

perceived Indians as having legitimate claims to occupy colonial space. They often expressed sympathy for Indians even as they advocated removing them from their homelands in order to “save” them. Countless numbers of Indians went a long way toward accommodating Euro-Americans by trading and interacting with them, negotiating and allying with them in warfare, converting to their religions, and showing a willingness to share space.

The persistence of destabilizing ambivalences and uncertainties ultimately could only be addressed through the virtual *elimination* of the indigene. Arriving in massive numbers, Euro-Americans assumed entitlement to the land and demanded total security from the threat of indigenous resistance. By occupying “middle ground” with Euro-Americans, Indians destabilized the colonizer’s identity and his presumed providential destiny to inherit the land. This persistent rupturing of the colonialist fantasy combined with “savage” anticolonial resistance had a traumatic impact on the colonizer. Euro-Americans thus engaged in often-indiscriminate violence aimed at fulfilling the self-serving vision of Indians as a “dying race.”

Borderland studies and postcolonial studies have focused mostly on the indigenes and the complexities of local situations. But a history focused overwhelmingly on indigenous peoples and their experiences is one-dimensional. A history of settler colonialism must by definition also “focus on the settlers, on what they do, and how they think about what they do.”¹⁴ In this study I attempt to probe into the psyche, the ambivalences, and the resort to violence of the colonizer as well as the colonized. The analysis encompasses the complexity of the colonial encounter but suggests that ambivalence and hybridity created unwanted contingencies and psychic anxieties that tended ultimately to be reconciled through violence.

Settler Colonial Studies

The central arguments of this book are framed by settler colonial studies, a relatively recent and cutting-edge field of inquiry. “Settler colonialism as a specific formation has not yet been the subject of dedicated systematic analysis,” Lorenzo Veracini notes.¹⁵ Academic conferences in 2007 and 2008, followed by the launching of a journal dedicated to settler colonial studies, have propelled the new field forward.

Settler colonialism refers to a history in which settlers drove indigenous populations from the land in order to construct their own ethnic and religious national communities. Settler colonial societies include Argentina, Brazil, Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States. What primarily distinguishes settler colonialism from colonialism proper is that the settlers came not to exploit the indigenous population for economic gain, but rather to remove them from colonial space. Settlers sought “to construct communities bounded by ties of ethnicity and faith in what they persistently defined as virgin or empty land,” Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen point out. A “logic of elimination and not exploitation” fueled settler colonialism. The settlers “wished less

to govern indigenous peoples or to enlist them in their economic ventures than to seize their land and push them beyond an ever-expanding frontier of settlement.” As Veracini succinctly puts it, “Settler colonial projects are specifically interested in turning indigenous peoples into refugees.”¹⁶

Under “conventional” colonialism the colonizer eventually departs, but under settler colonialism the colonizer means to occupy the land permanently. “Settler colonies were (are) premised on the elimination of the native societies,” Patrick Wolfe explains. “The colonizers come to stay—invasion is a structure not an event.” Because it was *structural* rather than contingent, settler colonialism extended widely and outlasted colonialism and European imperialism. By a process of conquest and “the reproduction of one’s own society through long-range migration,” James Belich explains, “It was settlement, not empire that had the spread and staying power in the history of European expansion.”¹⁷

Settlers dispossessed indigenous people by establishing “facts on the ground” through mass migrations backed by violence. Hungry for land unavailable to them in Europe, settlers poured into new worlds, leaving metropolitan authorities struggling to keep pace. “Mobility and a lack of supervision enabled free subjects and citizens to scout for prospects and to squat,” John Weaver points out. “All frontiers attracted squatters whose possessory occupation was difficult to supplant.”¹⁸

The triangular relationship between settlers, the metropole, and the indigenous population distinguishes and defines settler colonialism. Settlers sought to remove and replace the indigenous population and in the process to cast aside the authority of the “mother” country. Settler colonies created their very identities through resolution of this dialectical relationship, in which indigenes disappeared and metropolitan authority was cast aside—the American Revolution being a prominent example. Thus, the ability to make both the indigenous and the exogenous metropolitan other “progressively disappear” established “the constitutive hegemony of the settler component.”¹⁹

The speed and intensity of explosive colonization overwhelmed indigenous peoples. As Belich notes, indigenes “could cope with normal European colonization [but] it was *explosive* colonization that proved too much for them.” Masses of settlers brought modernity with them, as they hewed out farms, domesticated animals, and built roads, bridges, canals, railroads, factories, towns, and cities, mowing down indigenous cultures in the process. The migrants “destroyed, crippled, swamped or marginalized most of the numerous societies they encountered,” constructing new societies at an astonishing pace.²⁰

If “sheer demographic swamping” failed to overwhelm the indigenous people, the modern societies linked advanced technology with lethal tropes of racial inferiority and indigenous savagery to effect ethnic cleansing campaigns.²¹ “The term ‘settler’ has about it a deceptively benign and domesticated ring which masks the violence of colonial encounters that produced and perpetrated consistently discriminatory and genocidal regimes against the indigenous peoples,” Annie Coombes notes. Settlers could be “dangerous people,” Belich adds, “especially when in full-frothing boom frenzy.”²²

This study embraces settler colonialism as a critically important interpretive framework, but one that requires theoretical and historical contextualization.

I accept Wolfe's argument that settler colonialism establishes a *structure*; however, the tendency of structuralism to forge rigid binaries can gloss over historical complexity and contingency. Bhaba's ambivalence thus provides an important contextualizing framework, one that I use to incorporate exceptions, qualifications, gray areas, and middle grounds between the colonizer and the colonized.

Space, Place, and Law

Culturally imagined and legally enshrined conceptions of space and place fueled settler colonialism. Outside of geography "the importance, complexity, and dynamism of space is frequently rendered invisible," yet space, as Doreen Massey observes, "is by its very nature full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation." Spatiality thus plays a central role in the production of knowledge and power. The way space is conceived, imagined, and framed has political consequences, for example as in the relationship between conceptions of globalization and neoliberal economic policies in the more recent past. As David Delaney points out, "Much of what is experientially significant about how the world is as it is and what it is like to be in the world directly implicates the dynamic interplay of space, law, meaning, and power."²³

Rather than being an empty void, space in this context is heavily laden with meaning. A culturally imagined and legally sanctioned relationship with the land creates the conditions and contingencies of social relations—the facts on the ground. In settler colonial societies, terms such as "frontier," "Manifest Destiny," and "homeland" assumed powerful symbolic meaning, creating emotional attachments. Legal claims such as the "Doctrine of Discovery" and "domestic dependent nations" bolstered these cultural ties to colonial space, while sanctioning dispossession and removal policies.

Profoundly divergent conceptions of place and space thus played a critical role in the colonial encounter. Over centuries, indigenous people had cultivated deeply rooted spiritual connections with the land from which the colonizer sought to remove them. The spiritual universe of indigenous societies revolved around nurturing and preserving reciprocal relations with the natural environment. This powerful sense of reciprocity carried over into relations with other peoples. When the universe of reciprocal relations was disrupted, indigenous warrior cultures typically lashed out in a quest for blood revenge.²⁴

For the settlers, violent indigenous resistance in contestation for colonial space functioned to reaffirm their own powerful constructions of imagined relationships with the land. Eurocentric notions of racial superiority, progress, and providential destiny thus propelled settler colonialism. Europeans denied or derided "primitive" concepts of land use, creating a colonial binary between land wasted by indigenes and land mobilized for progress by settlers. Framing indigenous people as indolent and wasteful justified removal and relocating them onto less desirable spaces. "Europeans' convictions about improvement and waste, their assumptions

about supposedly advanced and less advanced peoples, helped make the land rush unstoppable,” Weaver points out.²⁵

As they linked private property and individual landholding with freedom, progress, and national destiny, under God, settlers assumed control over colonial space. Colonial ambivalence, the relative balance of forces, and alliances determined the pace and timing of the settler advance. In the end, however, settler states would not stop short of establishing their authority over colonial space through mass migration, sanctioned under their laws, backed by violence.

Equipped with a higher manhood and a higher calling, settler colonials boldly conquered the wilderness, the outback; inherited the True North; and reclaimed the land of Zion. Having imagined powerful connections to their chosen lands, settlers defended them violently and at all cost.

Comparative Analysis

Settler colonial studies facilitate comparative analysis that reveals surprisingly similar histories evolving at different places and at different times. “The fact that settler societies resemble one another in several respects is not a consequence of conscious imitation,” Donald Denoon explains, “but of separate efforts to resolve very similar problems.”²⁶ As settler colonial studies are relatively new, Lynette Russell notes, “One of the future directions for research include detailed comparative studies.”²⁷

While this book homes in on American settlement, the United States emerged out of a broader history of global colonialism and especially of British settler colonialism.²⁸ “The course of American history,” Weaver points out, “connects deeply, extensively, and reciprocally with land-taking and land-allocation episodes in the histories of British settlement colonies.”²⁹ The American, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, and South African settler colonies shared common cultural traits and similar outlooks toward indigenous people—ambivalent attitudes as well as lethal ones—yet important distinctions remained.

Although Canada like the United States was a product of British settler colonialism, geographic and demographic distinctions constructed a different history with indigenous people. In essence Canada had far fewer settlers, far fewer indigenes, and plenty of space to avoid one another for a longer time. Contrary to popular mythology, British Canadians were neither wiser nor morally superior in their handling of Indian affairs; rather they felt less pressured to address the issue. Canadians were also preoccupied with internal divisions between French and English settlers and between maritime and interior provinces.³⁰ Not until the 1860s did the Canadian policies begin to resemble the American removal policies, but the scale and scope of conflict with the First Peoples was small compared with the United States. “Aside from the 1869 Matisse resistance in the Red River country and the 1885 Matisse and Indian uprising,” Roger Nichols points out, “the Canadian record featured little violence particularly when contrasted to what was happening at the same time in the United States.”³¹