within settler discourses and together with the ways in which Indigenous peoples were depicted within these stories it is clear that the early twentieth-century *Tom Swift* novels reproduced much of the same Anti-Indian rhetoric of earlier settler discourses.

Of all the anti-Indian tropes found in previous settler discourses, it was the depiction of Indians as savage and violently malevolent characters that stood out the most in early *Tom Swift* novels. In the previously mentioned *On the Border For Uncle Sam* story, Native people were depicted as slow, hulks and dim—utilizing stunted speech when approached by U.S. officials. This can be seen in the following exchange;

> "'How Big Foot!' greeted the custom officer, to one Indian who had an extremely large left foot. How!"
>
> "How!" responded the Indian, with a grunt.
>
> "'Plenty much fine air-bird; eh?' and the agent waved his hand toward the Falcon."
>
> "'Yep. Plenty much big'."[75]

This depiction of brutishness would later be weaponized in early animation of the 1930s and 1940s and become a staple of twentieth century settler discourses about Native people.

Additionally, the ways in which savagery was intertwined with violence was a common theme in these stories. In the *Caves of Ice*, Swift wrecks his airship in the far-North where he encounters "th' savage Eskimos an' Indians."[76] The crew feared attack by the "savage Indians that are all around in th' mountains about th' valley." Ultimately, this attack came to fruition preceded by the use of another trope—the "war cry;" "Suddenly, from without the cave came a

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[75] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 1284.

[76] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 624.

series of fierce yells. It was the battle-cry of the Indians."[77] The device of the "war cry" or "war whoop" of Indians on the attack was used over and over in the Swift stories. In the second story, *Tom Swift and His Airship*, printed in 1910, there was a reference to a character "looking like a stage Indian's ready for the war-path."[78] In *Tom Swift and the Diamond Makers*, one of Tom's friends "gave a yell like an Indian, about to do a stage scalping act."[79] In *Tom Swift and His Air School Or, Uncle Sam's Mastery of the Sky*, Swift uses the "war whoop" as a descriptor for unfamiliar sounds stating "at that instant there broke on Tom's ears a succession of discordant sounds which seemed to be a combination of an Indian's war whoop and a college student's yells at a football game."[80] The use of scalping and Indians on the war path was not solely used as a proxy in relation to Native characters, there were examples of actual violent Indians as well. In *Tom Swift in the Land of Wonders Or, The Underground Search For Gold*, first published in 1917, Swift is told as a warning that "the old-time Indians used to scalp their enemies."[81] However, in no time the group faces imminent attack as an "Indian must have sneaked into camp when we were eating."[82] As Swift's group flees the camp, Tom "glanced back at the Indians grouped behind him—scowling savage Indians."[83] The ways in which the *Tom Swift* novels of the nineteen-teens and twenties engaged directly with, and reproduced, settler discourses admonishing Native people for being beggars, treacherous, deceitful, savage, and violent places

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[77] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 691.

[78] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 204.

[79] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 540.

[80] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 1886.

[81] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 1682.

[82] Appleton, *The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 1746.

[83] Appleton,*The Tom Swift Megapack*, Kindle, 1754.

these texts as a pivotal bridge between the settler discourses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The formula of young adult adventure novels featured in the *Tom Swift* series went on to become highly influential in other series such as *The Hardy Boys, Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators*, and *The Nancy Drew* detective mystery series.

The Hardy Boys mystery books were undeniably one of the most popular young adult adventure fiction series during the twentieth century. Originally written in the 1920s, and then edited in the 1960s to soften racist depictions of African American, Native America, Asian American, and Latin American peoples, these novels centered on the *Hardy Boys* solving mysteries.[84] *The Hardy Boys* novels obviously targeted young boys with the adventures relating to sometimes historical settings; the old west, ghost towns, and mines in particular, or modern settings with technological themes; espionage, motor boating, scuba diving, aviation, etc. There were over three hundred novels written by various authors and in various iterations of *The Hardy Boys* universe between 1927 and 2005.[85] The influence of these characters and stories was vast and persistent throughout the twentieth century.[86]

Indians were present in many of the *Hardy Boys* adventures—usually in spirit. Oftentimes the inclusion of Indians in the story was relegated to a historical past—inserting a historical note in the story that Indians used to be present—and a fear of Indian ghosts or revenge—characters often show some hesitancy that the old Indians might still be around. Six of the first ten *Hardy Boys* novels include mentions of Indians. In the third book in the series, *The Secret of the Old Mill*, the boys nervously explore the remnants of a nineteenth-century mill. As the boys and their

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[84] Connelly, *The Hardy Boys Mysteries*, 78-82.

[85] A complete list of *Hardy Boys* book publications can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Hardy_Boys_books.

[86] Connelly, *The Hardy Boys Mysteries,* 3.

friends are in search of the mill, they exit a cave and find an arrow embedded in the ground and share the following exchange;

> “It-it almost hit us,” Iola quavered. Callie, who was white-faced with fear, nodded.
>
> Joe was furious. “Whoever shot it shouldn't be allowed to use such a dangerous weapon!” he burst out. “That's a hunting arrow-it could have caused serious injury.”
>
> “Chet gulped. ‘M-maybe the Indians haven't left here, after all,’ he said, trying to hide his nervousness.”[87]

Later, after finding said mill and becoming trapped due to a pursuit, the brothers looked back to history to save themselves: “Remember, this mill was used by settlers. In those days many places had hidden rooms in case of Indian attacks.”[88] In the fifth book, *Hunting For Hidden Gold*, the boys are guided to an old mine by a local who tells them “You'll have to take an old Indian path called Ambush Trail, up near Brady's Mine.” Once on the difficult trail, Joe remarks “I'll bet even the Indians got lost sometimes on this snaky trail.”[89] In the very next novel, the boys investigate *The Shore Road Mystery*, and once again a local sets them on their path by telling them the history of the area, as discovered by settler Elias Dodd. He explains “A good seaman, with considerable knowledge of astronomy, he went in search of a horseshoe-shaped inlet he had heard of from an Indian. Dodd hoped to establish a settlement to which other families might come later.” However, once that settlement was established, Dodd sought to cheat local Indians: “When Elias left the colony for his journey, he brought with him a chest of jewels, many of which were very valuable. He hoped to use the less expensive ones to barter with the Indians he

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[87] Franklin W. Dixon, *The Hardy Boys: The Secret Of The Old Mill* (Henderson: SynSine Press, 2023) Kindle, 71.

[88] Dixon, *The Hardy Boys: The Secret Of The Old Mill*, Kindle, 185.

[89] Franklin W. Dixon, *The Hardy Boys: Hunting For Hidden Gold* (Henderson: SynSine Press, 2023) Kindle, 113-14.

might encounter."[90] Not all of the mentions of Indians were so benign though. In the seventh book, *The Secret of the Caves*, Chet Hardy unleashed his inner-Indian as "Suddenly, above the sound of the starting motor, Chet let out an Indian war whoop and yelled, "On to Rockaway!"[91]

The Hardy Boys novels also included other artifacts of earlier forms of settler colonial discourse. Usually these issues were unrelated to Native people within the stories, but the language that was commonly used in association with Indians in captivity narratives and settler narratives. Within those same first ten novels, there were frequent uses of the terms "treacherous," "thieving," "Begging," and "savagery." Again, these descriptors seem benign, but their frequency and connection to specific historical uses—in combination to the frequency of mentions of Indians within the same stories—places these phrases and words in a larger body of settler colonial discourse. One particular connection includes the terms "skulking" and "prowling"—frequent descriptors of Indians in historical settler discourse—to describe a "turbaned" agitator in the story. While not a Native American, this person is described in ways to illicit fear, mistrust, and danger around a character of Middle Eastern ancestry. For example, in *The Mystery of Cabin Island*, Joe Hardy reveals the impetus for disguising himself to scare the protagonist, "I got the idea from somebody else in a white robe and turban who was prowling around here and scared Chet."[92]

In the first ten *Hardy Boys* novels, where there was far more direct engagement with Indians, this occurred roughly in a third of the books. However, in books 11-19, where there was far less direct engagement with Indians, instead utilizing terms that had previously been

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[90] Franklin W. Dixon, *The Hardy Boys: The Shore Road Mystery* (Henderson: SynSine Press, 2023) Kindle, 29-30.

[91] Franklin W. Dixon, *The Hardy Boys: The Secret of the Caves* (Henderson: SynSine Press, 2023) Kindle, 57.

[92] Franklin W. Dixon, *The Hardy Boys: The Mystery of Cabin Island* (Henderson: SynSine Press, 2023) Kindle, 193.

connected to Indians in settler discourses occurred far more often—7 of the 9 books include multiple uses of these terms and often within the same text there would be uses of the words thieves, beggars, prowling, and savagery. In the next nine novels, numbered 11-19, there were only two books that directly referenced Indians. One interesting note is that book 14 titled *A Stormy Night* is a collection of ghost stories.[93] This book does not include direct mentions of Indians but features an Indian "ghost" on the cover. This is an interesting connection to the fear of Indian spirits and was used to sell the reader that in this compilation of ghost stories, such an Indian story would be included. Why that is not reflected in the text is a mystery.

In the 1960s, another team of young sleuths took up the task of investigating mysteries on the West Coast. The serialized novels *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators* (an obvious take on the Hardy Boys adventure novels) follow a gang known as the *Three Investigators* comprised of tweens Jupiter Jones, Pete Crenshaw, and Bob Andrews who operate their investigative business out of a secret hideout in the middle of the Jones Salvage Yard owned by Jupiter's Aunt and Uncle. These serialized adventure stories distinguished themselves through the draw of having Alfred Hitchcock as a character that aided the squad of investigators with resources and wisdom. Set in the fictional town of Rocky Beach near Hollywood, California, these stories also utilized pioneer mythologies and a romanticized history of Native Americans.

In *The Mystery of the Moaning Cave*, the *Three Investigators* encounter a cave-dwelling hermit in the hills of Southern California while they investigate said mystery. The boys are surprised by Ben Jackson while exploring the depths of the cave and things take an immediately dramatic turn as Ben warns them to "be mighty careful here" and that his predilection for planning ahead meant that he "never lost his scalp" as continued to the boys "got to think

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[93] Franklin W. Dixon, *The Hardy Boys: A Stormy Night* (Henderson: SynSine Press, 2023) Kindle, Cover Illustration.

ahead…know the country and fight the enemy." Pete Crenshaw, as confused as the reader as to what this has to do with a mysterious moaning cave that has been troubling local ranchers asks Ben "Scalp? You Fought Indians? Here?." Ben's response was like loaded buckshot aimed into the faces of young readers: "Injuns! I'll tell you about Injuns, I will. Lived with Injuns all my life. Fine people but hard enemies, yessir. Almost lost my scalp twice. Ute country and Apache country. Sneaky, the Apaches. But I got away."[94] The only connection between the story and this exchange is that there is some element of Native folklore about "the Old One" and references to Spanish heresy from local Indians who "said that a black and shiny monster called The Old One lived in a pool deep inside the cave in Devil Mountain."[95] While there is one brief moment that alludes to the existence of "the Old One", the story mainly focuses on a Mexican bandit named El Diablo who may be haunting the cave in either the spirit, or the very old flesh. This story, and many others like it, is deeply entrenched in layers of colonialism. The rhetorical remnants of the nineteenth century are apparent; Indians are sneaky and violent and it is only through the luck, or fortitude, of the settler that you can live amongst them and keep your scalp. To be generous and concede that at some point in American history, in some geographies, and regarding some Native Nations, this could have been an important survival lesson for young settlers, it is safe to say that such a warning was entirely unnecessary in 1968. What this rhetoric did, in the time it was reproduced, was to keep alive the idea that Indians were so bad, that the United States government (and its citizens) were entirely justified in trying to eradicate them. This may have been a helpful mental exercise for non-Native Americans given the war in Vietnam which in

[94] William Arden, *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators in The Mystery of the Moaning Cave* (New York: Random House, 1968) 22.

[95] Arden, *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators in The Mystery of the Moaning Cave* 9.

1968 saw brutal violence towards the U.S. in the Tet Offensive and the U.S. retaliation in the My Lai Massacre.[96]

The *Hardy Boys* and the *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigator* series obviously targeted young boys—as did much popular culture in mid-century that existed under the umbrella of "adventure"—but what of the *The Hardy Boys*' "sister" series, *Nancy Drew*? With over two hundred books published between 1930 (and as with *The Hardy Boys*, revised in 1959/1960) and 2023, how did this series stack up to utilizing settler colonial and anti-Indian rhetoric in a series aimed at young women?[97] It turns out, quite differently. In the first ten *Nancy Drew* mystery novels, Indians are only mentioned in one story. In *The Secret of Shadow Ranch*, set in an "Old West" setting, Indians exist as they often did in *The Hardy Boys* stories—as a prop. They are fixtures of the old west setting in which the stories take place. While there was only one out of the first ten stories that directly mentioned Indians, all of the first ten stories included, often multiple times, references to thieves, beggars, and prowlers. As was true with *The Hardy Boys* novels, these descriptors were not used in reference to Native people, but the inclusion and frequency of these specific terms that were commonly featured in nineteenth-century settler colonial discourses gives pause. A wider study of literature trends would be needed to more fully understand the importance, or lack thereof, of this observed pattern. If these words appear across a wide swath of literature genres, then the inclusion and prevalence of these terms in mid-twentieth century young adult fiction means little. However, in the context of specific rhetorical phrases and words encoded within settler discourse, the inclusion and

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[96] Richard Slotkin explored similar ideas about the use of violence in the film *The Wild Bunch*, released the year after this young adult mystery was published. See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 581-623.

[97] A complete list of the Nancy Drew Mystery novels can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Nancy_Drew_books.

prevalence of these specific terms in young adult fiction—specifically in the “adventure” genre—fit with similar messages that were explicitly linked to Indians in animated shorts, radio and television programs, films, music, comic books, scouting organizations and theme parks. I suspect that this link is meaningful.

“Lil’ Settlers” III: Performative Settler Colonial Discourse For Kids & Families

An explosion of settler nostalgia in the postwar period, coupled with white, middle-class prosperity, targeted children with newly-invigorated forms of popular culture associated with Western genre themes. The threads of this nostalgia ran deep in popular culture—much of which was produced in the mid-twentieth century by men who were middle-aged, career, working-class artists who had grown up influenced by the settler nostalgia of the turn of the twentieth century. However, much like the Wild West shows of the late-nineteenth century, part of this settler nostalgia was performative. The settler narratives that inundated young viewers from radio, television, animation, and film, was performed daily in households by children playing Cowboys and Indians. But there were public performances of these nostalgic discourses as well; scouting clubs encouraged children to “play Indian” while theme parks, such as Disneyland and Knotts Berry Farm in Southern California, took play-acting to whole new levels by providing immersive environments in which one could act out settler fantasies of a mythologized past.

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA), arguably the most well-known scouting organization in the U.S., was one of several organizations that sought to teach children independence, survival, and piety. Those messages were delivered through a reductive settler colonial framework that was heavily steeped in pioneer mythology as well as noble savage ideologies. Historian Micha Honek commented on the origins of the organization that “started as and Anglo-Saxon project

launched in the early 1900s by men in England and the United States who feared that white Protestant middle-class masculinity was in decline."[98] According to Honek's work in *Our Frontier is the World*, race, gender, and class were front and center in the conception of the Scouts, but these were not the only social constructs at work in this racial project. Honek argued that "BSA organizers deployed a specific concept of youth to sanitize the bloody work of empire and allay anxieties about the nation's future" while employing the "virgin continent" mythology "gave the descendants of white settlers a strong understanding of their nation as innocent and energetic" and "furthered the exceptionalism story of a youthful United States and a tired old Europe."[99] The other work accomplished through employing the "virgin land" mythology within scouting was that Scouts, like their white settler descendants, got to settle America all over again through nostalgia-laden performative settler memory with the added bonus of not having to eliminate Natives from the land, but rather, to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into their worldview.

Some of the most visible and clear examples of settler memory being skewed through nostalgia and a whitewashing of settler violence against Native People were found in literature from the BSA from the early-to-mid-twentieth century. In an early scouting handbook from 1911, the "laws" of scouting were preempted with the statement that "in aboriginal America, the Red Indians had their laws of honor: likewise the Zulus, Hindus, and the later European nations have their ancient codes."[100] Here, the BSA invokes the honor of Native Nations in order to perform celebratory settler memory in existing Indian spaces—both physical and theoretical. Not only

[98] Mischa Honek, *Our Frontier Is the World: The Boy Scouts in the Age of American Ascendancy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 3.

[99] Honek, *Our Frontier Is the World*, 13.

[100] Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts Handbook: The First Edition, 1911* (The Project Gutenberg EBook of Boy Scouts Handbook, 2009), 16. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/29558/29558-h/29558-h.htm

were Boy Scouts encouraged to exist in nature—on the land settlers displaced Indians from—but also to exist in that space like an Indian. In this 1911 handbook there are 76 mentions of Indians—nearly all of them instruct scouts to practice skills supposed to be practiced by Native people in a romanticized past. If a scout gets lost? "Hunters, Indians, yes, birds and beasts, get lost at times…When you do miss your way, the first thing to remember is, like the Indian, "You are not lost; it is the teepee that is lost."[101] How does a Scout find water?

> The Indians had a way of purifying water from a pond or swamp by digging a hole about one foot across and down about six inches below the water level, a few feet from the pond. After it was filled with water, they bailed it out quickly, repeating the bailing process about three times. After the third bailing the hole would fill with filtered water. Try it.[102]

Aside from taking on general Indian-ness, Scouts were encouraged to take on aspects of Indian savagery. On hunting: "Most savages are hunters, and one of the early lessons of the Indian boy is to know the tracks of the different beasts about him." So, scouts were to learn from the "savages" because of their affinity for hunting because "savages are more skilful at it than civilized folk, because tracking is their serious life-long pursuit and they do not injure their eyes with books." Here the ideology of settler colonialism that had long held that Indians were illiterate because they were savage became fully-circular as Indians were savage because they were illiterate. This is a clear example of how the rhetoric and ideology of settler colonialism ensnare Native people in discursive traps they can not escape from, and also protect settlers from ever falling victim to.

Yet, the story of American settlement, as told in the BSA Handbook, was presented in as concise a version of pioneer mythology as has perhaps ever been written down. In the following

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[101] Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts* Handbook, 68.

[102] Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts* Handbook, 155.

passage, I provide italics for emphasis, but the entire quote is useful to illustrate how the BSA specifically engaged in the settler language of “playing Indian:”

> In their work and service they paralleled very closely the knights of the Round Table, but whereas Arthur's knights were dressed in suits of armor, the American pioneers were dressed in buckskin. They did, however, the very same things which ancient chivalry had done, *clearing the forests of wild animals, suppressing the outlaws and bullies and thieves of their day and enforcing a proper respect for women. Like the old knights they often were compelled to do their work amid scenes of great bloodshed, although they loved to live in peace*. These American knights and pioneers were generally termed backwoods men and scouts, and were men of distinguished appearance, of athletic build, of high moral character and frequently of firm religious convictions. Such men as "Apple-seed Johnny," Daniel Boone, George Rogers Clark, Simon Kenton and John James Audubon, are the types of men these pioneers were. They were noted for their staunch qualities of character. They hated dishonesty and were truthful and brave. They were polite to women and old people, ever ready to rescue a companion when in danger, and equally ready to risk their lives for a stranger. They were very hospitable, dividing their last crust with one another, or with the stranger whom they happened to meet. They were ever ready to do an act of kindness. They were exceedingly simple in their dress and habits. *They fought the Indians, not because they wished to, but because it was necessary to protect their wives and children from the raids of the savages*.[103]

But, the overland trail narratives, the guide books, and the later settler reminiscences often included open discussions of settlers willfully, sometimes gleefully, engaging in violence against Indians. Settler narratives are rife with unreliable narrators, but we know that those who advocated in committing violence against Indians aligns with the historical reality that settlers committed violence against Native people. The handbooks of the BSA, too, were produced with unreliable narrators that then asserted that settlers had to commit that violence, that they didn’t want to.

Should a Scout think that they can rely on luck, rather than hard work, the handbook reinforced the pioneer mythology of rugged individualism:

> Life, after all, is just this: Some go through life trusting to luck. They are not worthy to be scouts. Others go through life trusting to hard work and clear thinking. These are they who have cleared the wilderness and planted wheat where forests once grew, who have

[103] Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts* Handbook, 240.

> driven back the savage, and have fostered civilization in the uncultivated places of the earth. The good scout is always at work--working to improve himself and to improve the daily lot of others.[104]

These messages coming out of this handbook are that Indian savagery was indicative of a shrewdness in living, not a quality that scouts' ancestors waged war against Native people for. In this story of the American West, settlers engaged in warfare with Indians against out of necessity—because Indians forced them to—not because settlers wanted to. The legacy left to the Scouts, then, is one in which taking parts of Indian knowledge ways and using them however the Scouts see fit contains no tension because the Scout's settler descendants did nothing wrong. As Philip J. Deloria explained, playing Indian was intentionally incorporated into Scouting as a way to honor Native people with no recognition of what actually happened to those Native people, or the role in which white settlers played in that history.[105]

If the rigors of scouting were too much of a commitment for playing Indian, theme parks in Southern California allowed visitors to drop in to an Indian village or an Old West settler town for an afternoon. Walt Disney, and his friend Walter Knott, two men responsible for the most immersive theme parks in Western America, prominently featured Western themes in their parks as a direct result of their own childhood nostalgia of the West—a nostalgia steeped in settler colonial discourses.[106] In particular, cultural historian Sabrina Mittermeier described how "Walt

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[104] Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts* Handbook, 252.

[105] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998), 109-114.

[106] Both Walt Disney and Walter Knott articulated the influence their boyhood love of a mythologized American West on their theme parks. Walt Disney directly addressed the influence that Twain and what he referred to as the "heroes" of the frontier such as Daniel Boone and Davy Crocket had on him, as explored in Sabrina Mittermeier's *A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks*. See Sabrina Mittermeier, *A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks: Middle Class Kingdoms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 36-7. Meanwhile Walter Knott was "creating a small mining town of his own as homage to the past." Specifically, to his grandmother who had "crossed the desert in a covered wagon in 1868." See Christopher Merritt and J. Eric Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved: From Boysenberry to Theme Park, the History of Knott's Berry Farm* (Santa Monica: Angel City Press, 2015), 37.

Disney's personal frontier nostalgia…played an important role in Frontierland" but also that "while [his] personal interest did play a big role, his ideas also were easy to market to visitors of Disneyland" and that his "nostalgia spoke to his generational peers."[107] The legacy of settler discourses relying on nostalgia and false historical narratives to sell a mythologized story to audiences, ready to hand over their hard-eared money, was alive and well at early California theme parks like Disneyland, from the very beginning.

Even before opening Disneyland in 1955, Walt Disney was entrenched in, and committed to, reproducing pioneer mythologies as exemplified by Davy Crockett. Featured in a televised series and Walt's weekly television broadcasts, Davy Crockett represented a static picture of an American pioneer that children could put on as a costume at the opening of Disneyland. Actors dressed as Crockett were there to meet visitors on opening day where they could buy Crockett's famous "coon skin cap," ride on the Davy Crockett Explorer Canoes, and fight off Indian attacks at Fort Wilderness on Tom Sawyer's Island.[108] Frontierland was described early in the park's existence, by the publication the Disneyland News, as "a land of hostile Indians and straight shooting pioneers" in which visitors could "actually meet full-blooded American Indians and hear stories of the Old West."[109] Historian Eric Avila, in his work on popular culture, examined the ways in which Disneyland visitors went beyond just existing among Indians in Frontierland and within the Indian Village it contained for a brief period, noting one New York Times reporter who "went so far as to interpret the popularity of the Disneyland Indian as a craving on the part

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[107] Mittermeier, *A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks*, 36-7.

[108] Mittermeier, *A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks*, 33-5.

[109] Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 132.

of visitors to actually be Indian."[110] The reporter stated "One of the most amusing and revealing sights at Disneyland is a score of people straining over paddles in a big Indian war canoe; while a real life brave solemnly steers in the stern…for ten minutes they are Indian warriors."[111]

Disneyland in general, and Frontierland *in particular*, provided ample space for settler-descended peoples to play settler or Indian. As historian Sabrina Mittermeier noted in her cultural history of Disneyland, "Frontierland became the first three-dimensional space that would embody it [the American frontier], de facto turning the frontier myth into a walkable environment for baby-boomer children and their parents."[112] Technically, Knott's Berry Place beat out this American "first," but we'll get to that in a moment. Not only did Frontierland put audiences into a walkable version of the American frontier, Tom Sawyer Island, in particular, allowed audiences to exist within the Mark Twain mythos of a settler-(re)imagined nostalgia of white American boyhood and girlhood where they could explore the "nearby caves like the one in which Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher got lost."[113] What is left out of that analysis, though, is that one of these caves was specifically named "Injun Joe's Cave" (as demarcated by a wooden sign hung outside) that existed on the island until a refresh of the land sanitized the Island of its Twain connections in favor of a pirate-themed island to correspond to the 2007 makeover of the Pirates of the Caribbean ride to accommodate the new movie franchise of the same name in 2007.[114] These spaces existed for over fifty years in Disneyland, and, while Disney's vision of never allowing the park to be "complete" (a stronger argument one could not make for

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[110] Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 133

[111] Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 133

[112] Mittermeier, *A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks*, 36.

[113] Mittermeier, *A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks*, 37.

[114] Mittermeier, *A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks*, 37.

connections to the ongoing project of settler colonial expansion) his theme park has, over the years and without major disruption to his operations, put on so many hats of various cultures and represented as many damaging cultural representations of Native, African, Mexican, and Asian Americans as one could imagine—all to the delight of settler-descended visitors.

Disneyland is not done representing Native Americans through engaging with settler discourses. Until the park closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Disneyland Paris operated a recreation of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show including—according to the show program—"authentic Indian dances and songs" (what constitutes "authentic" in this case is not stated) as well as an introduction to Sitting Bull, "the great chief of the Sioux nation and members of his tribe."[115] Today, in Anaheim, California, the Indians still perch atop the mountains of Neverland in the Peter Pan's Flight dark ride—doomed to sit next to their campfire and wigwam in an imagined past in a fantasy land. Audio Animatronics of Indians occupy a village on the banks of the imagined Rivers of America—complete with an elder shaman who is performing some sort of ritual in song and dance with arms aimed at the sky. Who this particular performance is appealing to is not entirely clear. Perhaps the inclusion of language stating that these performances are somehow "authentic" according to Disney is some attempt to assuage potential criticisms and provide the illusion that Disneyland is at least aiming for some version of authenticity, although in their flattening all of history down into one image it is practically-speaking just an updated depiction of Indians—less overtly and offensively racist—that is more palatable to non-Native audiences. But above all, that old relic of something that approximates a historical legacy of the frontier, the wooden Indian outside of the old tobacco shop (now the pin trading shop) continues its weathered watch over the streets of Frontierland.

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[115] McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows*, 2.

Nowhere near as world-renowned as Disneyland, Walter Knott's theme park in Buena Park, California was a staple attraction for area residents before Walt Disney ever broke ground in his Anaheim orange groves in 1955. Originally named Knott's Berry Place, the park began as an actual working farm in the early 1920s.[116] By 1935, the Berry Place had added a chicken dinner restaurant, house for the Knott family, and a number of western tableaus which increased in size, number, and complexity over the next decade.[117] In building the Western tableau's that would entertain guests who had come to eat at this wife's chicken shack, Walter Knott relied heavily on his own personal nostalgia for the nebulous ideas of the "frontier," the "old West," and of "pioneering."[118] Historian John Willis explored the ways in which Knott's nostalgia for Western mythology was informed by preservationist and performative forms of nostalgia: each promoting a nostalgia capitalism, "of selling the frontier experience for money and capital gain."[119] Willis further argued that Knott, like so many of his settler forefathers, relied on the very bounty reaped from nostalgic distortions about settlement in the West:

> Knott meanwhile increasingly used the park, and with it, frontier nostalgia, to fund and promote his politics and values. Despite benefiting from the U.S. government in the form of a 160-acre homestead in the 1910s and the assistance of George Darrow from the U.S. Department of Agriculture over initial boysenberry plants, Knott proved an ardent anti-federalist, and singularly blamed the government for the Great Depression. Knott feared that modern Americans, when faced with challenge, might 'lose that self-reliance and independence' rooted in frontier times. [120]

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[116] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 12.

[117] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 22-31.

[118] John Willis, "Nostalgia for the Old West in Knott's Berry Farm, Orange County, California" *Comparative American Studies An International Journal*, 2022, 2-3.

[119] Willis, "Nostalgia for the Old West in Knott's Berry Farm, Orange County, California," 2.

[120] Willis, "Nostalgia for the Old West in Knott's Berry Farm, Orange County, California," 4.

While Knott's capitalist venture was certainly not the only game in town standing to financially gain from a mythologized settler-past, it certainly relied on the nostalgic tableaus of the Old West to a greater degree than Walt Disney would in coming decades.

Between 1940 and 1941, the Western-themed tableaus that Walter Knott had placed around the farm were expanded into what would become one of the central features of Knott's Berry Farm Theme Park, an area named "Ghost Town." The town was constructed using reclaimed materials from actual Western ghost towns in Arizona, Nevada, and California, and gave the town an immersive quality that Knott believed combined education and entertainment.[121] Throughout the 1940s, Knott continued to expand and fill-in Ghost Town with a replica bottle house, and a host of characters portrayed by actors who roamed Ghost Town and interacted with guests. One of the more well-known characters was "Chief Red Feather," played by Jim Brady, a Navajo and Sioux stuntman from Shiprock, New Mexico.[122] A publicist for Knott's recalled the popularity of "Chief Red Feather," saying "He was the best one at getting tips. He had a stack of headdresses behind him and you could get your picture taken with him and all the time he was clinking those silver dollars. Yet he would make sure that your dad got a good picture. He kept everybody laughing, so everybody was happy."[123]

Ghost Town was central to Knott's identity and success as it blossomed into a Theme Park —officially changing the name to Knott's Berry Farm— in 1947.[124] Between 1950 and 1955 (when Disneyland opened in nearby Anaheim) Knott added the Ghost Town Saloon, a working stagecoach and horse team, an 1881-built locomotive complete with passenger cars (named "The

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[121] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 36-43.

[122] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 59.

[123] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 59.

[124] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 66.

Calico Railway" which traversed the entire farm), the Boot Hill cemetery, a one-room schoolhouse, the Birdcage Theater, and a functioning gold-panning sluice where families could pan for real gold flakes.[125] In competition with the immersive settings and world-class attractions of Disneyland, Knott added an "Indian Village" attraction and the infamous "Haunted Shack" (modeled after roadside "Vortex" sites) and, in 1960, a western-themed shooting gallery and the immense and immersive Calico Mine Ride—complete with a series of mining carts pulled by a small locomotive through an enormous mountain filled with wonderously-lit caverns.[126] Finally, in 1969, a large flume ride, named "The Calico Log Ride," was added adjacent to Ghost Town.[127]

For all of Knott's attention to recreating a mythologized, nostalgic, old west ghost town, there was always a noticeable omission of Native Americans. Aside from "Chief Red Feather," the Indian Village was a small addition that, like in Disneyland, mostly served as a place for visitors to shop. In their history of Knott's Berry Farm, Christopher Merritt and J. Eric Lynxwiler, describe the Indian Village as being "built by Frank Day and his Native American wife Ethel" which consisted of "three teepees and a souvenir-shop hogan."[128] Given the attempts to incorporate Native Americans into the story of the Ghost Town several decades later though, it seems that more does not equal better. In the early 1990s a new land connected Ghost Town to the back of the park—this new area titled "Indian Trails" "celebrated the variety of Native American culture and architecture, sold handmade crafts and also entertained with dance and music."[129] This was another attempt to blend education and entertainment, but the educational

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[125] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 78-95.

[126] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 101-107.

[127] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 126.

[128] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 104.

[129] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 158-9.

components quickly waned as the gift shop became the central component of the land. In 1994 the gift shop was attached to a new attraction, an animatronic storytelling event titled "Spirit Lodge" which "Followed the tales of an elderly Pacific Northwest storyteller as he reminisced about the meaning of life and love."[130] While Knott's should have been applauded for attributing humanity to its Native elder animatronic and gave consideration to Indians having their own reminiscences, it is not entirely clear that amidst the setting of this deeply-entrenched settler nostalgic space designed for audiences to perform settler memory that "the meaning of life and love" would be the subject of those Native reminiscences.

"John Wayne's Teeth:" The Reproduction of Settler Colonial Discourse in Western Genre Film

Film, arguably more often and more effectively than any other form of media, was utilized in reproducing settler colonial discourses about Native people in twentieth century. The ability to *show* audiences supposed "truths" about Indians, over and over again, was so effective at imprinting on audiences that these stereotypes were real that those cultural ideas became background noise. They didn't have to be *told* anymore—generations of consumers of American popular culture saw with their own eyes what it meant to be an Indian. What follows is a study, wholly incomplete, of some of the ways Western genre films, and the advertising strategies used to promote them, were instrumental in reproducing settler colonial discourses about Native people, and settlers themselves, throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries.

The ways in which Western genre films were marketed to audiences reveals threads of settler colonial discourses. Up until the 1980s western genre film posters were overwhelmingly

[130] Merritt and Lynxwiler, *Knott's Preserved*, 159.

illustrated. Early on this was in line with the technological limits of the time, but the style remained popular long after photography was used in other forms of artistic advertising. There was something romantic about the illustrated western film poster. Part of that something was the way in which Indians were represented. Being illustrated, artists were limited only by their imaginations, and, the studios paying them. The result was an artistic assembly line that existed for decades in which Native people were depicted as props, at best, and as vile creatures, at worst.[131]

Rather than try (surely in vain) to exhaustively trace the history of every depiction of Native Americans in Western genre films over a hundred plus years, I decided to approach this subject a bit differently. To begin my examination of settler discourses within Western genre film, I used Mark Fertig's book of western movie poster advertising in order to see how settler discourses were spread to audiences before they had even seen these films.[132] From there, I explored the films that were presented from this collection if there was something strange, interesting, or attention-grabbing about the ways in which that particular film poster was advertising Indians in the film. This solves the problem of an impossible task of trying to catalog Indian depictions in western film in merely a portion of one chapter.

Some interesting themes can be found within this collection of over 680 film posters. Of the 687 total posters in the book, 94 featured depictions of Indians in them, just over 14%. Again, as expected, the most numerous depictions of Indians in western movie posters come from the decades of the 1950s and 1960s when westerns were at the height of popularity. Of the 14% of

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[131] Film historian Mark Fertig noted that "The fact remains that those working in movie studio art departments mostly toiled in anonymity, not permitted to sign their work." See Mark Fertig, *Hang 'Em High: 110 Years of Western Movie Posters, 1911-2020* (Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2021), 3.

[132] See Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 2021).

advertisements that features Indians, nearly 80% of them depicted Indians as shirtless and wearing war bonnets or headbands, often with feathers sticking out the them. Nearly three-quarters of the images depicted Indians as menacing the camera—scowling or brandishing a weapon, and over half the posters show Indians amassing as a horde—usually on horseback. Other themes, less common than those mentioned above, also reproduced settler discourses from the past about encounters between Native people and settlers; some show Indians attacking a wagon train, stagecoach, or even a steam train, others show Indians grappling with white women, and finally some play with the fictionalized trope of a "White Indian"—a settler who either inadvertently, or sometimes intentionally, "becomes" an Indian or acts like an Indian.[133] This theme gets muddied by large studio productions of films that attempt to showcase a famous Native character (Geronimo, for example) but they are portrayed by a white actor. In these cases you'd see a white actor made to look like an Indian and often depicted as darker-skinned or with their hair long and dark.

It is critical to remember that these advertisements were reproducing settler discourses about Native Americans before viewers were even watching the film. This was a form of advertising propaganda that reinforced in Non-Native Americans' minds and memories—long

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[133] Phillip Deloria addressed the history of so-called "white Indians" in the context of colonial New England as EuroAmerican colonists dressed up as Native people either to hide their own identities or to cast suspicion on local Indian communities for acts of violence or disorder that the colonists engaged in. See Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 11-13. John Unruh tracked a later historical trajectory of "white Indians" in the context of the overland trail migrations and recounted several instances in which white settlers, dressed as Indians, robbed, harrassed, murdered, and sexually assaulted emigrant settlers. As with Deloria's work on "white Indians" in colonial New England, Unruh concluded that many of the EuroAmericans who committed violence dressed as Indians did so to hide their identities, but also to cast blame on Native people. Unruh wrote that in the mid-nineteenth century, "Overlanders themselves widely assumed that Indians bore the blame for much they did not do." See John D. Unruh, *The Plains Across*, 193-5. Richard Slotkin explored the "white Indian" as a mythic figure in *Regeneration Through Violence*. One version of a mythic "white Indian" comes from eighteenth-century "good savage" image, in which a "blend of Christian and Indian, European and Americans, cultivated and wild nature" come together into a mix-race, or mixed-cultural, identity that EuroaAmericans found acceptable. This "good savage" image acted as intermediary between "savage" Indians and white men who chose to live as "savages," rejecting the civilization of EuroAmerican society. See Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 153, 190-5, 252-3.

after the realities of settler and Indian conflicts and attempted genocide of Native peoples of the nineteenth century—the very worst of what settlers had said about Indians for hundreds of years.

The poster for *North of 36*, released in 1924, includes many of the themes that are present throughout the genre of western film advertising. A wagon is under attack from a horde of menacing Indians—brandishing weapons and relentlessly pursuing the settlers—while the wagon master whips an Indian on horseback in the face.[134] The whipping of an Indian in the face is a variation (within this study sample) on the theme of cowboys punching an Indian—almost always depicted in a one-on-one interaction (and, itself a variation on a larger theme of cowboys punching other cowboys or masked bandits). One of the most notable examples was the film poster for the 1929 film *The Drifter*, in which a cowboy leaps from his horse to punch an Indian in the face while a white woman cowers below him.[135] Another stark example was the poster for *Mystery Ranch*, released in 1932, in which a cowboy is shows punching a lone Indian off the edge of a cliff while a white woman cowers on the ground behind the hero.[136] Other film posters feature settlers and Indians grappling, often over a knife or other blade weapon; these are exemplified by the 1926 film *General Custer at the Little Big Horn* and the 1943 film *Wagon Tracks West*—both of which feature settles grappling with Indians wearing war bonnets.[137] The 1958 film *Fort Bowie* threw a spin on this trope; depicting an Indian in faceprint grappling with a white woman over a tomahawk with the word "MASSACRE!" Dramatically painted across the top of the poster—as though written in blood.[138] On one hand, in these advertisements, Indians

[134] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 69.

[135] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 91.

[136] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 110.

[137] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 85, 167.

[138] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 110.

became a mere stand in for the villain—fistfights between cowboys were often used to show who was good and who was bad in film advertising. Yet, the images of cowboys fighting each other often occurred in a more leveled playing field in which the villain was not usually visually represented as being different from the hero. In the cases of Indians receiving physical violence from settlers, Indians were usually depicted in a way that indicated a menacing, threatening demeanor that, when used repeatedly, reinforces (and reproduces) an association with Indian men and violent intent. An irony that is even more apparent in these advertisements though, is that in these cases, it is the cowboys who are performing violence but thanks in large part to centuries of reproduced settler discourses, audiences understand that settlers were probably just in using violence against Indians.

However, while images of cowboys punching out or grappling with Indians provided sensational imagery, it was the theme of the large group of armed Indians pursuing settlers—usually traveling in a wagon, stagecoach, or passenger train—or Indians amassing for war with settlers that defined depictions of Indians in western film advertising throughout the twentieth century. Shortly after the release of *North of* 36, as described previously, the 1926 film poster for *The Last Frontier* features a settler family in a wagon pursued by Indians on horses with spears.[139] The poster for the 1939 film *Geronimo!* depicts the title character (played by a white actor) leading the attack on a stage coach with rifles.[140] The advertisements for the 1940 film, *Young Buffalo Bill*, depicted a horde of Indians riding past an overturned stagecoach engulfed in flames (which they presumably caused).[141] Likewise, the image of Indians setting fire to a settler

[139] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 83.

[140] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 147.

[141] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 157.

wagon was used in advertising for the 1967 film *Fort Utah*.[142] Other films posters, like those for *The Big Trail* (1930,) *The Last Wagon* (1956,) *The Hallelujah Trail* (1965,) and *The Way West* (1967) were films explicitly depicting settler migrations West in which settler wagons were pursued and attacked by armed Indians.[143] Finally, even steam locomotive trains were not impervious to Indian attack in western films. The 1949 film, *Canadian Pacific*, shows Indians on horseback wearing bonnets attacking a passenger train with rifles.[144] In the 1966 film poster for *Navajo Joe*, a very non-Navajo Burt Reynolds leads an attack on a steam train.[145] Finally, in the 1975 film *Breakheart Pass*, one vignette depicts an Indian on horseback with a rifle and headband menacing a steam train with the caption "AMBUSH!" scrawled above.[146] Clearly these films, and their advertising, leaned heavily on the idea that Indians were dangerous, out to get settlers, and no matter of conveyance was safe—a notion that early rail riders directly contradicted in their travel narratives.

While Indians pursuing, menacing, and even attacking settlers were all common tropes that were found consistently throughout settler discourses from previous generations, there was a theme that film posters reproduced from a particular source of settler discourse. Namely, the re-imagined settler memory of the "Indian Wars" as they were known in the U.S., but should more aptly be names the "Wars of Indian Genocide" that were depicted in Wild West shows—particularly Buffalo Bill's show—were reproduced in twentieth century western films. In these depictions, the Indians are a formidable force that often has the U.S. Cavalry running for cover

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142 Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 277.

143 Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 99, 226, 264, 278.

144 Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 181.

145 Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 274.

146 Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 325.

with Indian "armies" in hot pursuit. English and Film Studies scholar Scott Simmon tracked the use of the U.S. Cavalry as a plot device, and its own stock character. Through an examination of Western film, Simmon concluded that "However much of the U.S. Cavalry of the Plains was historically an unglamorous force whose ugly primary job was to harry Native Americans, films accepted the point of view of cavalry officers themselves, who saw the cavalry as the army's elite."[147] While Native people forcefully resisted U.S. settler violence and wars of genocide, depictions of Indians haranguing the cavalry show a reversal of historical truth of the army being used to wage genocidal warfare against Indians.

These posters gave white audiences a glimpse of what they could expect from these films. But they also give contemporary viewers a sense of how Indian characters were portrayed within these films without even having to watch the films themselves. American westerns sold themselves on settler colonial discourses of settlers combatting violent, savage Indians. This was a very public form of media propaganda. Film studios used settler discourses at the expense of actual Native people in order to fill movie theater seats. And yet, the actual discourses portrayed within the films themselves were far more effective, and damaging. What follows is a brief selection of films, many that are well-known, but my goal here is to look at these films through the lens of settler colonial discourses that have been examined throughout this study to connect them together in this larger history of anti-Indian rhetoric that supersedes the importance of any particular film or filmmaker's body of work.

John Ford's *first* masterpiece of Western genre cinema was the 1939 film *Stagecoach*. One of the many collaborations between Ford and John Wayne, the film set the standard for many Western genre film tropes, and, according to literature and film scholar J. P. Telotte,

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[147] Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 71.

Stagecoach “helped to determine for audiences throughout the world the look of the cinematic West.”[148] In the film, a group of settlers travels through the West in a stagecoach and wind up being pursued, seemingly randomly, by Geronimo’s band of Apache warriors through Monument Valley. Once the pursuit begins at roughly just past the first hour, the ensuing fifteen minutes contains an Indian “war-whoop” played on a loop with constant Native bodies being fed to a machine of settler justice as the men in the coach fend off the pursuers. Just before the U.S. Cavalry shows up to rescue the coach and its passengers, there is a particularly important scene which reproduces an updated settler trope from Indian captivity narratives and nineteenth century overland trail narratives in which one of the men in the coach cabin realizes he is down to his last bullet. The camera shifts to the woman sitting next to him who is praying for salvation from the Indians and we see the barrel of his pistol slowly creep into frame until it sits aimed at the side of her head. At the last moment, she is the first to hear the bugle call of the Cavalry, and so the man does not have to perform what he thinks is a mercy killing. This is one of the most egregious on-screen reproductions of a centuries-old discourse that to fall into Indian captivity is a fate worse than death—particularly for a white, Christian woman.[149] J. P. Telotte explores this scene in detail in “Stagecoach and Racial Representation” through a lens of racism and argues that because the scene “happens in the context of racial conflict” that “the victim’s only salvation from this racist’s nightmare seems death itself, mercifully and lovingly delivered by someone near and dear.”[150] That is to say, death at the hands of a white settler is better than death at the

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[148] J. P. Telotte, “*Stagecoach* and Racial Representation,” in *John Ford’s Stagecoach*, Barry Keith Grant, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 115.

[149] J. P. Telotte notes the connections between the “fate worse than death” trope in this scene, in James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, and all the way back to Indian captivity narratives from the colonial era. See Telotte, “*Stagecoach* and Racial Representation,” 116.

[150] Telotte, “*Stagecoach* and Racial Representation,” 114-15.

hands of a racialized other: a savage Indian. There are also gendered and classist dimensions that add subtexts to the scene. As that the camera briefly passes by the reformed prostitute who is traveling with her infant, then comes back around to the praying woman, the audience is assumed to understand why the "gentleman" has chosen to offer his mercy killing to the unsullied, woman of God.[151] *Stagecoach* provides one of the earliest, and most persistent, examples of Western genre films showing audiences supposed truths about Indians that previous generations were told through a variety of settler narrative sources.

In the documentary *Reel Injun*, Jesse Wente provided a critical commentary on the absorption of settler messaging in the film *Stagecoach*—particularly for Native people. "*Stagecoach*," he said, "is the iconic Western. It's the Western that all others are really modeled after and it's one of the most damaging movies for Native people in movie history." Wente continued to expound on the ways in which Ford's film continues to influence audiences: "*Stagecoach* summed up and gave the opinion of Native people for decades to the populace in the U.S.…That's how they thought of us, and it's because of John Ford that they thought of us like that…and that Native people may have even thought of themselves."[152]

Fort Apache, released nine years after *Stagecoach*, may as well have been created as a reason to reuse B-roll film of the advancing Apache horde. The story is one that is 90% romantic drama about a frontier cavalry soldier wanting to marry the daughter of his commanding officer —with two notable chase scenes involving so-called Apache warriors pursuing cavalry soldiers. Those scenes look almost identical to the extensive chase scenes from *Stagecoach*. In two key scenes, an army of Apache warriors shows up on horseback armed mainly with rifles; in the first

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[151] Ford, dir. *Stagecoach*.

[152] Diamond, dir. *Reel Injun*.

sequence they chase off a small group of cavalry soldiers who were trying to recover dead bodies and in the second sequence the U.S. Army and the Apache army face off in battle. The pursuit scene scene is almost exactly like the pursuit in *Stagecoach*, albeit quite shorter, complete with the audio loop played of the stereotypical "Indian war whoop" sound.[153] Yet, in the pursuit, there aren't throngs of Indians being killed and it is interesting to note that when an Indian is killed by gunfire, the only sound made is that continuing loop of the war whoop—no screams, cries, or recognition that a human life has just ended. Instead, the tonal quality, the cadence, of the war whooping begins to take on an animalistic drone—sounding something akin to wild dogs—and the whooping sounds when an Indian is killed reinforce in a subtle way that these are not *people* being killed, this is what it sounds like when *Indians* are killed. Native activist and artist Russell Means spoke about going to the movies with his brother as children. His younger brother would hide his face as Indians were slaughtered onscreen; he refused to watch. Means recalls, as they'd leave the theater they would hear calls from the street of "There's those Indians!" He said, "we'd start fighting…had to fight them white kids. Every Saturday we knew we was gonna get in a fight."[154] The messages shown in Western films impacted Native and non-Native audiences in very different ways. Non-native absorption of settler discourses against Indians reinforced a narrative of violence against Native people as normative. For some Native people, the absorption of these messages was similar to what Jesse Wente described above: an internalized message that you not only did not belong, but that non-Native Americans could beat, maim, or kill you, and that was an acceptable cultural practice for Non-native settler descendants.

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[153] John Ford, dir. *Fort Apache (*1948; North Hollywood, CA: Argosy Pictures, 1948. MP4 Video, 1080p HD.)

[154] Diamond, dir. *Reel Injun*.

The 1956 film, *The Searchers,* remains the pinnacle of John Ford's legacy in Western film. The cinematography, grandeur of the Western landscape, adaptation of a famous Indian captivity narrative from Texas, and the boisterous performance by John Wayne still resonate with audiences. However, the story presented here is immediately identifiable as reproducing several settler discourses from the past.[155] John Wayne plays Ethan Edwards, ex-Confederate soldier who returns to his family's homestead in Texas where his niece has been captured by Comanche Indians.[156] Edwards goes on a rescue mission from Hell, driven by a hatred of Indians so powerful that he almost kills his nephew who is half-Indian, and once he finally finds his niece, he suffers an inner turmoil over whether or not to kill her when she doesn't want to be rescued from her captors.[157] This story was loosely based on the real-life captivity of Cynthia Anne Parker in the 1830s who was forcibly rescued by a U.S. soldier, only to return to her Indian family. Her story was famously told sixty years later by James DeShields who exaggerated much of the account and set the tone of the entire story around the heroic salvation of Parker. While

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[155] While scholars interpret themes within Ford's work, particularly the theme of racism in The Searchers, there is a general consensus to the notion that Ford was invested in myth making in his storytelling. Film scholar and author of several works on Ford's career, Scott Eyman, reflected on Ford's legacy as containing a nostalgia for an imagined history, wrote that "His history became the history of his time, mirroring it, transfiguring it, explaining America to itself." See Scott Eyman, "John Ford in the Twenty-First Century: Why He Still Matters," in *John Ford in Focus: Essays on the Filmmaker's Life and Work*, Kevin L. Stoehr and Michael C. Connolly, eds. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 16. Richard Slotkin also commented more generally on Ford's role as a myth maker, stating that "Ford thus reconstitutes mythological thinking… we are to continue to believe in our myths despite our knowledge that they are untrue." Yet, he continued, "for the sake of our political and social health we will behave as if we did not know the history whose truth would demystify our beliefs." See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation,* 343.

[156] Richard Slotkin comments on "Ethan's Confederate past" and argues that his "postwar criminal record link him to Jesse James and the cult of the populist outlaw." See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation,* 463.

[157] Ethan's hatred of Indians has also been widely explored in scholarship. A few interpretations of this theme will be explored subsequently, but the interpretation that I find most convincing is one that highlights the viciousness of Ethan Edwards' racism as rising above and beyond Ford's attempt to critique it. Scott Simmon commented that "John Wayne's obsessive racism in Ford's The Searchers separates him from other Indian fighters." See Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film,* 72.

DeShields' narrative fixated on acts of violence, the film *The Searchers*, and particularly Wayne's portrayal of Ethan Edwards, puts the source material to shame.

Ethan Edwards shows mid-century audiences a man who will kill as many Indians as it takes, including members of his own family, to save—not his niece Debbie, but specifically her whiteness and virtue. Even if that means killing her. Some scholars have turned to the fact that Ethan does not murder his niece as evidence that this is a redemptive story, in which white America turned away from a vitriolic racist past and leaned into the changing racial dynamics of America during the 1950s and 60s.[158] To me, and to the multitudes of students with whom I have viewed the film with in my courses, this argument falls short. What appears as a tense moment in the film, when Ethan makes the binary choice of "should I kill my niece because she's been tainted by Indians," or, "should I not kill my niece," Ethan's ultimate ethical choice neither addresses the simplicity of the choice, nor does it surmount the multitude of transgressions he inflicted throughout the film.[159] He mutilates Native bodies and denigrates Comanche people with an air of unchecked authority. During his group's pursuit of Debbie and her captors, Edwards angrily responds to one of his crew who wonders how the Indians can keep going; saying "a human rides a horse until it dies, then he goes on afoot. A Comanche comes along, gets that horse up, rides him 20 more miles... and then he eats him."[160] While the cultural imprint of

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[158] J. P. Telotte argues that Ethan's choice revealed in swooping Debbie off her feet and telling her "let's go home," signals a "new direction for both of them," and that the poison (racism) has been "cut out" of Ethan's character. See Telotte, "*Stagecoach* and Racial Representation," 129. Richard Slotkin reached a similar conclusion, stating that "the moment in which Ethan seizes Debbie, holds her aloft, and then embraces her marks his acceptance of a limit to his hitherto boundless rage." See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation,* 471.

[159] Richard Slotkin, although interpreting this scene as redemptive for Ethan and the racism portrayed in the film, did acknowledge that this may be a difficult interpretation for scholars and viewers alike, stating: "Ford's narrative strategy requires that we see the world first through Ethan's eyes; nonetheless, the images are so unforgettable that it is easy to see why the film has been charged with propagating the racialism it sets out to demystify." See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation,* 465.

[160] Ford, dir. *The Searchers*.

Stagecoach was Ford showing Indians as relentless pursuers of settler men and women across the West, *The Searchers* showed audiences a normalized, abject, hatred of Indian people in one of the most iconic actors of Western genre film.[161] These images, more than any specific bit of dialogue, reproduced core anti-Indian sentiments from settler discourses that started centuries before.

As amateur film fanatics on the internet lament the stunt work, the camera work, and performances of Ford's filmography, I believe that Ford's true legacies are the ways in which his films upheld and reproduced settler discourse of the past, while themselves becoming original sources that carried those same discourses on to new audiences in the twentieth century. In *The Searchers*, specifically, this includes whatever critique may have been behind presenting Ethan Edwards' vitriolic racism that has been lost to viewers in the decades since its release and instead become mired in what John Wayne's performance as Edwards *shows* audiences that no matter how much racist sentiments are carried, how many violent racist acts of violence are perpetrated against Native and non-Native people alike, that there is redemption in rejecting hatred and

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[161] Robbert Pippin articulated that "in *The Searchers* there is a direct confrontation with the fact that the origin of the territorial United States rests on a virulent racism and genocidal war against Aboriginal peoples, a war that would not have been possible and perhaps would not have been won without the racist hatred of characters like the John Wayne character." See Robert B. Pippin, *Hollywood Westerns and American Myth: The Importance of Howard Hawks and John Ford for Political Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 104. Additionally, Richard Slotkin stated that "Ethan Edwards is an Indian-hater, and his hatred takes an unambiguously racialist form; yet he is also clearly the 'hero' of the film" and that it can be "easy to mistake Ethan's racism for John Ford's." Although Slotkin provides an explanation for why he believes it would have undermined the sensibilities of Ethan's character had Ford scripted a "polemic rebuke of Ethan's bigotry" he concedes that "in the decade that followed the production of the film, what proved most memorable about Ethan Edwards was not Ford's critique of savage war but Wayne's powerful incarnation of 'the man who knows Indians.'" See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation,* 462-3, 473.

violence just once. At the very worst, one might suffer the consequences of having to stand outside the threshold of the homestead doorway.[162]

Of course, John Ford was just one of the producers of Western genre films steeped in, and reproducing, settler colonial discourses in the twentieth century. The 1970 film, *A Man Called Horse*, starred Richard Harris as an Englishmen living on the "American Frontier" who was captured by Sioux Indians.[163] The film sets itself up as a pseudo-Anthropological presentation of Sioux culture but is ultimately an unintentional (or, perhaps, ill-attended) reproduction of century-old settler tropes about Indians. The film showcases a painful gauntlet of abuses inflicted upon Harris by all members of the Sioux group that has taken him; young, old, male, female. Harris is mocked, beaten, cut, burnt, starved, frozen, and just about everything in-between by his captors. *A Man Called Horse* puts to screen the words that settlers put to page in captivity narratives and the darkest of settler diaries in which settlers imagined the horrors that might befall being captured by Indians. Ultimately, Harris is accepted by the group after he kills a Shoshone raider that threatens the village. In this particularly-gruesome scene, the Sioux all stand around until Harris scalps the man he has just killed at which point the Sioux cheer loudly. At this point, Harris becomes an Indian. Very quickly, though (and I mean as soon as he returns to the village), he declares himself an Indian, asserts he is going to marry the beautiful young Sioux woman (played by a very noticeably-white, Grecian actress Corinna Tsopei), and

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[162] One interpretation of Ethan's racism is that it sets him apart from the family he has sought to save; Martin Pawley who married an Indian woman, and Debbie, after being returned home, were allowed inside the family homestead. Ethan, on the other hand, lingers in the doorway as the camera retreats from him. Robert Pippin argued that "one could say that what the searchers have been searching for is not just Debbie, but "home," or even the meaning of home, kinship, some form of belonging together." This was achieved for Martin, as Pippin wrote, "the product of intermarriage who will also intermarry" while "Ethan's primitivism is banned and left outside." See Pippin, *Hollywood Westerns and American Myth*, 117.

[163] Elliott Silverstein, dir. *A Man Called Horse (*1970; Los Angeles, CA: Cinema Center Films, 1970. MP4 Video, 1080p HD.)

announces that he will be chief one day. Over the next several minutes we follow Harris on this path as he partakes in the "Vow to the Sun" ritual (a fictionalized ritual based on sun dancing) in which he is hoisted off his feet by ropes attached to hooks in his chest. This image, displayed prominently on the film poster advertisements, was the blood-soaked climax of a film filled with Indian savagery.[164] The entire purpose in this seems to be to make the audience feel how terrifying it would have been to be captured by Indians. Reinforcing centuries of rhetoric about Indian brutality as shown, not told. At this point the film begs the question; does Harris become more Indian, or do the Indians become more kind, more likable, more civilized? Lest the viewer get too comfortable, there's still a huge Indian raid and rather than stray from stereotypes, they all get pushed onto the Shoshone raiders. Harris takes control of the village defense and orders the Indians into a firing line like the British which repels the attack by the Shonshone and saves the village, cementing his rise to chiefdom. I assume that the two sequel films (*The Return of a Man Called Horse* - 1976, and *Triumphs of a Man Called Horse* - 1983) explore Harris' exploits as both a White Indian and an Indian Savior.

Geronimo: An American Legend is the most recent film centered on this famous Native person, and one of the few that has a Native actor playing the title role. Wes Studi plays the character with the stoicism that non-Native audiences might expect, but there is emotional depth behind the stoicism—to the credit of Studi—which helps the character defy a one-dimensional-stereotype. Perhaps "visible skepticism" is a more apt phrase than "stoicism." Geronimo carries a righteous anger and the film tries to situate itself as sympathetic to the plight of the Apache depicted as being aggrieved by white settlers and the U. S. Government. However, the story is narrated through the eyes (and voice-over narration) of a white Cavalry soldier played by a

[164] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 299.

young Matt Damon—situating the story as one of white settlement with Geronimo acting as a supporting character (albeit an important one).

However sympathetically the filmmakers may have been to what they perceived as the injustices faced by the Apache and Geronimo, this film, like so many others, is still a film catering to white audiences. Its main characters are U.S. soldiers and the narrative arc involves how they personally feel about being around Geronimo, and coming to terms with the U.S. role in committing Native Genocide. The Apache are shown as mystic, brutish, and hostile. There is also a very strange stylistic choice employed where as the Cavalry hunts down and shoots Apache men, a distorted screeching sound is played—sounding slowed down and utterly animalistic in nature—distinguishing the deaths of Native men from white soldiers. Most importantly though, despite potentially good intentions, *Geronimo: An American Legend* reproduces some of the most dangerous settler colonial rhetorical discourses about Native people. Robert Duvall plays a well-known "Indian Fighter" who is employed by the Cavalry as a scout to hunt Apache. In one particularly dark scene he engages Matt Damon's character in the following dialogue:

> RD - Well, sir, your Apache rides a horse to death and eats him and steals another. I mean the horse is just mobile food. I've chased them when they made 50 miles a day on horse and foot. And hell, they can live on cactus, go 48 hours without water. I mean one week of that would kill your average trooper.
>
> MD - I hear you can track as good as any Apache
>
> RD - It takes an Apache to catch and Apache
>
> (Pause in conversation)
>
> RD - If you ever get in a fight with Apache, things go bad, you save the last bullet for yourself. You don't want to get taken alive, no, sir. They got lots of ways to kill you. And

> one of their favorites is to strip you, tie you upside down to a wagon wheel. Then pour pitch on you, light you on fire.[165]

This set of dialogue starts with a similar diatribe about Indians over-working horses and then eating them as seen in *The Searchers*. It then continues along a similar pattern from *The Searchers* about how Indians are somehow super-human in their ability to go without water for a span that "would kill your average trooper" — here "average" means a white man. Then, the dialogue invokes the "White Indian" trope in which a white man must become "like an Indian" to either fight an Indian, or in this case, to catch one.[166] Finally, the last part of the exchange features the "fate worse than death" trope that was so common in Indian captivity narratives and overland settler narratives and made famous in the film *Stagecoach*. Here the idea is that one should take their own life (or the life of a white woman under one's care as in *Stagecoach*) instead of being captured by Indians. To cap it off, Duvall then lays out a detailed description of Indian torture and brutality that sounds like it was snatched right out of an eighteenth century captivity narrative. The purpose of this scene may have been intended to show the brutality of Duvall's character in his thinking—versus the celebratory heroism of John Wayne's character who invokes similar rhetoric in *The Searchers*—but that criticism falls flat in the larger context of settler colonial discourses being reproduced in popular culture. The description of being stripped and "tied upside down to a wagon wheel" also invokes a trope shown in the poster for the 1956 film, *The Last Wagon*, in which two scenes were depicted: The first is a wagon being chased across a river crossing by Indians on horseback with lances, and the second depicts a

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[165] Hill, dir. *Geronimo, An American Legend*.

[166] This trope of the "White Indian" is one version stemming from early Puritan leaders' concerns in New England that some white EuroAmericans, after forced or amicable contact with Indians, may choose to live amongst the "uncivilized." The film is referencing that white men may learn to be "Indian" through proximity to Indians. See Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 253.

settler tied (right side up, and clothed,) to a wagon wheel in the apparent aftermath of the Indian attack foreshadowed in the first vignette.[167] In this sea of anti-Indian rhetoric, this particular moment in film can easily be lost as one wave amidst uncountable others.

The 1990 blockbuster and award-winning film *Dances With Wolves* was largely seen at the time as a redemptive attempt to tell stories involving Indians that moved away from the overt racism of the John Ford films, and from the glut of Italian "Spaghetti Westerns" that had saturated the genre since the 1960s.[168] Film scholar Alexandra Keller describes Wolves as "revisionist in content, but formally it is a nostalgic Western" in summarizes the moral of the film as stating "yes, the white folks were institutionally terrible…*but this one was okay*."[169] While the film was applauded for the (at the time) perceived positive depiction of Lakota people (but not at all for Pawnee peoples) *Dances With Wolves* set a new standard for Western films; treating Native history, people, and characters with less openly hostile racism while solidly centering a film on white savior tropes became an acceptable and accomplished piece of cinema.[170] This film, and the themes it contains, have been studied extensively—particularly by Native scholars and filmmakers—but it was also a cultural moment that redefined how American

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[167] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 226.

[168] *Dances With Wolves* won seven Oscars in 1991, including Best Picture, Best Screenplay, and Best Director for Kevin Costner. See https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099348/awards/?ref_=tt_awd

[169] Keller, "Historical Discourse and American Identity in Westerns since the Reagan Era," 243.

[170] Kevin Costner, dir. *Dances With Wolves (*1990; Burbank, CA: Tig Productions, 1990. MP4 Video, 4K UHD.)

Western genre films were made and so it is worth recognizing here.[171] There have since been other films that have tried to redeem archaic approaches to telling the story of the American West in film, yet they too are often problematic.

The 2017 film, *Hostiles*, is another film that attempts to redeem white supremacy and historical settler injustices against Native Americans but somehow manages to do this by reproducing and amplifying anti-Indian discourses found prominently in eighteenth and nineteenth century settler narratives. Like *Geronimo: An American Legend* and *Dances With Wolves*, *Hostiles* too is told from the perspective of a U.S. Cavalry soldier in the nineteenth century. The theme of settler regret is overlaid by a denial of culpability in the film as it heavily asserts a "war is hard and war makes men do terrible things to one another" subtext.

The film opens with an Indian attack on a settler cabin in which the Indians shoot and kill the settler father, scalp him, and pursue the mother with an infant and two young daughters. The Indians kill the two daughters and the infant with gunfire, but the wife manages to escape. The film then cuts to Christian Bale as Captain Joseph Blocker escorting some Apaches the cavalry have rounded up and taken to their nearby military fort. A solider asks if he got them all and Blocker replies that Apaches are "like ants" and you can never catch them all. In the next scene, Blocker is reminiscing with another soldier about the time a Kiowa gutted him with a lance and

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[171] Pawnee scholar James Riding In addressed the uneven, and ahistorical, depictions of the Sioux and Pawnee peoples in *Dances With Wolves*. "Unfortunately," he wrote, "the movie industry seems to relish scripts that slander my people." (Here, he references the 1970 film *Little Big Man* in addition to *Dances With Wolves*) He continued: "To this Pawnee, *Wolves* deserves neither the praise nor the awards tat have been heaped on it. It distorts the history and culture of mid-nineteenth-century Plains Indians' societies. It's therefore folly to think of the film as anything other than a more subtle spin on Hollywood's traditional Indian myth making." See James Riding In, "You Mean I'm a White Guy?," in *Seeing Red: Hollywood's Pixilated Skins*, LeAnne Howe, Harvey Markowitz, Denise K. Cummings, eds. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 89-90.

Blocker hunted the man down and "gutted him from end to end" before lamenting to one another that "those were the good days."[172]

The entirety of the tension in *Hostiles* comes as Blocker is assigned to transport Chief Yellow Hawk (another commanding performance from Wes Studi) to his reservation because he's dying of cancer. Blocker absolutely hates Indians in general, and Yellow Hawk specifically, because of an unspoken history between the two; Joseph Blocker is every bit as much an Indian-hater as Ethan Edwards was in *The Searchers*. Blocker's first response to the assignment is "I'm not taking that cutthroat bastard and his brood of bastards and bitches anywhere" before ultimately accepting his duty. Along the way, we hear a lot more about how Blocker hates Indians and how he's "killed plenty of savages." When challenged by a journalist sympathetic to Indians who suggests Blocker enjoys hating Indians, he replies, "I hate them and I have a war bag of reasons to hate them." All of this hatred gets continuously wrapped in statements that Blocker was "just doing my job" and that war is hell. Never mind that these were the men waging the war against Indians in the first place. Blocker's deep hatred of Indians echoes that of Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers*. Philosophy and Film scholar Robert Pippin provided a critique of Edwards' Indian hatred in *The Searchers* that applies just as well to Blocker's racist views in *Hostiles*. Pippin wrote "Ethan [Joseph Blocker] clearly thinks he hates Indians because they killed some white people he knew. But he hates all Indians, and like all of Ethan's [Joseph's] attitudes, this is held in a kind of silence, without reflection or justification."[173] *Hostiles* makes this aggressive move of putting Blocker's hatred of Indians viscerally up-front, but continuously excusing it as the result of war. Additionally, at one point Yellow Hawk says of the Comanche:

[172] Scott Cooper, dir. *Hostiles (*2017; West Hollywood, CA: Le Gribsi Productions, 2017. MP4 Video, 4K.)

[173] Pippin, *Hollywood Westerns and American Myth*, 117.

"They are rattlesnake people. The worst kind."[174] In a more nuanced work, there can be room to address the complexities of hostilities between Native Nations and move away from a narrative binary that simply sets up "Indian" versus "white American." However, the film *Hostiles* is not a more nuanced work, and here, the settler rhetoric coming out of a Native character's mouth comes off more as an appeal to a "both sides" narrative that *seems* less-racist.[175] While all of this is supposed to be lost on the viewer as one member of Blocker's unit commits suicide on the journey to deliver Yellow Hawk to Montana, specifically because he is so eaten up about atrocities he had committed against Indians (this is the same soldier who was lamenting at the beginning of the film that it was Indian killing that comprised "the good old days"), and Blocker eventually comes to put himself in harms way to protect his old nemesis—all of it falls flat. The reverberating theme that comes out of this film is the visceral settler hatred of Indians that can effortlessly feel as contemporaneous in the nineteenth as the twenty first century.

Finally, one of the most recent western films made to the time of this writing was the 2020 film *News of the World*. In this film a traveling "news reader," played by Tom Hanks, travels from town to town reading newspapers in public. Early on he encounters a demolished wagon with an African American body hanged in a tree. After a few moments he finds a young white girl dressed in buckskin with hair roughly cut who only speaks in animalistic grunts. As the drama unfolds over the next few hours, audiences learn that the girl was taken in by Kiowa Indians after the death of her family and Hanks becomes tasked with taking her back to her German immigrant relatives. This set up appears to rebuke the trope of violent Indians and

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[174] Cooper, dir. *Hostiles*

[175] This "both sides were violent" narrative is a right-leaning articulation of settler fragility in which an assertion is made along the lines of "Indians were all killing each other anyway when Europeans got here." See Gilio-Whitaker, "Settler Fragility."

Indian captivity—instead focusing on humanizing the Kiowa through this young Anglo girl. There is a general recognition within the film of the complexities of Indian and settler violence, exemplified from the quote "Settlers killing Indians for their land. Indians killing settlers for taking it."[176] However, around mid-way through the film, the historical zombies of settler colonial discourses rise out of the grave and shamble through the rest of the story.

In the second half of the story, as Hanks' character and Johanna (or, Cicada, as she is known by her Kiowa family) search for her living relatives, they happen to cross some seemingly familiar territory to the girl. She leads Hanks off the road to a log cabin on the plains. Here we see that her family did not die in a wagon accident, but this cabin shows clear signs of Indian attack—arrows stuck in the windowsills and doorways, blood spatters stain the furniture and walls. Johanna finds a corn-husk doll and seems to remember for the first time who she was before living with the Kiowa. Shortly after this, the two are caught in a raging dust storm on the open plains and in the aftermath, a group of Kiowa appear as mythical shadows—it is not clear if they are real or not. But within this silent visiting in the dust, Hanks witnesses Johanna approach the Kiowa, embrace them, and then return to Hanks before the dust, and Kiowa along with it, disappear. Clearly, the young woman has chosen to return to Anglo civilization—although in the context of the film and her character it is not clear exactly why this would happen. Finally, Hanks delivers Johanna to the homestead of her German Aunt and Uncle. While there, the Aunt describes to Hanks the horrors inflicted by the Kiowa as she describes the scene inside the cabin, "You know my sister when we found her in the bedroom, they cut her throat. Her baby sister, they bashed her brain out."[177] Both of these descriptions of violence reproduce explicitly the

[176] Paul Greengrass, dir. *News of the World (*2020; Beijing: China: Perfect World Pictures, 2020. MP4 Video, 4K.)

[177] Greengrass, dir. *News of the World*.

details of accused Indian savagery from Indian captivity narratives. In a film that made such an effort to humanize Kiowa as complex people (without ever actually showing any on screen save for those shrouded in dust) and acknowledge the wrongdoings of American settlers and their role in violence and animosity towards Indians, it still manages to engage in rhetoric that is centuries-old and firmly settler-centered in its insistence on depicting Indians as inherently violent people. Ultimately, in that regard, this film (along with many other revisionist stories) becomes what it was seeking to undo—a vehicle for anti-Indian and settler-colonial discourses.

Conclusion

Early settler accounts of encounters with hostile Indians quickly blurred the lines of fact and fiction in the Indian captivity narratives of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Those accounts, widely read and spoken at churches across New England influenced settler narratives in the mid-nineteenth century during the overland trail migrations West where settlers, predisposed to fear and despise Indians, waged warfare along the trail and at trail's end to settle Indian lands. The U.S. government and settler militias waged open warfare against Native Americans while U.S. policies exerted cultural, economic, and physical control over Native Americans towards the end of the nineteenth century. At each point in this historical trajectory, settler populations reproduced Anti-Indian sentiments in settler discourses.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, settler discourses had been shaping non-Native American ideologies about Indians for over three hundred years. Those discourses continued to be reproduced, altered a bit, and more effectively spread through new technologies for the entirety of the century. Technological advancements in storytelling—particularly in animation and film—not only increased the reach of the *reproduction* of those discourses, it increased the

saturation of the *absorption* of those discourses to Native and non-Native Americans, and audiences around the world.

Western genre films from the twentieth century and beyond have tended to force Native characters into either a noble savage that is often sympathetic and helpful to white settlers or, as has been more thoroughly-explored in this study, as ruthless and violent savages that often exist without identity amidst a horde of other ruthless and violent savage Indians. Most of these stories, even in "revisionist" Westerns that were seemingly more sympathetic to the fact that Indians are actual people, have been told through the perspectives of white settlers or soldiers. Those EuroAmerican characters have also often been depicted in reductive forms; they are either a white-savior character or an Indian-hater character. The white-savior character inherently establishes a power dynamic between EuroAmericans and Native people in which Native people need EuroAmericans to save them. Finally, the Indian-hater character—so famously exemplified by John Wayne's portrayal of Ethan Edwards in John Ford's *The Searchers*—has persisted and is still reproduced in some of the most contemporary-to-this-study Western genre films. In line with literature scholar Barbara Alice Mann's analysis of James Fenimore Cooper's work, Indian-haters in Western genre film reflect the myth that these characters exist in the margins of society—acts of genocide passed off as the "unofficial misdeeds of cranky backwoodsmen who, apparently, are not to be held responsible for their crimes by reason of their lower-class origins."[178] Mann argued that "far from obscure social outcasts, 'Indian haters' occupied the highest positions in society and government."[179] These contemporary depictions of Indian-haters: the ex-Confederate soldier in *The Searchers*, the Cavalry Captain (and the men under his

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[178] Barbara Alice Mann, "Race Traitor: Cooper, His Critics, and Nineteenth-Century Literary Politics," in *A Historical Guide to James Fenimore Cooper*, ed. Leland S. Person (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 170.

[179] Mann, "Race Traitor," 171.

command) in *Hostiles*, and the professional Indian-fighter hired by the Army to hunt the Apache in *Geronimo, An American Legend*, all fit within this framework and show that rather than an aberration from a subset of the population, these men are respected members of the upper-echelons of shite settler society.

For as long as there have been motion pictures, there have been Native American actors. Native Americans have sought to control their depictions in film for a long time. In the 1998 film *Smoke Signals* there is a scene where the two young protagonists, Victor and Thomas, are traveling by bus to find Victor's father in Arizona. After disembarking at a restroom stop, the two have their seats stolen from them by two white men who admonish them with racial epithets until Victor and Joseph go an get two seats in the back of the bus. Victor begins to sing a song about the prevalence of John Wayne's teeth in cinema, and Victor's inherent trust of the actor as a result of the toothy prominence, that phonically sounds like a song sung at a Powwow while the entire bus stares at them—jaws agape. The John Wayne's teeth scene is a key moment in cinema history in which two Native men take the piss out of a century of settler-dominated discourses in film and subvert it for their own entertainment and protest. Another subversion of settler colonial discourses can be found in Thomas, an unreliable narrator throughout much of the film—but here his deceit is playful and ultimately causes no harm. If anything, Thomas' toying with the boundaries between 'truth' and 'storytelling' draw the viewer to him as if they are in this together rather than a reproduction of the "treacherous Indian" theme from earlier discourses. As important as these moments are, they was not the first, nor the last time in which Native filmmakers, storytellers, or performers hit back against the idea that, as Victor states in *Smoke Signals*, "the cowboy always wins."[180]

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[180] Chris Eyre, dir. *Smoke Signals (*1998; Seattle, WA: ShadowCatcher Entertainment, 1998. MP4 Video, 1080p HD.)

The *Billy Jack* series of films that spanned the 1970s and 80s was one of the most visible efforts to clap back at anti-Indian rhetoric in film. The poster for the film *Billy Jack*, written, directed, and starring Tom Laughlin (a non-Native actor) reversed a well-used trope in Western film advertising, in which a (contemporary to 1971) Indian character punches white men.[181] Technically, *Billy Jack* would fall under the category of "Playing Indian" as the main actor, Tom Laughlin, was not a Native person, but the character of Billy Jack was a "mixed-race" Navajo man who used his experience in military and martial arts training to attack his grievances with Indian treatment by modern-day settlers quite literally.[182] The *Billy Jack* series of movies ultimately consisted of five films, and complicates the lines between Native representation and cultural appropriation, and the profit thereof.

But, there are movements toward greater Native-led self-representation in film and TV media now than there have ever been. While Native resistance of dominant settler discourses in film has been as ever-present as physical resistance against actual settler violence in American history, it has been easy for white settler-descended audiences to ignore unless one went looking for it. Today, popular and award-winning streaming shows such as Hulu's original *Reservation Dogs*, and to a lesser extent, Peacock's *Rutherford Falls*, place Native people directly into the heart of the story and show them as fully-formed emotional, social, creative, and dynamic human beings.

Western films are still being made. They have enjoyed a revitalization to some degree after the surge in 1990s western glut brought about by the success of *Dances With Wolves*. One key component of these films, for the most part, has been their lack of engagement at all on themes of

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[181] Fertig, *Hang 'Em High*, 304.

[182] Tom Laughlin dir. *Billy Jack (*1971; Santa Fe, NM: Eaves Movie Ranch, 1971. MP4 Video, 1080p HD.)

indigeneity. Some films have addressed Native peoples directly in their stories, others have fallen into old tropes like centering stories around a white savior character, but far and away the most common Indian trope in western film in the twenty-first century has been a color-blind approach of not mentioning Indians at all. That is not to say that stereotypical tropes about Indians are not present in contemporary film, but rather, they aren't prominent in the western genre which has waned in popularity in recent years. Where they can be found, however, is in the horror genre—as we will explore briefly in the final conclusion of this study.

Chapter Six

Conclusion: The Settler Present

Native Horror(s), and Settler Fear(s):

The Reproduction of Settler Colonial Discourse in Contemporary Horror

In the 2015 independent horror western *Bone Tomahawk*, the local sheriff interrogates one of the only identified Native characters in the film, a man known as "the Professor." In the following exchange, Sheriff Hunt consults the professor on how to track a settler's wife who was taken, presumably, by local Indians:

Sheriff Hunt: What kind of tribe doesn't have a name?

The Professor: One that doesn't have a language. Cave dwellers.

SH: You'll take us to them?

TP: I won't.

SH: Because you're an Indian?

TP: Because I don't want to get killed.

SH: You're afraid of your own kind?

TP: They're not my kind - they are a spoiled bloodline of inbred animals who rape and eat their own mothers.

SH: Well, what are they?

TP: Troglodytes.

SH: What do they look like?

TP: A man like you would not distinguish them from Indians, even though they are something else entirely.[1]

This exchange does some interesting things. It sets up a Native character as the authority on what is happening in the story. More importantly, and to much contention amongst horror fans, the filmmaker puts the burden of incorporating centuries of settler discourse about Indians onto the shoulders of the one Native character. Between that, and that these Indians, or "troglodytes"—monstrously savage cannibals—are the savages of yore by any other name, the filmmakers are attempting to sidestep accusation that they (as the producers of the settler narrative) are responsible within this particular story for the rhetoric that has been introduced. It was the Native American who has said these things about the Troglodytes, who aren't really Indians anyway, they are monsters and that distinction is obvious. Except that it isn't.

In every way the Troglodytes in *Bone Tomahawk* embody the derogatory stereotypes of Western Native peoples of the Great Basin. They are dirty, they are cunning and silent—they skulk around and kidnap white women—and most horribly of all, they eat human flesh (because that's how savage they are). The settler men, led by Sheriff Hunt, who posse'd up to rescue the woman, do not differentiate at all in their characterizations of the Troglodytes and actual Indians (one of them brags consistently about his accolades as an Indian fighter and uses his skill in killing and hunting real Indians to practical use in hunting the ultra-savage Troglodytes). When the film reaches a climax in which the settler men are killed off and the Sheriff and his deputy are imprisoned in the Troglodytes cave the audience is subjected to on-screen depictions of the savagely violent depravity that settler narratives have been imagining of Indian peoples for hundreds of years. The Troglodytes take one of their victims and horrifically impale him before

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[1] Craig S. Zahler, dir. *Bone Tomahawk* (2015; New York, NY: Caliber Media Company, 2015. MP4 Video, 1080p HD).

vertically bisecting him with several chops of an axe made of bone as he screams in agony. Once this is done, the Troglodytes carry off the two halves of the carcass and all of the entrails puddled on the cave floor—presumably to be prepared as food. This is certainly one of the most violent displays on screen—even by horror standards. That it happens in a way that directly mirrors the atrocities settlers have imagined about Indian people for centuries yet is portrayed in a way that tries to absolve the film-makers of that connection is an abhorrently regressive reproduction of settler colonial discourse that is reminiscent of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Indian captivity narratives. That these decisions to accept the shielding of the filmmakers from those discourses in online horror communities is, unfortunately, reflective of the contemporary legacies that are in place directly because of settler discourses and incorporate larger intersecting discourses of race, whiteness, and masculinity.

Bone Tomahawk is no B-horror movie. Writer and Director S. Craig Mahler is a well-known and respected independent filmmaker. While shot with a small budget and light crew, the film features superb acting, impressive visual effects, and beautiful cinematography that places it amongst the best-looking modern western films. It also included high-profile, Emmy and Oscar nominated lead actors: Kurt Russel as Sheriff Hunt, Patrick Wilson as the settler whose wife was taken, Richard Jenkins as the cantankerous Deputy, as well as a slew of recognizable supporting actors.

The film opened to small audiences in 2015 but has gone on to earn great respect as a cult-horror film. It is, however, also one of the most prominent examples of how filmmakers can carelessly reproduce Anti-Indian settler discourses in film by *showing* us what to think about Indians, even while they are *telling* us something else.

Writer and Director of *Bone Tomahawk*, S. Craig Zahler, has spoken at length in interviews about the brutality of the film. In a 2015 interview with the online popular culture publication *Daily Dead*, Zahler discussed the impetus for the way in which he dealt with violence on screen. Zahler said "There haven't been many movies in my life that have bested me, where I had to look away or shut off—really only a couple once I became an adult (when I was a kid I was scared of everything)."[2] He continued by discussing a Chinese film about atrocities during a WWII Japanese "experiment camp" and how "it was a very dry presentation of the violence in the same way as *Cannibal Holocaust*."[3] Zahler concludes by saying "The long shots of the horrible stuff happening to people, you just see it unfold. When you go in close, those aren't perspectives anybody ever has on violence unless it's happening to them firsthand, in which case they haven't survived to watch the movie. So I kept the style consistent with the hideous violence as with Chicory and Sheriff Hunt talking about corn chowder."[4] So it seems that the seed of this scene was planted in the soil of Zahler's childhood fears, and sowed amidst a race to shock viewers in independent horror film.

What I have not seen anyone ask Zahler, and what I would like to ask him, is to what extent did he research the historical conditions and contemporary legacies of anti-Indian discourses? Does he truly believe that by naming his protagonists "Troglodytes" he sidesteps the

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[2] Derek Anderson, "Interview: BONE TOMAHAWK Director S. Craig Zahler Talks Working with Kurt Russell, Richard Jenkins & More," 12/29/2015, *Daily Dead*. https://dailydead.com/interview-bone-tomahawk-director-s-craig-zahler-talks-working-with-kurt-russell-richard-jenkins-more/

[3] *Cannibal Holocaust* was a film released in 1980 that was one of the first mockumentary horror films. The film centers on a group of anthropologists who set out to document some "undiscovered" tribes of people in remote locations, and wind up unwittingly filming their own deaths at the hands of a cannibal society. It is, still, a shocking film in terms of sexual violence, on-screen torture and killing of real animals, and assertions of the violent nature of "savages". See Ruggero Deodato, dir. *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980; F.D. Cinematografica, 1980.) MP4 Video,720p. HD.

[4] Anderson, "Interview: BONE TOMAHAWK Director S. Craig Zahler," https://dailydead.com/interview-bone-tomahawk-director-s-craig-zahler-talks-working-with-kurt-russell-richard-jenkins-more/.

obvious comparison to Native people? Did he consider Native people at all? It seems clear from the way in which he does talk about the film, and the violence on display within that story, that he was concerned with shocking people. It seems clear that he used Indians as a tool in that pursuit but the larger horror community reacts with noticeable defensiveness—a form of white fragility—at this suggestion. In the introduction to an interview with S. Craig Zahler in the publication *Cowboys & Indians* ("The Premier Magazine of the West"!), *Bone Tomahawk* was described thusly:

> When you wear the badge and keep the peace in a Wild West town, you're expected to stand your ground against any lawbreakers — even cannibalistic troglodytes. And if a bunch of those scary varmints abduct members of your community — well, dang it, a man's got to do what a man's got to do. You just have to raise a posse, and ride off to the rescue in the wilderness.[5]

Clearly, this publication—steeped in generations of settler colonial discourses about Native Americans—made the connections between *Bone Tomahawk* and historical discourses of Indians and the West in general that Zahler had denied exist both publicly and in the art itself.

Cowboys & Indians then asked Zahler "It's been said that, deep down in his or her heart, every filmmaker really wants to make a western. But I can't say I know of too many filmmakers who have expressed interest in making a movie about cannibalistic troglodytes. Which impulse was stronger for you?" Zahler answered "The urge to make a western. And it's interesting: With the push for this movie when we were trying to get it financed, and certainly through advertising — there's been a lot of talk and emphasis on the cannibalism and the horror elements. But I don't think it's a horror movie. I think the scenes of horror are strong and deliberate, and they're what I

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[5] Joe Leydon, "Q&A: S. Craig Zahler, Director of 'Bone Tomahawk'," *Cowboys & Indians*. https://www.cowboysindians.com/2015/10/qa-s-craig-zahler-director-of-bone-tomahawk/.

want them to be."[6] I suppose that's as direct an answer we can expect about what was important to the filmmaker.

In 2022, the much-anticipated new addition to the *Predator* film franchise, originally launched with the 1987 film *Predator*, was released on the streaming service Hulu. The film, titled *Prey*, is set in the seventeenth century on the Great Plains, and pits a young Comanche woman (played by Native actress Amber Midthunder) against the technologically-advanced hunter space alien predator.[7] Leading up to the release of the film, there was so much discourse around how respectful the film would be to Native Americans that it seemed impossible to believe that it would not fall into one of several obvious historical tropes about Indians, despite the filmmakers claiming otherwise. Immediately after its release, the film was lauded by non-Native media critics and journalists for two things: the first being the biggest debut for content on the home streaming service Hulu, and second that while the writer was a white man, he consulted with many Native people in making the film.[8] Even actress Midthunder publicly applauded the film, as she said in this interview with *The Guardian:* "For a period piece, it showed so much more cultural accuracy, instead of boiling us down to something one-dimensional, like that hyper-spiritual side or something overly violent."[9]

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[6] Leydon, "Q&A: S. Craig Zahler.

[7] Dan Trachtenberg, dir. *Prey,* 2022; (Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Home Entertainment, 2022. MP4 Video 4K).

[8] Press for the film was fairly static in their treatment of how the film dealt with Native representation. See Melissa Harris-Perry, "What 'Prey' Gets Right About Native Representation," August 18, 2022, *WNYC*, https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/takeaway/segments/what-prey-gets-right-about-native-representation, Phil Hoad, "How the Predator franchise is breaking new ground for Native Americans on screen," July 29, 2022, *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/jul/29/prey-predator-native-american-indigenous-characters, Michael Green, "By destroying old tropes, Prey turns a corner for Native Americans in film," August 14, 2022, *Digital Trends*, https://www.digitaltrends.com/movies/prey-changes-native-american-representation-in-the-movies/.

[9] Phil Hoad, "How the Predator franchise is breaking new ground for Native Americans on screen," 07/29/2022, *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/jul/29/prey-predator-native-american-indigenous-characters.

Yet, for all of this insistence that the film was keenly aware of treating Native people with respect (and, for the most part, it does) it still falls into the trap of reproducing settler discourses about Indians from the past. The problem with *Prey* is not that it doesn't have problematic messaging about Native people, the problem is that it is slickly packaged to young, modern audiences and covers old settler discourses about Indians with new nods to culture wars that obscure the problematic heart of this movie. Although it is a young woman who, in an attempt to rebel and buck the traditional gendered norms of her hunter society (as imagined by the filmmakers in this particular sci-fi horror version of seventeenth-century Comanche) as she seeks to hunt this new enemy that has bested all of the young male warriors in the film, the absolute base of the story is that the only hunters who could turn the predator into prey were the masterful Comanche hunters. That is not to deride the hunting prowess of any Native North American group, but historical details are decidedly absent in this story. The trope of the great Indian hunter who can move silently across the land and out-sneak the—literally invisible (thanks to a piece of advanced alien cloaking technology)—alien hunter who at this point in the franchise has bested paramilitary groups in 1980s South American jungles, the entirety of the LAPD in 1997, and speculative future settlers in space with technology as advanced as the predator itself, has nothing to do with respecting Comanche culture or addressing Native representation in film. Those issues may exist in the background, but in *Prey* they are used as selling points to further a major-studio science fiction action film franchise that, much like the Disney corporation, would chew up any and all aspects of culture in order to provide new settings for the predator to engage in carnage. While both Native and non-Native audiences may celebrate the representation of Native actors and crew in *Prey*, it is important to remember that this is not a Native story, or a Native film.

The recent independent horror film, *Slash/Back* is about Native characters who *are* telling a Native story set amidst the legacies of settler colonialism in the Canadian far-north.[10] In this story, a group of Inuit tween and teenage girls fight for their lives and save their village from an unforgiving alien monstrosity. The first thing that is immediately apparent to audiences is that these young people carry themselves with such a presence that is rare in cinema. Once the film gets going though, another detail becomes clear—the girls' survival will later depend on their modernity and knowledge of popular culture as much as it does on the ability to use a hunting rifle. Imagine if the cast of *Reservation Dogs* were thrust into the universe of *Stranger Things* and defeated the monster from John Carpenter's *The Thing*, specifically because they had seen that movie a hundred times and knew what the monster was when it showed up in their home town. The girls survive and triumph, not because of some notion of indigenous mysticism or because of essentialist notions of being great hunters or warriors—although the film throws some nods to the latter as the girls feel empowered by their successes—but because they exist in this world caught between an older generation of traditional families and being influenced by vibrant forms of popular culture that only come into their community by way of the internet and Amazon. They spend their days with faces attuned to iPhone screens and Tik Tok, competing with each other for who best rocks streetwear fashion. Sometimes, they steal an old hunting rifle and a family fishing boat and go plinking on nearby islands while playfully singsonging a tune in their Indigenous language. In the next scene, one of the girls reenacts for her friends some of the more visceral scenes from the John Carpenter film *The Thing* in foreshadowing the very knowledge that will save them later on. After their first encounter with the monster, there is tension in the group about whether it is a creature from the folklore of their culture, or something

[10] Nyla Innuksuk, dir. *Slash/Back*. (2022; Toronto, Canada: Good Question Media, 2022.) MP4 Video, 720p HD.

else. One character quips "that's just dumb Inuit stuff"—illustrating one of the many moments that highlights the tension between the past and present for the girls.[11] The girls face not only an alien menace (surely, there's an allusion here to *something*) but, also, trying to get the attention of local boys, being hassled by the local tribal police, and the boredom that comes with growing up in an isolated village that has long-faced economic stagnation. When the girls prepare for their final battle against the creature, they paint their faces with lines that nod to the tattoos some women receive in Inuit cultures, and don leather jackets emblazoned with contemporary activist statements such as "There is no justice on stolen land."[12]

The point is not that this film, its characters, or life in Nunavut as depicted are real. It is clearly fantasy, but it is a fantasy in which Native people—young women and girls—are doing the same things most tween and teens do around the world. Although they refer to being trapped in their village due to its remoteness, they are enmeshed in a modern world. This is the kind of fantasy non-Native settlers could have been imagining for Native people all along, but *Slash/Back* came from a Native filmmaker and shows us that, once again, the only times that audiences see Native people imagined onscreen in ways that defy expectations and break out of settler colonial discourses are when Native people are in control of their own representation. To put this in Beverly Singer's terms, to implement the "Indian Solution."[13]

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[11] Innuksuk, dir. *Slash/Back*.

[12] Innuksuk, dir. *Slash/Back*.

[13] Singer, *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens,* 3.

Contemporary Settler Fantasies: Race Wars, (RE)Occupying the West, New Nativism

About the Author

LaVoy Finicum was a rancher and family man who lived in northern Arizona. As he had watched the feedoms[sic] of this great land of America being eroded away through unconstitutional legislation and outright thievery, he decided to do more than sit idly by. He wrote this novel in an effort to teach the principles of "natural law," to show that certain truths are "self-evident" and that our rights come to us from God and are "inalienable," meaning they cannot be given away or taken away.

John Locke (*England, 1632-1704*) was a physician, statesman, and political philosopher who expressed the radical view that government is morally obliged to serve people, namely by protecting life, liberty and property. He insisted that when government violates individual rights, people may legitimately rebel.

A recent example of this type of behavior was demonstrated when the Federal Government sought to take away the grazing rights from LaVoy's friend and neighbor, Cliven Bundy. This they did by force of arms. It was only when the common man stood up, willing to meet force with force, that those rights were preserved.

It was time to back up talk with action.[14]

The above text was taken directly from the Amazon author page for LaVoy Finicum, a martyr to the cause of twenty-first century settler colonialism who occupied historically-Paiute lands near Burns, Oregon, in 2015-16. That he, along with many of his fellow occupiers, would fetishize violence against the state is of no surprise—they put on a great show of armed militia waving flags as they occupied a federal wildlife preserve office.[15] It is also not surprising, given all of the rhetoric this work has examined over centuries, that contemporary settler colonial

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[14] The final line here, "it was time to back up talk with action" refers to the author himself—either his "action" or occupying a federal building, or the "action" of writing this tale of post-appocalyptic-revenge-fantasy fiction. It is unclear which. See "About the Author," Amazon.com, https://www.amazon.com/Only-Blood-Suffering-LaVoy-Finicum/dp/193773594X/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1690953371&sr=1-1.

[15] Mark Pitcavage, writing for the Anti-Defamation League, chronicled the near immediate use of Finicum's death as a martyr "of the so-called "Patriot" movement (which includes militia groups, sovereign citizens, and other anti-government extremists)" and that "upon learning of Finicum's death, 'Patriot' movement adherents immediately claimed that he was murdered, though initial accounts from other occupants of the vehicles were confused and contradictory." See Mark Pitcavage, "Robert "LaVoy" Finicum: The Making of a Martyr," (2016, Anti-Defamation League,) https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/robert-lavoy-finicum-making-martyr.

fantasy fiction would be even more removed from reality than personal settler narratives. And still, that Finicum's author page invokes "outright thievery" of land without any acknowledgement of the history, or irony, of squatter settlers occupying Indian land (and, in terms of American history, some of the most recently occupied Indian lands) in the name of "feedom" [sic] is an especially bitter pill to swallow. Even worse was the occupation's disavowal of historic violence against Native people and the victimization of the settler movement.

In 2017, Finicum's novel, *Only By Blood and Suffering,* was published posthumously after the author was killed by law enforcement officials after charging a roadblock in Eastern Oregon on January 26th, 2016.[16] The novel is, on its face, a survival story in a post-apocalyptic contemporary American West. After some destabilizing event (it is never clear if it was a nuclear detonation that was far enough away from the West to disrupt society but not outright destroy the landscape and its inhabitants, or if the event was some kind of energy disruption that damaged information systems but left buildings standing and people unharmed) the American West is thrown into chaos as the "weak people" who had given their guns up to the government were preyed upon by those who kept firearms and were organized under a nefarious government agent —a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employee no less—who had some insight about this event beforehand but who did nothing to stop it, rose to power. In settler fantasy fiction, even in the apocalypse, the BLM is harassing pioneers. The hero of the story, referred to as "the cowboy," is an obvious caricature of Finicum himself, who was shown throughout the entirety of the Malheur occupation wearing blue jeans, pearl-snap western shirts, and a light colored

[16] Finicum was the only occupier who was killed, despite the movement's claims that the government meant them harm. Finicum was killed as a direct result of rushing, on foot, at law enforcement officers while reaching into his coat pocket, which contained a firearm. See Maxine Bernstein, "What We Know About Robert 'LaVoy' Finicum's Shooting on 3rd Anniversary of His Death," Updated January 25, 2019, Oregon Live, https://www.oregonlive.com/news/g66l-2019/01/aec01fab567030/trial-gave-most-complete-account-of-fbi-state-police-shooting-of-robert-lavoy-finicum.html.

cowboy hat.[17] The cowboy in this story is smart when everyone else is not. He is prepared when others were caught off guard. He knows what is happening and moves decisively, while others cower in fear. The cowboy embarks on a trek to the family homestead where he knows his adult children, who are spread out in the West, will also sojourn to so they can ride out the apocalypse together.

While *Only Blood and Suffering* is a gratuitous twenty-first settler fantasy that drips with contempt for, well, everyone who isn't like the cowboy, it is also awash in the settler colonial discourses this study has examined from the past few centuries. As the cowboy makes it back to the family ranch, he reflects back on his grandfather who built the homestead. On the property were five graves, one that belonged to his grandmother and one which belonged to his grandfather, who was "mortally wounded after in a fight with three Navajoes." The other three graves were unmarked, but the cowboy tells the reader they belonged to the three Navajo men whom his grandfather killed before succumbing to his injuries. The cowboy says "his dying request was that the three Indians he had killed in the fight be brought and buried next to him. No one knew why it was so important to him, but it was."[18] There are so few unanswered questions in *Only Blood and Suffering* so this one stands out. However, through a lens of settler colonial discourses, this passage can be read as the grandfather wanting to keep possession and control over not only Navajo land, but the bodies of Navajo men he had killed. Perhaps in an extension

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[17] In an interview with Jefferson Public Radio, Finicum referred to himself as a "cowboy" and was shown in an image on JPR's website that was an inverted image from famous last scene in The Searchers. Here, the cowboy stands inside the doorway of his family ranch home, the photographer is outside of the structure looking in. Finicum is wearing the same hat he would later be killed in, with double pistols holstered on his waist in a gunslinger-esque gun belt. See Amelia Thompson, "Deceased Militant LaVoy Finicum: Rancher, Patriarch, Bundy Believer," January 27, 2016, *Jefferson Public Radio*. https://www.ijpr.org/law-and-justice/2016-01-27/deceased-militant-lavoy-finicum-rancher-patriarch-bundy-believer.

[18] Lavoy Finicum, *Only By Blood and Suffering: Regaining Lost Freedom* (Self Published, 2017), 56-7.

of Ethan Edwards' shooting the eyes out of a Comanche corpse in *The Searchers*, to prevent him from wandering the "spirit realm," the grandfather wants the bodies of Indian men to lay alongside his eternal resting place. This also undermines the trope of the "Indian burial ground," for, surely, the grandfather would not intentionally inter murdered Native people on his family's homestead if he believed they would haunt future generations of his bloodline.

The theme of possession of Native people—particularly Native women—is present throughout the cowboy's story. On the way home to the ranch he encounters a woman holed up in a building, asleep and the cowboy notes "The woman had the high cheekbones of the Indian people."[19] As the cowboy approaches her, she springs from the bed and attacks him with a knife—inflicting a not-so-superficial wound. His reaction, of course, is to be admirable of her defensive skills: remarking that she was a "Wild cat," like a "caged wild animal." It turns out the woman, Sandy, is Navajo and the cowboy's first good look at her revealed eyes that were "a deep green, belying other blood ran through her veins."[20] Of course, the two find out they face similar struggles and take similar perspectives on rugged individualism, and they very quickly fall in love. Sandy remarks on her distaste for those who cannot take care of themselves: "They have no honor, no respect for the old ways. Our people used to be completely self-reliant in the old days before the government came to 'help us.'" Here, Finicum's ideology of the settler as an independent and righteous actor—embodying the mythic pioneer—seeps into the words spoken by a Native woman for the purposes of equalizing the historical colonization of Native people to the contemporary self-imposed victimhood of the political right. Again, this is a right-leaning articulation of settler fragility; in Finicum's mind (and therefore, the cowboy's mind as well) the

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[19] Finicum, *Only By Blood and Suffering*, 95.

[20] Finicum, *Only By Blood and Suffering*, 96.

only way to reconcile historic violence against Native people and modernize Indians into his worldview is to make the Indian and the settler mirror images of one another.[21]

Meanwhile, the cowboy's eldest daughter, Cathy, is described as descending from Anglo and Comanche heritage (from a distant point in the family's past where "some of the [Texas] Bonhams had married Comanche women") and possessing "those traits" (associated with the Comanche part of her ancestry) coming out in "Cathy's high cheek bones and dark eyes. She had physical beauty and a fiery spirit." In the context of Cathy's Comanche ancestry and her facial features - it is clear that by her "fiery spirit" the cowboy is insinuating some reference to her fiery "Indian" spirit. Again, appealing to a "both sides" leveling of Indian and settler narrative, Cathy's ancestry is juxtaposed with the cowboy's two youngest girls, twins, who have long blonde hair and were raised in Utah. Their mother "was from the Deep South with ancestors who had fought for the Confederacy" and whose "family still had a reverence for General Robert E. Lee, hence the names" in reference to the names of the twins, Haylee and Kaylee.[22] The family at the center of this story, whose ancestors on one side fought against the Comanche in Texas, but had families with Comanche women (this point glosses over a *whole lot* of issues), and on the other side fought to defend slavery under the Confederacy, have culminated in, what the cowboy sees, as a people wielding superior ways of thinking and being. After all of the family reunites at the ranch, the cowboy reflected:

> The thoughts of my ancestors re-entered my mind and a peaceful feeling stole over me. It seemed as if they were riding with us. I could feel their spirits, men who had lived in a hard and wild land and the women who had loved them. Nature had blessed the Bonham men physically. Their bodies were like fine steel blades, honed to a keen edge that held sharp through the years of life. Women of beauty, strength, and quality were drawn to them. Those women, when not bearing children, rode beside them. Gratitude filled my

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[21] Gilio-Whitaker, "Settler Fragility."

[22] Finicum, *Only By Blood and Suffering*, 27.

> heart. My ancestors had given me so much. They had given me a heritage of strong families, of self-reliance, of hard work, and of freedom.[23]

This passage contains a jumbled set of messages that include nods to racial essentialism, vague spiritual and natural themes associated with settler ideas about Indians, and gendered assumptions about attraction to power. At the heart of it all lies the pioneer mythology that the modern settler-state was won by individual hard work and determination of people just like the cowboy.

Ultimately, the cowboy gave his life, much was Finicum did. Fighting against the agents of the government in a last stand that martyrs the cowboy (and author) to a greater cause. The cowboy, as LaVoy Finicum did in real life, considered the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees the right to "keep and bear arms," central in identity and practice. What is missing from these modern settler militia movements is an acknowledgement of the role that settler violence played in causing trauma to Native bodies, cultures, and political structures. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz argues in her work, *Loaded*, that "the violence of settler colonialism stems from the use of 'savage war' and is related to the militias of the Second Amendment" and that it was the Second Amendment itself that "entitled settlers, as individuals and families, to the right to combat Native Americans on their own."[24] Just as the cowboy's grandfather had done with the three Navajo men he killed on Navajo land he was settling. Just as the occupiers of the Malhleur Wildlife Refuge office ignored calls from the local Burns-Paiute tribe to leave, while espousing speculations that their rifles and handguns were a necessary protection from the U.S.

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[23] Finicum, *Only By Blood and Suffering*, 114.

[24] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Loaded: A Disarming History of the Second Amendment* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2018), 42, 53.

government that was persecuting them.[25] In the jumble of conflicting themes in the settler discourses surrounding contemporary American settler militia movements, it is hard to keep a clear focus on any one issue. Somewhere in all of this, LaVoy Finicum running towards police with guns trained on him in the very landscape in which settler militias, along with U.S. soldiers, waged war against the native inhabitants of that land, is interpreted as "patriots who are persecuted for their beliefs are being subjected to injustices similar to those faced by Native Americans." While the articulations of this within the movements are nebulous and difficult to point to examples, it can be seen in the ways in which settler militia movements articulate their grievances with what they see as government encroachment on "their" (i.e. public) lands. The sentiment can also be seen in the development of the love story between the cowboy and Sandy. Sandy is not much of a character; she seems to be a female version of the cowboy, and the things he likes about her are the things he likes about himself—which includes that they both are on Navajo land and they both feel they have familial connections to that land. This is problematic, to say the least, given how the cowboy has described his family's ties to that land. Within both of these sentiments, Lorenzo Veracini's "Narrative Transfer IV" framework, in which claims are made of "settlers are also indigenous peoples" is present.[26] One example can be found in naming of the so-called "sovereign citizen" movements that often crossover with settler militias.[27]

These two examples of contemporary reproductions of the settler colonial discourses examined in this work represent a fraction of the ways in which one could explore such

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[25] Amanda Preacher, "Tribe Denounces Malheur Refuge Occupation." 2016, *Oregon Public Broadcasting*. https://www.opb.org/news/series/burns-oregon-standoff-bundy-militia-news-updates/tribe-denounces-malheur-refuge-occupation-/#:~:text=The%20Burns%20Paiute%20Tribe%20has,ancestral%20territory%20in%20Southeast%20Oregon.

[26] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 42-3.

[27] Dunbar-Ortiz, *Loaded*, 159-61.

manifestations. There is significant room to further explore both of the above realms in which settler colonial discourses are circulating today. There is a rich history of settler colonial discourses just within the genre of horror fiction and film waiting to be explored and catalogued in its own right. For all that is happening with the resurgence of horror film today, the explosion of horror fiction is even more prolific. There are several Native American authors who are pushing back against these discourses and retaking control of the depiction of Native people within the horror genre in ways similar to the filmmakers discussed above. But as visible as Native people using Native voices and telling Native stories are at this moment, there are still magnitudes greater numbers of non-Native content creators reacting to this newly-visible presence by reproducing old discourses about Indians in popular culture.

At the same time, the rise of far-right settler militia groups—informed by white supremacist ideologies, outfitted for violence through the Second Amendment and the proliferation of U.S. gun manufacturers, emboldened by more openly-hostile policies against marginalized people, and the politicians who advance those policies—are not the only manifestation of a settler-populace backlash against a true reckoning with America's settler-colonial past and present. They are just the most visibly dangerous. In 2019, the 166th Congress of the United States authorized a division of Homeland Security dedicated to tracking and combatting domestic terrorism. The bill begins with the finding, that "White supremacists and other far-right-wing extremists are the most significant domestic terrorism threat facing the United States."[28] While the visibility of white settler "patriots" calling for violence against those they see as political rivals, or simply not belonging in their version of America is upsetting, and the use of government resources to track such individuals and activity is of some comfort in that

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[28] Congress.gov. "S.894 – 116th Congress (2019-2020): Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019" March 27, 2019. https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s894/BILLS-116s894is.xml.

upset, both of those issues mask another. What I have seen, after immersing myself in racist discourses about Native people and history, contemporary politics, and popular culture for the last several years, is that—amidst the level of heightened awareness around threats of actual violence and actual increases in racist violence—there is a reluctance to take discourse seriously. The argument is articulated along the lines of "all this talk isn't as important as white supremacists openly marching in Virginia." That may be true, and yet the discourses that surround all of us—racist messaging that is internalized by some, externalized by others, and reproduced abundantly through political and cultural discourses—informs those more egregious performative aspects of white supremacy. It is exactly because it doesn't *seem as bad* and because that onslaught of discourse is absorbed makes folks—especially settler-descended folks—numb to it. It becomes normalized. It's hard to measure the damaged caused by that kind of intrusiveness in cultural messaging, but it was my primary aim in this study.

First looking to Indian captivity narratives from the early-seventeenth through the late-eighteen centuries informed colonial European perceptions about the Native people who lived in the Americas long before the moment of European contact. Discourses about Indians from those captivity narratives reflected real anxieties felt by European colonials, but they were also quickly, and with increasing magnitudes as time went on, sensationalized and reproduced for economic gain or local social control (as we saw in the relationship between colonial clergy in writing and performing these narratives in community sermons). Fearing Indians became an effective means for controlling one's religious flock, but that idea, too, quickly escaped the local, and it became the unifying language for European colonials and early Americans. Native people were demonized, denigrated, and disparaged in settler colonial discourses that informed, through constant reproduction, what new generations of EuroAmericans thought was true of all Native

people. By the beginning of the nineteenth-century, when U.S. explorations of the continental interior began in earnest, these discourses were firmly entrenched within the American cultural consciousness.

But still, those early expeditions of exploration in the early-nineteenth century provided white Americans, literally, a map to follow to settle the Indian lands of the West. John C. Frémont's celebrity and exploits brought attention to the movements West. His maps created in the early 1840s guided American settlers to the West in droves. The overland trail migrations of the mid-nineteenth century were marked by a prolific journaling tradition that reveals insights on what the settlers who were emigrating to the West thought about themselves and, more importantly, what they thought about the Native people they encountered. As this study has shown, settler writings from this period were often virulently denigrating towards Native people. Settlers saw the Indians before them through imagery that was entrenched in EuroAmerican discourses for a century and a half at that point, rather than for the people they often were: helpful, kind and curious, as many settlers described in their actual encounters with them. But, settlers held onto notions that the *next* Indian they were going to meet was going to viciously kill them, or worse. In the span of two decades, the settler migrations produced a wealth of narratives, and within them they reproduced the worst stereotypes about Native people from Indian captivity narratives. As travel overland gave way to railway travel after the completion of the transcontinental railroad, early rail riders documented their journeys with a nostalgic spin on the form and function of the overland settler narratives.

As settlers began the process of settling into their new lives on Indian land—stolen and then regifted to non-Native settlers by the government—they reflected back on their journeys West and their surroundings. Settlers began, as early as the 1860s, to write "remembrances" of

their travels that rehashed the same grievances about Indians. Here, though, settlers remembered Indians not so much in the fear they had of Indians, but as an obstacle to the land settlers now occupied. Their conclusion was, of course, the Indians *had* to go, otherwise the settler wouldn't be settled. Increasingly, these writings existed along contemporary settler colonial discourses justifying the settlement of the West through violence against Native people. Much as settler discourses in the current American political climate inform white supremacist ideologies and performances in settler militias, so too did they in the later nineteenth century. This is not to say that settler remembrances caused genocide against Native people. More so, that just as the different bodies of settler discourse examined so far reveal the concerns and ways of thinking of a settler populace, settler reminiscences reveal how settler discourses were active in re-imagining the historical memory of the settling of the West, and the culpability of settler violence against Native people. Similarly, early automobile travel narratives were written amid this newly imagined settler memory in which Native people were seen as relics of the past. These travel narratives reveal a mindset deeply influenced by settler nostalgia and reveal insights of the early twentieth-century world—reconstructed by settler memory and mythology—that dominated cultural messages through the reproduction of settler discourses in popular culture for the next century.

The final chapter of this study examines those discursive reproductions throughout various forms of popular culture during the twentieth century and extending in the twenty-first century. Wild West shows and early pieces of literature expressed settler colonial ideologies and were illustrative of how those cultural messages were spread through written word and performances targeting settler-descended Americans. By the 1920s and 1930s, those messages were being reproduced again through silent film and, in particular, animated shorts that upheld racist

ideologies from the previous two centuries. Additionally, the sheer volume of these animated short films brought racial representations of Native and Black Americans to the screen and replicated imagery from the minstrel shows of the mid-nineteenth century. Here I argue, that the damage was primarily done, not through adults watching these shorts at the beginning of other films in the cinema shortly after they were made, but in their distribution and syndication throughout the mid-and-latter twentieth century where the racist messages contained within were largely absorbed by children. Similarly, I investigated the reproduction of settler discourses within young adult serialized fiction—an evolution of the nineteenth-century dime novel—as well as physical spaces in which children and their families could enact performative expressions of settler nostalgia such as Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm in Southern California or through scouting organizations. Finally, I explored the reproduction of settler discourses within Western genre film and found that film acted as an efficient and effective disseminator of settler discourses—particularly racial discourses—in its ability to show the audience what it wants them to see, rather than telling them (but, of course, they did that too.) This is significant in the absorption of these discourses; Western genre films may not say anything within the character's dialogue that is negative about Indians, but they can show Indians doing all of the things that settler discourses have been telling readers for centuries. The need to explicitly say "Indians are violent savages" becomes less important in spreading that message when a filmmaker can show Indians acting as violent savages against white settlers in western films. This was especially true with the proliferation of films within the genre over decades in the twentieth century inundated audiences with settler discourses that upheld white supremacist ideologies. Those messages were absorbed and internalized as truth by Native and non-native audiences alike. This cycle shows no signs of stopping.

To come full-circle, in the Introduction of this study, I commented on the history of this discourse and that "It will be here tomorrow." This begs the question, is there anything to do about it? My answer? Yes—but—it would depend on a radical decolonization restructuring of the Americas. While I have no specific vision for what that could look like, as long as American history and American cultural discourses are controlled by non-Native Americans, I think time up until that point will only serve to give us more examples that add to the timeline I've developed within this study. Entrenchment in whiteness is stronger than ever—pushback in the post-Trump moment reveals a racist animus that had been brewing for decades. While liberal colorblindness isolated people of color who experienced racism, the white-American discourse on race was that it shouldn't exist but failed to recognize that social constructions of race and their implications for people of color did, and still do, exist. The Black Lives Matter protests in the wake of George Floyd's murder, the NODAPL protests in South Dakota, the 2015 mass-shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and the white supremacist march (and subsequent violence) at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, all brought a visibility to contemporary race issues in the U.S. that, previously, even white liberals ignored through notions of colorblindness in America. One effect of the above flashpoints of activism mentioned above has been non-Native American liberals beginning to embrace the notion that we did not, in fact, live in a colorblind society. Only white Americans did. As liberal white Americans began to address the racism inherent in our history, conservative Americans lost a key demographic that kept racial animus under control and now any advancement of critical thinking about race, any move to better represent people of color in the media, any marginalized people speaking from personal experience about bigotry or racial violence, all got lumped into a new boogeyman: Woke. This call to reclaim the narrative of

American as equal to white, heteronormative, and Christian has been deafening. As the "war on woke" has moved to include public universities and K-12 classroom as new battlefronts, the contribution of this dissertation, to provide a long and clear historical timeline of this one strand of racial discourse, feels more important than ever.

If all of this sounds inconsistent and confusing, that is because it is both of those things. There are no parameters of logical consistency within the settler discourses used in this study; the *point* of settler colonial discourses is that they serve settler colonial ideology in different ways, in different contexts, and at different times. That these messages can overlap and contradict themselves—for example, how is it that Indians are all passive and cowardly, yet all Indians are also treacherous and cunning, and all Indians represent a physical threat to EuroAmerican settlers because they are bloodthirsty and have a savage hunger for violence?—works in favor of a dominant settler-descended culture. Any particular meaning is as slippery to catch as a fish with one's bare hands, and trying to interrogate depictions of the "ignoble savage" rhetoric can be countered (albeit in bad faith) by bringing up representations of the "noble savage." It is precisely the avoidance of logical consistency that allows for these discourses to uphold ideologies of settler colonialism and white supremacy.

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