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## **The US Predatory Discourse on its Origin Myth Contrapuntally Analyzed: The Case of American Settlers' Narrative on Native Americans**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The article seeks to unpack the US hegemonic and predatory discourse which firmly underpins its origin myth through the use of Said's contrapuntality approach. More specifically, the article places a special premium on revealing that the US mainstream, official historical account about its origins is largely insufficient to vehicle the thorough reality of how the US was first established. The article investigates the US dichotomous, hierarchized and inveterately supremacist narrative that underpinned policies of land theft, forcible removal and genocide against Native Americans. Most importantly, the article contrapuntally analyses President Andrew Jackson's milestone speech before Congress (Dec. 6, 1830) to demystify the univocal and exclusionary US historical account which elevated its ethnocentric and supremacist narrative into a commonsensical and non-negotiable logic. The analyses dwell on unearthing alternative, but muted, narratives about the experiences of the encounter of American settlers with Native Americans.*

**KEYWORDS:** American Settlers; Native Americans; Jackson's Speech; White Supremacist Logic; Said's Contrapuntality Approach.

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## Introduction

*“what happened is attenuated to disappearance; history as what somebody told about what happened makes up the whole book” (Moseley, 1997, 120).*

The US mainstream and official history is generally narrated from an ethnocentric perspective which implies an utter neglect of the experiences and the perspective of Native Americans (Vasquez 1993, p. 27; Dirlik 1994, p. 329). Indeed, facts related to the existence of Native Americans and the ways in which they reacted to American settlers' campaigns of expropriation, forcible removal accompanied by the “worst human holocaust” are totally obliterated and muted (Stennard, 1992, p. x, 8, 90, 103, 125, 146). The narrativisation of European colonization as being noble expeditions aiming to civilize, urbanize and organize is far from capturing the inherent dissonance that characterize any encounter between two peoples, two cultures and two necessarily divergent visions to world phenomena (“John Jacob Astor to John C. Calhoun” 191; Ortiz, 2014, p 118). European univocal and exclusive perspective to their encounter, and ultimately clash, with Native Americans, which makes quasi-total abstraction of systematic and systemic policies of dispossession, relocations and genocide as “inevitable” and “inadvertent” is a thinly veiled endeavour to cover for what Stennard (1992) depicted as “a fanatically religious and fanatically juridical and fanatically brutal people to justify a holocaust” (p. xii, 66). This assertion was given further credence by the French philosopher de Tocqueville, who depicted the removal of the Indians from their ancestral lands as “a great evil” (p. 394).

Drawing heavily upon the Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny ideals, American settlers justified and rationalized their extermination and the dispossession of Native Americans by the importance of converting and civilizing “savage” Indians (“J. C. Calhoun to the Cherokee Delegation”; “The Indians of southern California in 1852” 131; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs 379). American settlers equally appealed to the “*terra nullius*” doctrine, which stipulates that North America was a vacant land, to cover for their untrammelled greed for Indian lands (Miller 347).

By and far, awareness about the importance of dusting off hidden and muted truths related to the real nature of relationship between settlers and Indians triggered an unprecedented emphasis on the relevance of settler colonial paradigm as an interpretive tool to elucidate and unravel the intricacies and the particularities of the “logic of elimination” and the “totality of dispossession” that underlie their relationship between the entities (Collin 2011). From the perspective of the proponents of this paradigm, settler colonialism starkly differs from colonialism because in the former “invasion is a structure, not an event” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 93; Cavanagh and Veracini, 2013: 1; Pappé, 2012, pp. 40–41).

These evolutions largely instigated experts in the field of sociology, political science and historical studies to question the monolithic, univocal and iron-clad US historical narrative about the settler-Indian encounter in an attempt to incorporate Native perspectives and intellectual stances into the US official historical narrative (Said 1995; 1993). One core inference to be drawn from the inevitable diversity and divergence that inherently characterize narratives about American settlers' encounter with Native Americans requires an indiscriminate engagement with diverse sources and perspectives to gain a better insight and a more nuanced perception of Native history in the United States. Moreover, for the sake of better construing the ongoing struggles for recognition and sovereignty of Native Americans, it is indispensable to embark on a more encompassing investigation of Indigenous cultures, modes of thinking and life styles.

The core idea of the contribution at hand is that there is no means for the correct perception and the thorough construal of the US historical narrative about the Native inhabitants without necessarily counterpointing the historical narratives of both American settlers and Native Americans regardless of their irreconcilable dissonance. On the contrary, it is within this discrepancy and incongruity between the two entities that lies the truth of the encounter. The overarching goal of this study is, thus, not to rummage for

some harmonious and consensual version about the colonial experience of American settlers and Native Americans. The objective is rather to bring to the fore the dissonance and the divergence between the two perceptions, experiences and accounts by unleashing and unlocking the muted and the excluded narrative of Native Americans.

As such, the examination of this encounter through the lens of Said's approach of contrapuntality makes of the narratives of both entities look more complementary rather than mutually exclusive as they provide different facets of the a shared experience and a variety of perspectives on the same events. By so doing, the usage of Said's approach lends a practical tool to reflect in a more or less balanced way on the colonial experience of American settlers in the New World as their narrative bluntly gives precedence to issues related to exploration, colonization and the establishment of colonies, while the narrative of Native Americans emphasizes indigenous cultures, resilience, and multi-faceted resistance to colonization.

It is paramount in this respect to stress that what may make peoples and nations clash and disagree are not memories, which are, by nature "multiple," "diversified," "collective" and "pluralized" and "individualized" (Nora 1984, xix). Giving further credence to Nora's claims, Said (1994) asserted that "nations themselves are narrations" (p. xiii). What makes peoples clash are histories which are often the selective sanctifications and mythicisation of some memories as embodiments of the official historical experiences of nations and hence conduits for their official discourse (Nora, 1984, xix). As such, the official narrative of the historical experiences of a nation is more often than not the biased and self-serving historicization, and hence legitimization, of some memories to the detriment of others (Nora, 1984, p. xx; Rousso, 1991, p. 4; Geertz, 1973, pp. 312-319).

The essence of memories does not often fully correspond with historical accounts. History's goal and ambition are, in Nora's words "not to exalt but to annihilate what has in reality taken place (xx). Consequently, historians, in Bressler's words (2007), "can never provide us with the truth," as they cannot "give us a totally accurate picture of past events or the worldview of a people. Similar to language, history is but one of the many discourses or ways of viewing the world" (352). For this reason, a contrapuntally oriented approach to IR, in Runia's words (2010), ought to dwell on understanding "what is fictive in all putatively realistic representations of the world, and what is realistic in all manifestly fictive ones" (240).

Far from delving into the deconstruction and the critique of US official historical narrative, the study at hand posits, through the lens of Said's contrapuntal approach, that the historical narratives of both American settlers and Native Americans have the inalienable right to stake claims to veracity and validity without necessarily being recognized as such by the opposing entity. Having mobilized his intellectual capital in his seminal book "Culture and Imperialism" (1994) to address the inevitably bifurcated nature of the history of imperialism, Said's emphasized the necessity to "formulate an alternative both to a politics of blame and to the even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility" (18).

Forcefully supportive of the assumption that perspectives and meanings are inherently multi-voiced, polyphonic and dialogic, Bakhtin relentlessly asserted that understanding the complexity of tensions that characterize postcolonial memory and imaginary where a miscellany of muted voices struggle for emancipation from a domineering and homogenizing narrative requires the emphasis of a "dialogic counterpoint" (Dialogic Imagination, p. 325). For Bakhtin, the narratives of nations should not be by any means reduced to a common denominator and they have to be kept open to a multiplicity of voices. "[T]wo voices are the minimum for life, the minimum for existence," argued Bakhtin (1984, 252). This line of reasoning is conducive to the plausible inference that different, conflicting and antagonistic ideological perspectives are but ineluctable and necessary components for the understanding of same historical experience as all narratives enclose a plurality of "independent" and free voices endowed with the legitimate right to stake claims to validity (Clark & Holquist 1984, 242).

Looking eye to eye with Bakhtin, in his contrapuntality theory, Said placed a premium on the need to resist harmony and compromise between visions. For him, multiple voices competing for the narrativization of historical experiences do not need to be reconciled. On the contrary, Said's vision values

cacophony which instead of discouraging and silencing diversity, it enhances multiplicity by exhorting suppressed voices to cry out their difference high and loud (Said and Viswanathan 2001, 366).

### **Data of the study**

Since their landing on the shores of the New World, Europeans went to great lengths to control and expand over the fertile and cultivable lands by ousting and dislodging their original owners. After having appealed for a long time to the “Doctrine of Discovery” to legitimate their grab for lands belonging to Native Americans and deligitimize Indian claims of ownership of the lands coveted by Europeans, these last further escalated their insatiable hunger for land under the garb of the so-called “Manifest Destiny” (Johansen, 2005) For the sake of sacralizing their systematic policies of land theft and genocidal crimes, American settlers emphasized that their expansionism was just decreed by God (Venebales, 2004). Aptly encapsulating the underpinning logic of European settlers, Stennard asserted that they capitalized on “the stenotype of barbarically hostiles natives” to sell their idea that “there was the promise of God's favor should they successfully introduce the New World's "pagan innocents" to the glory of his grace (pp. 64-65)

Even after the War of Independence (1775-1783), the successive US presidents, at varying degrees, expressed and defended the importance for White settlers to expand westward allegedly to concretize their civilizing project and to fulfill a divinely ordained plan. Despite the awareness of post-Independence presidents from George Washington to James Monroe of the need to heed White settlers' ever-growing hunger for land, Andrew Jackson's presidency stands out as a case in point in this regard.

Both as a military man and a political official, Andrew Jackson has such indelible and far-reaching impact on American expansionist and genocidal policies against Native Americans. He equally played a pivotal role in arranging for the signature of a number of treaties that resulted in stepping up the American extortion of Indian lands and their transfer to White settlers. As president of the US (1829-1837), Jackson forcefully backed numerous undertakings that sought to allocate to White settlers whatever they coveted from Indigenous-held lands. Jackson's commitment to this issue climaxed in the approval by the US Congress, albeit with a thin majority, of the 1830 Indian Removal Act. By dint of this act, the US federal government, in total contravention of previously signed treaties and in defiance to the rulings of the US Supreme Court, removed hundreds of thousands of Indians from their traditional lands east of the Mississippi River before being forcibly resettled to the west of the river Mississippi.

Although the act simply mandated the US federal government to negotiate fairly with Indian tribes, President Jackson rapidly abandoned his appeasing and conciliatory stance toward Indians and proceeded to their forcible eviction to the poor lands west of the Mississippi River. Ironically, the Indian tribes that adamantly and firmly refused to succumb to the US government pressure were the “five civilized tribes”—the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole and Cherokee. Despite their hospitality to American culture and life style and even their embrace of much of what American culture extolled, Jackson's government disowned and stigmatized them as savage and unsuited for civilization and hence had to be wiped off the road of the civilizing and urbanizing wave spearheaded by White settlers. American policies of “ethnic cleansing” and “forced displacement” against Native Americans from their traditional lands culminated the infamous “Trail of Tears” (1838-1839), in which about 60.000 of the Cherokees were forcibly relocated to lands west of the Mississippi River resulting the perishing of around 30 percent of them

### **Methodology**

The core thrust of Said's contrapuntal approach hinges on the importance of engaging with historical experiences contrapuntally rather univocally. For him, the reading and analysis of the “metropolitan” history is inherently insufficient to provide the reader with a full-fledged picture of what effectively occurred unless supplemented with the histories of those against whom (and together with whom) the discourse wielder interacted (Said, 1994, p. 51). For Said and Barsamian (1994), imperialism ought to be

construed as “an intrinsically ‘contested and joint experience’: domination and resistance are co-constituent parts of a whole” (pp. 71-73).

Metropolitan history, as Said argued, draws its ostensible truthfulness and validity from an “incorporative,” “universalizing” and “totalizing” molds and codes that narrate history and depict experiences from an exclusively Eurocentric perspective of colonizing, imperializing and globalizing powers. Examining experiences contrapuntally, thus, centers on highlighting injustice and standing up for the voiceless who was deprived of agency and indicted of being incapable of representing himself which gave the dominant imperializer an *imprimatur* to construct him as a malleable and controllable “Other” (Said, 1996, p. 1; Marx, 2019, p. 573). It also implies the enmeshing and entwinement of “discrepant” and “dissonant” experiences and narratives and counter-narratives of domination and resistance regardless of the peculiarities of their internal formations, their internal coherence and their ostensibly commonsensical truthfulness into an imbricated version that welcomes their dual claim to reality and legitimacy (Said, 1994, pp. 18-32; Said and Barsamian, 1994, pp. 71-73 ).

Most importantly, Said’s contrapuntal approach permits to address the power dynamics inherent in the memory issue. It allows to question certain narratives that have been privileged or excluded. As such, it enables the transcending of the one-sided and lop-sided understanding of the American-India contentious memory issue. By so doing, it purports to open paths for a more inclusive, more nuanced and more comprehensive analysis of this historical and memory issue. Most importantly, this implies, in George M. Wilson’s words (1994), “[reading the narrative of the colonizers alongside those of the colonized, thus examining opposite and intertwined histories” by juxtaposing “the claims of internal or intrinsic readings of a work,” and “the claims of various forms of external critique (p. 265).

As an interpretive paradigm, Said’s contrapuntality approach holds powerful conceptual and pedagogical implications for reframing understandings of American-Indian encounter. It specifically enables the examination of a vast array of perspectives and narratives simultaneously, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of complex historical events. More specifically, Said’s idea that “the legacy of imperialism gives shape to the present” prompts historians and researchers to “read the great canonical texts, and perhaps also the entire archive of modern and pre-modern European and American culture, with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented in such works (p. 67).

In the case of both American settlers and Native Americans, both entities cultivate different memories and discrepant interpretations of the colonial past, which continue to shape their relationship. By appealing to a contrapuntal approach, we can explore the interconnectedness and the imbrications of these perspectives. This implies engaging not just with the dominant narrative of American settlers, but also the alternative perspectives promoted by Native Americans and that have often been marginalized and excluded.

This concern largely justifies the choice of Said’s approach of contrapuntality as the pivotal tool through which the issue is scrutinized. Said’s approach squarely rests on the principle of resisting the “insularity,” “provincialism” and “parochialism” of Western-centric cultures and histories (Said, 1995, p. 43). In this venue, Said emphasizes that the process of identity formations are to be conceived of as “contrapuntal ensembles” rather than “essentializations” because identities draw significance and substance from their interactions with oppositions and resistance. This equally implies the importance of broadening the reading of the text to encompass even what was marginalized, overlooked or excluded (Said, 1994, pp. 66-67).

Emphasizing both “disjuncture” and the inescapable interdependence of cultures as many experiences could not be fully captured and apprehended unless firewalls between cultures are surmounted through a contrapuntal reading of texts and narratives that may entwine and interlace narratives of the “centre” and the “peripheries” (Said, 1993, pp.194, 259). Giving a supplementary credence to this assumption, Williams posited that “texts are not finished objects” and that they do not only “create their own precedents but also their successors” (p. 259).

One major implication of these claims is that experiences and events are massive and rich continua of thoughts, feelings, actions and reactions that could simply be construed, represented and interpreted in a miscellany of ways. It is, thus, a self-defeating and futile enterprise to think about their possible straitjacketing within one single, univocal reading. As a direct result of this insularity and the insistence to conceive of American settlers' history and experience in the New World in isolation from Indian perceptions and experiences would be that experiences of the dominator-dominated relationship remain "artificially and falsely separated" (Said, 1994, p. 259).

For Trouillot (1995), who stressed the entanglement between historicity and power, "any historical narrative is as "a bundle of silences" from which what is unthinkable is suppressed" (p. 27). Having managed to fasten their economic and military clasp over their former colonies, Western European powers extended their domination to the knowledge sphere by imposing an "epistemically racist" regime that muted, marginalized and excluded all knowledge emanating from the "other." This process that consisted in elevating their own knowledge to the status of non-negotiable and commonsensical truth was paralleled by the relegation of the knowledge produced by the peripheries to the status of the unknown and the unknowable trying desperately to grab attention from the West's windowsill (Said, 1994, p. 259).

Examined through an "integrative" or contrapuntal lens, the histories and experiences of the colonizer/colonized, imperializer/imperialized and the dominator/dominated are found to be inherently woven and intertwined together with common belonging and affiliation. This implies that the experience and the history of Euro-Britons' self-perception as a civilized and civilizing people that occupied a deserted land probably settled by heathen savages unsuited for civilization ought to be narrated in tandem with the narrative of Native Americans that centered on the colonizer's policies of expropriation, forcible expulsion, genocidal wars on unarmed innocents as an "atonal ensemble" that draws upon a compilation of simultaneous but dissonant experiences –a "polyphonic composition in Said's words--that contribute to form a common history (p. 318).

An unbiased accounting for both perspectives will inescapably and unmistakably generate a more holistic and inclusive understanding of the shared history between American settlers and Native Americans in the United States. Stressing the importance of valuing and emancipating "dissonant" tones or narratives and rejecting the false hierarchization of perceptions and narratives, a contrapuntal examination of the encounter between American settlers and Native Americans greatly helps in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions and dynamic between the two entities. Most importantly, this analytical critical endeavour enhances a more nuanced construal of the tangled interpenetration and interdependence in the historical narratives of American settlers and Native Americans by meticulously accounting for all practices that contribute to the "complex and uneven topography" of their relations (p. 318).

## Results

01	Savage hunters
02	Indian occupancy
03	Their [Indians'] own rude institutions
04	The wandering savage
05	Their [Indians'] savage habits
06	Their [Indians'] wandering habits

Table 1: The stereotyping and demonization Native Americans and the rationalization of policies of expropriation, removal and genocide (in Andrew Jackson's Speech to Congress on Indian Removal” (December 6, 1830)

In order for the US federal government to legitimize its policies of land grab and forcible removal, it capitalized on the demonization, the stigmatization and the distancing of Indians as a weird other. Central in this regard to emphasize that President Jackson’s usage of the phrase “savage hunters” was instrumental to both legitimize their exclusion from the life of American settlers, to underscore their undeserved presence on the fertile lands to the east of the Mississippi River. These devices of othering Indians were also paramount in justifying the inevitable control of those fertile lands by American settlers.

In his quest to confer supplementary credence upon the argument that Indians were not worthy of occupying their fertile lands east of the Mississippi River, President Jackson, in “Andrew Jackson's Speech to Congress on Indian Removal” (December 6, 1830), characterized American Indians as “wandering savages” with “savage” and “wandering habits” implying that they lacked the know-how and the skills required for the adequate exploitation of the fertile soils that they occupied. Moreover, their nomadic lifestyle implied that they did not to control those fertile soils. To further accentuate the cultural discrepancy between American settlers and American Indians, President Jackson depicted the possible refusal of Indians to melt into White culture as a thinly veiled expression of their adherence to what he characterized as the “rude institutions” of Indians.

01	The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves.
02	It [speedy removal of Indians] puts an end to all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the General and State Governments on account of the Indians.
03	By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will incalculably strengthen the southwestern frontier and render the adjacent States strong enough to repel future invasions without remote aid.
04	It [speedy removal of Indians] will relieve the whole State of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power.
05	It [speedy removal of Indians] will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions;
06	[speedy removal] will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community.

Table 2. The camouflaging of the expansionist ideology of American Settlers under the guise of inevitable security strategy (Andrew Jackson's Speech to Congress on Indian Removal” (December 6, 1830)

As shown in table 2, President Jackson unwaveringly justified the expansionist and land-hungry designs of American settlers by stressing the strategic importance of these lands for the security of American citizens. Most importantly, President Jackson portrayed the removal of Indians from their ancestral lands as being instrumental for the preservation of Indians’ lives and the promotion of their well-being. President Jackson went to great lengths to delineate the removal of Indians as being crucial for the maintenance and the advancement of a harmonious and peaceful relationship between US federal and state

governments. Clearly presenting the choices available for Native Americans as a real plight, President Jackson depicted the “speedy removal” of Indians as some of sort of salvation for them as it would, from the perspective of the US president, release the Indians from the clasp of state government but simply to take refuge in their so-called “rude institutions.” The removal of Indians was also presented as being a new opportunity for Indians to access their atmosphere of equanimity and happiness.

In a thinly veiled manifestation of the ethnocentric drive behind American settlers determination to oust Indians from their lands, President Jackson emphasized that the “speedy removal” of Indians was more beneficial to Native Americans than to American settlers. For the US president, removal was the rampart against the progressive extinction of the Indian race as well as a possible inducement to them to jump into the bandwagon of the White man’s civilization by relinquishing their “savage habits.”

01	The present policy of the Government is but a continuation of the same progressive change by a milder process.
02	The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to land where their existence may be prolonged and perhaps made perpetual.
03	Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but what do they more than our ancestors did or than our children are now doing? To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects.
04	Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions.
05	Does Humanity weep at these painful separations from everything, animate and inanimate, with which the young heart has become entwined? Far from it. It is rather a source of joy that our country affords scope where our young population may range unconstrained in body or in mind, developing the power and facilities of man in their highest perfection.
06	These remove hundreds and almost thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival.
07	Can it be cruel in this Government when, by events which it cannot control, the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode?
08	How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions! If the offers made to the Indians were extended to them, they would be hailed with gratitude and joy.
09	And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home than the settled, civilized Christian? Is it more afflicting to him to leave the graves of his fathers than it is to our brothers and children?
10	Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous.
11	He [the red man] is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population.
12	To save him [the red man] from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement."

Table 3. The Infantilizing and Paternalistic Stance of American Settlers toward Native Americans (in Andrew Jackson's Speech to Congress on Indian Removal” (December 6, 1830)

American settlers' perception to Native Americans and their occupation of lands east of the Mississippi River was, as it is codified in table 3, an extension of the Eurocentric logic that sacralizes the White man's intentions, plans and policies. From this perspective, Native Americans were just conceived of as a hamper on the road of the civilizing mission spearheaded by Euro-Britons then American settlers. In order for President Jackson to rationalize and justify the forcible removal of Indians from their ancestral lands, he concocted an apocryphal adequation between the history and the fate of the Puritans and the red Indians.

For the sake of blurring the conspicuously atrocious impact of the US federal government's policies of dispossession and forcible dislodging, President Jackson recast them as part of what he called the "progressive change" operated by American settlers. By so claiming, President Jackson asserted that, being the custodians of the presumably noble, civilizing mission, American settlers were determined to accomplish it at any cost. President Jackson's claims were clearly reflective of the prevailing ethnocentric justifications of Discovery Doctrine that stipulate that American settlers held "the only valid religions, civilizations, governments, laws, and cultures, and Divine Providence intended these people and their institutions to control and own North America (Miller, 2005, p. 336).

The proclivity to restrict the portrayal of Native Americans to the status of "obstacles to white settlement" or "victims of oppression," as Axtell opined, clearly strips Native Americans of their legitimate right to advance their alternative perception to the experience of their encounter with American settlers (981). For Josephy and Hoxie, the confinement of Native Americans to the posture of passive recipients to the actions of American settlers fosters the "deep-seated tendency to see whites and Indians as possessing two distinct species of historical experience rather than a mutual history of continuous interaction and influence" (Josephy 67; Hoxie 22).

In an unambiguously disdainful and belittling stance towards red Indians, President Jackson pretended to be acting in behalf of the Native Americans when he decided to remove them from the East of the Mississippi River. In an attempt to lure the Native Americans to accept the exchange of their ancestral, fertile lands for the poor lands west of the Mississippi River, President Jackson, as if addressing himself to morons, feigned that the removal of the Native Americans was above all an act of magnanimity by the US federal government to create a "new" and ostensibly more appropriate home for them and hence spare them the impending risk of total annihilation. American settlers push for the occupation of Indians' lands was unwaveringly substantiated and authorized by "religious and ethnocentric ideas of European and Christian superiority over the other races and religions of the world (Miller, 2005, p. 330).

Ironically, American settlers who landed on the shores of the New World as conquerors arrogated to themselves the right to determine who was worth of occupying the fertile lands and who could be dislodged to the poor lands west of the Mississippi River. Most importantly, President Jackson invested much of his intellectual capital to play down the plight of the Native Americans by making their removal pale into insignificance when juxtaposed the Pilgrims bereavement of their homeland.

Appealing to their sacrifices and their devotion to their ideals as a mythmoteur, American settlers, in the words of President Jackson invoked the tribulations of the Puritans before their landing on the shores of the New World to downplay and trivialize the injustices inflicted on them by American settlers. For President Jackson, the Native Americans had to turn to the sufferings and hardships encountered by American settlers on a foreign land for inspiration to ultimately accept their removal to the West of the Mississippi River.

## **Discussion**

After landing on the shores of North America, greedy for land, European settlers concocted all sorts of strategies, policies and stratagems to strip the Indigenous inhabitants of their lands. This ranged from concluding transactions, treaties wars, outright land theft to forcible removals. In fact, Europeans' voracious

land grab gained momentum after the War on Independence (1775-1783) as the US successive governments showed too little, if any, readiness to recognize Indian nations as sovereign or Native inhabitants. This was recurrently and relentlessly expressed through their institutions, laws and policies. Appealing to a litany of different, self-serving myths and meta-narratives, European settlers and after them supremacist White Americans relegated Native Americans to the status of savages presenting a lethal peril to White civilization to invalidate their claims to land property, sovereignty or even to citizenship under White control.

The relentless and unflinching determination of White settlers to dispossess Native Americans of their lands which dated back to pre-colonial America took a different turn with the election of James Monroe as the US fifth president in 1817. Upon his inauguration, President Monroe unequivocally expounded US official intentions to remove Indians from the fertile lands east of the Mississippi through a plan laid out by his secretary of war John Calhoun. Failing to enlist the support of the House of Representatives after having received the approval of the Senate, the plan would disappear in the drawers of the White House bureaucracy before being re-launched by the John Quincy Adams administration. In fact, it was after having invested some of his intellectual capital in trying to civilize and assimilate Indians into White society that he shifted his focus to persuading them to emigrate to the trans-Mississippi West (Richardson, Messages and Papers, 2: 262). Indeed, even after it dawned on him to subscribe to the policy of removing Indians, President Monroe cultivated a deeply anchored ambition to conclude a deal that would be satisfactory to Indians and honorable for the US (James Monroe: Inaugural Speech 1821).

The Monroe-Calhoun Indian policy continued unscathed after the inauguration of the John Quincy Adams presidency in 1825. Continuing along similar lines, President Adams and his secretary of war James Barbour provided an unequivocal backing to the policy of general removal of Indians to the West of the Mississippi (John Forsyth to James Barbour, March 9, 1825; John Quincy Adams to the Senate, January 31). President Adams showed a great deal of determination to remove Indians by peaceful means before being discouraged by the state of Georgia's recalcitrance to cooperate with the federal government due to a divergence with the Cherokees ("Indian Treaties and the Removal Act of 1830"). In fact, the most conspicuous novelty with Adams' Indian policy was the official introduction of the concept "removal" instead of "emigration" in US official lexicon (Register of Debates, Senate, 19th Congress).

Conspicuously different to his predecessors, President Jackson showed an unprecedented determination to embrace Indian removal, *manu militari* if need be, as his administration's official policy (Richardson, Messages, 2: 9, 298; Daniel W. Wright to Andrew Jackson, March 4, 1829; William Carroll to Andrew Jackson, June 29, 1829). Having contributed a lot in the accomplishment of the US federal government's land grabbing policies as a military man, President Andrew Jackson could easily maintain his tough stand against Indians who showed too little, if any, readiness to relinquish their homelands by non-forceful means. Indeed, after reaping the support of the US Congress with a thin margin, the Indian removal bill, on May 30, 1830, President Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act. Although the new law gave the US federal government only the power to negotiate and persuade the Indian's to leave their lands, President Jackson arrogated to himself the right to use military force to compel Indians to abandon their homelands" (Indian Treaties and the Removal Act of 1830").

In the speech that President Jackson delivered in the immediate aftermath of the adoption of the Indian Removal Act, President Jackson depicted the substance of this undertaking as being beneficial to Indians as it presented them as mere occupants of lands and as an obstacle to fruitful exploitation by civilized and civilizing Whites. Backed by President Jackson, the US Congress officially validated the removal of Native Americans from their ancestral lands to be relocated in the poor areas west of the Mississippi River. The removal act was highly prejudicial and detrimental not just to the lives of Indians but it most importantly resulted in the total devastation of an entire culture and the annihilation of a total community.

In order for the US political elite to downplay and even totally obliterate the uniquely destructive impact of their political and military undertakings, they often recast the intentions underlying their policies of dispossession and genocide as being destined to save and preserve Indian lives. President Jackson's

speech was an edifying illustration of the univocal and exclusively subjective reasoning and historical account of Whites. The consecration of the unrivaled validity of this univocal historical account, which pervaded the US political and cultural thought, largely draws from the long-running meta-narrative of the “Manifest Destiny.” This last rests squarely on the belief that the United States is the custodian of “some unique moral virtues” that the US is entrusted with the “divinely ordained mission” of redeeming the world by spreading republican government and the American way of life around the globe (Miller, 2005, p. 332). For Miller, “[t]his kind of thinking could only arise from an ethnocentric view that one’s own culture, government, race, religion, and country are superior to all others (332).

In an attempt to whitewash this part of history, the US historians like Francis Parkman and George Bancroft bluntly claimed that Indians were “inferior in reason and moral qualities.” Taking this anti-Indian rhetoric farther, Bancroft emphasized that this “inferiority” was not related to the individual but to the organization and the characteristic of the race. These claims were instrumental in justifying colonial plundering by demeaning the Indians and granting the US federal government an imprimatur to destroy Indian tribal life which constituted the very source of Indians’ strength and spiritual support.

The long-lasting and iron-clad myth about the benevolence of the expansionist policies of American settlers came to be questioned by the insightful and seminal contributions of historians like Frederick Turner (1893), David Stennard, Ward Churchill (1997) and Ben Kieman (2009), Benjamin Madley and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2014; 2021). Sending serious shock wave across the academic community and beyond, the aforementioned historians and others called the bluff of the presumable merits of Westward Expansion. Most importantly, they unearthed and unmasked the ugly side of the widely spread glorification of the Westward Expansion as the American people’s pursuit of economic development in the Western frontier by claiming that it advanced American democracy, boosted economic prosperity and contributed to the construction and endorsement of American national spirit. Aptly capturing the folly and unstinted pride of the White settler, the US poet Walt Whitman asserted that

“The nigger, like the Injun, will be eliminated; it is the law of the races, history ... The whole world would benefit from US expansion: We pant to see our country and its rule far-reaching” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2024, p. 118)

The construction, the promotion and the perpetuation of a univocal historical account about the US origin myth, which hinges on the relegation of the Native Americans to back seat, was largely enabled by the mobilization of a miscellany of implicit tactics such as the demeaning and the dwarfing the Indians’ culture which proved to be paramount in decimating the identity of Native Americans. Encapsulating the gist of this claim, Ngūgī wa Thiong’o (2005) hypothesized that controlling people’s culture implies controlling their “tools of self-definition in relations to others” (p. 16). To Thiong’o, the colonization of people’s minds operates by defining a culture as inferior, which induces the people of that culture to identify accordingly (p. 16).

Being the “systematic expression” and reflection of the values incarnated and defended by the official institutions, discourses are inherently reductionist and exclusivist (Kress, 1988, p. 7). Amply imbued by the conviction that the US historical account is intrinsically biased and univocal, Churchill vehemently defended the need for the re-invention of a “more accurate,” “more comprehensive” and “more nuanced” historical account. To him, the US official historical and political discourses doggedly obey to iron-clad rules that describe “rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions” (p.7).

To ensure the unchallenged perpetuity and presumable validity of their univocal historical account, American settlers embarked on a thorough and systematic destruction of “rival forms of knowledge” culminating in what the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos called “epistemicide” (Cunico and Munday, 2007, p. 153). This somehow explains there is too little, if any, space for themes, paradigms, traditional scholarship and epistemologies covering the perspectives of Native Americans in the official historical account of the US is, in Collins (2000) words, largely attributable to the hermetic control of elite White supremacists over structures of knowledge validation (p. 269). The inevitable result of this monopoly

over these epistemic processes was that non-White knowledge and intelligibility are automatically marginalized, excluded and muted with truth about historical experiences being exclusively determined from the perspective of the dominant (Scheurich & Young, 1997, p. 8; Giroux, 2014, p. 8)

A central implication of this “symbolic genocide” is that President Jackson could hardly perceive the possible existence of another possible means to execute and achieve the goals set by his government for the sake of his people. In other words, the prevailing regime of truth and the grid of intelligibility that mould and govern the ways speakers and leave no possibility for members of a linguistic community to construe matters differently from what is agreed upon and held as a self-evident truth.

Therefore, when President Jackson decided to tread on what should otherwise be regarded as the inalienable right of Indians to live as they wished on their ancestral lands, he was totally convinced that tending to the well being and the security of American settlers was axiomatic and a non-negotiable priority. Deeply imbued by the spirit of Manifest Destiny, President Jackson also demonstrated the unshakable that what Europeans did and what Indians underwent was just ineluctable as it was a preordained and divine blueprint that none could shun. From this perspective, Native Americans’ feelings, beliefs and ambitions are just worthless and could blindly be sacrificed on the altar of the economic prosperity, social well-being and ideological designs.

For President Jackson and the US federal government in general, the “savage” and “wandering” Native Americans who lived on hunting were not worthy of controlling the fertile soils east of the Mississippi River. In Jackson’s “exclusivist” and “supremacist” logic, that deeply drew upon the encompassing hubristic and jingoist sentiments emanating from the Manifest Destiny doctrine, warding off dangers from American settlers, the promotion of their well-being and the boosting of their economic state takes precedence over issues related to respect of what the US president called “the savage habits” and “rude institutions” of the Native Americans.

The pervading values of a divinely ordained mission ostensibly incarnated by American settlers could equally be inferred from President Jackson’s claims that the eviction and the relocation of Native Americans would be advantageous for Indians. By arguing that the expulsion of Native Americans to what he called their “new homes,” “new and extensive territories” and “new abode” was part of the “liberal” and “generous” policy and that Native Americans ought to receive it with “gratitude” and “joy,” President Jackson voiced the callous and infantilizing core the ideology of Manifest Destiny.

Most importantly, President Jackson’s embrace of such an “exclusivist” and subjective rhetoric sought to marginalize, mute and totally exclude an alternative narrativization of the experience of American settlers with Native Americans. By so doing, President Jackson envisaged to bury evidence of the White Man’s liquidation of about 100 million Indians, the illegal expropriation of millions of millions of acres of Indians’ ancestral lands, the forcible eviction of hundreds of thousands of Indians and genocidal wars against defenseless civilians.

This “self-referential” and “self-justificatory” discourse cultivated and promoted by President Jackson, which encodes the ideology of the US political elite, simply encapsulates a particularistic vision of the world and strictly delineates what may be thought and said by the communities using them (p.7). From the perspective of Churchill, “deniers” and “exclusivists” framed US historical account in a way that “denied,” “suppressed,” “minimized,” or even “celebrated” the “ghastly holocaust” of Native Americans. To him, these “deniers” staunchly believe that the liquidation of the Native Americans was entirely justified as European colonialism in the New World is commendable for having turned the jungle into a more pleasant place to live. Summing up the pith of this reasoning, historian Francis Parkman emphasized that the “American Indian will not learn the arts of civilization and he and his forest must perish together” (“The American Genocide of the Indians...”)

## Conclusion:

The study has uncovered the substance, the intent and the implications of the US subjective and univocal historical account. More specifically, it has demonstrated that the US origin myth was firmly grounded in a compilation of meta-narratives, doctrines and racialized epistemologies. Most importantly, the study has shown that the discrepant experiences of American settlers and Native Americans about their divergent construal and their irreconcilable logics are not mutually exclusive. They are rather indispensable components of a common, overlapping experience of the hemispheric encounter between American settlers and Native Americans. To do so, the study has utilized Said's contrapuntality approach to scrutinize President Jackson's speech on Indian removal to display the reductionist and essentialist logic that underpinned the US official historical account whose validity and claim to truthfulness was no more than important than the marginalized, muted and excluded voice of Native Americans.

The study has, thus, endeavored to re-read President Jackson's speech on Indian removal in a more dynamic historical and cultural environment wherein an ongoing contest between two dissonant and discrepant voices about a common historical experience. The process has involved the reinvigoration of the inertly vulnerable, dominated and muted voice of Native Americans contrapuntally with the official historical account advanced by American settlers to bring to the fore the indispensably simultaneous awareness of the invaluable contribution of both for a more nuanced and a more comprehensive apprehension of the encounter of American settlers and Native Americans whose historical experiences are deeply interwoven and intertwined with each other with highly important implications on US history.

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