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A Theoretical Overview

Lorenzo Veracini

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Also by Lorenzo Veracini

ISRAEL AND SETTLER SOCIETY

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A Theoretical Overview

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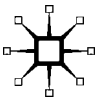

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This research was supported under Australian Research Council's *Discovery Projects* funding scheme (project number DP0986984). This support was seriously enabling; without the fellowships the Council provided, researching and writing this book would have been impossible. Many in my generation had to leave Italy to find opportunities and dignity elsewhere. I was lucky and ended up in Australia. At the same time, Australia is also a great place to get to know about settler colonialism.

Part of Chapter 1 has appeared in *Native Studies Review*, an earlier version of Chapter 3 was published in the *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, and an abridged version of Chapter 4 will appear in *Thinking Settler Colonialism: Essays on Settler Colonialism and its Consequences* (Palgrave Macmillan). The jacket reproduces a painting by William Ludlow Sheppard entitled "Wives for the Settlers at Jamestown" (1876). I believe this painting identifies the moment when colonialism turns into settler colonialism. The cover image is reproduced with permission from the New York Public Library.

And I want to thank the shower for a number of decent ideas that came up while I was having one. Had we not had water restrictions all along, this book would have probably been a better one. Blame climate change.

Introduction: The Settler Colonial Situation

The expectation that every corner of the globe would eventually become embedded in an expanding network of colonial ties enjoyed widespread currency during the long nineteenth century. A theoretical analysis of what is here defined as the settler colonial situation could perhaps start with Karl Marx and Friederich Engels' remark that the "need of a constantly expanding market for its product chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe", and that it "must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere".[1] "Nestle", "settle", "establish connections": Marx and Engels were effectively articulating in 1848 what had become a transnational system of diversified colonial intervention. It was a typology of colonial action that depended on local circumstances and opportunities: there were different colonial empires, and there were different *modes* of empire. Settler colonialism, "the colonies proper", as Engels would put in 1892 underscoring analytical distinction between separate forms, was one such mode of colonial action.[2] Sometimes capable of displacing established colonial traditions, more rarely giving way to other colonial forms, settler colonialism operated autonomously in the context of developing colonial discourse and practice.

Another point of departure for this analysis could be Charles Darwin's voyage, which, as well as an exploration into the evolution of the species, was also a journey into what had become a geographically diversified system of intertwined colonial forms. On the issue of settler colonialism, he had specifically noted in 1832 that the

Argentinean war of extermination against the Indians, an episode he had personally witnessed during his voyage, was too much.

> The Indians are now so terrified that they offer no resistance in a body, but each flies, neglecting even his wife and children; but when overtaken, like wild animals they fight, against any number to the last moment. [...] This is a dark picture, but how much more shocking is the undeniable fact that all the women who appear above twenty years old are massacred in cold blood! When I exclaimed that this appeared rather inhuman, he [general and temporarily out of office national leader Juan Manuel de Rosas] answered "Why, what can be done? They breed so".[3]

Personal dispositions are often surprising. Whereas one could argue that (especially the later) Marx was not a "Marxist" in suggesting that traditional, indigenous, and colonised societies could follow historical trajectories that did not necessarily reproduce the evolution of the metropolitan cores, at the same time, one could maintain that Darwin was not a (social) "Darwinist" when he regretted the deliberate targeting of the reproductive capabilities of the indigenous community and the horror intrinsic to what was otherwise understood as a globally recurring approach to indigenous policy. In both cases, a colonial imagination had failed to ultimately convince them.

This book is a theoretical reflection on settler colonialism as distinct from colonialism. It suggests that it is a global and genuinely transnational phenomenon, a phenomenon that national and imperial historiographies fail to address as such, and that colonial studies and postcolonial literatures have developed interpretative categories that are not specifically suited for an appraisal of *settler* colonial circumstances.[4] The dynamics of imperial and colonial expansion, a focus on the formation of national structures and on national independence (together with a scholarship identifying the transoceanic movement of people and biota that does not distinguish between settler and other types of migration), have often obscured the presence and operation of a specific pan-European understanding of a settler colonial sovereign capacity. *Settler Colonialism* addresses a scholarly gap.

"Colony" as a term can have two main different connotations. A colony is both a political body that is dominated by an exogenous

agency, and an exogenous entity that reproduces itself in a given environment (in both cases, even if they refer to very different situations, "colony" implies the localised ascendancy of an external element – this is what brings the two meanings together). Settler colonialism as a concept encompasses this fundamental ambiguity. As its compounded designation suggests, it is inherently characterised by both traits. Since both the permanent movement and reproduction of communities and the dominance of an exogenous agency over an indigenous one are necessarily involved, settler colonial phenomena are intimately related to both colonialism and migration. And yet, not all migrations are settler migrations and not all colonialisms are settler colonial: this book argues that settler colonialism should be seen as structurally distinct from both.

Both migrants and settlers move across space and often end up permanently residing in a new locale. Settlers, however, are unique migrants, and, as Mahmood Mamdani has perceptively summarised, settlers "are made by conquest, not just by immigration".[5] Settlers are *founders* of political orders and carry their sovereignty with them (on the contrary, migrants can be seen as *appellants* facing a political order that is already constituted). Migrants can be individually co-opted within settler colonial political regimes, and indeed they often are. They do not, however, enjoy inherent rights and are characterised by a defining lack of sovereign entitlement. It is important that these categories are differentiated analytically: a very different sovereign charge is involved in their respective displacements; not only do settlers and migrants move in inherently different ways, they also move towards very different places. As New Zealand historian James Belich has noted, an "emigrant joined someone else's society, a settler or colonist remade his own".[6] Migrants, by definition, move to *another* country and lead diasporic lives, settlers, on the contrary, move (indeed, as I suggest below, "return") to *their* country. A diaspora is not an ingathering.

Indeed, an analytical distinction could also be made between settler colonial and other resettlements. Imperial, national, and colonising (including internally colonising) states frequently promote "settlement" with the aim of permanently securing their hold on specific locales. On the contrary, the political traditions *Settler Colonialism* focuses on concentrate on autonomous collectives that claim both a special sovereign charge and a regenerative capacity.

Settlers, unlike other migrants, "remove" to establish a better polity, either by setting up an ideal social body or by constituting an exemplary model of social organisation. Of course, even if I propose to see them as analytically distinct, colonialism with settlers and settler colonialism intertwine, interact, and overlap.

Ultimately, whereas migration operates in accordance with a register of difference, settler migration operates in accordance with a register of sameness, and one result of this dissimilarity is that policy in a settler colonial setting is crucially dedicated to enable settlers while neutralising migrants (real life, however, defies these attempts, with settlers recurrently failing to establish the regenerated communities they are supposed to create, and migrants radically transforming the body politic despite sustained efforts to contain and manage their difference).[7] In this context, refugees – the most unwilling of migrants – can thus be seen as occupying the opposite end of a spectrum of possibilities ranging between a move that can be construed as entirely volitional – the settlers' – and a displacement that is premised on an absolute lack of choice (on a settler need to produce refugees as a way to assert their self-identity, see below, "Ethnic Transfer", p. 35).

At the same time, settler colonialism is not colonialism. This is a distinction that is often stated but rarely investigated. And yet, we should differentiate between these categories as well: while it acknowledges that colonial and settler colonial forms routinely coexist and reciprocally define each other, *Settler Colonialism* explores a number of structuring contrasts. In a seminal 1951 article – a piece that in many ways initiated colonial studies as a distinct field of scholarly endeavour – Georges Balandier had defined the colonial "situation" as primarily characterised by exogenous domination and a specific demographic balance:

> the domination imposed by a foreign minority, racially (or ethnically) and culturally different, acting in the name of a racial (or ethnic) and cultural superiority dogmatically affirmed, and imposing itself on an indigenous population constituting a numerical majority but inferior to the dominant group from a material point of view.[8]

Balandier's definition remains influential.[9] Jürgen Osterhammel's more recent and frequently quoted definition of colonialism, for

example, also insists on foreign rule over a colonised demographic majority. In his outline, colonialism is

> a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule.[10]

Historian of British imperialism A. G. Hopkins's definition of settler colonialism as distinct from colonialism is also premised on demography: "Where white settlers became numerically pre-dominant, colonial rule made peoples out of new states; where indigenous societies remained the basis of government, the state was fashioned from existing peoples", he concludes.[11] Similarly, D. K. Fieldhouse's seminal classification had also privileged demography. He had placed "mixed", "plantation", and "pure settlements" colonies on an interpretative continuum: in the "mixed" colonies, settlers had encountered a resilient and sizeable indigenous population and asserted their ascendancy while relying on an indigenous workforce; in the "plantation" colonies, settlers relied on imported and unfree workers; and in the "pure settlement" colonies, the white settlers had eradicated and/or marginalised the indigenous population.[12]

Settler colonial phenomena, however, radically defy these classificatory approaches. As it is premised on the domination of a majority that has become indigenous (settlers are made by conquest *and* by immigration), external domination exercised by a metropolitan core and a skewed demographic balance are less relevant definitory traits. According to these characterisations, colonisers cease being colonisers if and when they become the majority of the population. Conversely, and even more perplexingly, indigenous people only need to become a minority in order to cease being colonised.

At the same time, while Osterhammel's interpretative framework emphasises the antagonisms pitting colonising metropole and colonised periphery, settler colonial phenomena, as I argue in

Chapter 1, complicate this dyad by establishing a fundamentally triangular system of relationships, a system comprising metropolitan, settler, and indigenous agencies. But there are other structuring distinctions. For example, whereas settler colonialism constitutes a circumstance where the colonising effort is exercised from *within* the bounds of a settler colonising political entity, colonialism is driven by an expanding metropole that remains permanently distinct from it. And again: as settlers, by definition, stay, in specific contradistinction, colonial sojourners – administrators, missionaries, military personnel, entrepreneurs, and adventurers – return.[13]

And yet, while the "colonial situation" is not the settler colonial one, and as *Settler Colonialism* programmatically explores a systemic divide between the two, the political traditions outlined in this book are contained *within* the space defined by the extension of Europe's colonial domain. Even if they defy it by espousing a type of sovereignty that is autonomous of the colonising metropole, this book focuses mainly on *European* settlers.[14] I do not want to suggest, though, that non-Europeans have not been, or cannot be, settlers. If settler colonialism is defined as a "situation", it is not necessarily restricted to a specific group, location or period (or, as I emphasise throughout the book, to the past).

Even though they placed colonialism and settler colonialism within the same analytical frame, reflections on colonial orders and their historiographies have traditionally acknowledged the distinction between colonies of settlement and colonies of exploitation and between "internal" and "external" colonialisms.[15] Classificatory attempts have repeatedly emphasised this separation. For example, Ronald Horvath's analytical definition of colonialism distinguished between "colonialism" and "imperialism" on the basis of a settler presence, Moses I. Finley's argued against the use of "colony" and associated terms when referring to the act of settling new lands; George M. Fredrickson's distinguished between "occupation colonies", "plantation colonies", "mixed colonies", and "settler colonies"; and Jürgen Osterhammel's identified a unique "New England type" of colonial endeavour.[16] Despite this acknowledgement, however – indeed, one result of this acknowledgement – settler colonial phenomena have been generally seen as a subset, albeit a distinct one, of colonial ones.[17] Alternatively, an approach dedicated to highlighting the transcolonial circulation of ideas and practices

has placed the colonies of exploitation and settlement – as well as the metropole itself – in the same analytical frame.[18] The notion that colonial and settler colonial forms actually operate in dialectical tension and in specific contradistinction has not yet been fully articulated.

In the 1960s, Louis Hartz's *The Founding of New Societies* proposed a theory of "fragment extrication" (that is, the founding of a new society out of a fragment of the old one) that was entirely unconcerned with colonial and imperial phenomena. Hartz insisted on the separate development of the "fragments", a development that detached them from, rather than subordinated them to, the colonising core: when it came to the founding of new societies, settler colonialism, like the indigenous peoples it had been assaulting, disappeared entirely.[19] Later, in a 1972 article for the *New Left Review*, Arghiri Emmanuel convincingly criticised available theories of imperialism by identifying settler colonialism as an irreducible "third force" that could not be subsumed into neatly construed oppositions. He defined settlers as an "uncomfortable 'third element' in the noble formulas of the 'people's struggle against financial imperialism' ", and called for the elaboration of dedicated categories of analysis.[20] Conflicts involving settlers demanded that traditional approaches to understanding colonial and imperial phenomena be revised and integrated. Even in a call to account for an intractable specificity, however, the settlers and their particular agency were detected only as they operated *within* a colonial system of relationships: when it came to the actions of settlers, it was the settler societies that disappeared entirely. The settlers were entering the analytical frame but not settler colonialism; the two terms could not yet be compounded.

Nonetheless (also as a result of the renewed global visibility of indigenous struggles), calls for the study of settler colonialism were repeatedly issued during the following decades. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Donald Denoon called for a systematic exploration of the specificities characterising settler economic development as structurally opposed to the dynamics of colonial de-development. There is "something distinctive about settler societies, marking them off from metropolitan societies on the one hand, and the rest of the 'third world' on the other", he concluded.[21] Denoon was placing Anglophone and non-Anglophone and developed and developing countries in the same analytical frame: as his analysis encompassed

colonial and settler colonial settings, this was a crucial passage in the development of a truly global focus. Without concentrating specifically on the development of a settler economy, but still insisting on an intractable systemic specificity, David Prochaska similarly concluded in 1990 that "settler colonialism is a discrete form of colonialism in its own right", and that it should be recognised "as an important and legitimate subtype of imperialism and colonialism".[22] Presenting settler colonialism as a discrete category (even if a subtype), Denoon and Prochaska emphasised again the need to develop dedicated interpretative categories.

In 1990 Alan Lawson proposed the notion of the "Second World", a category equally distinct from the colonising European metropoles and the colonised and formerly colonised Third World (indeed, during these years, a particular branch of postcolonial studies focused on the specific circumstances of settler colonial subjectivities).[23] In line with this interpretative trajectory, Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval Davis have also emphasised in their 1995 comparative overview that settler societies complicate the dichotomy typical of colonial and postcolonial studies between Europe and the rest of the world.[24]

However, these insights have more recently been the subject of sustained analysis. Patrick Wolfe's 1998 definition of settler colonialism distinguished structurally between colonial and settler colonial formations. Wolfe drew a crucial interpretative distinction: settler colonialism *is not* a master–servant relationship "marked by ethnic difference" (as Osterhammel, for example, has argued restating a crucial discursive trait of a long interpretative tradition); settler colonialism *is not* a relationship primarily characterised by the *indispensability* of colonised people.[25] On the contrary, Wolfe emphasised the *dispensability* of the indigenous person in a settler colonial context.

> The primary object of settler-colonization is the land itself rather than the surplus value to be derived from mixing native labour with it. Though, in practice, Indigenous labour was indispensable to Europeans, settler-colonization is at base a winner-take-all project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement. The logic of this project, a sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the Indigenous population, informs a range of

> historical practices that might otherwise appear distinct – invasion is a structure not an event.[26]

Wolfe's *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* could thus be seen as a crucial moment in the "extrication" of settler colonial studies from colonial (and postcolonial) scholarly endeavours: no longer a subset category within colonialism, settler colonialism was now understood as an antitype category. As such, settler colonial phenomena required the development of a dedicated interpretative field, a move that would account for a structuring dissimilarity.

Similarly, in 2000, Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson conceptualised a specifically *settler* form of postcolonial theory. "There are always two kinds of authority and always two kinds of authenticity that the settler subject is (con)signed to desire and disavow", they noted (i.e., the authentic imperial culture from which he is separated and an indigenous authenticity that he desires as a marker of his legitimacy). "The crucial theoretical move to be made is", they argued,

> to see the 'settler' as uneasily occupying a place caught between two First Worlds, two origins of authority and authenticity. One of these is the originating world of Europe, the Imperium – the source of its principal cultural authority. Its 'other' First World is that of the First Nations whose authority they not only replaced and effaced but also desired.[27]

Following a similar trend, during the subsequent decade, a growing number of scholars have approached settler colonialism as a distinct category of analytical inquiry. "Settler" and "colonialism" were now routinely compounded. One tendency was to comparatively appraise legal history, international law, land tenure, judicial institutions, and environmental histories.[28] Edited collections of essays and monographs exploring comparatively specific issues characterising the history of the settler colonial polities (with particular attention dedicated to indigenous–settler interactions) have also appeared.[29] International academic conferences dedicated to settler colonialism in 2007 and 2008 and a special issue of an academic journal published in 2008 confirm that "settler colonial studies" may be consolidating into a distinct field of enquiry.[30]

Besides comparative approaches, in recent years, scholarly activity has continued to focus on the need to distinguish between colonial and settler colonial phenomena. One line of inquiry has placed an emphasis on settler colonialism's inherently transnational character.[31] As settlers and ideas about settlement bypassed the imperial centres and travelled and communicated directly, settler colonialism requires, as suggested by Alan Lester, a "networked" frame of analysis: an approach that inevitably displaces the metropole–periphery hierarchical paradigm that had previously underpinned the evolution of colonial studies.[32] Marilyn Lake drew attention in 2003 to the imaginative coherence of settler colonial formations and emphasised the inadequacy of definitory approaches based on demography. The "defensive project of the 'white man's country' ", she argued,

> was shared by places as demographically diverse as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Kenya, South Africa, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Australia. Clearly their strategies of government were different – ranging from indirect rule to democratic self-government – but a spatial politics of exclusion and segregation was common to them all and the 'white man' always ruled the 'natives'. In this framework, immigration restriction was merely 'segregation on a large scale' as Stoddard observed in *The Rising Tide of Colour*. 'Nothing is more striking', he added, 'than the instinctive solidarity which binds together Australian and Afrikanders, Californians and Canadians into a "sacred union" '.[33]

Lake also focused on the conflict between settler national projects and their insistence on racial exclusion and imperial demands regarding the freedom of movement of British subjects within the Empire, a conflict crucially pitting colonial and settler colonial sensitivities against each other (a topic that she would later develop further with Henry Reynolds in *Drawing the Global Colour Line*).[34]

Two years later, Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen's theoretical definition of settler colonialism emphasised institutionalised settler privilege (especially as it relates to land allocation practices) and a binary settler–native distinction in legal and social structures (especially as it relates to a settler capacity to dominate government).[35] In the introduction to their edited collection they distinguished

between twentieth-century "state-oriented expansionism", which was undertaken by "imperial latecomers", and nineteenth-century "settler-oriented semiautonomy", which was typical of colonies where settlement had happened earlier. Deploying a genuinely global perspective, Elkins and Pedersen produced an analysis that was ultimately inclusive of all the settings where settler projects had been operative at one stage or another. Settler colonial forms, they argued, had a global history, a history that could not be limited to the white settler societies or to the settler minorities that had inhabited colonial environments.[36] A further passage in this globalising trend was a new way of implicating the metropolitan core in the history of settler colonialism. In *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (2008), Robert Young suggested that the very notion of an English ethnicity is actually premised on settler colonial endeavours in an expanding British world.[37]

Finally, Belich's 2009 *Replenishing the Earth* outlined a "settler revolution" that had comprehensively transformed colonial practice. Enabling technological changes and a crucial shift in attitudes to migration had created the conditions for "explosive settlement". Without a crucial shift that allowed for the possibility of thinking about life in the settler locale as actually preferable to (and more important than) life in the metropole, this would have been impossible.[38] An awareness of the settler "transition" could in turn sustain an understanding of the relationships between settler peripheries and metropolitan cores that emphasised the immediate sovereign independence of the multiplying settler entities (Belich calls this phenomenon "cloning"). This was a transformation that had crucially *upturned* – not merely complicated in the context of a networked pattern of relationships – the hierarchical relationship between centre and periphery that is intrinsic to colonialism. Settler colonialism had turned colonialism upside down.

Settler Colonialism engages with this literature and aims to integrate it (indeed, as well as an attempt to define settler colonial phenomena and a call to establish settler colonial studies as an independent scholarly field, this book is intended as an entry point to a number of literatures, and in the endnotes I engage extensively with the work of others). Its aim is not so much to confirm a conceptual distinction, but, rather, to emphasise dialectical opposition: colonial and settler colonial forms should not only be seen as separate but also construed