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Rethinking Canadian Working-Class History

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Résumé de l'article

Au Canada, l'histoire du travail et de la classe ouvrière a été entravée, dans une large mesure, dans ses tentatives pour comprendre les tendances nationales, par les clivages liés au sexe, à la région, à l'industrie, à la race, à la langue et à la culture. Cet article soutient qu'une solution possible pour sortir de cette impasse consiste à mettre en évidence la relation particulière entre l'exploitation coloniale et l'exploitation de classe dans notre économie coloniale, à la fois en termes de formation de classe et dans le projet permanent de reproduction sociale. L'adoption d'un « cadre réglementaire pour les colons » s'appuie sur d'importants travaux récents qui tentent de comprendre la participation des peuples autochtones dans les rangs de ceux qui peinent, luttent et rêvent de se libérer du capitalisme, en intégrant la réalité fondamentale du vol de terres et de ressources autochtones par les travailleurs colons dans l'histoire de la classe ouvrière canadienne.

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The Settler Order Framework: Rethinking Canadian Working-Class History

Fred Burrill

The truth of reconciliation is that reconciliation cannot happen in a settler colonial state that relies so heavily on Indigenous land and resources.

– Dr. Bonita Lawrence

It is the absolute character of settler society to be parasitic, dependent upon the super-exploitation of oppressed peoples for its style of life.

– J. Sakai, *Settlers*

From its earliest days, the writing of Canadian working-class history has been a contested practice. New scholars who care about working-class and labour history enter into a field in which the methodologies they choose align with debates in a broader political project examining the impact of class exploitation and conflict in the Canadian past.[1] We also enter, however, into a historiography that, with a few important regional exceptions, has been largely

1. For the briefest of introductions to some of these debates, see Desmond Morton, "Some Millennial Reflections on the State of Canadian Labour History," *Labour/Le Travail* 46 (Fall 2000): 11–36; Bryan D. Palmer, "Listening to History Rather than Historians: Reflections on Working Class History," *Studies in Political Economy* 20 (Summer 1986): 47–84; Craig Heron, "Towards Synthesis in Canadian Working-Class History: Reflections on Bryan Palmer's Rethinking," *left history* 1, 1 (1993): 109–121; Joan Sangster, "Beyond Dichotomies: Re-assessing Gender History and Women's History in Canada," *left history* 3, 1 (1995): 109–121; Karen Dubinsky & Lynne Marks, "Beyond Purity: A Response to Joan Sangster," *left history* 4, 1 (1996): 239; Franca Iacovetta & Linda Kealey, "Women's History, Gender History and Debating Dichotomies," *left history* 4, 1 (1996): 221–236; Joan Sangster, "Feminism and the Making of Canadian Working-Class History: Exploring the Past, Present and Future," *Labour/Le Travail* 46 (Fall 2000): 127–165; Ian McKay, "For a New Kind of History: A Reconnaissance of 100 Years of Canadian Socialism," *Labour/Le Travail* 46 (Fall 2000): 69–125.

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silent on the question of the structuring influence of settler colonialism and the ongoing theft of Indigenous lands and resources.[2]

Cracks have begun to appear in this historiography, as historians, too, have been touched by the recent report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its admonition that in order for reconciliation to begin, "there has to be an awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behavior."[3] The latest issue of the *Canadian Historical Review* featured pieces by leading Aboriginal thinkers Brenda MacDougall, Lianne C. Leddy, Mary Jane Logan McCallum, and John Borrows, as well as an extensive bibliography of works related to Indigenous history, in an effort to "acknowledge the boundaries that have excluded Indigenous scholars from the field of Canadian history."[4] Recent years have also witnessed a marked growth in critical histories of Indigenous labour, from Aboriginal and settler historians alike.[5] No longer is it possible to use the language of "irrelevance" or "oblivion" when discussing Indigenous workers, modernity, and capitalist production.[6] Decolonization theory and

2. Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940–1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 3–13.

3. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, vol. 1, *Summary: Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future* (Toronto: Lorimer, 2015), 6–7.

4. Dimitry Anastakis, Mary-Ellen Kelm & Suzanne Morton, "New Approaches to Indigenous History," *Canadian Historical Review* 98, 1 (March 2017): 61. In this issue of *Canadian Historical Review*, see Brenda MacDougall, "Space and Place within Aboriginal Epistemological Traditions: Recent Trends in Historical Scholarship": 64–82; Lianne C. Leddy, "Intersections of Indigenous and Environmental History in Canada": 83–95; Mary Jane Logan McCallum, "Starvation, Experimentation, Segregation, and Trauma: Words for Reading Indigenous Health History": 96–113; John Borrows, "Challenging Historical Frameworks: Aboriginal Rights, The Trickster, and Originalism": 114–135; "Historical Perspectives: Bibliography": 136–143.

5. See, in alphabetical order, Robin Jarvis Brownlie, "'Living the Same as the White People': Mohawk and Anishinabe Women's Labour in Southern Ontario in the 1920s and 30s," *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (Spring 2008): 41–68; John Sutton Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); McCallum, *Indigenous Women*; Andrew Parnaby, *Citizen Docker: Making a New Deal on the Vancouver Waterfront, 1919–39* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

6. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, 9. McCallum's footnote here makes reference to the first edition of Bryan Palmer's *Working Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800–1980* (Toronto: Butterworth and Co., 1983), but does not provide specific page numbers. A revisiting of Palmer's 1983 text reveals a language that, if not *exactly* using the terms referred to, is certainly still solidly in the realm of the regrettable: colonialism had "obliterated [Indigenous workers'] way of life"; they were "reduced to a state of dependency by 1850" (24). As Steven High has demonstrated, the language of irrelevancy was widespread in early assessments of Indigenous labour: High, "Native Wage Labour and Independent Production during the 'Era of Irrelevance,'" *Labour/Le Travail* 37 (Spring 1996): 243–264. Contemporary labour history readers reproduced this dynamic. Desmond Morton's *Working*

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methodologies are slowly becoming part of the toolbox of labour historians and seem to be "killing [the old, white supremacist] Canadian history" more efficiently even than originally feared by liberal and conservative historians.[7]

This encouraging trend, however, belies another troubling absence – that of analyses pertaining to the impact of settler colonialism on class and identity formation amongst white settler workers, and the relevance of this phenomenon as an explanatory framework for the absence of revolutionary class struggle in Canada. Settler colonialism is most succinctly defined, by Métis scholar Chelsea Vowel, as the "deliberate physical occupation of land as a method of asserting ownership over land and resource" – a "mode of domination," in the words of Lorenzo Veracini, characterized by the fact that settlers "rarely sail away" from their initial act of colonization, instead putting down roots and perpetuating and re-perpetuating patterns of displacement, dispossession, and genocide of Indigenous peoples.[8] Settler colonialism is thus more

People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement (Ottawa: Deneau, 1984) makes no mention of Indigenous workers in Canadian class formation, other than a nod to the genius of the invention of the canoe (1); Craig Heron, in *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1989), simply states that "the native population was pushed back and European social patterns were transplanted" (xii). Palmer's work on this topic has evolved as new sources and theories have become available, as can be seen in the second edition of *Working Class Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 51, and the increasing attention he pays to Indigenous questions in later publications. See Bryan D. Palmer & Joan Sangster, eds., *Labouring Canada: Class, Gender, and Race in Canadian Working-Class History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4–34; Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 367–414.

7. See J. L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998). On the necessity of "killing" Canadian history, I tend to follow Timothy J. Stanley, "Why I Killed Canadian History: Towards an Anti-Racist History in Canada," *Social History/Histoire sociale* 3, 65 (Spring 2000): 79–103. For a critical analysis of the ways in which antiracist frameworks perpetuate colonialism, see Bonita Lawrence & Enakshi Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism," *Social Justice Studies* 32, 4 (2005): 120–143. I was struck by the prevalence of decolonizing theory at the Spring 2017 Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies Graduate Student Conference at York University (20–21 April), where only *one* of the presentations I heard did not explicitly name Canada as a settler state and an ongoing purveyor of colonialism.

8. Vowel, *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Issues in Canada* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2016), 16; Veracini, "Introduction: Settler Colonialism as a Distinct Mode of Domination," in Edward Cavanagh & Lorenzo Veracini, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2016), 1–2. This framework of understanding is not without its criticisms. As Vowel has pointed out, the term "settler colonialism" also "obscures the way in which colonialism outside of Canada has created conditions that have given many peoples little choice but to seek homes elsewhere – including in Canada." Vowel, *Indigenous Writes*, 17. Corey Snelgrove, Rita Kaur Dhamoon, and Jeff Corntassel have reviewed several of the main critiques of settler colonial studies, among them that it is primarily settler-focused and tends to sideline Indigenous voices and resistance, leading to a kind of structuralist "colonial fatalism." Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Corntassel, "Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settlers, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 3, 2 (2014): 8–9.

of a process than an event, a "distinct form," as Penelope Edmonds writes, "with specific material and political effects."[9]

While this mode of domination clearly benefits the settler ruling class more than its working-class counterpart, it has nonetheless had important historical impacts on the constitution and development of those labouring subjects that preoccupy our field, both in terms of their relative economic conditions and in their cultural and social constitution as a class. In 2002, David Roediger called on Canadian labour historians to pay greater attention to this central structuring reality,[10] what he famously referred to elsewhere as the "wages of whiteness" or the ways in which "racial formation and class formation were bound to penetrate each other at every turn."[11] Despite this, and notwithstanding the new contributions referenced above, we are still largely looking at a Canadian labour map oriented around an "either/or" axis: *either* we are studying the working class *or* we are looking at "Indigenous workers." What follows is an attempt to think through this absence, through a (in no way exhaustive) review of some recent works touching on settler colonialism and labour. What motivates this failure to think relationally? How have different authors recently attempted to bridge this gap, and to what extent have they been successful in doing so? Which theoretical frameworks might allow us to begin to understand the deep roots of settler colonialism within the Canadian working-class past? What might that look like, applied to on-the-ground examples?

In asking these questions, I hope in turn to contribute to the aforementioned debate surrounding interpretations of labour history and to engage critically with Ian McKay's much-debated concept of the "liberal order" in examining Canadian history. At least in a provisional fashion, I want to suggest that foregrounding the structuring role of settler colonialism – adopting a "settler order framework" – can go a long way toward articulating a more theoretically sound and narratively integrated history of the Canadian working class.[12] The settler working class, I will argue, must be understood not only as a second-tier

9. Edmonds, "Unpacking Settler Colonialism's Urban Strategies: Indigenous Peoples in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the Transition to a Settler-Colonial City," *Urban History Review* 38, 2 (2010): 3. Edmonds and other urban historians have been on the forefront of analyzing settler colonialism's impact on the development of Euro-Canadian polities. See also "Encounters, Contests, and Communities: New Histories of Race and Ethnicity in the Canadian City," special issue, *Urban History Review* 38, 2 (2010); Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

10. Roediger, "Top Seven Reasons to Celebrate and Ask More from Labour/Le Travail," *Labour/Le Travail* 50 (Fall 2002): 94.

11. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso Books, 2007), 20.

12. See Ian McKay's seminal article, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 81, 4 (2000): 616–645. I will engage more fully with this argument below.

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harvester of the inequalities sown by the settler state and capital but also as a collective subject making choices about its alignment within the settler historical bloc.

Either/Or

Labour and working-class historians should rightly take pride in having helped to undermine the national myth-complexes that once defined Canadian historiography, especially in the current context of the rise of far-right nationalism domestically and across the globe. And yet, we should do so with a note of caution, for often, despite our best intentions, our bookshelves are not as freed from the confines of what Sunera Thobani calls the "master narrative of the nation" as we might believe.[13] John Sutton Lutz has argued that in the case of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia, "first white settlers and then historians erased Indians, either by leaving them out of their accounts or by placing them on the margins, where they were barely visible. The 'red men' have not vanished from the historical landscape: they have *been* vanished."[14] On the opposite end of the country, William Wicken has posited that labour historians of Cape Breton, perhaps overly enamoured of the inspiring struggles of coal and steel workers, "have ignored the Mi'kmaq" in a process that "parallels the working class' own actions of the early twentieth century, which isolated the Mi'kmaq within the city [Sydney] and within the labour movement."[15] McCallum, for her part, locates the marginalization of Indigenous peoples as modern historical actors in the boundary policing of the white Canadian historical profession: "The use of the nation-state as an organizing principle," she argues, "subtly and unsubtly presents history, and more particularly Canadian history, as not the project of Aboriginal people and non-white people more generally."[16]

Labour/Le Travail, too, shares responsibility for these elisions. Australian labour historian Verity Burgmann commented in 2002 that the journal had seen "relatively little" scholarship "on indigenous peoples and the labour movement."[17] This lack of attention, despite some improvement in recent years, is still quite noticeable: only 2.5 per cent of the total amount of research articles, notes, and critical review essays – of which there were 878 in total – in the 41-year history of the journal pertain in some way to Indigenous issues

13. Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 4.

14. Lutz, *Makúk*, 42.

15. Wicken, *The Colonization of Mi'kmaw Memory and History, 1794–1928: The King v. Gabriel Sylliboy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 204.

16. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, 236.

17. Burgmann, "Labour/Le Travail and Canadian Working-Class History: A View from Afar," *Labour/Le Travail* 50 (Fall 2002): 82.

or settler colonialism.[18] Whether motivated by the privileged material context of university knowledge production or by a lack of critical engagement with our (mostly white) working-class sources (or both), it remains true that this journal and, more broadly, the foundational texts of Canadian labour and working-class history deal only perfunctorily with the question of colonization of Indigenous land and resources – remarkably so, for works claiming to understand class as "a totality resting on the essential economic relations of production."[19]

It is all the more encouraging, then, to now have so much more material for thinking through these questions of colonialism and work. Important steps in this direction were made by an earlier scholarly generation, dealing mostly with the western provinces, with scholars like Rolph Knight and Frank Tough arguing over the extent of Indigenous peoples' economic marginalization with the onset of industrial capitalism.[20] Other variations of what McCallum terms

18. This figure is based on a survey of titles and abstracts over the course of the journal's history and is consistent with other North American labour history publications and Canadian historical production more generally. For an overview, see Burgmann, "Labour/Le Travail," 82. Exceptions to this pattern in *Labour/Le Travail* begin most notably with the 1996 joint issue with Australia's *Labour History*. Other important references in the journal on the question of Indigenous peoples and labour include High, "Native Wage Labour"; Sangster, "Feminism"; Scott W. See, "Nineteenth-Century Collective Violence: Toward a North American Context," *Labour/Le Travail* 39 (Spring 1997): 13–38; Rosemary Gagan, "Gender, Work, and Zeal: Women Missionaries in Canada and Abroad," *Labour/Le Travail* 53 (Spring 2004): 223–246; Miriam Wright, "'Building the Great Lucrative Fishing Industry': Aboriginal Gillnet Fishers and Protests over Salmon Fishery Regulations for the Nass and Skeena Rivers, 1950s–1960s," *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (Spring 2008): 99–130; Brenda MacDougall, "'Comforts of Married Life': Métis Family Life, Labour, and the Hudson's Bay Company," *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (Spring 2008): 9–40; Brownlie, "'Living the Same'"; Andrew Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival: The Mi'kmaq of Cape Breton in the Mid-19th Century," *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (Spring 2008): 69–98; Charles R. Menzies & Caroline F. Butler, "The Indigenous Foundations of the Resource Economy of BC's North Coast," *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (Spring 2008): 131–150; Suzanne Mills, "The Difficulty with Diversity: White and Aboriginal Women Workers' Representations of Diversity Management in Forest Processing Mill," *Labour/Le Travail* 67 (Spring 2011): 45–76; Kiera L. Ladner & Michael McCrossan, "Whose Shared History?," *Labour/Le Travail* 73 (Spring 2014): 200–202; Jarrett Henderson, "Working [on Imperial] Families: Bettina Bradbury's Imperial (Re)turn," *Labour/Le Travail* 74 (Fall 2014): 289–295; Carmela Patrias, "More Menial Than Housemaids? Racialized and Gendered Labour in the Fruit and Vegetable Industry of Canada's Niagara Region, 1880–1945," *Labour/Le Travail* 78 (Fall 2016): 69–104.

19. Palmer, "Listening to History," 75. See also Gregory S. Kealey & Bryan D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Palmer, *Working Class Experience*, 2nd ed.; Craig Heron & Robert Storey, eds., *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986).

20. See Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858–1930* (Vancouver: New Star, 1978); Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native People and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870–1930* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996).

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the largely male-focused "decline/persist" debate continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s.[21] As Joan Sangster has argued, Canadian and American feminist scholarship has grappled in recent decades with the forces of patriarchy and colonialism structuring Indigenous women's working lives, influenced by the caring, militant, and academic labour of Aboriginal women.[22] More recent efforts, like McCallum's excellent *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940–1980*, have engaged in a project of contestation, of fighting back against dominant patriarchal tropes of Aboriginal "laziness" and antimodernity by conducting close examinations of Indigenous women labouring in the shadow of an expanding state concerned with modernizing projects and assimilatory work programs, living out intensely contradictory experiences at the crux of structures of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy.[23]

These important works combat extremely harmful historical myths and go a long way toward righting long-standing historiographical wrongs. Consequently, and justifiably, their project is not oriented around an examination of the impacts of colonialism on the development and ongoing constitution of the Canadian white settler working class.[24] There is an important distinction to be made here, I believe, between responsibilities of Indigenous historians and settler historians. It is the responsibility of non-Indigenous scholars, as beneficiaries of the violent history of colonialism, to undermine dominant settler narratives and to analyze their imbrication in the worlds inhabited by

21. McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, 241, n. 4–5; see also High, "Native Wage Labour"; Ron Laliberté & Vic Satzewich, "Native Migrant Labour in the Southern Alberta Sugar Beet Industry: Coercion and Paternalism in the Recruitment of Labour," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 36 (February 1999): 65–85; Alicja Muszynski, "Race and Gender: Structural Determinants in the Formation of British Columbia's Salmon Cannery Labour Forces," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 13 (Winter–Spring 1988): 103–120; James Burrows, "A Much Needed Class of Labor: The Economy and Income of the Southern Interior Plateau Indians, 1897–1910," *BC Studies*, 71 (Autumn 1986): 27–46; Thomas W. Dunk, "Indian Participation in the Industrial Economy on the North Shore of Lake Superior, 1869 to 1940," *Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, Papers and Records* 15 (1987): 3–13; Julie Guard, "Authenticity on the Line: Women Workers, Native 'Scabs,' and the Multi-ethnic Politics of Identity in a Left-Led Strike in Cold War Canada," *Journal of Women's History* 15 (Winter 2004): 117–140. This bibliographical run-down is indebted to the historiographical reflections of McCallum and Brownlie. Other good examples of research analyzing the impact of colonialism on Indigenous labour, again in a Western context, include David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Patricia A. McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History, 1788–1920s: "We Like to Be Free in this Country"* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011). See also Lutz, *Makúk*, 42–46.

22. Sangster, "Aboriginal Women and Work across the 49th Parallel: Historical Antecedents and New Challenges," in Carol Williams, ed., *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism* (Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 27–45.

23. See McCallum, *Indigenous Women*; Brownlie, "'Living the Same.'"

24. It goes without saying, of course, that the broader project of examining settlerism could not be carried out without this central work on the experience of Indigenous workers.

our subjects of study. I want, then, to turn to three settler historians who in the last decade have contributed studies that move us further in this direction – Joan Sangster, Andrew Parnaby, and, most explicitly, John Sutton Lutz – and in so doing, to think through some of the strengths and weaknesses of their respective approaches.

Sangster has been instrumental in conceptualizing the ways in which gendered colonial capitalist production has tied together Indigenous and settler women workers. Her study of fur production, in particular, demystifies the commodification and extraction of surplus value from women workers in bush economies, industrial production, and commercial retail work, examining the ways in which "women's bodies were implicated within and constituted by three social processes, of capital accumulation, consumption, and colonialism."[25] Her 2010 book, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-War Canada*, is a similar combination of resolute historical materialism and flexible attentiveness to the ways in which "ideology, culture, and human agency were integral to the nature of class, gender, and race relationships."[26] From this socialist feminist approach, her understanding of the "totality of the relations of production" is significantly more complex than the labour history classics referenced above, written in "recognition of a historical relationship that involved dispossession, segregation, and violence, as well as the state's encouragement of a racialized and gendered labour force." Sangster's work, focused on social reproduction at intersections of oppressions, "assume[s] the historical significance of capitalist accumulation, colonialism, and state initiatives."[27]

Unfortunately, in its narrative construction, *Transforming Labour* largely replicates the "either/or" complex referenced above. Unlike in Sangster's piece on the fur industry, white settler workers do not appear in her longer analysis to be part of the same system of colonialism affecting Indigenous labourers. The chapter on Indigenous women on the prairies anticipates in some ways McCallum's arguments about the state's active agenda of assimilation through work programs, underlining the state's central and violent role in insisting on a gendered and subordinate insertion of Aboriginal women into the capitalist labour market. But while Sangster does point out that the enforcement of this particularly unjust division of labour "was inseparable from processes of capitalist accumulation and the contours of post-war economic development,"[28] we do not get a concrete sense of the impact of this ongoing theft of Indigenous resources on the material and social conditions of her settler protagonists

25. Joan Sangster, "Making a Fur Coat: Women, the Labouring Body, and Working-Class History," *International Review of Social History* 52, 2 (2007): 270.

26. Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 11.

27. Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 232, 11.

28. Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 232.

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– the Dionne girls, Frères Dupuis workers, Cold War union activists, or those writing letters to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Colonialism is thus understood to be a structuring reality only for Indigenous workers and does not impinge upon either the individual subject formation or the collective consciousness of settler workers. Despite representing a significant advancement for Canadian working-class history in thinking through these questions, *Transforming Labour* does not ultimately fully shine "the light of historical materialism on Babylon itself."[29]

Parnaby's *Citizen Docker: Making a New Deal on the Vancouver Waterfront, 1919–1939,* moves further along in the direction of relationality. Parnaby's work is a historiographically essential reconstruction of the interwar Vancouver dock world of labour struggles, looking at the welfare capitalism of the 1920s and the radicalism of the 1930s. He argues that labour reform policies pursued by employers after the workers' uprisings of 1919 – decasualization, new associative forms (clubs, picnics, etc.), company unions – helped to foster a language of citizenship and entitlement that in turn served as the basis for a more combative Communist-influenced unionism in the 1930s. This contested terrain of citizenship was the ground for the evolution from "labourism" to industrial unionism and an increased emphasis on militant collective bargaining prefiguring New Deal politics post-1945. As part of this analysis, Parnaby conducts an in-depth exploration of the world of Squamish dockworkers, indicating the ways in which waged industrial labour and union organizing were not peripheral in Indigenous community life but rather central elements of new forms of community resistance and struggles for cultural autonomy and protection.[30] Emerging economic trends shaped by decasualization and time-work discipline, however, marginalized Indigenous workers. "At the core of labour market reform and welfare capitalism was both an image of the ideal waterfront worker and the internal mechanisms necessary to assemble, differentiate, and evaluate a pool of prospective employees," Parnaby informs us – an economic and discursive restructuring that "ran counter to [the Squamish] attachment to a more mobile working life and their need to work at a variety of things to get by."[31]

Parnaby, too, writes from a historical materialist perspective that seeks to place Aboriginal history and labour history in conversation, underlining the ways in which the experience of class was central to Indigenous life and resistance to colonialism.[32] In doing so, he also accounts to a certain extent for white privilege, describing settler workers' interactions with their Squamish

29. J. Sakai, *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat from Mayflower to Modern* (Montréal: Kersplebedeb/Oakland: PM Press, 2014), 4.

30. Parnaby also carries out a similar operation on the East Coast, in "The Cultural Economy of Survival."

31. Parnaby, *Citizen Docker*, 169.

32. Parnaby, *Citizen Docker*, 171–172.

colleagues as "buttressed by the sense of entitlement that all whites possessed by virtue of being white in a society in which race mattered, a feeling rooted deeply in culture, discourse, and space, formalized in law, and bound up in the material structures of the province's political economy."[33] Further, his limited geographical focus on one workplace helps to expose the tensions and potential solidarities between settler and Indigenous workers.

And yet, even within the boundaries of a study of the parallel and intersecting universes of white and Aboriginal dockworkers, there is a certain bifurcation in Parnaby's attempt to map out the nature of class and colonial power. Tellingly, in the book's index, a search for the word "race" leads the reader to several pages within the chapter on Indigenous workers, followed by "*See also* Squamish."[34] Within his broader analysis of the run-up to labour's historic compromise with capital, the role of white supremacy is thus limited to the discussion of Indigenous labour, rather than woven throughout the narrative. White workers are understood only as existing within a racialized power nexus when their Indigenous counterparts come on the screen; otherwise, *Citizen Docker* is a fairly conventional work of labour history, and its non-Aboriginal protagonists are relatively indistinguishable from European workers across the Western world. While we gain an understanding of the importance of proletarianization to the Squamish historical experience, and a sense of how the reformulation of longshore economies was predicated on Indigenous exclusion and erasure, the book misses an opportunity to fully delve into the ways in which the settler working class's buying into and construction of a gendered notion of entitled citizenship – so central to the elaboration of the postwar consensus – was in part a product of its ongoing extraction of power and wealth from Aboriginal territories and resources. In other words, *Citizen Docker* is an act of inclusion of Indigenous communities in conventional labour history, and not of integration of the structuring realities of settler colonialism into said canon.[35] As such, it runs the paradoxical risk of invisibilizing colonialism while bringing Aboriginal workers to the fore – of remembering Indigenous labour while forgetting "the fundamental insight," as historian Adele Perry writes, "that imperialism and race are crucial to social experience and thought on both sides of the imperial divide."[36]

Finally, Lutz has fruitfully attacked this problem from another, non-Marxist angle. His impressive book, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White*

33. Parnaby, *Citizen Docker*, 84.

34. Parnaby, *Citizen Docker*, 241.

35. On this question of inclusion vs. integration, I am indebted to Johanna Lewis, "Dis/Remembering Settler Origins: Colonialism, Racism, and the Legacies of Prairie Homesteads" paper presented at Transgressing the Nation-State: Constructs of Canadian Identity, Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies Graduate Student Conference, York University, 20–21 April 2017.

36. Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 4.

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Relations, takes as its framework the concept of "makúk," the Chinook jargon for "trade" that came to characterize the ambiguous and mutually shaping nature of Indigenous-settler relations during British Columbia's 19th century. Lutz examines the history of Indigenous wage work and welfare as a way to get at the complex relationship between Euro-Canadian capitalism and other forms of economic and cultural production on contested territory. He does so in methodologically heterogeneous fashion, bringing together oral history, ethnohistorical analysis of cross-cultural dialogue, and more traditional mining of archival resources to re-centre Indigenous voices, conducting microhistories of the Lekwungen and Tsilhqot'in First Nations and then zooming back out to examine broader patterns of dispossession, economic coercion, and reshaping of Indigenous economies.

Lutz's analysis of the "White Problem" is probably the most significant signpost for our discussion here. His emphasis on the dialogic relationship between peoples and economies, and between white and Indigenous workers, underlines the ways in which the conditions for the emergence of the settler working class were fostered in lockstep with the discursive and economic sidelining of First Nations, one producing the other. *Makúk* tracks a legislative and policing agenda geared toward regulation, dispossession, and reattribution to settlers: "This pattern of alienation of aboriginal control over resources, and then the denial of access on the same terms as whites, is visible in every major economic resource: fish, timber, fur, and minerals. But the first and most important alienation came in the form of land." From this basis, Lutz writes, "with every act that affected Indians and non-Indians differently, governments redefined race to the disadvantage of Aboriginal People."[37]

In many ways, then, Lutz's book provides us with a road map for thinking through questions of colonialism and its impact on Canadian working-class history in a way that does not simply write the Aboriginal worker into the existing narrative; a dialogic framework, he writes, "put[s] both parties to a historic encounter under the same lens, treating the interpretations of the observer and the observed as equally factual and equally mytho-historical."[38] And yet, for all his methodological hybridity, his eschewal of materialism – and the concomitant, as Parnaby has pointed out, somewhat glaring oversight of the dynamics of the actual workplace[39] – leads Lutz into what seem like essentially liberal conclusions about the necessity for more equal dialogue and an emphasis on cross-cultural miscommunication. Although in some instances he points out the active role of white workers in limiting Indigenous access to wage work,[40] by far the most important settler characters in his book

37. Lutz, *Makúk*, 237, 254.

38. Lutz, *Makúk*, 16.

39. Parnaby, *Citizen Docker*, 171.

40. Lutz, *Makúk*, 254–255. One particularly poignant vignette tells the story of the Indigenous

are the governors, legislators, Indian Affairs agents, and other creators and purveyors of politico-juridical discourse.

There is certainly room for focusing on language in the working out of this historical problem, not least in order to unpack the structures of colonial feeling that united white workers with white bosses rather than with Indigenous labourers and thus to understand how "evaluative accents dialogically shape understandings of self and other, produce alignments and commitments to ways of being, acceptance or rejection of dominant meanings made and established within hegemonic structures and practices."[41] But this, in my estimation, is a project best carried out with a sense of the impregnation of language with the totality of social relations. While Lutz is correct to point out that neo-Marxist attempts to understand Indigenous history have neglected the central historical reality of Aboriginal "moditional," varied economies, and thus the role of Indigenous agency and ingenuity in responding to Euro-Canadian capitalism,[42] a flexible materialism urges us to understand white settler decision-makers and discourse creators not as inadvertent enforcers of different cultural understandings of work but as integrally tied to a system of power and economic production; in turn, poor and working-class whites cannot be considered solely as the beneficiaries of this miscommunication but must also be approached as a collective subject making choices about its alignment within the settler historical bloc.

The Settler Order Framework

How, then, might we begin to articulate a framework for understanding the impact of settler colonialism on Canadian labour history, when both our working-class sources and our own minds have been so fundamentally shaped by "the narratives that normalize Settler people on the land and exclude or eliminate Indigenous peoples and Indigenous presence on the land"?[43] One place to start might be in a collective resolution to never forget what Vowel put so succinctly in her recent book, *Indigenous Writes*: "The original settlers were of various European origins, and they brought with them their laws and customs, which they then applied to Indigenous peoples and later to all peoples who have come to Canada from non-settler backgrounds. *This does*

plumber who broke down in tears before the 1914 McKenna-McBride Royal Commission on Indian Land Claims when asked to testify to his treatment by fellow white workers, saying, "The conditions I had to go through I would not like to mention them."

41. John Kirk, *Class, Culture and Social Change: On the Trail of the Working Class* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007), 205.

42. Lutz, *Makúk*, 306.

43. Emma Battell Lowman & Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2015), 34.

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not refer only to those European people with sociopolitical power, but also to those of lower classes who settled here to seek economic opportunity."[44]

This ideological alignment of opposing classes around a project of domination means that Gramscian analysis, in the Canadian context most deeply identified with Ian McKay's much-debated, often-referenced "liberal order framework," is worthy of exploration. McKay argues for a reading of the past that theorizes Canada as "a historically specific project of rule, rather than either an essence we must defend or an empty homogenous space we must possess." Following Gramsci, McKay wishes to refocus the discipline around the advance of a "liberal order" as it unfolded in this specific section of time and space, using a strategy of "reconnaissance" that allows one to track the imposition of the hegemonic, life-structuring "belief in the epistemological and ontological primacy of the [property-owning] individual," while also paying attention to the multiple forms of resistance to the project that have been accommodated and appropriated by "passive revolutions" along the way. While liberalism in this country was a product of Europe – and influenced by developments south of the border – it was shaped indelibly by the particular constellation of resistance it encountered in the British North American context. In the end, despite post–World War II reification of the symbol-system complex associated with the Canadian "nation," McKay posits that Canada "was essentially a liberal empire, not a nation, and not a democratic state."[45]

When applied strictly to settler society, McKay's analysis is, in my opinion, without parallel in its explanatory breadth and depth. Furthermore, there are multiple examples – enfranchisement, the *Indian Act*, the 1969 White Paper – that speak to the potential relevance of this framework for understanding the history of Canada's attempts to colonize Indigenous peoples.[46] But, as Jarvis Robin Brownlie has pointed out, the liberal order framework is still an awkward fit for much of Indigenous experience, whose "persistent antagonism"

44. Vowel, *Indigenous Writes*, 16; emphasis added.

45. See McKay, "Liberal Order Framework," 621, 624, 645.

46. McKay, "Liberal Order Framework," 640. McKay also includes residential schools as part of this attempt to force Indigenous peoples into acceptance of the liberal order framework: "First Nations children were 'forced to be free,' in the very particular liberal sense of 'free,' even at the cost of their lives" (637). This seems to me like a confusion of intention and impact, as the residential school project was more often lived out on the ground as a distinctly illiberal genocidal white supremacy. On the other hand, Maggie Walter and Chris Anderson, following Barry Hindess, perhaps bridge the gap between our two understandings, pointing out that "liberalism's authoritarian elements (what [Hindess] terms 'unfreedom') cannot be understood as contradictory or aberrational to an otherwise enlightened form of rule. Rather, they speak centrally to its *developmentally based* notion of human capacity: government works best by making use of these capacities, and, as such, liberal authority required the discretion 'to distinguish between what can be governed through the promotion of liberty and what must be governed in other ways.'" Walter & Anderson, *Indigenous Statistics: A Quantitative Research Methodology* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2013), 13. My thanks to Molly Swain for bringing this reference to my attention.

toward liberal individualism, combined with the legacies of white Christian savourism, has meant that Canada's policies toward Indigenous peoples have often been profoundly illiberal.[47]

The fundamental oversight in McKay's framework, I would argue, is rooted in an underestimation of the apartheid-like structure of the Canadian project, springing from a too easy grouping together of the imperial and the colonial. Ranajit Guha has argued in the South Asian context that we must make clear the difference between the metropolitan state – "hegemonic in character with its claim to dominance based on a power relation in which the moment of persuasion outweighed that of coercion" – and the colonial state – "non-hegemonic with persuasion outweighed by coercion in its structure of dominance."[48] The twisted genius of the settler state is that it manages to be both in one. French Canadians, Catholics, settler socialists, and first-wave feminists in the 19th century were indeed coming up against a liberalism of the British imperial world that sought to consolidate its project of rule by "going beyond its immediate corporate interests to take into account the interests of other groups and classes."[49] But on a deeper level, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples were faced with a settler colonialism oriented around genocidal attempts to physically, culturally, and legally erase their presence from the land.

This is not to say that this two-tiered nature of the advancement of imperial capitalism in Canada was lived out in totally bifurcated fashion. Indeed, as I will argue below, the entirety of the "settler tier's" experience was injected with the privilege and power stolen from Indigenous communities: a "dialectical encounter," as Jean and John Comaroff wrote about settler colonialism in South Africa, "in that it altered everyone and everything involved, if not all in the same manner or measure."[50] But understanding that a link exists between these realities is different from placing them on the same playing field. In McKay's analysis, there is a kind of flattening out of the cleavages between different collective refusals of this liberal imperialism, placing on similar theoretical footing, say, Québécois nationalism, queer liberation struggles,

47. See Brownlie, "A Persistent Antagonism: First Nations and the Liberal Order," in Jean-François Constant and Michel Ducharme, eds., *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 298–321. My appreciation of McKay's analysis notwithstanding, readers of the entire volume will note that it is by no means only scholars of Indigenous history who have critiqued the relevance of the framework to their chosen historical subjects.

48. Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), xii.

49. McKay, "Liberal Order Framework," 630.

50. Jean Comaroff & John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 2, *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 5.

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the Socialist Party of Canada, and First Nations opposition.[51] Vowel's maxim of the complicity of all levels of settler society is forgotten.

As a consequence, despite all its sophistication, the liberal order framework still ends up operating according to a teleology in which successive oppositions are subsumed into a centralized "liberal historic bloc," each positively shaping and remaking the project called "Canada." The automaton may wear a maple leaf, but it is still the automaton. The central problem – that on this territory, one of the fundamental sociopolitical-historical organizing principles is that of Indigenous people and trespassers, and that every action of the latter retains a fundamentally non-consensual and exploitative character, warping class formation and relations – is thus submerged within this narrative of progress. It allows McKay, for example, to say about the history of Canadian socialism, so integrally tied to the settler working class, that while "nothing has worked," in a certain sense, "everything worked."[52] Yet, such a conclusion forces us to ask for whom did "everything work"?

This critique, as briefly mentioned above, is heavily influenced by the Marxist, antiracist "whiteness" scholarship of the 1990s and early 2000s, widely associated with historian David Roediger and his book *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. Roediger argues that the formation of the industrial working class in the United States was inextricably tied up with the articulation of a white identity defined in reference to and in tension with chattel slavery; the American working class's deep, historical identification with whiteness was carved into the very foundation of a developing post-revolutionary industrial republicanism, undercutting resistance and interracial solidarity.[53]

Despite some exceptions, the whiteness argument has generally not had as much intellectual purchase in Canadian labour history,[54] perhaps because

51. See McKay, "For a New Kind of History."

52. McKay, "For a New Kind of History," 125.

53. See Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*; for critical reflections on the field, see Eric Arnesen, "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 60 (Fall 2001): 3–32; Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* 89, 1 (June 2002): 154–172; Ronald H. Bayor, "Another Look at 'Whiteness': The Persistence of Ethnicity in American Life," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 29, 1 (Fall 2009): 13–30.

54. Prominent exceptions include David Goutor, *Guarding the Gates: The Canadian Labour Movement and Immigration, 1872–1934* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Bryan D. Palmer, "Nineteenth Century Canada and Australia: The Paradoxes of Class Formation," *Labour/Le Travail* 38 (Fall 1996): 16–36; Jason L. Newton, "'These French-Canadians of the Woods Are Half-Wild Folk': Wilderness, Whiteness, and Work in North America, 1840–1955," *Labour/Le Travail* 77 (Spring 2016): 121–150; Katrina Srigley, "'In Case You Hadn't Noticed!': Race, Ethnicity, and Women's Wage-Earning in a Depression-Era City," *Labour/Le Travail* 55 (Spring 2005): 69–105; Christina Burr, "Some Adventures of the Boys: Enniskillen Township's 'Foreign Drillers,' Imperialism, and Colonial Discourse, 1873–1923," *Labour/Le Travail* 51 (Spring 2003): 47–80.

in its focus on chattel slavery and the rise of the industrial working class it is describing a system of racial apartheid much different from the one that characterized Canada in the mid-19th century. In Canada, the state focused its racist energies on the institution of the residential school system and anti-Black racism developed differently, although similarly virulently.[55] Given these very different contexts, a transposition of the whiteness arguments cannot be conducted mechanically or uncritically. Roediger's discussion of the colonization of Native American nations and territory, unfortunately, is mostly limited to what he terms the "pre-history" of the American industrial working class. Replicating the discursive disappearance so aptly criticized by Lutz, he argues that the "small and dwindling numbers of Native Americans" by 1800 meant that "Indians were not ultimately the counterpoint against which Euro-Americans could define themselves as white."[56] And in the context of Australian settler colonialism, scholar Jane Haggis has criticized some of Roediger's fellow travellers in the New Abolitionist school and the journal *Race Traitor* as engaging in overly simplified racial dichotomies that actually limit the agency of Indigenous peoples and instead strive toward white comfort.[57]

Still, I think we can find in this whiteness scholarship an imperative toward a sharpened analysis of the parallel and intersecting processes of racial and class formation in this part of North America, which could go a long way toward explaining the material and scholarly exclusion of Indigenous workers – and perhaps even the "chasm separating class as a silent structure and class as a potential force for revolutionary change."[58] In the Canadian context, and in line with Perry's recent reimagining of Winnipeg 1919 in light of the dispossession of the Anishinaabe community of Shoal Lake, labour and working-class historians need to be writing histories about "exploitation of Indigenous resources in the interest of settler ones" and looking at "what happens when settler communities are compelled to acknowledge that their lives, their resources, and their relative prosperity have come at the expense of, sometimes the very direct expense, of Indigenous peoples."[59]

55. On slavery in the Canadian context, and its impact on the segregation/segmentation of the Canadian working class, see Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016); Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006); Sarah-Jane Mathieu, *North of the Colour Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2017).

56. Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 21–22.

57. Haggis, "Beyond Race and Whiteness? Reflections on the New Abolitionists and an Australian Critical Whiteness Studies," *Borderlands* 3, 2 (2004): 1–9.

58. Palmer, *Working Class Experience*, 2nd ed., 21.

59. Perry, *Aqueduct: Colonialism, Resources, and the Histories We Remember* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2016), 14–15.

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Adam Barker, Toby Rollo, and Emma Battell Lowman have pointed out that capitalist extraction in Canada has "fit neatly into the trajectory of settler colonialism, supported in the first instance by perceptions of *terra nullius* (empty land) and frontier mythologies, all leading toward a sense of finality or transcendence of the colonial form when the land has been developed beyond recognition as something that Indigenous peoples could claim."[60] If we are serious in our insistence in searching for the roots of this capitalist extraction and accumulation in labour's production and reproduction, we must necessarily grapple with the game-changing realities of natural-resource wealth and cultural capital that are added to the basket of wares brought by the labourer to the theoretical marketplace of capitalism. The histories of dispossession and oppression driving the settlement process, while important to our understanding of global production and imperialism, do not in themselves change the material and cultural relations of production inherent to settler capitalism that created the conditions in which Canadian labour has been formed and formed itself. The point here is not to construct a so-called stacking of privileges to see which oppressed group comes out the moral winner. While there is no lack of ethical urgency in dissecting our collective complicity in settler colonialism, the underlying motivation for this work is to come to a greater understanding of the special material and social conditions for the development and constitution of the non-Indigenous proletariat in settler economies – a process in which settler privilege plays an integral part, if not at all to the same extent for all settlers.[61]

Two main thinkers can help us construct the theoretical scaffolding from which to build a scholarship detailing the impacts of this reality on the development of Canada's working class. The first of these is J. Sakai, a movement intellectual and antiracist organizer who published the book *Settlers:*

60. Barker, Rollo & Battell Lowman, "Settler Colonialism and the Consolidation of Canada in the Twentieth Century," in Cavanagh & Veracini, eds., *Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, 159.

61. Beyond this, it is a limited Marxism that posits a dichotomy between moral imperatives and political economy. As Andrew Sayer has convincingly argued, class matters not only because it functions as a "social position" in the Bordieuian sense, determining one's sets of dispositions ("habitus"), but also because – expanding on the post-structuralist concept of different sets of capital being struggled over in a morally neutral "social field" – people's struggles and views of class and capital accumulation are framed within values, commitments, and moral judgments: what is good and bad. See Sayer, *The Moral Significance of Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Further, while it is important to guard against an overly essentialist concept of white privilege that erases difference and the presence of a class structure within settler society, I also think that for historians of labour and the working class, insisting on this point distracts from the central developing contradiction between a worker elite and an ever more exploited non-white, dispossessed proletariat. See Bromma, *The Worker Elite: Notes on the "Labour Aristocracy"* (Montréal: Kersplebedeb, 2014), 10. I adhere to David Roediger's assessment of "the value of the labor movement speaking frankly to itself – a far more important activity than 'speaking truth to power,' that deeply questionable practice we hear so enthusiastically press-agented." Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, x.

The Mythology of White Proletariat from Mayflower to Modern as a piece for popular education and discussion in the early 1980s. Unlike Roediger, Sakai's interpretation of American history pays more than passing attention to the genocidal roots of American capitalism, conducting a "reconnaissance into enemy territory" that argues that "*genocide was the necessary and deliberate act of the capitalists and their settler shock-troops*."[62] And while *Settlers* has been criticized by some within the left for its Maoist over-reification of contingent categories like "nation" and "proletariat,"[63] Sakai's book distinguishes itself as a work of theory in its clear articulation of the warped nature of class development in American society. Sakai argues that "the key to understanding Amerika is to see that it was a chain of European settler colonies that expanded into a settler empire" – a society in which the white working class came to form a "historically negative" labour aristocracy, forming an alliance with the bourgeoisie through common adherence to a land-grabbing system of "settlerism"; America was "constructed from the ground up according to the nightmare vision of the bourgeoisie."[64] This history continues to be felt in the United States today, where

> Euro-Amerikan workers are absorbed … into supra-class settler communities where the petit-bourgeoisie is leadership and the labor aristocracy is the largest and most characteristic element. … The general command of bourgeois ideology over these settler communities is reinforced by the mobilization of tens of millions of Euro-Amerikans into special reactionary organizations.[65]

One wonders if describing Canadian class politics in these stark terms would not have made sense to the Squamish, Lekwungen, and Tsilhqot'in workers referenced above who watched their resources and jobs end up in the hands of their white settler counterparts. At the very least, it should inspire labour historians to articulate a clearer vision of the particular impact of colonial extraction on class relations and formation in Canada.

In doing so, we might also profitably turn to the writing of Dene scholar Glen Coulthard, whose *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* contains an important reformulation of historical materialism

62. Sakai, *Settlers*, 4–11; emphasis in original.

63. For one such critique, see Tyler McCreary, review of *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*, by J. Sakai, *Upping the Anti* 2 (January 2005), http://uppingtheanti.org/journal/article/02-settlers-the-mythology-of-the-white-proletariat. For a more well-rounded critique, see Sebastian Lamb, "J. Sakai's Settlers and Anti-Racist Working Class Politics" (2003), review of *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*, by J. Sakai, *New Socialist*, 6 February 2010, https://newsocialist.org/j-sakais-settlers-and-anti-racist-working-class-politics/.

64. Sakai, *Settlers*, 9–24. The theory of the labour aristocracy is still endlessly debated amongst Marxian scholars. For one good critique, see Charles Post, "Exploring Working-Class Consciousness: A Critique of the Theory of the Labour Aristocracy," *Historical Materialism* 18 (2010): 3–38. For my part, I continue to find much value in the concept. I have been especially inspired by Bromma's *The Worker Elite*.

65. Sakai, *Settlers*, 340–341.

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crucial to understanding settler colonialism in Canada. Coulthard argues that "*contextually shifting* our investigation from an emphasis on the *capital relation* to the *colonial relation*," and thus transforming the cruder modernist, developmentalist aspects of Marx's thinking about the process of primitive accumulation by focusing on the historical and ongoing necessity for Canadian capitalism to dispossess and exploit Indigenous land and resources, underlines that "the historical experience of *dispossession*, not proletarianization, has been the dominant background structure shaping the character of the historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state."[66] Coulthard's argument is focused on Aboriginal peoples, but I want to suggest that upholding colonial dispossession as "the inherited background field within which market, racist, patriarchal, and state relations *converge* to facilitate a certain power effect" additionally entails a radical revisioning of the settler workers whose struggles and experiences have informed Canadian labour and working-class history since the very beginnings of the field.[67] This analysis also provides a means to think about the role of Black workers and other workers of colour. As Métis scholar and labour activist Molly Swain recently explained, "Canada exists through and because of a regime of resource extraction that includes not just natural resources … but also … the extraction of Indigenous lands and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and … the extraction of the labour resources of poor Black people and People of Colour."[68]

We arrive, then, at the settler order framework. Canadian labour and working-class history has to a great extent been bedevilled in its attempts to understand national trends by the cleavages of gender, region, industry, race, language, and culture. One possible way out of this impasse, I want to suggest, lies in foregrounding the particular relationship between colonial exploitation and class exploitation in our settler colonial economy, both in terms of class formation and in the ongoing project of social reproduction. This is a project that cuts across multiple "registers," to borrow from Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, and one with many possible narrative inroads.[69] Structurally, we would need to understand in more depth and detail the ways in which the conditions for the emergence of an industrial working class were rooted in colonial dispossession and genocide. What effect has this had on the relative privilege of the Canadian settler working class, vis-à-vis its European or Global South counterparts, especially in terms of rates and forms of property

66. Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 10, 13; emphases in original.

67. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 14; emphasis in original.

68. Swain, "Until We're All Free: Building Indigenous-Labour Solidarity in the Colonial Apocalypse," À Bas les Boss!, panel discussion, CKUT 90.3 FM, 26 April 2017, https://soundcloud.com/radiockut/sets/a-bas-les-boss-panel-discussion-april-26th-2017.

69. See Eley & Nield, *The Future of Class in History: What's Left of the Social?* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

ownership?[70] Further, how have ongoing patterns of capitalist accumulation through colonial extraction impacted the developing national class structure? Culturally, the tools of whiteness studies can help us analyze the ways in which the Canadian settler working class's "making" of itself was rooted in our particular system of racial apartheid.[71] How has settlerism, with its baggage of white supremacist patriarchal entitlement, influenced the development, or lack thereof, of a revolutionary workers' movement in Canada? How have working-class identities been built around and shaped by this privileged position? Where and how has the Canadian settler working class allied itself with opposing class interests for the sake of the colonial power structure? How, more particularly, has the white settler working class's position within said power structure impacted Black labourers and other workers of colour?

Conclusion: Notes on Further Research

Obviously, at this point there are more questions than answers. All the same, I wish to conclude by suggesting several points of entry for this line of investigation. First, we must return to this notion of the "pre-history" of the industrial working class, investigating the ways in which agrarian movements and working people involved in primary industries in the early 19th century related to the Indigenous communities around them and the Indigenous land on which they trespassed, paying particular attention to the collective ways in which peasant mobilizations were influenced by settlerism and a developing sense of whiteness.[72]

A good example of the challenges and promises of doing so lies in Rusty Bittermann's work on Prince Edward Island's escheat movement. For a book about the conflicts between absentee imperial land ownership and landless peasant discontent, his 2006 *Rural Protest on Prince Edward Island: From British Colonization to the Escheat Movement* pays remarkably little attention to the question of settler colonialism. There are a combined four references

70. As Sarah Rotz argues, "The political-economic implications of settler colonialism are expressed in Canadian landholding." Rotz, "'They Took Our Beads, It Was a Fair Trade, Get Over It': Settler Colonial Logics, Racial Hierarchies and Material Dominance in Canadian Agriculture," *Geoforum* 82 (2017): 159. For a good early introduction to this question, albeit not from a settler colonial framework, see Sean Purdy, "A Property Owning Democracy? Home Ownership and the Working Class in Canada," *Labour/Le Travail* 31 (Spring 1993): 341–353.

71. This analysis necessarily attempts to inscribe itself in the best tradition of socialist feminist labour history, particularly in its notion of gender and race being not categories apart from class but in fact the "building blocks" of economic stratification – the constitutive framework for the working class's understanding of itself and its struggles. See Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

72. Again, Sarah Rotz has effectively argued that nascent Canadian industry and commerce were built on the backs of an agricultural economy made possible by "(a) the breadth of settler colonial land seizure, and (b) the ways in which Indigenous peoples lived on and cared for the land prior to contact." Rotz, "'They Took Our Beads,'" 159.

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to PEI's Mi'kmaw population, including what essentially serves as a character reference for escheat radical William Cooper: we learn that Cooper, in addition to bringing peasant concerns about the land ownership structure to London in 1838, also brought with him a petition from Mi'kmaw leader Oliver Thomas LeBone; we do not learn about the content of the petition.[73]

Bittermann seeks to correct this oversight, however, in a short companion article in the *University of New Brunswick Law Journal*, in which he reproduces the petition in full and argues that settler support from escheat leaders in formulating and delivering the petition is evidence of the potential in shared struggle for a broader notion of property rights centring "the common problems of those who lived on the land and needed access to resources in order to survive."[74] And yet, while Bittermann notes that LeBone's petition asserts Aboriginal title to the island, his emphasis on commonality of interests underplays the broader structural contradiction. In the end, his is a conception that fits well in McKay's liberal order. Bittermann argues that escheat in the 1830s represented a full-blown counterhegemonic popular movement typical of a nascent worldwide agrarian working class. Despite eventually being undermined by military repression, the shifting international context, and a misplaced faith in the imperial governing apparatus, escheat radicalism gradually was absorbed into the common sense of the politically and economically coalescing Canadian state, succeeding in legitimizing the notion that the state had a role to play in regulating land distribution for the greater good.

Understood within the framework of the settler order, things look much different. Centring the role of colonial extraction and dispossession suggests that in fact the escheat contestations were essentially an argument about the most efficient means of land theft. When tenant farmers described themselves as the King's "most faithful and loyal people," it was more than simple rhetoric.[75] Particularly significant here is that in studying the escheat movement and other primary resource industry–based mobilizations in the 19th century, we are observing the first stirrings of a Canadian "labouring

73. Bittermann, *Rural Protest on Prince Edward Island: From British Colonization to the Escheat Movement* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 9, 13, 17, 222. There are, of course, contemporary counter-examples of settler solidarity with Indigenous struggles, perhaps most notably the case of William Jackson/Honoré Jaxon and the connections between his role in the Métis struggle and subsequent socialist activism in the United States. But it is important not to get tied up in confusion between historical argument and historiographical discussion. My contention is not that there have never been convincing examples of settler individuals betraying their whiteness in favour of Indigenous rights; rather, I am trying to point out the dangers of historical works that study class formation without paying attention to the central, class-warping reality of colonial land theft. For those interested in this particular counter-example, see Donald B. Smith, *Honoré Jaxon: Prairie Visionary* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2008).

74. Bittermann, "Mi'kmaq Land Claims and the Escheat Movement in Prince Edward Island," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal* 55 (2006): 175.

75. Bittermann, *Rural Protest*, 77.

class" and the subsequent development of a nascent working-class culture and theory of value, reminiscent of the "producerist" ideology of their contemporary American counterparts.[76] These roots, in turn, were embedded in a struggle for a freehold property regime that would grant working people more privileged access to stolen Mi'kmaw territory. From this angle the deep identification of escheat leaders with the colonial state apparatus appears not misplaced but rather a rational understanding of common interest.[77]

Second, we need to engage more fully with and develop the ideas laid out in Bryan D. Palmer's important 1996 article, "Nineteenth-Century Canada and Australia: The Paradoxes of Class Formation." Contrary to his earlier understanding of the historical erasure of Indigenous peoples from the labour market, his evolving analysis of "the historical making of white, settler society working classes" holds useful elements for thinking through class formation in Canada.[78] In particular, Palmer argues that class formation in these settler colonies was predicated on the commodification of land through dispossession of Indigenous territories and resources, giving rise to a relatively prosperous and strong, racially exclusionary, male-gendered white working class. "Politically," he submits, "the state conceded much to working class interests. … Class formation's paradoxical history in 19th-century Canada and Australia was that as a class was made through struggle and solidarity, *gaining* much from capital and that state, it was also made against struggle and solidarity, *giving* much to capital and the state." A white working class formed in opposition to Indigenous peoples easily transitioned to anti-Chinese and anti-Black campaigns and other racist ideologies, undercutting its own potential revolutionary strength.[79] Much can be learned, I think, from a critical revisiting of

76. See Catherine McNicol Stock, *Rural Radicals: Righteous Rage in the American Grain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 15–86.

77. Another interesting reference to settler-indigenous conflict around an agrarian movement is Allan Greer's *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 345–349. For an encouraging exploration of the relationship between colonialism and class identity in resource-extractive industries, see Steven High's *One-Job Town: Work, Belonging, and Betrayal in Northern Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018). Molly Swain has brought my attention to the fact that there is also much to explore in this vein related to the Prairies, particularly related to the "class implications of the Contact vs. Control narrative – both whiteness and class became more rigid as the settler project steamrolled into the West, but class was a huge part of racial indication for both British whites as well as emerging halfbreeds – whiteness was tied to working/living at trading posts and forts in more Euro/'middleclass' lifestyles, for example." These legacies continue to have major implications for relations between settler agricultural workers and Indigenous peoples, as evidenced by the 2016 murder of Colten Boushie. Swain, email message to author, 21 August 2017.

78. Palmer, "Nineteenth-Century Canada and Australia: The Paradoxes of Class Formation," in "Australia and Canada: Labour Compared," special joint issue, *Labour/Le Travail* 38 and *Labour History* 71 (Fall 1996): 35.

79. Palmer, "Nineteenth-Century Canada and Australia," emphasis in original.

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the key years of working-class formation and emergence in the second half of the 19th century already so vividly reconstructed by historians such as Palmer, Greg Kealey, Craig Heron, Linda Kealey, and Bettina Bradbury,[80] for these years, as Brownlie notes, were also important in the Canadian state's legal and political attack on Indigenous communities and land title.[81] Coming at this period anew with an approach foregrounding differing patterns of settler colonial dispossession can aid in re-evaluating some of the fundamental questions about the social formations making up Canadian capitalism and could in turn help us more efficiently dissect different patterns of class struggle in different regions and industries in Canada.

Finally, with respect to the 20th century, re-examining histories of class struggle within the settler order framework can hopefully allow us to investigate the ways, particularly post-1945, in which both the Canadian settler working class and its intellectual supporters have engaged in a concerted discursive campaign of "self-indigenization," identifying itself with the resistance to "imperialist" American capital in a "move to innocence" that erases Indigenous presence on the land while also rehabilitating settlerism.[82] This trend is visible within the broader Canadian labour movement in its mobilization of anti-American left-nationalist discourse in the 1960s and 1970s,[83] but has been most significant in Québec. There, the labour movement's intense identification with Third World anticolonial struggles in the 1970s and its ongoing overlap with an increasingly xenophobic sovereigntist movement is tied up with the idea of Québec as a "Métis nation" and trapped within a mytho-history of cordial French-Indigenous relations.[84] Claiming Indigeneity,

80. For a good example of the type of re-interpretation required, see Robert Gregg, "Class, Culture and Empire: EP Thompson and the Making of Socialist History," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 11 (1988): 419–460.

81. Brownlie, "Persistent Antagonism," 301–302.

82. See Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1, 1 (2012): 1–40. For an example in the American context, see Stephen Pearson, "'The Last Bastion of Colonialism': Appalachian Settler Colonialism and Self-Indigenization," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, 2 (2013): 165–184.

83. On this front, see particularly Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

84. See Adam Gaudry & Darryl Leroux, "White Settler Revisionism and Making Métis Everywhere: The Evocation of Métissage in Quebec and Nova Scotia," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 3, 1 (Spring 2017): 116–142; "Colon raciste: une critique feminist anticoloniale de 'L'Empreinte,'" Hyènes en jupons, 2015, https://hyenesenjupons.com/2015/09/14/colon-raciste-une-critique-feministe-anticoloniale-de-lempreinte/. This myth creeps into otherwise excellent works of history, on earlier Indigenous-French relations, particularly through a periodization that focuses on the years of more collaborative relationships between First Nations and French-Canadian *voyageurs*, stripped of broader historical context and the more concentrated colonial violence that was to come. See Jean-François Mouhout, "L'influence amérindienne sur la société en Nouvelle-France: Une exploration de l'historiographie de François-Xavier Garneau à Allan Greer (1845–1997)," *Globe* 5, 1 (2002): 123–157; Jean-Philippe Warren, "Tolérance

of course, requires the sidelining of actual Aboriginal peoples, and First Nations' continued struggles to exist have infamously provoked eruptions of ugly settler working-class violence in *la belle province*.[85] Refocusing the lens, then, to examine ongoing patterns of dispossession, can hopefully permit us to pull apart the Québec and Canadian working classes' continuing cultural reproduction of themselves as an exclusionary white social formation in a globalizing age, and to understand something about how Canadian workers' status within the global labour aristocracy has been dependent on shoring up their dominant position within the settler economy "at home."

This is, then, an approach that urges working-class and labour historians to follow up on the "reconnaissance" impulse of McKay's liberal order framework but to do so with a greater attention to the apartheid structures that continue to condition our existence. Centring the ongoing process of settler colonialism in the rewriting of Canadian working-class and labour history is hopefully different than the shallow trend of "Indigenizing" Canadian universities, denounced by Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd.[86] It is intended instead as a way to hold ourselves, as the predominantly settler historians of that working class, accountable to our own and our subjects' historical role in genocide and dispossession. Harkening back to Brownlie and Mary-Ellen Kelm's key critical 1995 intervention on Indigenous history, historians Crystal Fraser and Ian Mosby have recently reminded us that "the fact that most of the overwhelmingly white, settler community of Canadian historians have benefitted directly, and in profound ways, from Canada's history of settler colonialism means that we need to be especially careful to avoid speaking for Indigenous peoples or passing judgment about which stories are worth telling."[87] In listening, instead, we can continue the important work of understanding Indigenous peoples' participation in the ranks of those who toil, struggle, and dream of freedom from capitalism; we can also begin to integrate the fundamental reality of our theft of Indigenous land and resources into our own stories, facing up to the

et métissage (Essai bibliographique)," *Anthropologie et sociétés* 30, 1 (2006): 233–246; Gilles Havard, *Empire et métissages: Indiens et Français dans le Pays d'en Haut, 1660–1715*, 2nd ed. (Québec: Éditions du Septentrion, 2017), 10, 539–543. For an example of this myth playing out in labour history, see Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

85. See Alanis Obamsawin, dir., *Kanehstake: 270 Years of Resistance* (Montréal: National Film Board of Canada, 1993), https://www.onf.ca/film/kanehsatake_270_ans_resistance/.

86. Todd, "Indigenous Stories, Knowledge, Legal Traditions, Ontologies, Epistemologies as Unceded Territories (Or: Hands Off of Our Teachings)," *Urbane Adventurer: Amiskwacî* (blog), 27 April 2017, https://zoeandthecity.wordpress.com/2017/04/27/indigenous-stories-knowledge-legal-traditions-ontologies-epistemologies-as-unceded-territory-or-hands-off-of-our-teachings/.

87. Fraser & Mosby, "Setting Canadian History Right? A Response to Ken Coates' 'Second Thoughts about Residential Schools,'" ActiveHistory.ca, 2015, http://activehistory.ca/papers/paper-20/.

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fact that the Canadian working class, and those who would seek to understand its past, have more often been the finger in the dike than we have been the tide of justice.

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