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## **‘Settler Colonialism’: Career of a Concept**

Lorenzo Veracini

*In a necessarily selective way, this paper explores the historiographical evolution of ‘settler colonialism’ as a category of analysis during the second half of the twentieth century. It identifies three main passages in its development. At first (until the 1960s), ‘settlers’, ‘settlement’, and ‘colonization’ are understood as entirely unrelated to colonialism. The two do not occupy the same analytical field, pioneering endeavours are located in ‘empty’ settings, and the presence and persistence of indigenous ‘Others’ is comprehensively disavowed. In a second stage (until the late 1970s), ‘settler colonialism’ as a compound identifies one specific type of diehard colonialism, an ongoing and uncompromising form of hyper-colonialism characterised by enhanced aggressiveness and exploitation (a form that had by then been challenged by a number of anticolonial insurgencies). During a third phase (from the late 1970s and throughout the first half of the 1980s), settler colonialism is identified by a capacity to bring into being high standards of living and economic development. As such, as settler colonialism is understood as the opposite of colonialism and associated underdevelopment and political fragmentation. It is only at the conclusion of a number of successive interpretative moments that ‘settler colonial’ phenomena could be theorised as related to, and yet distinct from, colonial ones. On the basis of this transformations, beginning from approximately the mid 1990s, ‘settler colonial studies’ as an autonomous scholarly field could then consolidate.*

Settler colonial phenomena – circumstances where colonisers ‘come to stay’ and to establish new political orders for themselves, rather than to exploit native labour – are inherently transnational and transcultural.<sup>1</sup> Transnational and translocal because the relationship between ‘home’ and settler locale institutes a dialectical tension between ‘here’ and ‘there’; transcultural because the relationship between metropole and settler colony is routinely understood as inherently dynamic. Settler colonialism is about turning a place and a specific human material into something else, and, paradoxically and

simultaneously, about a specific human material that remains true to itself in a place that is 'other'. Of course, while the colonies settlers build for themselves are either independent or politically subordinate to the colonising metropole, a capacity to establish a new society that replicates the original one (without its perceived shortcoming) is inevitably premised on the possibility of controlling and dominating indigenous peoples. As the possibility of encountering a genuinely empty locale has been historically quite rare, building settler colonies and the exercise of colonial domination, while different, should be seen as inescapably intertwined (hence the need for a compound definition containing both 'settler' and 'colonialism').

A growing scholarly endeavour is now focusing comparatively and transnationally on 'settler societies' and 'settler colonialism'.<sup>2</sup> And yet, while it is attributed quite different meanings in different national, scholarly, or disciplinary contexts, 'settler colonialism' as an interpretative category also has a history. Colonial and settler colonial phenomena have generally been seen either as entirely separate, affecting inherently different geographical spaces, and involving inherently different constituencies, or as different manifestations of colonialism at large.<sup>3</sup> Neither stance, however, allows a proper appraisal of settler colonialism in its specificity. In contrast, I suggest that colonialism and settler colonialism should be understood in their dialectical relation: neither entirely separate, nor part of the same conceptual field.

The following historiographical outline is an attempt to make sense of the long term development of multiple debates, scholarly approaches, and national historiographical traditions. On the one hand, it is inevitably selective and interpretative. It is important to note that even if they are here analytically organised in a narrative and thematic succession, the distinct passages I identify in the following sections do not necessarily dovetail into each other. Different interpretative traditions and scholarly approaches overlapped and coexisted – indeed as they rarely communicated across different countries and various disciplinary and area studies focuses, some of the scholarly traditions identified here remain ongoing. Yet again, these debates and the conceptual and historiographical shifts they engendered travelled transnationally, even reaching literatures like the one dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where the very acknowledgement of a settler colonial dimension to current dispensations is bound

to be most contentious.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, if settler colonialism is inevitably transnational, the historiography of a global phenomenon should be also considered in the context of its global development.

### **Settlers without Colonialism: Pioneering and ‘Virgin Lands’**

A *Foreign Affairs* essay by Isaiah Bowman entitled ‘The Pioneer Fringe’ explored in the late 1920s what its author defined ‘the science of settlement’.<sup>5</sup> It was nearly a century since Edward Gibbon Wakefield had espoused the ‘art of colonization’ – ‘science’ had replaced ‘art’ but ‘colonization’ had remained a priority. The essay mapped the pioneering ‘regions’ of the age – ‘the Canadian Northwest, Rhodesia, West Australia, where white men lead in settlement’, but it mentioned other areas as well: Alaska, Patagonia, the Brazilian hinterland, Central Southern Africa, internal Australia and northern Asia. At the same time, the essay identified who was a ‘pioneer’: ‘a young man bent upon winning from the wilderness with strong hands and the hope of youth a homestead for himself and an inheritance for his children’.<sup>6</sup> This definition encapsulated many of the long lasting traits of settler colonial political traditions: a gendered order, a focus on mononuclear familial relations and reproduction, and the *production* of assets transferable across generations. Its author did not mention it, but it went without saying: this young man had a white wife, his children were white, and if he had nonwhite neighbours, it was understood that they would be gone by the time his children were ready to inherit. Crucially, however, the essay was also acutely conscious of inexorably diminishing returns: not only was pioneering becoming less practicable in increasingly marginal areas, even if new technologies and a ‘scientific’ approach could now be deployed, the growing appeal of urban life was making it less and less attractive. Even conceptually, a ‘fringe’ was decidedly not a ‘frontier’ – an area that, in Turnerian terms, would practically settle itself before being eventually ‘closed’. These fringes were to remain marginal; eventually, ‘pioneering’ as a way of life would necessarily die out. Bowman had recognised the end of an era, and the narrative was shaped in an elegiac mode (the same elegiac mode that had four decades earlier framed Turner’s rendition of

the American frontier – a reconstruction that was crucially inspired by its alleged ‘closure’).

An interest in the utter limits of ‘pioneering’ was also the subject of Archibald Grenfell Price’s 1930s and 1940s systematic and comparative analysis of the worldwide experiences of white settlers.<sup>7</sup> Beside an outline of the different approaches to the administration of indigenous communities – the topic of one of his volumes (existing indigenous people, after all, are one crucial limit of a settler project), Price focused on the communities of settlers established in various tropical regions (the subject of another volume).<sup>8</sup> The management of indigenous residues in settler areas and settler communities established in non-settler locales were thus the subject of a global scholarly project also dedicated to the analysis of the ‘fringes’ of pioneering endeavour.

The tropics were areas that had traditionally been associated with settler failure and colonial – that is, not settler colonial – orders. Price was aware of the crucial need to distinguish between colonial and settler colonial forms as a necessary prerequisite for his exploration. Even in tropical regions, settlement was *permanent* ‘colonization’, he noted,

under which the incomers and their descendants follow all the usual routine of life, including manual labor, maintaining their standards of health, energy, civilization and culture, and raise families that do not exhibit mental or physical degeneracy. This definition excludes officials, soldiers, missionaries, and traders, who go to the tropics for only a part of their lives. They are sojourners, not settlers.<sup>9</sup>

‘Permanent’ should be here understood in its contextual ambiguity. On the one hand, the very definition of ‘settler’ is premised on an intention to stay that is contrasted to the intention to return of colonial sojourners and adventurers; on the other, as it was becoming increasingly clear, the ongoing and indefinite domination of colonial dependencies could no longer be taken for granted. If colonialism was becoming increasingly impermanent, settler colonialism was acquiring an enhanced degree of permanence.

Both Bowman and Price were thus detecting an epochal transition, and perceived that environmental, demographic, geographical and structural limits had been finally encountered. There was no easy way of thinking about further expansion; from then on the new frontiers would have to be qualitatively new. This was indeed a widespread conception, and novelist John Steinbeck, for example, who could often effectively encapsulate the spirit of the time, also effectively expressed a very similar structure of feeling. On this subject, one of his characters articulates a sense an irretrievable loss:

‘It wasn’t the Indians that were important, nor adventures, nor even getting out here. It was a whole bunch of people made into one crawling beast. ... It was westering and westering. Every man wanted something for himself, but the big beast that was all of them wanted only westering. ... When we saw the mountains at last, we cried – all of us. But it wasn’t getting here that mattered it was movement and westering’.

We carried life out here and set it down the way those ants carry eggs. And I [Jody’s Grandfather, the main subject of Steinbeck’s story] was the leader. The westering was as big as God, and the slow steps that made the movement piled up until the continent was crossed.

Then we came done to the sea, and it was done’.

‘Maybe I could lead the people some day’, Jody said.

The old man smiled. ‘There’s no place to go. There’s the ocean to stop you. There’s a line of old men along the shore hating the ocean because it stopped them’.

‘In boats, I might, sir’.

‘No Place to go, Jody. Every place is taken. But that’s not the worst – no, not the worst. Westering has died out of the people. Westering isn’t a hunger any more. It’s all done’.<sup>10</sup>

‘Saltwater’ colonialism would not do – boats would be ineffectual; even if the author of ‘The Pioneer Fringe’ could still find on the map locales where ‘white men lead in

settlement', it was generally expected that the next generation would only metaphorically 'lead'.

The perception of a global and epochal transition would produce in the 1950s a scholarship finally interested in the comparative analysis of similar colonisation/settlement processes. Analyses of pioneering endeavours centred on frontiers, their exceptionality, or, conversely, their comparability.<sup>11</sup> Walter Prescott Webb even argued in 1951 that the American frontier had shaped the institutions of Europe *as well as* America, and that the American frontier had been a genuinely *universal* frontier.<sup>12</sup> He quoted Steinback's passage: it was indeed with an elegiac sense of the irretrievable passing of an era that a comparative literature was now developing.

In this newly comparative climate, Louis Hartz's *The Founding of New Societies* focused on the reproduction of European sociopolitical bodies (indeed, Hartz's many detractors would also produce comparative analyses).<sup>13</sup> Hartz's argument emphasised a crucial discontinuity between a colonising past and a no longer colonising present. He explicitly referred to a 'New Era' characterised by the impossibility of establishing new 'fragments', and where the 'fragments' themselves were now collectively facing a similar experience: a truly globalised world was forcing them to finally face 'Europe' after drawn out isolation.<sup>14</sup> Hartz focused on what happens 'when a part of a European nation is detached from the whole of it and hurled outward onto new soil':

it loses the stimulus toward change that the whole provides. It lapses into a kind of immobility. Nor does it matter what stage of European history the part embodies, whether it is feudal, as in Latin America and French Canada, bourgeois, as in the United States, Dutch South Africa, and English Canada, or actually radical, charged with the proletarian turmoil of the Industrial Revolution, as in Australia and British South Africa. The fragments reflect every phase of the European revolution, but they evince alike the immobilities of fragmentation.<sup>15</sup>

While the new societies shared in this rendition a traditionalist drive, a perceived incapacity to produce 'history' was explained with reference to a lack of 'European'

challenges. The fragments and the ideologies that underwrote them could master their regional domains, could escape their (ideological) European enemies, and were protected from ‘a whole series of later [also ideological] enemies’.<sup>16</sup> In a setting devoid of challenges, the history of a fragment was therefore understood as a mere ‘unfolding’ taking place in a ‘curiously timeless place’.<sup>17</sup> There was ‘a stifling future as well as an escape from the past’, Hartz concluded. The awareness of an epochal transition was still there, not so the elegiac mode.<sup>18</sup>

However, and this is crucial, as well as ‘curiously timeless’, the place was also peculiarly indigenously. The fragments/fringes and the pioneering endeavours that defined them were recurrently understood in their *exclusive* relationship with Europe or other cores. Reflecting the conceptual separation between ‘colonies of settlement’ and ‘colonies of exploitation’ (a long lasting trait of reflections on colonial experiences), all these analyses were thus fundamentally unconcerned with indigenous peoples. As such, they were narrating an exclusive encounter between the settlers and the lands they claimed. These scholarly traditions did not address colonialism and focused on ‘colonization’ (indeed, they could be seen as having a vested interest in disavowing the colonial dimension inherent in the relationship they were describing). Settlers were studied in isolation, and colonialism – the subjection of colonised ‘others’, systematically disavowed. The study of settlers was not yet the study of settler colonialism.

### **‘Settler Colonialism’ within Colonialism: Hyper-Colonialism**

The first wave of post-WWII decolonisation engulfed areas where no substantial communities of settlers were present. The Algerian war changed everything. If, as Todd Shepard has recently argued, it is true that decolonisation as a concept emerged in the very context of a decolonising Algeria, it is also true that ‘settler colonialism’ as a conceptual category also emerged there (even if, paradoxically, as Shepard demonstrates, settler colonialism had to be ultimately disavowed in order to allow for decolonisation to be conceptualised first and enacted later).<sup>19</sup> It was in the context of 1960s/1970s protracted anticolonial struggles involving settler minorities (especially in Africa) that



‘settler colonialism’ as a compound made up of both ‘settler’ and ‘colonialism’ first emerged as category of analytical inquiry.<sup>20</sup> During this phase, traditional references to ‘land settlement’ and ‘pioneering endeavours’ could no longer be made in isolation from the colonial relations these processes inevitably instituted and sustained; as such, ‘settler colonialism’ came to identify a specific colonial form – a type of hyper-colonialism. In this interpretative context, Marc Ferro would later define settler independence as the ‘most advanced stage of white colonial expansion’, while Perry Anderson had talked about Portuguese ‘ultra-colonialism’.<sup>21</sup>

During this phase, however, ‘colonialism’ and ‘settler colonialism’ were often understood as essentially coterminous categories. Ronald Robinson’s theory of periphery-led imperial expansion, for example, understood the settler as the ‘ideal prefabricated collaborator’ of colonial and imperialist regimes.<sup>22</sup> His theory did not distinguish between colonial and settler colonial forms and conflated indigenous mediators/collaborators and settlers: it was their similar peripheral positioning *vis à vis* metropolitan imperialism that enabled this conflation. In Robinson’s theory, the settler had fulfilled a process of indigenisation and had become in some ways ‘a native’. According to similar approaches, settler colonialism disappeared as a distinct formation, even if the characteristics of a ‘colonialism of a special type’ were extensively discussed in relation to South Africa.<sup>23</sup> In a different context and for different reasons, but with similar results, Frantz Fanon had also not differentiated between colonial and settler colonial phenomena. In his analysis, the two forms overlapped: it was ‘the settler’ that had brought the native into existence – he was acutely aware of settler colonialism – there was no colonial relation, he believed, outside of the settler-native one. The direct anticolonial struggle he was advocating was an especially anti-settler struggle because a distinction between permanent settlers and temporary migrants could not be ultimately sustained: every colonist, Fanon argued, is a *potential* permanent settler.<sup>24</sup> As the settler was simply the colonist that would not negotiate, for Fanon ‘colonialism’ inevitably disappeared within ‘settler colonialism’.

Conflating colonial and settler colonial forms was indeed typical of contemporary understandings of ‘imperialism’. In *The Political Economy of Growth*, for example, Paul Baran had also authoritatively turned the settlers into a fully indigenous collective. They

came to the new lands with ‘capitalism in their bones’ and *meeting no resistance worth the name* [...] they succeeded in a short time in establishing on virtually virgin (and exceptionally fertile) soil *an indigenous society of their own*. From the outset capitalist in its structure, unencumbered by the fetters and barriers of feudalism, that society could single-mindedly devote itself to the development of its productive resources [...] the newly emerging bourgeois societies were at an early stage cohesive and strong enough to overthrow [metropolitan control] and to create a political framework conducive to the growth of capitalism.<sup>25</sup>

Still within a Marxist tradition, but departing from this pattern of interpretation, it was a path breaking 1972 essay published by the *New Left Review* that, on the contrary, emphasised the structuring importance of the settler presence. Arghiri Emmanuel’s intention was to disrupt traditional theories of imperialism: he therefore proposed that settler colonialism be understood as an ‘uncomfortable “third element” in the noble formulas of the “people’s struggle” against financial imperialism’.<sup>26</sup> Emmanuel argued that it was settler colonialism (he defined it as ‘true colonialism’ and a ‘third factor that intervenes between imperialist capitalism and the peoples of the exploited countries’) that prevented any possible accommodation between metropolitan, capitalist, and indigenous national interests.<sup>27</sup> Settlers were an ‘independent motive force’ (that is, a force that was independent from metropolitan interests), an element, he noted, that was often opposed to financial imperialism, and was therefore actively supported in some leftwing milieus. Three is not two: settler colonial phenomena, he concluded, did not fit within traditional categories of enquiry; as such, they needed distinct ones.

A similar analytical separation between colonialism and settler colonialism can also be detected in Ronald Horvath’s 1972 taxonomy of colonial phenomena. He distinguished structurally between ‘colonialism’ and ‘imperialism’ and based this distinction on whether settlers were actually present or not (he defined ‘settlers’ as migrants who acquire over time a certain degree of domination in their new homes):

The domination of Latin America, North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Asian part of the Soviet Union by European powers all involved

the migration of permanent settlers from the European country to the colonies. These places were colonized. Most of Africa and Asia, on the other hand, was imperialized – dominated but not settled – and the countries involved are noticeably different today, in part, because of the nature of the domination process. Therefore, colonialism refers to that form of intergroup domination in which settlers in significant numbers migrate permanently to the colony from the colonizing power. Imperialism is a form of intergroup domination wherein few, if any, permanent settlers from the imperial homeland migrate to the colony.<sup>28</sup>

A further step in this classification involved the creation of a matrix where ‘colonial’, as opposed to ‘imperialist’ phenomena could be plotted depending on varying approaches to the population economy of the colonised/imperialised locale (Horvath identified three possibilities: ‘extermination’, ‘assimilation’, and ‘relative equilibrium’). Thus, he concluded, the matrix ‘generates six logical types, three of colonialism and three of imperialism’ (other variables in Horvath’s classification were ‘formal’ as opposed to ‘informal’, and ‘domestic’ as opposed to ‘international’ types of intergroup domination). The (settler) ‘colonialism’ types included:

Type 1 is colonization in which the dominant relationship between the colonizers and the colonized is extermination of the latter. In the extreme sense of the word, to exterminate is to root out totally or eradicate. History provides us with relatively few examples where total extermination of the inhabitants of geographic entities occurred-among them the European occupation of Tasmania and of some of the Caribbean islands-but extermination of the inhabitants of vast areas of America, Australia, Canada, and Tsarist and Communist Russia can also be cited here.

Type 2 is colonization in which assimilation is the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. Among the many examples of this type are Hispanicized Latin America and the Philippines, the Arabicized and/or Islamicized Middle East, and the Sinicized East and Southeast Asia. In each of these examples, and the many others that could be offered, the colonizers acted as

a 'donor' culture and the colonized people constituted a 'host' culture, with a vast amount of cultural transfer going, as the name implies, from donor to host [...].

Type 3 is colonization in which settlers neither exterminate nor assimilate the indigenes. Settlers and indigenes may live either side by side or apart, but in either case there is a lack of wholesale acculturation or eradication (this is not to imply that no culture change occurs). Among the former European colonies that exemplified this type are Algeria, Rhodesia, Kenya, South Africa, and Indonesia.<sup>29</sup>

Horvath's classification thus introduced a further theoretical innovation: for him, as Emmanuel had also argued, settler colonial phenomena do not constitute a subset category of colonial ones (that is, they are not placed at opposite ends of a continuum); on the contrary, his matrix understands colonialism and settler colonialism as subtypes of the larger 'intergroup domination' category. Colonial and settler colonial phenomena were therefore understood as related and yet separate categories.

In a similar fashion, Kenneth Good proposed in the mid-1970s the notion of a 'colon state'.<sup>30</sup> This specific type of polity (Kenya, Algeria, Rhodesia, South Africa – societies where conquest and colonial domination had been particularly traumatic – were considered together in their similarities) was characterised by a structural element that distinguished it from other colonial states:

In strong contrast with the general experience of the Third World, settler societies show a capacity for independent capitalist development [...]. They thereby avoid relegation to the periphery of the world system as perpetual suppliers of raw materials, and as providers of dependent domestic markets for the manufactures of the metropole. In the process, the *colon* state assumes an ambivalent position in relation to imperialism in that it co-operates with the metropole, providing a secure and cheap occupation of a strategic area in return for political support and military aid.<sup>31</sup>

The ‘*colon state*’ (but note: Good is reluctant to use ‘settler’ – ‘settler colonialism’ could not yet be easily compounded), and indeed the ‘settler mode of production’, presented special challenges for decolonisation processes and conflict management.<sup>32</sup> A Marxist tradition of analysis had understood settler colonialism as distinct in its particular relationship with capitalism, and it was a manifest capacity for ‘independent capitalist development’ that presented special classificatory challenges (a challenge that would be met by the interpretative school outlined in the next section). Thus, settler colonialism was seen as fundamentally characterised by an inherent ambivalence, an ambivalence that required that settler colonial phenomena be considered simultaneously *part of* and *distinct from* colonialism at large. If ‘colonization’ and ‘colonialism’ could once be seen as essentially unrelated phenomena, a number of bitter anticolonial insurgencies and especially contested decolonization processes had forced them into the same analytical frame.

However, as bitter conflicts involving settlers and delayed decolonisations demanded that traditional approaches to understanding colonial and imperial phenomena be revised and integrated, even calls to account for an intractable specificity focused on settlers and their particular agency as they operated *within* colonial systems of relationships. Thus, a shift towards the appraisal of the distinctive pattern of settler colonialism necessitated a parallel area studies shift: settler colonialism was generally seen as something happening elsewhere; not in the white settler nations, but in Africa and the Third World (of course, as well as an area studies displacement, this move implied a disciplinary rearrangement: geography and political science were now joined by political economy). This area study focus was thus actually foreclosing the possibility of exploring settler colonialism *beyond* the colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial worlds. On the one hand, ‘settler colonialism’ as a compound category had entered the analytical frame, but as it did so, a conceptual/area studies displacement contributed to reproducing the rigid compartmentalisation between colonial and noncolonial worlds.<sup>33</sup> As the focus was on anticolonial confrontation, *accomplished* settler colonial forms in locales characterised by the *absence* of open anticolonial challenge (that is, the white settler nations) fell from view. As disavowal was being dealt with, displacement reintroduced its effects.

## **‘Settler Colonialism’ without Colonialism: ‘Dominion’ Capitalism**

A focus on the economies of the settler polities characterised the historiography of settler colonial phenomena during the late 1970s and 1980s.<sup>34</sup> This was certainly not a new development: the ‘staple theory’ of economic development had emphasised since the 1930s that settler peripheries and metropolitan cores were closely integrated.<sup>35</sup> According to this theory, Canada (and by implication Australia and New Zealand) and Great Britain had not grown apart – a protracted/ongoing institutional relationship was therefore explained via this link.<sup>36</sup> During this new phase, while the area studies focus shifted again, from the colonial world to the analysis of what will be defined as a global settler ‘Second World’, economic history and sociology also became crucial disciplinary sites in the consolidation of ‘settler colonialism’.<sup>37</sup>

A number of comparative economic histories of settler colonial polities appeared during this decade, most notably Donald Denoon’s *Settler Capitalism* (Philip McMichael’s work was also crucial in theorising a specific form of settler capitalism: in *Settlers and the Agrarian Question* he had detailed the ways in which an original Australian *colonial* capitalism had by the 1860s been turned into *settler* capitalism).<sup>38</sup> Denoon proceeded from an appraisal of a fundamental divide: ‘there is something distinctive about settler societies’, he noted, ‘marking them off from metropolitan societies on the one hand, and the rest of the ‘third world’ on the other’.<sup>39</sup> He thus introduced a critical analytical distinction: the settler world was neither constituted by European (or neo-European) fragments, as Hartz had argued, nor a subset part of the colonial world, as those concerned with decolonising struggles involving settler minorities had postulated. As such, settler colonialism demanded a third conceptual space.

Denoon insisted on an economic definition of settler colonial forms (he was implicitly criticising a previous comparative historiography of settler societies for failing to understand how capitalism should be the ‘central consideration’). ‘An overview of these societies in the first half of the nineteenth century’, he noted, would

reveal a considerable number of common features. First, they were self-consciously European, but separated from Europe by great distances and expensive transport. Second, metropolitan strategists and capitalists saw them as way-stations *en route* to more lucrative opportunities in the tropical world – India and China particularly. Third, they were all concentrated around the harbours, the termini of their European life-lines, and the essential markets for the produce of the hinterlands. Fourth, the temperate grass-lands behind these ports enabled them to grow crops and raise stock in much the same way as Europeans did, though it was difficult to market these products in bulk. Fifth, labour was provided either by the settlers themselves, or by slaves or convicts, or by wage labour; but very rarely by squeezing indigenous communities.<sup>40</sup>

Most crucially, he noted, they ‘were *highly dependent, highly successful* economically, and as thoroughly enmeshed in capitalist international trade as they were permeated with capitalist relations within’.<sup>41</sup> Their current (and past) prosperity and political stability (as opposed to chronic underdevelopment and political fragmentation) made them inherently different from the rest of the colonial and postcolonial world. Their dependency on external finance and trade, on the other hand, made them also different from the metropolitan cores. More generally, this interpretative tradition was a response to Immanuel Wallerstein world-systems theory: while According to Wallerstein, a hierarchical articulation between peripheral and core regions and associated relations of unequal exchange were producing weak states and fragmented political institutions at the margins, the settler polities, Denoon argued, were obviously upsetting this interpretation.<sup>42</sup>

In the context of these debates, Argentina was seen as a liminal case between two types – the prosperous/stable, albeit dependent, and the underdeveloped/subaltern.<sup>43</sup> As such, Argentina became a crucial and recurring test case for comparative analysis (especially in comparative relation to Australia and Canada). Carter Goodrich had already set the comparative tone in a 1964 *Comparative Studies in Society and History* essay:

As a new country of settlement origins Argentina, like the United States, belongs to a small group of historically favored nations. Since its economic development has differed to a considerable degree from that of others of the group, an examination of Argentina's experience and relative position may serve to raise questions of interest to students of comparative history.<sup>44</sup>

Where was Argentina to be located in the context of this interpretative pattern; how could its 'deviant' trajectory be explained; had it ever been an (albeit informal/'honorary') British Dominion? Organised primarily in accordance with a register of difference, an extensive comparative literature in English focused on class composition, the elites, the state, the allocation/misallocation of property rights, the failure to develop industrially, tariffs, institutional and business styles, migratory patterns, the labour movements, and other features characterising Argentina's 'divergent' development.<sup>45</sup> Crucial to these approaches was the possibility of reading Argentinean history according to a 'normalcy to deviance' narrative structure. When was it that a settler colonial context had turned into a colonial one? Positions varied, and identified the point of divergence at different passages, from Rosas' ascendancy in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, to Peron's in the 1950s. Crucial to these approaches was also the more or less explicit anxiety pertaining to the possibility that a similar 'deviance' could manifest itself in other semi-dependent, semi-peripheral settler colonial polities – that Argentina was not only deviant, but a precursor as well. These were years of sustained crisis; were Australia, New Zealand, and Canada also at risk of turning into economically fragile and politically unstable settings?

During this phase, as mentioned, another area studies shift can be detected in discussions involving 'settlers' and 'settler colonialism'. No longer a form involving Africa in particular, settler colonialism was now seen as characteristic of the southern hemisphere (it is significant that 'settler colonialism' is a largely Australian developed category; elsewhere scholarly debate focused on 'settler society', which obscures 'colonialism', or simply referred to 'colonialism', which neglects 'settler').<sup>46</sup> It was still the 'global' South, but a South that was now seen as inherently diversified in its relationship with the metropolitan cores. There was a colonial/postcolonial South and a *settler* colonial South (and an intermediate Argentinean case). And yet, as 'settler



colonialism' was being conceptually 'brought home' to the non-European developed countries (and while disciplinarily it was now economics that took the lead), the emphasis on 'colonialism' was implicitly dropped from the interpretative frame.

Definitions of 'settler' or 'dominion' capitalism now implied sustained high levels of economic performance together with the sudden and irretrievable disappearance of indigenous polities and agency. Both these characteristics contributed to making reflection on colonialism marginal. True, this interpretative tradition still used 'colonialism' as a conceptual category, but crucially in order to emphasise settler dependent development, and not to refer to indigenous subjugation. The very notion of 'settler capitalism', with its emphasis on an order that is established *ex novo* without 'Old World' restraints and without sustained conflict with surviving indigenous polities, demanded that indigenous people be deemed insignificant *both* at the moment of the settler polity's foundation and thereafter. Denoon, it should be noted, had crucially based his analysis on the type of indigenous presences and their impact in determining the possibility of instituting a specific type of colonial domination rather than another. '[I]t is the qualities of the indigenous society which profoundly influenced the kind of settler society which could be superimposed upon it, or which might entirely replace it', he had concluded.<sup>47</sup> This was a crucial concession, but also a preemptive consideration (and at exception anyway, most scholars continued to disregard all indigenous inputs). References to 'settler capitalism' were effectively writing indigenous people and indigenous history off the conceptual map. As displacement was redressed, disavowal became reactivated.

### **Colonialism within 'Settler Colonialism': Settler Colonial Studies**

The indigenous peoples of the white settler nations – the 'Fourth World' – eventually began to militantly demand recognition and self-determination.<sup>48</sup> In the context of renewed political contestations, another phase in the development of 'settler colonialism' as a concept thus began. If previous historiographical traditions in settler colonial polities had focused on 'virgin lands' and 'quiet continents' (the Americanists of the 'myth-

symbol' school of interpretation, for example, had focused on a prototypical American Self [i.e., *the American Adam*], on a specific quest [i.e., *the Errand into the Wilderness*], and on the process of acquisition/liberation of the land [i.e., a *Virgin Land*] against all sorts of indigenous and exogenous challenges), a new interpretative trend now emphasised violence, theft, wastefulness, classism, and racism.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, ethnohistory, anthropology, indigenous studies, and especially history became crucial disciplinary sites in the development of 'settler colonialism' as a conceptual category.

A general critique of settler colonial development – indeed, a series of critiques – thus coalesced around the recovery of the historical experience of indigenous peoples in the white settler nations – the timing and detail, but not the general direction, of the historiographical 'revolutions' in the settler polities varied.<sup>50</sup> Crucially, this recovery initially needed to focus on dispossession and violence: that is, on 'colonialism' (the notion of 'internal colonialism' initially contributed to mediating this passage).<sup>51</sup> If the first and third passages outlined in this article had neglected 'colonialism', now, as had happened during the second interpretative moment outlined above, a renewed focus was bringing it again to the fore. But this time it was different. As this transformation also implied another displacement in area studies focus, 'colonialism' was now seen operating *within* all settler colonial environments, including the settler colonial North, and not merely the settler colonial/noncolonial/semi-dependent South (for different reasons, both the Canadian and US historiographies were late in adopting settler colonialism as a category of analysis).<sup>52</sup> As multiple historiographical shifts had now detailed, beginning from the mid-1970s, and as the colonial subjugation of indigenous peoples in the settler polities could no longer be ignored, 'settler' and 'colonialism' could now be compounded without either disavowal or conceptual displacements.

An initial emphasis on indigenous devastation in the 1970s and 1980s was in due course coupled with an appraisal of indigenous agency, resilience, and success in resisting settler domination and, as a number of historians would argue in the 1980s and 1990s with increasing insistence, in contributing to specific national patterns. If an emphasis on indigenous destruction had been contiguous with the 'settler/dominion capitalism' approach, the recovery of a long lasting 'middle ground' between indigenous and settler polities *in the past*, sustained the possibility of renewed relationships between

indigenous people and settler nations *in the present* (renewed, after all, is crucially different from brand new).<sup>53</sup> It is significant that all these processes of revision and reinterpretation of national and/or regional pasts accompanied constitutional and especially juridical rearrangements involving indigenous constituencies.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the role of historians in contributing to institutional adjustment/reform was in some cases decisive, and historians and other academics involved in the production of indigenous and national histories in the settler societies have in some cases made history by literally (re)writing it.<sup>55</sup> Inevitably, as they successfully challenged entrenched settler colonial foundational narratives, these revisionisms have repeatedly engendered a number of denialist responses. However, in a way that replicated what had happened in relation to the various historiographical revolutions, the timing and detail, but not the general direction, of the ‘history wars’ in the settler societies varied. These contestations confirmed that ‘settler colonialism’ – and not colonialism elsewhere, or the fantasy of an indigenousless encounter – had become a crucial and legitimate focus of public debate. These historiographies had always dealt with ‘colonialism’ (nobody ever denied the existence of a ‘colonial history’), and had always focused on settlers and settlement. Now the awareness of the inevitable relationship between ‘settlement’ and ‘invasion’ produced the need for instituting ‘reconciliation’ processes, and eventually issuing public ‘apologies’ to indigenous constituencies (which, in turn, induced anxious rejectionist reassertions of traditional settler colonial historical narratives).<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, the idea that the consolidation of settler colonial studies constitutes a genuine synthesis in the context of an historiographical progression should be strongly qualified by the awareness that public debate in settler societies has rarely allowed for a thorough discussion of the settler colonial foundations of the different settler colonial polities, and that scholarly contributions have very rarely been able to convince conservative sections of the public opinion. And yet, also on the basis of these contestations, what could be described as ‘settler colonial studies’ eventually consolidated as a transnational scholarly field (see n. 1 above). In an important sense, however, contributions to this trend were collectively suggesting that settler colonial phenomena could no longer be appraised with the interpretative tools developed by colonial studies. The relationship between ‘colonialism’ and ‘settler colonialism’ had

thus come full circle, and colonial and settler colonial phenomena were again seen as separate categories. This time, however, it was analytical distinction, not disavowal, that underpinned separation. It was a significant conceptual shift that overcame important conceptual blockages. As settler colonialism operates towards its supersession, paradoxically, settler colonialism was most recognisable when it was most imperfect – say, 1950s Kenya, or 1970s Zimbabwe. Where it is most triumphant, settler colonialism effectively covers its tracks. That ‘settler’ and ‘colonialism’ needed to be appraised conjointly, after all, had been disattended for decades.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, 2.



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<sup>2</sup> See, for examples, Stasiulis, Yuval–Davis, *Unsettling Settler Societies*, Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, Russell, *Colonial Frontiers*, Evans, Grimshaw, Philips, Swain, *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights*, Weaver, *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World*, Elkins, Pedersen, *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century*, Coombes, *Rethinking Settler Colonialism*, Banner, *Possessing the Pacific*, Pateman, ‘The Settler Contract’, pp. 35-78, Goldstein, Lubin ‘Settler Colonialism’, Lake, Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, Ford, *Settler Sovereignty*, Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers*, Veracini, *What is Settler Colonialism?*

<sup>3</sup> For an early definition of colonialism that systematically avoided a joint consideration of the colonies of settlement and those of domination, see Keller, *Colonization*. This compartmentalisation, however, was typical of nineteenth century understandings as well. John Stuart Mill, for example, wrote extensively, and for decades, on both colonialism and settler colonialism but kept them rigorously separate. See Bell, ‘John Stuart Mill on Colonies’.

<sup>4</sup> For interventions dealing with the issue of Zionism as primarily a settler colonial movement, see, for example, Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?*, Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory*, Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Veracini, *Israel and Settler Society*, Salaita, *The Holy Land in Transit*, Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism*, Jabary, Qato, Rabie, and Samour (eds), *Settler Colonialism in Palestine*, special issue of *settler colonial studies*.

<sup>5</sup> Bowman, ‘The Pioneer Fringe’. See also Bowman, *The Pioneer Fringe*.

<sup>6</sup> Bowman, ‘The Pioneer Fringe’, pp. 49, 50, 54.

<sup>7</sup> See Price, *White Settlers in the Tropics*, Price, *White Settlers and Native Peoples*. As Frederick Hoxie has recently noted, Price was probably the first scholar to conceptualise a specific form of settler-driven colonialism: ‘independent’ settlers, he noted in a 1929 essay, had proved to be better colonisers than other metropole-directed groups. See Price, ‘Experiments in Colonization’, and Hoxie, ‘Retrieving the Red Continent’, p. 1158. See also Price, *The Western Invasions of the Pacific and its Continents*.

<sup>8</sup> Price saw the different histories of Anglophone settler expansion as characterised by ‘similarities rather than contrasts’. The moving frontier had brought indigenous destruction, but a later phase had produced indigenous recovery. In the context of a destruction/recovery paradigm he plotted different experiences of indigenous-settler relations on a continuum: Australia’s was the most destructive, followed by the US; New Zealand’s was slightly more destructive than Canada’s. See Price, *White Settlers and Native Peoples*.

<sup>9</sup> Price, *White Settlers in the Tropics*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Steinbeck, *The Red Pony*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>11</sup> See, for examples, Treadgold, ‘Russian Expansion in the Light of Turner’s Study of the American Frontier’, Sharp, ‘Three Frontiers: Some Comparative Studies of Canadian, American and Australian Settlement’, Burt, ‘If Turner Had Looked at Canada, Australia, and New Zealand When He Wrote about the West’, Gerhard, ‘The Frontier in Comparative View’, Mikesell, ‘Comparative Studies in Frontier History’, Lobanov-Rostrovsky, ‘Russian Expansion in the Far East in the Light of the Turner Hypothesis’, Coleman, ‘The New Zealand Frontier and the Turner Thesis’, Allen, *Bush and Backwoods*, Mikesell, ‘Comparative Studies in Frontier History’, Lipset, *The First New Nation*. This genre of comparative inquiry, however, would be sustained for decades. See, for example, Miller, Steffen, *The Frontier*, Lamar, Thompson, *The Frontier in History*, Lonsdale, Homes, *Settlement in Sparsely Populated Regions*, Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory*, Solberg, *The Prairies and the Pampas*, McQuilton, ‘Comparative Frontiers: Australia and the United States’.

<sup>12</sup> Webb, *The Great Frontier*.

<sup>13</sup> Hartz (ed.), *The Founding of New Societies*. For critiques of this approach, see Bolton, ‘Louis Hartz’, Holt, ‘Louis Hartz’s Fragment Thesis’, Martin, ‘Australia and the Hartz “Fragment” Thesis’, Harris and Guelke, ‘Land and Society in Early Canada and South Africa’, Hirst, ‘Keeping Colonial History Colonial’, Cross, ‘Comparative Exceptionalism’. Despite this criticism, that what could be defined as the Hartzian ‘fragment’ school of historical thought is in many ways still operating should be emphasised. In different ways, David Grayson Allen’s *In English Ways*, David Hackett Fischer’s *Albion’s Seed*, and more recently, Christopher Tomlins’ *Freedom Bound* all interpret different settlement patterns in the ‘New World’ by focusing on the different experiences and locales of origin of the incoming settlers.

<sup>14</sup> Hartz, ‘The European Fragment, Africa, and the Indian Tribes’.

<sup>15</sup> Hartz, ‘A Theory of the Development of the New Societies’, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Hartz, ‘A Theory of the Development of the New Societies’, p. 6.

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- <sup>17</sup> Hartz, 'A Theory of the Development of the New Societies', p. 9.
- <sup>18</sup> Hartz, 'A Theory of the Development of the New Societies', p. 6.
- <sup>19</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*.
- <sup>20</sup> On conflicts with indigenous peoples in settler Africa, see, for example, Lodge (ed), *Resistance and Ideology in Settler Societies*. In this context, see also Arrighi, *The Political Economy of Rhodesia*, and Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?*
- <sup>21</sup> Ferro, *Colonization*, p. 211. On 'ultra-colonialism', see Anderson, 'Portugal and the End of Ultra-Colonialism, I', Anderson, 'Portugal and the End of Ultra-Colonialism, II', Anderson, 'Portugal and the End of Ultra-Colonialism, III'.
- <sup>22</sup> Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism.
- <sup>23</sup> See Everatt, 'Alliance Politics of a Special Type'.
- <sup>24</sup> On Fanon's understanding of settler colonialism, see Krautwurst, 'What is Settler Colonialism?'
- <sup>25</sup> Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, pp. 273-274. Emphasis added.
- <sup>26</sup> Emmanuel, 'White-Settler Colonialism and the Myth of Investment Imperialism', p. 40.
- <sup>27</sup> Emmanuel, 'White-Settler Colonialism and the Myth of Investment Imperialism', pp. 57, 36.
- <sup>28</sup> Horvath, 'A Definition of Colonialism', p. 47. For a similar classification of colonial phenomena, see also Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires*, Finley, 'Colonies', Fredrickson, 'Colonialism and Racism', Osterhammel, *Colonialism*. Fieldhouse placed 'mixed', 'plantation' and 'pure settlements' colonies on an interpretative continuum. Finley argued against the use of 'colony' and associated terms when referring to the act of settling new lands – a circumstance that necessitated, he argued, an alternative terminology. Fredrickson distinguished between 'occupation colonies', 'plantation colonies', 'mixed colonies', and 'settler colonies'. Finally, Osterhammel identified three 'modular forms of colonies': colonies of exploitation, colonies of settlement; and enclaves, or strategic territorial outposts.
- <sup>29</sup> Horvath, 'A Definition of Colonialism', p. 47.
- <sup>30</sup> Good, 'Settler Colonialism'. See also Good, 'Settler Colonialism in Rhodesia'. Significantly, Good would also contribute to a successive interpretative trend. See Good, 'Colonialism and Settler Colonialism'.
- <sup>31</sup> Good, 'Settler Colonialism', p. 597.
- <sup>32</sup> See Biermann and Kössler, 'The Settler Mode of Production'.
- <sup>33</sup> For exceptions to a compartmentalised interpretative pattern, see Weitzer, *Transforming Settler States*, Akenson, *God's Peoples*, Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands*.
- <sup>34</sup> For economic definitions of settler colonialism, see, for example, Pomfret, 'Settler Economics', Ehrensaft and Armstrong, 'Dominion Capitalism'. On the relative eclipse of this approach in the 1990s, see Beilharz and Cox, 'Review Essay'. For more recent examples of this interpretative strand, see Denoon, 'Settler Capitalism Unsettled', Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson, 'The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development', Harris, 'How Did Colonialism Dispossess?', Gaido, 'Settler Colonialism and the Bourgeois Revolutions'.
- <sup>35</sup> On staple theory and its original formulation, see Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, Taylor, 'Restructuring Canadian Business History', Schedvin, 'Staples and Regions of Pax Britannica'.
- <sup>36</sup> Schedvin represents Argentina as failure, Canada as success, and Australia and New Zealand as both engulfed in a 'staple trap'. The staple theory of economic development was recently criticised by James Belich, who proposed a reversed narrative emphasising early import-driven independent development and later 'recolonization'. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*.
- <sup>37</sup> Slemmon, 'Unsettling the Empire'.
- <sup>38</sup> McMichael, *Settlers and the Agrarian Question*. For similar interpretative approaches in a US context, see Kulikoff, *Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism*, Dunaway, *The First American Frontier*.
- <sup>39</sup> Denoon, 'Understanding Settler Societies', p. 511.
- <sup>40</sup> Denoon, 'Understanding Settler Societies', p. 513.
- <sup>41</sup> Denoon, 'Understanding Settler Societies', p. 515. Emphasis added.
- <sup>42</sup> See Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*.
- <sup>43</sup> For a discussion of 'comparative location' as a recurring theme in Argentina's historiography, see Salvatore, 'The Unsettling Location of a Settler Nation'.
- <sup>44</sup> Goodrich, 'Argentina as a New Country', p. 70. Interestingly, Goodrich had also set the comparative tone in the earlier phase; see Goodrich, 'The Australian and American Labor Movements'.
- <sup>45</sup> This is a surprisingly vast literature. Beside Denoon's work, see Goodrich, 'Argentina as a New Country', Moran, 'The 'Development' of Argentina and Australia', Wheelwright and Ferrer, 'Australia and

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Argentina', Dyster, 'Argentine and Australian Development Compared', Teichman, 'Businessmen and Politics in the Process of Economic Development', Alexander, 'Business Elites, National Development, and Problems of Comparative and World-System Approaches', Duncan and Fogarty, *Australia and Argentina on Parallel Paths*, Hirst, 'Keeping Colonial History Colonial', Platt, and di Tella (eds.), *Argentina, Australia, and Canada*, Gerardi, *Australia, Argentina and World Capitalism*, Solberg, *The Prairies and the Pampas*, Platt (ed.), *Social Welfare, 1850-1950*, Adelman, *Frontier Development*, Weaver, *The Great Land Rush*, especially pp. 13-17, Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, especially pp. 522-540.

<sup>46</sup> See Fiona Paisley, 'White Settler Colonialisms and the Colonial Turn', especially #9

<sup>47</sup> Denoon, *Settler Capitalism*, p. 27.

<sup>48</sup> On the global emergence of what could be understood as an indigenous international, see Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism*, Stewart-Harawira, *The New Imperial Order*, Mander and Tauli-Corpuz (eds), *Paradigm Wars*.

<sup>49</sup> See Pease, 'New Perspectives on US Culture and Imperialism', p. 24. Pease mentions two critical monographs in his outline: Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence*, and Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land*. For an Australian example of this trend, see Evans, Saunders and Cronin, *Exclusion, Exploitation, and Extermination*.

<sup>50</sup> See Veracini, *Negotiating a Bicultural Past*.

<sup>51</sup> For a convincing critique of 'internal colonialism' as a notion suitable for the interpretation of indigenous subjection in settler contexts, see Byrd, *Transit of Empire*. Byrd argues that the conflation of racism and colonialism – the idea that 'internal colonialism' is applicable to all racialised alterities – disallows the upholding of a specifically indigenous special status and completes imperial conquest. She sees critical ethnic studies as complicit with settler attempts to produce the erasure of indigenous specificity.

<sup>52</sup> The Canadian and US historiographies were relatively late in adopting settler colonialism as a conceptual category. In these cases, as both historiographies formed around the issue of American independence (in the US it was an accomplished sovereign independence, in Canada, a sustained relationship and connection), the dialectical opposition between institutional continuity and rupture contributed to blocking off settler colonialism. In the US, a focus on anticolonial struggle prevented 'colonialism' to enter the analytical field; in Canada there was no 'settler colonialism' because there was only 'colonialism' (even if the term was used with a distinctively local inflection). Even the historiographical revisions did not focus on settler colonialism: in the US the main argument was that, even if it had been previously denied, US foreign engagements were actually imperialist (that is, 'colonialism' was brought into the analytical field); in Canada the argument was that British imperialism was actually *Canadian* imperialism (that is, the focus on 'colonialism' was retained even if redirected). See Kaplan and Pease, (eds), *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (which authoritatively organised two decades of historiographical revision), Berger, *The Sense of Power* (which authoritatively initiated two decades of historiographical revision).

<sup>53</sup> On the 'middle ground', see, of course, White, *The Middle Ground*.

<sup>54</sup> For an inclusive overview of these processes, see McHugh, *Aboriginal Societies and the Common Law*, especially pp. 1-58.

<sup>55</sup> See, for examples, Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, Ward, *An Unsettled History*.

<sup>56</sup> See for examples, Flanagan, *First Nations? Second Thoughts*, Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*.