

Italy's American West: *Brava Gente*, American Indians, and the Circulation of Settler
Colonialism

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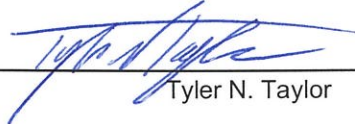
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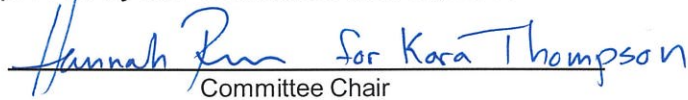
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ABSTRACT

The racialized logics that uphold and perpetuate U.S. settler colonialism are not confined within U.S. borders. Instead, the legacies of white settler colonization and American Indian resistance are woven into processes of Americanization, globalization, transnational migrations, and cultural exchange. The role of white settler cultural production in the ongoing process of U.S. settler colonialism is well-established, as well as the advent of mass culture in facilitating cultural exchange between the U.S. and Europe. Regarding the specific relationship between the United States and Italy, many studies have noted the immense influence of the mythology of the American West in Italian cultural production and, conversely, the impact Italian emigrants to the United States left on American culture and society. The ways in which U.S. settler colonialism intersects with and connects these histories brings to light how U.S. settler colonialism has evolved into an international, rather than solely American, project.

“Italy’s American West: *Brava Gente*, American Indians, and the Circulation of Settler Colonialism” positions the Italian state and Italians as settlers-from-afar of the American West in this evolution. The simultaneity of circulations of American mass culture in Italy, Italian colonialism in Africa, and mass Italian emigration to the United States imbued the development of Italian national identity with U.S. settler colonial logics and expanded the global influence of U.S. settler colonialism. Buffalo Bill’s two tours of Italy in 1890 and 1906, the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and Western-themed Italian comic books published from 1948 to today intertwined U.S. white settler cultural production with Italian cultural production. Viewing this cultural production under the umbrella of “transnational settler colonialism”—the circulation of U.S. settler logics and Native resistance in the movements of people and ideas between Italy and the United States—frames them as evidence that U.S. settler colonialism helped construct Italian national identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and continues to inform Italian expressions of colonial desires.

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This Ph.D. is dedicated to Joshua and Ainsley Taylor

Chapter One

Introduction

The Hollywood image of the American West created by the likes of John Ford, John Wayne, Sergio Leone, and Clint Eastwood is inescapable in both American and Italian life. Even as the American government continued its forceful and violent invasions of American Indian lands in the Western and Southwestern regions of what is now the United States, the settler-constructed narrative of righteous cowboys vs. “savage” Indians became mythologized in America’s burgeoning mass entertainment industry. Most notably, Colonel William F. Cody’s Wild West Show blurred the lines between the stage and the battleground, with Buffalo Bill himself performing a fictionalized story of defeating and taming American Indians one day, and abandoning his show to participate in U.S military action against American Indians the next. The overlap of the construction of the American West of popular culture with the period during which the United States made its greatest efforts at westward territorial expansion has resulted in the conflation of history and myth in American collective understandings of the nation’s past. This, however, should come as no surprise to any student of the history of the American West. What may come as more of a surprise, however, is the extent to which this conflation of fact and fiction has become ingrained in European—particularly Italian—cultural understandings, not only of American life, but of Italian life as well.

This phenomenon first came to my attention as an undergraduate studying abroad in Ferrara, Italy—a medieval town in Italy’s northern Emilia Romagna region. I was surprised to find that a familiarity with Westerns was an easy way to forge social connections with Italians I met. Their fathers and grandfathers too were fans of Wayne and Eastwood, and they too associated American Westerns with a significant part of their upbringing. However, different from the United States, my very limited personal experience in Italy hinted to me a sense that Italian understandings of America were stuck in their perception of the nineteenth century West. Even my Italian professor of American History at the University of Ferrara excitedly declared to me, “Sei una secessionista!” (“You are a secessionist!”) when learning I hailed from Texas, and was surprised to hear there were currently no large-scale secessionist movements there. When Italian friends or acquaintances learned of my origins, they often responded with questions about rodeos and lassos. Through these discussions, I was introduced to an Italian comic book series called *Tex*. At the time, I found it mildly interesting to come across Italian reproductions of Westerns set in my home state and purchased issue no. 113, *Tra due bandiere* (“*Between two flags*”)—about the Civil War, as a trinket to show my family back home—they’d get a kick out of it.

My cursory interactions with and ignorance regarding what I would later identify as Italian participation in U.S. settler-colonial violence against American Indians is indicative of my privileged place in society as a young student traveling abroad. As a white woman in America, I am undeniably a settler. I have lived my

life and I have researched and composed this dissertation on land and using resources my forefathers stole from American Indians, and I inevitably have benefited from that history.¹ I come at this history from the perspective of a white, American settler—it's the only one I have. In many parts of this dissertation, I am an outsider looking in. Even my limited experience in Italy familiarized me with a *northern* Italian perspective—one this project will explain is one of privilege. This study, then, is fundamentally one of U.S. settler colonialism and seeks to more accurately define “settler society.” Of course, any such definition depends upon and must prioritize indigenous perspectives.

I have relied on American Indian scholars for such perspectives, and the moments of import that construct this narrative were chosen in part due to the American Indians present in them. The main source material and inspiration for this dissertation is Italian Western *fumetti* (comic books) by the publisher Sergio Bonelli Editore, especially the aforementioned *Tex*. I argue that these *fumetti* are a part of an internationalized expansion of U.S. settler culture, which I call transnational settler colonialism. American Indians and American Indian perspectives are not present in these materials. As these *fumetti* are not circulated in the United States and are very rarely written about, examples of American Indian perspectives on the *fumetti* themselves are currently unavailable to non-Native readers and scholars of *fumetti*. The historical context for their production,

¹ By “forefathers,” I mean those from whom I have inherited the societal privilege of whiteness. I personally know little of my family’s genealogy.

however, is deeply informed by American Indians and Italian and American reactions to American Indian resistance to settler colonization. For instance, the American Indian performers who traveled with Buffalo Bill in Italy and the American Indians present at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago defined those events as much as any Italian or white American did. *Fumetti* like *Tex*, therefore, emerged not out of an isolated Italian imagination, but out of one informed by contact with American Indians. Examinations of these moments of contact in the chapters that follow expose Italians as participants in U.S. settler colonialism and Sergio Bonelli Editore's Western *fumetti* as settler products.

Italy's love affair with the mythology of the American West is woven into its very national and cultural identity. Buffalo Bill first came to Italy in 1890 during the nation's adolescence. Italy's unification era, known as the Risorgimento, lasted from 1815 to 1870. The political unification of the Kingdom of Italy occurred in 1861 after the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies held a plebiscite and voted to join the various northern kingdoms, regions, and principalities that had come together over the previous decades. Geographic unification occurred in 1870 when the Kingdom of Italy acquired Rome and made it the capital. The Risorgimento, however, failed to produce a cohesive and unified Italian culture. Even as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show toured the peninsula twenty years after geographic unification, Italy remained a fragmented conglomeration of insulated, linguistically and culturally distinct regions. In an era where few things represented common Italian experiences or cultural understanding, American mass culture rode into town and

became part of the process of constructing the modern culture of the new Italian nation.

The confluence of American mass culture in Italy with the long and slow process of Italian national identity formation made a fascination with the American West more than just a fad in Italy. In the late-nineteenth century, the mythology of the American West was entrenched in American mass culture and carried with it settler-constructed false narratives of history aimed at othering, subjugating, and eliminating American Indians and American Indian cultures from North America. American forms of mass culture have circulated across the Atlantic since their inception. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and World's Fairs represent some of the most pervasive and popular examples of the exportation of the mythology of the American West to Europe. While mass culture was well-received throughout Europe, and the American Indians who performed in and traveled with such shows had their voices heard throughout the continent, Italy represents a special case. As a young nation whose nascent government was actively working to construct a sense of national identity that aligned with the likes of northern European nations, Italy and Italians were particularly affected by the settler-colonial logics that accompanied American mass culture.

Circulations of American mass culture in Italy coincided with definitive moments in the formation of the Italian nation and in the growth of a more pervasive and cohesive sense of what it meant to be Italian. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as mass culture traveled from the U.S. to Italy, Italians

migrated en masse to the United States, including to the American West. From 1885 to 1943, Italy engaged in many attempts at establishing settler colonies in northern Africa, which, during Italy's fascist era, played a large role in establishing a sense of national unity. This study contends that settler colonialism in both the form of Italians settling Africa and in the form of Italians consuming American mass culture was a foundational element of modern Italian national identity more so than other European nations who participated in American mass culture. Unlike with other European nations, settler-colonial culture entered the Italian peninsula as Italian culture itself was seeking definition.

The simultaneity of circulations of American mass culture in Italy, Italian colonialism in Africa, and mass Italian emigration to the United States imbued the development of Italian national identity with U.S. settler colonial logics and expanded the global influence of U.S. settler colonialism. Buffalo Bill's two tours of Italy in 1890 and 1906, the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and Western-themed Italian comic books published from 1948 to today intertwined U.S. white settler cultural production with Italian cultural production. Viewing this cultural production under the umbrella of "transnational settler colonialism" frames them as evidence that U.S. settler colonialism helped construct Italian national identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and continues to inform Italian expressions of colonial desires.

Transnational settler colonialism is the process through which American and Italian colonialisms became intertwined. In its simplest explanation,

transnational settler colonialism is the circulation of U.S. settler logics and Native resistance in the movements of people and ideas between Italy and the United States. It encompasses the movement of colonizers and the colonized, and of colonial desires, anxieties, and logic between the U.S. and Europe. Through the travel and exchange of people, cultural production, and political ideas, the U.S. and Europe developed their individual colonial strategies via a transnational connection. The U.S. settler-colonial logics that flow through this connection define, uphold, and communicate how U.S. settler colonialism has reinforced both European and American structures that maintain control over how racialized and/or indigenous others access and claim territory. Transnational settler colonialism explains exactly how Italian-American Indian relations over time—both through real interaction and imagined representation—reproduced U.S. settler colonial logics in Italy and ingrained them in Italian national identity. Transnational settler colonialism, then, has expanded the category of “settler” in relation to American Indians to include Italians.

Transnational settler colonialism is not isolated to the U.S and Italy, however, and represents but one aspect of a rich history of American Indians in the Atlantic world. Jace Weaver lays out the long history of strong American Indian presence in and influence on the Atlantic world in *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927* (2014). Expanding upon Paul Gilroy’s intervention into the study of the Atlantic world, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), which argued for the

immense significance of black culture on American and European modernity, Weaver argues that “from the earliest moments of European/Native contact in the Americas until the first quarter of the twentieth century, Indians, far from being marginal to the Atlantic experience, were, in fact, as central as Africans. Native resources, ideas, and peoples themselves traveled the Atlantic with regularity and became among the most basic defining components of Atlantic cultural exchange.”² Beginning his exploration of this topic in 1000, Weaver demonstrates the arbitrary nature of marking the beginning of transatlantic cultural exchange as 1492. From the earliest moments of contact, the products and cultures of indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere deeply shaped Europe, including Italy. As Weaver points out, “What would southern Italian food look like without the tomato?”³ The temporal boundaries of this project, therefore, represent a glimpse at a much longer history of the co-development of Europe and the Americas during which indigenous peoples played a central role in defining transatlantic culture.

Transnational settler colonialism, however, is more specifically concerned with the development of settler logics within this history and examining how settler-colonial logics that developed in the United States shaped Europe. Although this study makes an example of Italy, the reproduction of U.S. settler-colonial logics and their incorporation into modernity appears throughout Europe. Germany

² Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 17.

³ *Ibid.*, 26.

provides the most widely-known and studied example. H. Glenn Penny's *Kindred by Choice: Germans and American Indians Since 1800* (2012) is the most comprehensive work thus far to address this. Penny focuses on the widespread community of German hobbyists that is fascinated with and reenacts American Indian culture and history. He lays out the history of how many Germans came to feel an affinity with American Indians, and argues that "in many ways 'playing Indian' or simply thinking about American Indians goes to the very base of being 'German' during the modern period."⁴ Penny argues that earnest interest in American Indian culture in Germany led to representations of American Indians becoming a tool of expressing German nationalism. He contends that "the German fascination with American Indians has much to teach us about...connections between state-sponsored efforts to gain influence and territory and informal settlement projects."⁵ This includes both ways that Nazi Germany employed representations of American Indians to promote fascism, and ways that post-World War II Germany used the same representations to redefine itself. As Penny's work is primarily a history of Germany, however, he does not directly address how American Indians are involved in Germans' elective affinity with them.

The anthology *Germans & Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections* (2002), the result of a conference organized by Dartmouth professors Colin G. Calloway, Gerd Gemündend, and Susanne Zantop, addresses the difficulty of

⁴ H. Glenn Penny, *Kindred by Choice: Germans and American Indians since 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

combining German and American Indian histories in such a project. Their collection addresses historical encounters between Germans and American Indians in order to better understand what they call “Indianthusiasm” in Germany.⁶ They present the anthology as a jumping off point for further scholarship that seeks to incorporate American Indian history when discussing German representations of American Indians. Penny is upfront in his admission that this was not the aim of his work, but that further work is needed to address the American Indian side of things.

Both *Kindred by Spirit* and *Germans & Indians* present a relationship between Germany and a pop-cultural understanding of the American West that parallels in many ways a similar relationship between Italy and the United States. However, they both leave room for and call for further scholarship that investigates ways that this European history relates to American Indian histories. These scholars have set their studies in Germany in order to discuss how representations of American Indians are tools used to define the modern German state. Similar dynamics are at work in Italy, however there is a lack of scholarly attention to Italy as a setting for discovering the connections between European and American Indian histories. Italy’s similar “Indianthusiasm” is also foundational to what it means to be Italian, and while American Indian perspectives on this are equally difficult to uncover in regards to Italy, reframing “Indianthusiasm” as participation

⁶ Colin G. Calloway, Gerd Gemünden, and Susanne Zantop, *Germans & Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 4.

in U.S. settler colonialism reveals more about how Italian practices relate to American Indians. By considering Italian and German practices as settler practices, the relationship between European enthusiasts and American Indians gains fuller, yet still incomplete, definition.

London serves as another site where scholars have explored the transatlantic movement of American Indians. These works more successfully shift focus from European actions to Native actions through focusing on American Indian travelers. Kate Flint's *The Transatlantic Indian, 1776-1930* (2009) charts the ways images and stereotypes of American Indians have been integral to British print culture since the American Revolution. Much like in Italy, Flint points out that images of American Indians are "a touchstone for a wide range of British perceptions concerning America during the long nineteenth century and [play] a pivotal role in the understanding and imagining of cultural difference."⁷ Flint's work reveals many parallels between the relationships between Italians and American Indians and the British and American Indians. For instance, according to Flint, the British used images and understandings of American Indians to express their own imperial relationships with other indigenous peoples and to articulate British forms of masculinity. These same things occur on the pages of Italian Western *fumetti*. Flint also sees the rapid transatlantic circulation of American culture during the nineteenth century as a key component of the increased appearance of images of

⁷ Kate Flint, *The Transatlantic Indian, 1776-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 2.

American Indians in British print culture as well as the presence of American Indian performers in traveling Wild West Shows. She argues that American Indians traveling to London both for political reasons and to perform challenges popular conceptions of American Indians as an inevitably disappearing race.

Coll Thrush's *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (2016) more deeply focuses on American Indians who traveled to London and their influence on British modernity from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Thrush argues that indigenous peoples' presence in London deeply shaped the history of the city and he works to break the imaginary boundaries between the urban and the indigenous, as he sees this as a falsely-constructed binary. According to Thrush, such binaries have "undergirded hundreds of years of racist colonial policies. They have justified the dispossession of land through the doctrines of discovery and of *terra nullius*, which proclaimed that 'savages' did not use the land in ways that led to civilized progress."⁸ *Indigenous London* expands on a point that *The Transatlantic Indian* puts less focus on. While Flint's work exposes Great Britain's indulgence in the cultural forces that create and perpetuate settler-constructed binaries, Thrush's work expands on the examples of indigenous presence in London that prove the falsehood of the urban-Indigenous binary.

⁸ Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 13.

Many of Flint's and Thrush's observations are applicable to the Italian case as well. Italy's history as a colonial nation, however, is quite distinct from Great Britain's, and therefore the presence of American Indians in Italy had a different effect. The effect of American Indians on Italian modernity is best understood by shifting the lens through which past studies have examined American Indians in Europe. Indeed, American Indians—both in representation and in real life— influenced Italian life and Italian empire at least as much as scholars have argued they did in Germany and Great Britain. To assess the depth of this impact, this study looks at Italy's relationship with American Indians and with U.S. settler colonialism as foundational to Italy's overall history as a colonial nation. Viewing Italy's relationship with American Indians since the nineteenth century as a form of Italian participation in U.S. settler colonialism reveals that the United States is not alone in many of its continuing efforts to further colonize American Indians. Furthermore, Italy has been participating in these efforts since its earliest days as a unified, modern nation. Unlike Great Britain, whose involvement in U.S. settler colonialism is one chapter in a much longer imperial history, Italy's involvement in U.S. settler colonialism begins in its national history's first chapter, and is a foundational—rather than tangential or ancillary—element of its overall colonial history. Through looking both at Italian practices similar to German "Indianthusiasm" and American Indian performers traveling in Italy, in addition to considering the role of Italian migration to the United States and reframing the discussion to consider Italy and Italians as settlers, this project proposes a new

perspective on how European cultural fascinations with American Indians relate to American Indian history and life. As previously mentioned, however, this only works to more clearly define the *settler* in relation to American Indians. Understanding this relationship, while a step in the right direction, still does not fully define the implications that transnational settler colonialism has for American Indians.

Even so, transnational settler colonialism begins to define the connection between Europeans and American Indians that scholars have noted in studies of Germany and Great Britain. Transnational settler colonialism demonstrates that, despite particular histories, the logics that undergird U.S. settler colonialism and modern European colonialisms were never isolated, but rather are a product of the transnational cultural and political exchanges in which they both participated. In Italy specifically, relationships and interactions between Italians and American Indians, and the developments of Italian and U.S. colonialisms over time reveal sites of intersection—including representation in both Italian and American popular culture—that reproduce U.S. settler-colonial logics and incorporate them into Italian modernity.

In examining U.S. settler colonialism as part of a transnational relationship, it is necessary to reimagine the inherently transnational nature of settler colonialism as a concept. Lorenzo Veracini notes that “settler colonialism is constitutively transnational, being essentially about the establishment and consolidation of an exogenous political community following a foundative

displacement.”⁹ Transnational settler colonialism, however, suggests a more intricate transnational quality. Rather than settler colonialism being transnational solely in the sense that settler societies move between borders to eliminate and displace the indigenous peoples of another geopolitical space, settler colonialism is also transnational in that settler societies develop in transnational spaces. In the case of Italy and the United States, Italian settler colonialism developed under the influence of U.S. settler colonial logics and alongside Italian participation in and support of U.S. settler colonialism. The settler society of U.S. settler colonialism includes Italians and the Italian state. As Chapters One and Three will detail, Italian settler colonialism in Africa aspired to the greatness of U.S. settler colonialism and thus borrowed and adapted its logics. Italian and U.S. settler colonialisms are not merely ideologically similar, they are co-constitutive, as Chapter One’s exploration of the simultaneity of Italian colonialism in Africa and Italian involvement in transnational settler colonialism will demonstrate.

Patrick Wolfe’s definition of settler colonialism defines settler colonial invasion as “a structure, not an event” that adheres to what he calls “the logic of elimination.”¹⁰ For Wolfe, settler colonialism is an invasion in which the settler “destroys to replace,” eliminating indigenous populations because they are “obstruct[ing] settlers’ access to land.”¹¹ This logic of elimination employs the

⁹ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15.

¹⁰ Wolfe, Patrick, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 387-388.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 388.

“organizing grammar of race” to determine who the settler must eliminate and why.¹² He is careful to point out that this practice is not *reflective* of race, but rather *makes* race: “we cannot simply say that settler colonialism or genocide have been targeted at particular races, since a race cannot be taken as a given. It is made in the targeting.”¹³ This targeting for elimination takes many violent forms, including genocide, forced displacement, forced assimilation, and eugenics to name a few. Settler colonial invasion not only targets bodies, but ways of life as well.

Jodi Byrd sees the racialization aspect of settler colonialism as essential in the North American context as she views “Indians and Indianness . . . as a site through which U.S. empire orients and replicates itself by transforming those to be colonized into ‘Indians’ through continual reiterations of pioneer logics, whether in the Pacific, the Caribbean, or the Middle East.”¹⁴ In other words, U.S. settlers identified those obstructing their access to land as a racial other defined by “Indianness”—a concept constructed by settlers “in the targeting,” as Wolfe says. The result was the continued racialization of American Indians to justify U.S. settler colonial expansion. To establish an indigenous population as dispensable, or as inevitably disappearing anyway, justified settlement, elimination, and the violence those efforts entail.

¹² Ibid., 387.

¹³ Ibid., 388.

¹⁴ Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xiii.

The significance of “Indianness” as a settler-constructed racial marker for who is to be colonized, although seemingly unrelated to Italian settler colonialism in Africa, was part of the colonial logics that circulated between the United States and Italy since the nineteenth century, primarily through cultural exchange and Italian migration. Any racialization along these lines that Italians practiced in Africa, therefore, is part of a broader Italian settler and U.S. settler practice. Byrd cautions, however, that it is imperative to distinguish between racialization and colonization in a settler-colonial framework. As separate concepts, she argues, they have “worked simultaneously to other and abject entire peoples so they can be enslaved, excluded, removed, and killed in the name of progress and capitalism.”¹⁵ Racialization is a strategy through which colonization is attempted. So, while the two are often intertwined, fundamentally, racialization targets people; colonization targets land. As settlers in Africa, emigrants to the American West, consumers of American mass culture, and producers of Italian settler culture, Italians engaged in both. Chapters Two, Three, and Four provide explanations of how Italians and the Italian state have participated in the construction of “Indianness” in both the United States and Italy from 1890 to the present day. It is this process of replicating the construction of Indianness in both Italy and the United States by Italian and American settlers and by the Italian and American governments that makes U.S. settler colonialism transnational.

¹⁵ Ibid., xxiii.

Veracini describes settler colonialism in a way that distinguishes it from other kinds of colonialisms. Much like Wolfe, Veracini views settler colonialism as an “ongoing phenomenon”:

Settler colonialism is a relationship. It is related to colonialism but also inherently distinct from it. As a system defined by unequal relationships (like colonialism) where an exogenous collective aims to locally and permanently replace indigenous ones (unlike colonialism), settler colonialism has no geographical, cultural or chronological bounds. It is culturally nonspecific. . . . It can happen at any time, and everyone is a settler if they are part of a collective and sovereign displacement that moves to stay, that moves to establish a permanent homeland by way of displacement.”¹⁶

Settler colonialism can happen anywhere. Its mechanics and foundational logics, according to Veracini, are applicable across historic, geographical, and cultural examples. To distinguish between different settler colonialisms isn't to distinguish between the strategy of racialization that they employ, but to distinguish between who is attempting to eliminate who and where and how. The fact that Italy participated in U.S. settler colonialism as well as attempted to establish Italian settler-colonialism in Africa, therefore, necessitates that they are ideologically

¹⁶ Edward Cavanaugh and Lorenzo Veracini, "Introduction: Settler Colonialism as a Distinct Mode of Domination," in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, eds. Edward Cavanaugh and Lorenzo Veracini (New York: Routledge, 2017), 2, 4.

intertwined. Chapter One will explore this as it describes the beginnings of Italian settler colonialism in Africa.

Scholars of U.S. settler colonialism have been careful to nuance definitions such as Wolfe's and Veracini's to move emphasis away from the actions of the settlers and onto the actions of the indigenous. Gregory Smithers, for example, notes that, "[w]hile there were moments in the history of the Americas when European colonists committed social, political, and economic abuses against Native peoples in the Americas, when an 'eliminationist' or 'exterminationist' motive no doubt animated the actions of colonists and colonizers, we must be careful not to overlook the important roles that indigenous people played as actors in, for example, trade, diplomacy, and labor."¹⁷ The same thinking applies to all settler-colonial contexts, including Italian settler colonialism in Africa. The structure of colonization is a constant push and pull between settlement and resistance to settlement. Indigenous resistance shapes the nature of settler-colonial landscapes just as settler encroachment does. Examples of Native resistance targeted at Italians throughout this study will expose how American Indians shaped Italians as settlers in the transatlantic settler colonial framework.

Transatlantic settler colonialism holds that the settler logics laid out above developed in the United States, circulated in Italy, and became an integral part of

¹⁷ Gregory D. Smithers, "Introduction: 'What Is an Indian?'—The Enduring Question of American Indian Identity," in *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas*, eds. Gregory D. Smithers and Brooke N. Newman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 6.

Italian national identity. While Italy and Italians are not directly implicated in the initial theft of American Indian land that lays the foundation for U.S. settler colonialism and, similarly, the United States and Americans are not directly implicated in the Italian invasions of African nations, Italians and Americans aided one another in the legitimation of their claims to stolen indigenous land. As Chapter Two will detail, the vehicle through which this legitimation occurred was transatlantic cultural exchange and Italian participation in American mass culture.

An understanding of American mass culture and transatlantic cultural exchange, then, is also a necessary component of transnational settler colonialism. As Richard Pells argues, the influence of transatlantic cultural exchange between the United States and Europe during the nineteenth century was imbued with hyperbole, fantasy, and imagination: “For many Europeans, ‘America’ was and is a symbol; a receptacle for fears and fantasies; a state of mind, rather than a real country. Americans, for their part, have regarded ‘Europe’ as equally fictional. Both continents have indulged in the language of melodrama to portray the ‘other.’”¹⁸ In this portrayal of the “other,” however, were also expressions of affinity and admiration, especially from Italian perspectives. Pells notes that while “[i]n the eyes of European aristocrats and wealthy members of the bourgeoisie, America was a nightmare threatening to obliterate all respect for

¹⁸ Richard H. Pells, *Not like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 2.

tradition, culture, privilege, and social position,” the opposite perspective prevailed elsewhere. In his words:

“For European workers, craftsmen, peasants, liberal and socialist activists—most of whom were prospective immigrants to the United States—America seemed not only a new Eden but a promise of redemption for the common folk. In this view, the United States was a gigantic political and economic laboratory in which the libertarian and egalitarian ideals of the eighteenth-century revolutions could be tested, modified, improved, and implemented. Here, for people who experienced daily the poverty and oppressiveness of the Polish ghetto, the Italian village, or the Irish farm, the chance for advancement appeared real and visible. Letters from friends and relatives who had already settled in America confirmed this sense of mobility and expansiveness. The references to the steady increase in one’s income, the chronicle of the move from the first tenement to a better neighborhood, and the pride in the vaulting aspirations of one’s children were all unmistakable signs that in America the horizons looked broader, economically and psychologically. The encrusted institutions of Europe need not be overthrown; they could simply be abandoned in the journey across the ocean. The success

of the democratic experiment depended not on rebellion but on flight.”¹⁹

With the imagined promise of potential upward mobility, however, intrinsically came settler colonial logics. The elements of mass culture that promoted the image of America as a promised land for the middle and lower classes of Europe depended invariably on the theft of American Indian land and the continued celebration of that theft that occurred through the racialization of American Indians in American mass culture.

In a statement on cultural exchange and American mass culture, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) implicitly recognized the inseparability of land theft and mass culture. The NIAS explains that “[t]he geographical expansion of the United States across the continent transformed vast expanses of land into potential markets which in turn stimulated innovations in communication and transportation technologies. Of particular importance in this respect were two innovations, the telegraph and the railroad, which by mid-century linked the coasts and hastened the creation of vertically integrated corporations—both necessary for the truly mass dissemination of a variety of cultural products.”²⁰ The infrastructure that structured the invasion of American Indian lands by making inroads into the American West were also the

¹⁹ Ibid., 5-6.

²⁰ David Ellwood et al., “Questions of Cultural Exchange: The NIAS Statement on the European Reception of American Mass Culture,” *American Studies International* 32, no. 2 (October 1994): 35.

building blocks of the mass culture that the U.S. federal government used as a tool to eliminate American Indian cultures. As Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes explain, “[m]ass culture means the mobilization of cultural and ideological resources on a scale unimaginable in a preindustrial society,” and mass culture “expresse[s] and convey[s] ideologies of race, gender, empire, and consumption.”²¹ These ideologies were the same that comprised the U.S. federal government’s assimilation policies directed toward eliminating, often through violence, American Indian cultures in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mass culture, in short, is part of U.S. settler colonial structures aimed at destroying Indianness and replacing it with whiteness.

This mass culture solidified in the U.S. and was transmitted to Europe as the modern Italian nation was born. As the NAIS statement summarizes, “[d]uring the last third of the nineteenth century a series of interlocking cultural institutions, including wild west shows, world’s fairs, dime novels, sentimental fiction, circuses and amusement parks, produced a *relatively* homogeneous mass culture that valued entertainment, leisure, and an unpretentiousness that many Europeans found congenial.”²² Often, as Chapter Two will demonstrate, mass culture during the nineteenth century focused on themes of Westward expansion, American exceptionalism, perceived American Indian savagery, and the inevitability of American Indian disappearance. The promotion and popularization of such

²¹ Robert W Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 4.

²² Ellwood et al., “Questions of Cultural Exchange,” 36.

narratives is part of the U.S. settler-colonial machine. According to Alyosha Goldstein,

“[M]odern colonialism entails techniques and institutions that maintain foreign control over a people or peoples and territory through varying degrees of imperial occupation and settlement, depriving those subjugated of autonomy and self-determination, and *justifying this imposition in terms of the (religious, moral, cultural, or racial) superiority of the foreign power*. The colonial administration of populations operates in tandem with the juridical political, military-strategic, economic, and *cultural* production and control of property, territory, and resources.”²³ [emphasis added]

In this formulation, cultural production and the narratives that promote the superiority of the colonizer in order to justify colonial violence are part of a larger network of interrelated social, political, and economic structures. Indeed, mass culture could not effectively do the work of legitimating settler claims to land were it not for the economic prosperity supporting the dissemination of mass culture and the political and military operations that perpetrated settlement. While U.S. settler colonialism revolves around acquisition of land, the process of securing and keeping that land often involves deploying the mass culture machine in ways that

²³ Alyosha Goldstein, "Introduction: Toward a Genealogy of the U.S. Colonial Present," in *Formations of United States Colonialism*, ed. Alyosha Goldstein (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 8.

seek to justify colonization and in ways that seek to eliminate American Indian cultural practices and replace them with relatively homogeneous mass culture.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that “[w]hilst colonialism at an economic level . . . opened up new materials for exploitation and new markets for trade, at a cultural level, ideas, images and experiences about the Other helped to shape and delineate the essential differences between Europe and the rest.”²⁴ Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show—both in Italy and in the United States—and the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, for instance, made a spectacle out of this difference, but also conveyed that the differences were based in scientific and historic reality. Later, Italian Western *fumetti* replicated the same practices for solely Italian audiences.

Philip Deloria uses the concept of “expectations” to explain how power struggles between settler colonization and American Indian resistance take place in the creation of culture in his *Indians in Unexpected Places* (2004). For Deloria, “expectation” is “shorthand for the dense economies of meaning, representation, and act that have inflected both American culture writ large and individuals, both Indian and non-Indian,” and he sees “in expectation the ways in which popular culture works to produce—and sometimes to compromise—racism and misogyny, which reinforces expectations, and the unexpected, which resists categorization

²⁴ Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2012), 63.

and, thereby, questions expectation itself.”²⁵ In the history he lays out, American mass culture in the nineteenth century set the expectation that American Indians were inherently and incredibly violent and destined to disappear from North America. Near the turn of the century, however, this narrative shifted to one of pacification, which “served as a bridging ideology between the most powerful expectations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—violence and Indian disappearance—and those of the twentieth, which clustered around various forms of primitivism.”²⁶ In both of these narratives, American Indian violence made Indianness incompatible with modernity. The difference, simply put, is the manner in which the narrative worked to eliminate American Indians from settler society: “Even if [Indians] didn’t melt away—as earlier vanishing proponents assumed—they would either melt into American society or sit quietly in the marginal distance, no longer disturbing anyone.”²⁷

These settler logics that constructed ideas of “Indianness” and transformed Indianness as diametrically opposed to whiteness, civilization, and progress were not only inherent in American cultural production and exchange, but also became so in Italian culture. Due to Italy’s enthusiastic acceptance of American mass culture at a time when Italian national identity was impressionable, and later Italian incorporation of U.S. settler logics into Italian cultural production, these same

²⁵ Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

logics entered in to Italian understandings of the world and of themselves. This is reflected first in Italian participation in American mass culture near the turn of the twentieth century, and again in Italian cultural production that developed after World War II. Transatlantic settler colonialism is made of these circulations of settler logics and connects the two seemingly unconnected histories of U.S. settler colonialism and Italian settler colonialism in Africa.

This connection was formed in two key moments—first near the turn of the nineteenth century, and then after World War II. The temporal distance between these events is due to the nature of their significance for the development of transnational settler colonialism. Both moments witnessed the confluence of an Italian national identity crisis and the explosion of cultural production that circulated U.S. settler logics throughout Italy. In addition, both moments are inherently interconnected with Italian settler colonialism in Africa. Each of these moments represents a time in modern Italian history where settler-colonial logics were circulating at their maximum and simultaneously working to inform the formation of Italian national and cultural identity.

The first of these moments occurred in the 1890s. This decade saw the coincidence of Buffalo Bill's European tour in Italy, the beginning of Italian settler-colonial efforts in Africa, and Italian migration to the American West and subsequent exposure to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In this period, the Italian public became familiar with U.S. settler colonialism through a fascination with the American West and representations of American Indians that

grew from the influence of Wild West Shows and World's Fairs. At the same time, Italy invaded Eritrea and began the process that Mussolini eventually expanded into his attempt to create an Italian empire in Africa. In addition, Italian emigrants to the American West occupied Native space, and, as Chapter One will describe, did so with the encouragement of the Italian state as it attempted to transform emigration into a form of colonialism.

The second definitive moment for U.S.-Italian transnational settler colonialism came immediately following World War II. After the fall of Mussolini's Fascist Party in 1942, Italy surrendered its colonies in Africa to Allied powers. In the immediate postwar period, the Italian public was in flux. The overturn of their government forced them to suppress any remaining affinity for fascism and settler-colonial dominance in Africa. As Chapter Three will explain, the rise of fascism, along with its mission to use settler colonialism to transform Italy into a modern iteration of the Roman Empire, had united the Italian people behind a specific understanding of what it meant to be an Italian more than ever before. The sudden loss of what had fostered national unity left Italian identity in flux, much as it was after the Risorgimento and into the 1890s. To combat the suddenly-taboo nature of fascism, Italians distanced themselves from or justified their nation's recent past, including Mussolini's attempt at constructing an Italian empire in Africa, in order to exonerate themselves of any possible fascist allegiance. In reconstructing Italian identity to fit the postwar world, Italians justified their nation's recent history with the idea of the *brava gente*. As a *brava gente*, or "good people," as Chapter Three

will explain, Italians accepted the fiction that, while occupying Africa, Italy acted as a benevolent power that made a conscious decision to leave. This shifted the Italian public's perception of their failed settler colonialism from a lamentable forced dispossession of their land to an admirable act of decolonization.²⁸ In the process of distancing themselves from their fascist past, the notion of the *brava gente* allowed Italy to re-write recent history in favor of a self-gratifying alternative.²⁹ As Chapter Three will also address, the notion of the *brava gente* was, in part, constructed and disseminated through Italian cultural production, including Western *fumetti*.

Western *fumetti* emerged as a product of transnational settler colonialism in this environment of suppressed settler-colonial desires. *Fumetti*—literally translated as “little puffs of smoke,” referring to dialogue bubbles—are widely-read and beloved comic books that have comprised a large part of Italian popular culture since World War II. Some of the earliest and most popular *fumetti* focus on the nineteenth-century American West and simultaneously romanticize and criticize U.S. settler colonialism. The *fumetto* is a long-lasting cultural phenomenon in Italy that has remained a staple of Italian visual and print culture since its initial surge in popularity in the postwar era. *Fumetti*, in the form they still take today, emerged from the postwar desire to promote Italians as the *brava gente* and focus on U.S.

²⁸ Nicola Labanca, “History and Memory of Italian Colonialism Today” in *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*, eds. Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

²⁹ Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan, eds., *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

settler colonialism in order to help alleviate the guilt of settler colonialism in Africa, yet indulge the latent colonial desires of fascist Italy. The evolution of these *fumetti* into an essential element of Italian popular culture, and their persistence as such, carried these colonial desires into the twenty-first century. As Chapters Three and Four will demonstrate, *fumetti*—particularly those from publisher Sergio Bonelli Editore—became a site through which Italians defined their postwar identity and through which they engaged with transnational settler colonialism.³⁰ To express colonial desires and to experience settler colonialism vicariously, they used language and imagery that referenced U.S. settler colonialism. Furthermore, *fumetti* employed representations of American Indians—namely the notion that Indianness signified a colonized subject in U.S. settler society—as a way to envision constructions of race in postwar Italy.

The pervasiveness of *fumetti* in everyday Italian life from the postwar era to today has had a lasting impact on Italian popular culture. For instance, *fumetti* both preceded and outlasted the Spaghetti Western and piqued the Italian public's interest in the genre. This, along with the coincidence of the emergence of *fumetti* with the loss of Italian settlements in Africa, make *fumetti* a more telling example of transnational settler colonialism than Spaghetti Westerns. Spaghetti Westerns and American-made Western films in Italy were, indeed, a prominent example of the circulation of settler-colonial logics that drive transnational settler colonialism. However, *fumetti* set themselves apart due to their greater longevity, their role in

constructing the *brava gente* myth and incorporating it into Italian identity, and in their uniquely *Italian* quality. As Chapter Four will demonstrate, Western *fumetti* like *Tex* were entirely made by Italians and intended solely for Italian audiences, and, therefore, are a more accurate reflection of the ways U.S. settler logics have become Italian through transnational settler colonialism.

The circulation of settler-colonial logics that spiked in the late-nineteenth century and mid-twentieth century tied Italian understandings of U.S. settler colonialism to how the Italian public understands itself. The exploration that follows of the historical development of transnational settler colonialism between the U.S. and Italy reveals the ways that U.S. settler colonialism is upheld and legitimized outside of U.S. borders. This study chronologically charts this history through looking at the development of relationships between Italians and American Indians over time, the ways Italian and American colonialisms are both ideologically and concretely related, and the role of the resulting Italian uses of representations of American Indians and how these representations shape Italian modernity and U.S. settler colonialism.

Chapter One begins with the unification of Italy in 1861 and explains the unique process of Italian national identity formation in the nineteenth century. Through looking at the different types of colonialism that Italy was engaged in since its founding, Chapter One argues that colonialism is inseparable from Italy's modern nationhood. More specifically, it will break Italy's relationship with colonialism into three component parts: Italy's internal colonialism, Italian settler

colonialism in Italy, and Italy's role in transnational settler colonialism and begin to look at how these influenced the development of Italian culture before the rise of fascism in Italy. Italy's internal colonialism will reveal that the very formation of Italy was in many ways a colonial project with its own set of logics that easily juxtapose with U.S. settler logics. Examining Italian attempts to establish settler colonialism in Africa during Italy's liberal era will more specifically demonstrate how the Italian government consistently relied on disseminating settler logics as a strategy to foster national unity. A look at part of Italy's involvement with transnational settler colonialism—Italian migration to the American west—will reveal the Italian state's interest in joining in the U.S. settler-colonial project through a form of emigrant colonialism that claimed space for Italians in the American West.

Chapter Two will continue with Chapter One's examination of Italy's role in transnational settler colonialism through analyzing Italian participation in American mass culture. While the Italian state attempted to instill settler logics in newly-forming senses of Italian cultural and national identity, the Italian people participated in U.S. settler colonialism through engaging with American mass culture, both in Italy and in the United States. Looking at Buffalo Bill's two tours of Italy in 1890 and 1906 and the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, Chapter Two will expose the ways that U.S. settler logics became ingrained in a collective Italian sense of self. Furthermore, Italian involvement in these events will demonstrate ways that Italians and the Italian state acted as settlers working to eliminate American Indian cultures. Along the way, however, the presence of

American Indians influenced Italian experiences of these events and resisted Italian efforts to join in transnational settler colonialism.

Chapter Three will march forward in time to explore the foundations upon which logic proliferated in postwar Italy. Firstly, Chapter Three will look at Italian settler colonialism in Africa during the fascist period. From 1922 to 1943, the Italian state's attempts to engender enthusiasm for settler colonialism in Africa and thus foster a sense of national unity achieved success for the first time. The ultimate result of this success for Italian cultural and national identity, however, was crisis. The fall of Italy's fascist regime, the devastation left by World War II, and the occupation of Italy by American military forces left Italy in flux. As Italy recovered from war, Italian cultural production became a place for Italians to explore how recent events changed their national identity. As multiple ideas of what it meant to be Italian formulated, representations of American Indians entered into negotiations of Italian self-understanding more prominently than ever before. This is best seen in the construction of the *brava gente* myth and its reflection in Italian Western *fumetti*. Looking at the history of *fumetti* both before and after World War II will establish their role as a site of negotiating Italian identity. In particular, the history of *fumetto* artist Gian Luigi Bonelli will reveal how U.S. settler logics and representations of American Indians entered into this equation. A part of everyday Italian life, *fumetti* reflect ways that Italian consumers interacted with fictionalizations of U.S. settler colonialism and representations of American

Indians, and give vital insight into Italian popular understandings of American settlers and American Indians.

Chapter Four will specifically delve into settler-colonial themes in *fumetti* and the particular ways representations in *fumetti* promoted the *brava gente* myth. Analyses of Italy's most popular Western *fumetto*, *Tex*, will reveal ways in which settler logics enter not only into Italian popular culture, but also experiences of Italians that influence their identity. *Tex* encourages readers to imagine themselves as a white hero of American Indians, which distances Italian readers from what they find undesirable about U.S. settler-colonialism while still allowing them to imagine themselves at the top of the structure. *Tex*, Chapter Four argues, provides a prime example of how Italy's involvement in transnational settler colonialism continues to shape Italian modernity and pushes the boundaries of the "settler" within U.S. settler colonialism.

The *fumetti* of Sergio Bonelli Editore, particularly *Tex*, represent the culmination of transatlantic settler colonialism in Italy. With *fumetti*, the settler-colonial logics that circulated between the U.S. and Italy near the turn of the nineteenth century and after World War II have become enshrined in Italian popular culture. Although looking in-depth at these two periods helps define transnational settler colonialism and explain its role in Italian modernity, this barely scratches the surface. The transatlantic world has seen the interaction of Europeans and Indigenous Americans for centuries, and this history touches on merely two moments in how specifically Italian real and imagined relationships with

American Indians have shaped modern European life and U.S. settler colonialism. However, transnational settler colonialism's effect on Italy brings insight into how relationships between American Indians and Europeans have expanded the role of settler colonizers from Americans living within the U.S. to include Europeans. As Europeans have interacted with American Indians and used representation to appropriate their conceptions of Indianness to inform their own identities, they too colonize. Furthermore, this transnational settler colonialism reproduces settler logics and incorporates settler logics into European cultures, thus legitimizing and upholding U.S. settler colonialism from abroad.

Chapter Two

Italy's Three Colonialisms: The Role of Settler Colonialism in Early Constructions of Italian National Identity

From the time of Italy's unification in 1861, settler colonialism has played a key role in Italian national identity formation. This close connection between Italian nationhood and settler colonialism began less than three short decades after Italy's birth as a modern nation when Italian forces invaded Ethiopia in 1885 with the aim of conquering territory for an Italian empire. Italian settler colonialism, however, did not and does not occur in Africa alone, but is one part of a more complex colonial history. To understand Italy as a settler colonial nation, it is helpful to break Italy's colonial history into three distinct yet related parts. Firstly, what Italian studies scholars deem Italy's internal colonialism, referring to the imbalance of power and wealth between northern and southern Italy, both precedes and undergirds not only Italy's settler colonial identity, but its entire national history and any sense of Italian national identity. Secondly, Italy's concerted attempts at creating settler colonies in Africa constitute the most visible component of Italian settler colonialism. Thirdly, Italy's role in transnational settler colonialism as a participant in and supporter of U.S. settler colonialism has contributed to the formation of Italian cultural identity since Italy's unification.

Italy is a young nation with an old soul. Italian culture has roots well beyond the temporal boundaries of its modern nationhood, deep into the peninsula's famously rich history. While 1861 provides a useful mark in the region's timeline for interrogating Italy's relationship with transnational settler colonialism, the 1860s

was a time of cataclysmic change for the peninsula. At this point, Italy was emerging from its unification process, known as the Risorgimento. The Risorgimento began in 1815 as an effort to politically unify the various states in the Italian peninsula. In less than fifty years, a region of independently governed states became the Kingdom of Italy.

This brief yet lasting transformation has its own complex history beyond the scope of this study.³¹ In short, separate Italian states had been consolidated under French rule until Napoleon's defeat in 1815. The Italian peninsula then divided into a number of independently-ruled states, largely under the influence and control of the Austrian Empire. A series of liberal and republican revolutions followed that engaged Italy's middle classes and slowly united the peninsula's regions. In 1859, Italy's wealthiest region, the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia (Piedmont), led by Prime Minister Count Camillo di Cavour, allied with France to defeat Austrian-controlled Lombardy and incorporate the region into Piedmont. Shortly thereafter, Giuseppe Garibaldi led a military campaign to overthrow the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in the south. In 1861, Italy politically unified when the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies joined Piedmont to create the Kingdom of Italy and the first Italian

³¹ For more on the Risorgimento, see:

Chapters 4-5 of Derek Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Christopher Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Davis, John A. Davis, ed. *Italy in the Nineteenth Century: 1796-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Parts I-IV of Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).

Parliament proclaimed Victor Emmanuel the first King of Italy. Geographic unification was not achieved until 1871 when the Papal States in the center of the peninsula were incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy and the capital moved from Florence to Rome.

At this point, the Risorgimento had created a regionally disjointed and socially stratified country with weak internal cultural and linguistic ties. While the Risorgimento waned with the formation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, the rhetoric of the Risorgimento and subsequent efforts to foster national unity traced Italy's origins back through the Renaissance all the way to Ancient Rome. As a new nation, the Italian state sought to reclaim Rome's imperial prestige and Renaissance Italy's reputation for spearheading the progress of Western civilization. However, Italy's large rural and impoverished population, lack of exploitable resources and industrial infrastructure, overall political and social disjuncture, and emigrant population presented immense barriers to growing the Italian economy and developing a common sense of *Italianità*, or "Italianness," among the populace.

Clearly and succinctly defining a single sense of *Italianità* at any point in Italy's history is a fool's errand. Christopher Duggan explains that scholars since the fifteenth century have tried, and largely failed, to nail down what it means to be "Italian."³² Although what Duggan calls "glimmerings of cultural nationalism"

³² Christopher Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

emerged with Dante's influence on disseminating a common language throughout the peninsula and with the cultural pride that spread with the many accomplishments of the Italian Renaissance, by the time of the Enlightenment intellectuals still puzzled at how to conceive of Italy as an independent and unified European nation comparable to France and Britain.³³ Even after the Risorgimento, "the reality of united Italy fell far short of expectations" and "all levels of society . . . turned their anger against the new regime and its leaders," culminating in the political crisis that paved the way for the rise of Mussolini and the fascist state.³⁴ Only after the rise and fall of fascism does Duggan argue that *Italianità* started to take a more broadly-applicable form. In Duggan's words, "[t]he catastrophe of the Second World War gave Italy what was arguably its most cohesive set of values since 1860, the values of anti-fascism."³⁵

Historian of contemporary Italy, Paul Ginsborg, sees *Italianità* as just as elusive a concept well into the twentieth century. In explaining his work's treatment of Italy as divisible into three distinct regions, Ginsborg recognizes the generality such a division requires, explaining that "it would be better to talk not of three Italys but of three hundred."³⁶ He conceives of this disjointedness as partly due to strong currents of individualism in all parts of Italian society. Ginsborg explains what he sees as the main themes of contemporary Italian history: "the incapacity of the

³³ Ibid., 4-5.

³⁴ Ibid., 7.

³⁵ Ibid., 2.

³⁶ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943 - 1988* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 3-4.

élites to establish their hegemony over the classes that lay below them; the weakness and inefficiency of the state; the strength of the Catholic church in Italian society; the class consciousness of significant sections of Italian urban and rural workers; the special political role of the *ceti medi*, the middle classes of Italian society; the enduring problem of the South” and “the relationship between the family and society,” which he argues “has probably been a more constant and less evanescent element in Italian popular consciousness than any other.”³⁷

The concept of Italian national identity, Italian culture, or *Italianità*, therefore, is much more clearly defined by what it *is not* rather than what it *is*, and often takes on different forms for different regions, subregions, families, and individuals. Due to emigration patterns and the formation of Italian communities abroad that maintained close ties to their networks on the peninsula, these different forms evolved even *outside* of Italy, a concept Donna Gabaccia calls “diaspora nationalism.”³⁸ Common experiences and interpersonal connections bind together the Italian people across the Italian diaspora much more than a patriotic affinity for the state within Italian borders, yet the state has consistently attempted to create a common sense of *Italianità* since its creation, with little success until the advent of fascism after World War I. Therefore, *Italianità* in this study refers not to a strict, well-defined, widely-accepted sense of what it means to be Italian, but rather to the shifting and inconsistent ways Italians have experienced their relationship with

³⁷ Ibid., 2.

³⁸ Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

the state, the ways the state has attempted to engender patriotism in the Italian people, and the ways both the Italian people and the Italian state have viewed themselves in relation to the rest of the world. Although *Italianità* holds varied meanings in different times and places and for different people, *Italianità* is ultimately defined by the very fact that Italy and Italians have always been in search of it and that it has always been tied to Italy's foundational colonial logics. The ongoing and largely inconsistent nature of Italy's national identity formation, and the fact that this identity formation is intertwined with Italy's three colonialisms, constitutes what this study refers to as *Italianità*.

The project of creating a national Italian identity was, in large part, a flailing top-down effort by Italian elites and political leaders during post-unification political and social tumult that never reached Italy's large and isolated working classes and emigrant populations. Generally speaking, as a newly-unified nation in the late-nineteenth century, Italy was mostly rural and agricultural with a small industrial center in the north. Much of the population were either laborers on large southern estates, known as *latifondi*, or sharecroppers who lived in relatively isolated regional communities. A majority of Italians were illiterate, many were impoverished or working class, most spoke in dialect, and many emigrated to find economic opportunity in North and South America. Soon after unification, the Italian state took it upon itself to "inculcate national symbols and values and thereby 'make' Italians" in order to diminish the political problems Italians'

dedicated regionalism posed for the centralization of authority.³⁹ Most of this consisted of government-controlled curricula in schools aimed at refashioning the history of the Risorgimento in such a way that, although not loyal to the truth, encouraged patriotism.⁴⁰ This strategy, along with early large-scale efforts at standardizing the Italian language and discouraging the use of dialect, was ignored and ineffective at worst, slow to take hold at best, and plagued by waves of mass emigration. Leaders during the liberal era and the fascist period made distinct attempts at creating national unity by instilling pride in Italy's claimed descent from Ancient Rome. However, not much more remained consistent in shifting strategies to construct Italian national identity, or in common elements of Italian experience in the time between the Risorgimento and World War II.

The effort to establish Italy as a colonial power its people would take pride in, however, remained a consistent presence despite other radical shifts in Italian politics and governance from the Risorgimento through the fascist period. Alongside this, the colonial relationship between northern and southern Italy vexed the nation's political thinkers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and mass emigration constantly challenged national unity. Together, Italy's internal colonialism, settler colonialism in Africa during both the liberal era and the fascist

³⁹ Christopher Duggan, "Politics in the era of Depretis and Crispi, 1870-96," in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century: 1796-1900*, ed. John A. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 167.

⁴⁰ Duggan "Politics in the era of Depretis and Crispi, 1870-96." Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 267.

period, and mass emigration constituted central components of both the organic, multidirectional development and the constructed, top-down development of *Italianità*. As Duggan has noted, this top-down push to transform Italy into an imperial nation that recalled Ancient Rome and instill pride and loyalty in the Italian people did not take hold with most Italians. However, the everyday effects of internal colonialism and mass emigration were inescapable for most Italians, making those large parts of the collective experiences that contributed to different yet overlapping regional and individualized senses of *Italianità*. During Italy's early development of settler colonialism in Africa, Italians fell anywhere on the spectrum from active participation and support to apathetic unawareness. Italian emigrants that settled in the American West took part in the United States's settler-colonial project of territorial expansion, linking a foundational element of *Italianità* to transnational settler colonialism. Alongside one another, Italy's internal colonialism, the beginnings of settler colonialism in Africa, and the creation of Italian emigrant communities abroad demonstrate the Italian state's foundational commitment to settler-colonial ideologies that later solidified in Italian politics and popular culture during and after the fascist period.

Italy's Internal Colonialism

"Internal colonialism" is one way of framing northern Italian economic and cultural hegemony over southern Italy, commonly known as the *Mezzogiorno*. Defining the divide between northern and southern Italy as a colonial relationship

requires viewing the Risorgimento as a northern effort to conquer southern Italy. In this interpretation of history, the incorporation of the *Mezzogiorno* in the creation of the Kingdom of Italy was thrust upon a less-than-willing southern population and encountered southern resistance. Once Italy politically unified, the Italian state, motivated by a mission to civilize a racially-inferior southern population, proceeded to force northern Italian political structures, values, culture, and language in the *Mezzogiorno* and kept Italian wealth and power concentrated in the north. Scholars of postcolonial Italy often invoke, and more recently have begun to critically interrogate, Antonio Gramsci's vision to define the *Mezzogiorno* in relation to the north. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo summarize the recent consensus among Italian postcolonial scholars that "Gramsci understood beforehand that Italian capitalism (unlike capitalism elsewhere in Europe) pursued a colonial agenda predominantly for ideological purposes in order to attain national unity at the expense of the *Mezzogiorno*."⁴¹ In this view, the relationship between northern and southern Italy is one that considers southerners as internal colonial subjects and one that constitutes a part of a broader Italian colonialism that includes settler colonialism in Africa and is deeply intertwined with Italy's consistent pattern of mass emigration.

Miguel Mellino sees the overarching ideological purpose behind "the territorial socioeconomic annexation of southern territories" as "colonial/imperial

⁴¹ Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, eds., *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 5.

logics.”⁴² He argues that these logics and the “antisouthern racism and rhetoric of civilization (which also entailed the thesis of the biological inferiority of southern people), woven into the national social fabric by northern élites since the *Risorgimento*, were nothing but the local translation of the Western ‘civilizing mission’ discourse and its constitutive colonial racism.”⁴³ In other words, a northern belief in the racial inferiority of southerners and their inability to civilize, and a desire to exploit southern resources motivated an effort to politically, economically, and socially conquer the south. The logic of Italian internal colonialism, therefore, was a reflection of broader Western colonial logics that depend on establishing colonial subjects as racially inferior and thus unable to productively manage their own resources in order to justify the expense of violent subjugation and/or conquest of colonial subjects for the extraction of resources and wealth.

Lombardi-Diop and Romeo see the logic of Italian internal colonialism as deeply linked with other aspects of Italian colonialism. In their words, “the notion of Italian national identity and culture is shaped in a historical continuum that connects the postcolonial present to colonialism, to the subaltern position of the South, and to international and intranational migrations.”⁴⁴ In other words, the colonial logics based in establishing southern Italians as a racialized other are one

⁴² Miguel Mellino, “De-Provincializing Italy: Notes on Race, Racialization, and Italy’s Coloniality,” in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, eds. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 84.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, *Postcolonial Italy*, 3.

aspect of a larger colonial ideology that includes the settler-colonial logics behind colonialism in Africa, the lasting legacies of that settler colonialism (what Lombardi-Diop and Romeo would call Italian postcolonialism), and the impetus for mass emigration of Italians abroad since the Risorgimento. A look at the early history of Italy's internal colonialism, therefore, establishes colonial logics as an integral part of the very fabric of *Italianità*, both in its top-down construction and in common experiences amongst the Italian people. It is out of these fundamental colonial logics that Italy's other colonialisms flow and out of which Italy's modern nationhood was born. Many of the tactics the Italian state employed toward the south immediately following the Risorgimento aim at instituting infrastructural means of controlling the southern economy and assimilating southern Italian people according to northern norms and are similar to strategies of control Italy would later rely on in Africa and that Italian emigrants to the American West would participate in.

Much of the northern Italian attitude, and that of the Italian state, toward southern Italians characterizes southerners as a racialized other. According to Duggan, many northern Italians believed the *Mezzogiorno* was "a different order of civilization, more African than European in character."⁴⁵ Gabriella Gribaudi explains that it was commonplace at the time of unification for northerners to view southerners as having "an atavistic cultural backwardness—the preference for corruption and a tendency towards irrationalism that bear the mark of original

⁴⁵ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 195.

sin.”⁴⁶ Duggan describes consistent southern resistance to this racialization, explaining that “in the South voices of protest have been raised against what have been seen as the persistent colonialist and racist attitudes of northerners and the perpetration during the 1860s of what some have claimed was tantamount to genocide.”⁴⁷ The relationship between Italy’s north and south is one of oppression of a marginalized population and consistent resistance to that oppression, and was established as such during and after the Risorgimento. Italy’s internal colonialism, then, created Italy’s borders and forms the very foundation of its history as a unified nation.

Immediately after unification, the “southern question” emerged in Italian discourse as a central issue for the Italian government that has, as Ginsborg identifies, comprised a central component of Italian politics and life since its founding. The “southern question,” or “southern problem,” refers to the view that the *Mezzogiorno* was underdeveloped in comparison to the north. Prominent politicians and historians made this assessment after Italian unification and sought to ascertain the reasons for endemic poverty, violence, and social unrest in the region. The perception of the *Mezzogiorno* as a backward region of morally-bankrupt and racially-inferior peasants who were doomed by a lack of natural resources persisted until the 1980s. Only then did Italian historians move away from looking at the *Mezzogiorno* through a northern lens and challenge

⁴⁶ Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, *The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 97.

⁴⁷ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, xxii.

oversimplified generalizations about the *Mezzogiorno*'s people as backward and economy as undiversified and inferior to the north's.⁴⁸

After the Risorgimento, the new yet weak Italian government's view of the *Mezzogiorno* as a region of second-class citizens justified the northern-controlled state to enact policies aimed at controlling the southern Italian people and the southern Italian economy. Instead of making the south and southerners more like the north and northerners, however, these colonial policies exacerbated the economic instability of the south and contributed to the conditions that sparked waves of mass emigration of southern Italians during the late nineteenth century. The "southern question," therefore, quickly became much more than an issue of powerful elites attempting to control a population they positioned as racially inferior to themselves. As a result of northern intervention in the *Mezzogiorno*, the strength and unity of the new nation came under threat. How could the state engender patriotism amongst the populace when the people were leaving?

The north's efforts to solidify Italian unification began after the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies joined the north, and entailed efforts to homogenize the country's laws and institutions. For the most part, this meant taking structures and laws from Piedmont, Italy's most powerful northern region at the time, and exporting them. The apocryphal statement by Piedmontese statesman Massimo d'Azeglio, "We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians." characterized the actions of political

⁴⁸ For an introductory overview of this historiographical shift, see: Lumley and Morris, *The New History of the Italian South*.

elites of the time and of the new Italian state, and recalls common colonial desires to eliminate undesirable, or “backward,” cultural practices in order to spread those of the economically and politically powerful. Efforts to do this focused on government structures, infrastructure, and education and aimed to establish a means of centralizing and strengthening the Italian state’s influence over disjointed regions. By establishing means of state control in Italy’s most “backward” regions, the cultural values and economic prosperity of Piedmont could expand throughout the peninsula. The result, so the thinking went, would be a unified and cohesive Italian populace made loyal to the nation in Piedmont’s image.

After Italian unification in 1861, the north both feared and encountered social uprising in the *Mezzogiorno*. Both organized crime and general banditry were common in the south and threatened northern efforts to gain control of the region. Historians over time have disagreed on the characterization of southern banditry. Derek Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini explain that Italian historians first interpreted banditry as the reprehensible behavior of a specific southern race, then as a social insurrection combatting the northern colonialism of the Risorgimento. They, however, view banditry as merely a common practice of the time that transcended the Risorgimento. While northern Italian governments had gained control of the countryside by 1861 and largely eradicated banditry, southern governments had not. Whether as an intentional form of resistance to northern interference, or a continuation of previous practice, however, southern banditry threatened the sovereignty of the new, northern-controlled Italian state in the

region, and therefore demonstrates the south's resistance to internal colonization. By either "combatting" or "transcending" the Risorgimento, southern banditry privileged ways of living in opposition to the north's assertion of authority.

The result was a violent civil war from 1861-1865 in the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies during which the new Italian state deployed over 100,000 soldiers to quell the rural banditry that threatened their authority.⁴⁹ The Italian state addressed the problem of banditry by establishing infrastructure in the *Mezzogiorno*. Beales and Biagini argue that general capital investment in the *Mezzogiorno*, particularly the construction of roads and railroads, was a key element of the state's effort to "pacify" the south.⁵⁰ The north's capital investment established infrastructural control over the south through new networks of northern-constructed travel routes that gave Italian forces control of the southern countryside and allowed them to effectively combat banditry. Northern Italy had already constructed a robust railway network before unification, and in 1862 the Italian Parliament issued the rights to build railways in the *Mezzogiorno* to a private, northern banking group based in Turin, the then capital of the new Kingdom. In addition to this large-scale effort, between unification and 1876, Italy greatly expanded its telegraph network and added 21,000 km (about 13,000 miles) of new roads.⁵¹ The increase in southern infrastructure was meant to combat the

⁴⁹ Derek Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (Harlow: Longman, 2008), 159.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

“southern problem” by providing the state with the logistical framework necessary for militarily asserting sovereignty in the region. In addition, with increased avenues into the *Mezzogiorno*, the state could work towards assimilating southerners to more northern Italian norms.

This assimilative effort relied mostly on education, and was implemented throughout Italy as part of the state’s effort to create a unified sense of *Italianità* in the new nation, not just in the *Mezzogiorno*. Still, Italian elites viewed the creation of educational infrastructure as essential to combatting the perceived “southern problem.” State-controlled education was meant to spark a radical change throughout Italy, but would also control specifically southern efforts to resist state authority. Two-thirds of the overall population, and even more in the south, were illiterate.⁵² Education, Italian elites believed, would solve Italy’s industrial and agricultural problems. A more educated population would create more efficient and diversified laborers. Agricultural production could then go towards exports and Italian industries could expand. Furthermore, education was necessary for homogenizing the Italian language to fit northern, Tuscan norms. An effective education system could quell rampant social unrest in Italy through peddling “a secular patriotic ideology, in which anti-clericalism and a devotion to the institutions of the state featured prominently.”⁵³

⁵² Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy*, 155.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 146.

Schools could transform southerners from disloyal subjects of the state whose racial inferiority made them unable to adequately extract their region's wealth for the good of the nation into productive and dedicated citizens. These citizens would abandon their local languages in favor of that of Dante and would transfer their loyalties from clerical or local authorities to national, northern ones. State-run schools, therefore, proliferated throughout Italy, including the *Mezzogiorno*, in the 1860s and 1870s, but they were often underfunded and had to overcome the challenge of an uninterested public. Still, the state turned to education as a means to control and unify the nation. Schools were designed to maintain the state's desired social order. In 1895, the Education Act made elementary education compulsory for all, but higher education was reserved for the middle class and for elites.

Northern colonization of the south, however, could not solve a major problem the "southern question" posed to northern elites: mass emigration. The waves of southern Italians leaving to North and South America proved a major thorn in the new nation's side as it was indicative of Italy's economic failures and as Italy's population was hemorrhaging beyond its borders. Despite northern elites' disdain for southerners, Italy needed Italians to make Italians. To re-direct the outflow of southern Italians, to remedy the region's economic instability, and to further engender patriotism, the state relied on its ideological roots. In order to make southerners Italian, the state would transform them into colonizers who would bring the prestige of other European powers to Italy. This took the forms of

Italy's other two colonialisms—that of conquering territory in Africa to make room for Italian settler colonies that would attract southern emigrants, and that of building and disseminating Italian culture through emigrant communities throughout the Italian diaspora. Italian colonies in Africa would solve the “southern problem” by funneling emigrants into settlements in Italian colonies in Africa, and establishing Italian cultural institutions in diasporic communities abroad would disseminate Italian culture beyond Italian borders.

Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo sum up this history succinctly: “The temporal and spatial axes that link colonization, emigration, and immigration set Italy apart from other European contexts.”⁵⁴ The braided history of colonization, emigration, and immigration that flowed out of the Risorgimento bound disparate conditions and experiences on the Italian peninsula and throughout the Italian diaspora together. The simultaneous emergence of the Italian nation, the Italian diaspora, Italian colonialism in Africa, and Italian involvement in transnational settler colonialism all contributed to the formation of *Italianità*, and all grow out of the “southern problem.” The result is an inextricable connection between the diverse formations of *Italianità* with colonial logics and a complex web of colonial relationships within the Italian population.

In the broadest possible terms, the north has a colonial relationship with the south—one in which northern-controlled state sovereignty was asserted and resisted in the south. The effects of colonization on the south, in turn, encouraged

⁵⁴ Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, *Postcolonial Italy*, 5.

southern emigration, which instigated the Italian government to make colonizers out of emigrant southerners in an attempt to transform population loss into territorial expansion. Emigration created a diaspora of Italian populations throughout North and South America, including on American Indian land in the American West where Italians and the Italian state claimed a piece of U.S. settler-colonial expansion for themselves. In Africa, the Italian state employed southerners to displace indigenous populations and occupy territory for the glory of the Italian state. To be “Italian” therefore, is to be a colonizer, even if unwillingly. For the *Mezzogiorno*, however, to be “Italian” is also to experience and resist colonization.

The colonial ideologies that structure power along the lines of race, therefore, were deeply entrenched in developing and varied constructions of *Italianità*. Although deeply related to Italy’s internal colonialism, these colonial systems of logic pervade other aspects of Italian culture and history. The early decision to embark on creating a settler-colonial empire in Africa, for example, further entrenched colonial logics—in this instance those of settler-colonialism—into *Italianità*.

African Colonialism in Liberal Italy, 1885-1922

Italian colonialism in Africa began in earnest in 1885 with the Italian invasion of Massawa, Ethiopia and came to an abrupt halt in 1943 when British and French forces defeated Italian forces in Libya. Although settler colonialism in Africa lasted

less than a century, it was essential to Italian identity formation in both the liberal and fascist periods of Italian history. The construction of the Italian empire in Africa from unification through World War II contributed to the broad circulation of settler-colonial logics between the U.S. and Italy. As Italy developed its settler-colonial strategies in Africa, Italians also engaged with U.S. settler colonialism through participating as emigrant settlers of the American West and as consumers of American mass culture that disseminated and celebrated settler-colonial logics.

Italy's development as a settler-colonial nation occurred alongside its development as a participant in U.S. settler colonialism—both of which contributed to the evolution of the settler-colonial logics foundational to *Italianità*. It is this multivalent relationship with settler-colonial logics that makes Italy a part of transnational settler colonialism along with the United States. The relationship between Italian settler colonialism in Africa and U.S. settler colonialism was not simple coincidence or analogy. For instance, Duggan identifies a common belief among Italian soldiers invading Libya in 1911 that “they would be welcomed as liberators and discover ‘a second America’ to which they might subsequently emigrate.”⁵⁵ Chapter Two will demonstrate that Italian consumption of American mass culture since the Risorgimento set the stage for such a belief in the similar missions of Italian and U.S. settler colonialisms.

Although Italian settler colonialism in Africa did not begin in earnest until the fascist period, its ideological foundations, and the state's efforts to tie settler

⁵⁵ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 383.

colonialism with *Italianità*, lie in the liberal era. Establishing this early tie between settler colonialism and top-down formations of *Italianità*, however, requires an examination of the ways in which Italian actions in Africa from 1885-1922 fall under the umbrella of settler colonialism. Furthermore, since Italian settler colonialism during the liberal era occurred alongside the beginnings of Italian participation in U.S. settler colonialism—Buffalo Bill toured Italy in 1890 and 1906, Italian mass emigration to the American West peaked in 1880, the World's Columbian Exposition occurred in 1893, and the Italian government established cultural institutions for emigrants in the United States in 1901—an interrogation of the ideological similarities between U.S. settler colonialism and Italian settler colonialism is also necessary.

The elements of colonization and resistance to colonization are present in the settler colonialisms that informed the early formations of *Italianità*. As far as the beginnings of the state's efforts to instill a sense of Italian collectivity and loyalty to the state, these appeared in early efforts to create a settler-colonial empire in Africa. During both the liberal and fascist periods, the goal of Italian colonial efforts in Africa was to institute settler colonialism, which Italians called “demographic colonialism,” to solve the epidemic problem of mass Italian emigration that Italy's internal colonialism had instigated. In this vision, Italians would claim sovereignty over African lands and settle there, creating agriculturally-based communities and economies that would expand the borders of the Italian nation. The Italian notion of demographic colonialism necessitated conquering indigenous groups to

displace or eliminate them, often through brutal violence, falling directly within Wofle's and Veracini's definitions of settler colonialism that also apply to the United States. Although this vision never completely became a reality, Italian settler colonialism in Africa prioritized the Italian emigrant settlement of indigenous African lands. The role of the Italian emigrant settler colonizer, therefore, was central to the Italian colonial project in Africa.

In their volume *Italian Colonialism*, Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller argue that, in Italy, "colonialism was even more central to the construction of nationhood" than it was for other European colonial powers, and that colonialism in Italy "had no less an impact on the development of metropolitan conceptions of race, national identity, and geopolitical imaginaries," despite its short lifespan.⁵⁶ It was through imperialism in Africa that the new Italian nation began asserting its modernity and its place among the most powerful European nations and that the practice of racialization that is also at work in the United States became Italian. Italians framed racialization and colonization as a "civilizing mission," which, Francesca Locatelli argues, was "rooted in the cultural system set up by anthropologists, sociologists and scientists between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth centuries."⁵⁷ This cultural system included American mass culture that proselytized

⁵⁶ Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, eds., *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1-2.

⁵⁷ Francesca Locatelli, "Migrating to the colonies and building the myth of '*Italiani brava gente*': The rise, demise and legacy of Italian settler colonialism" in *Italian Mobilities*, eds. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Malia Hom (New York: Routledge, 2015).

U.S. settler logics to Italians and was on display for Italian emigrants at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

The same anthropological theories that argued for the naturally uncivilized state of American Indians and thus supported white settler claims to land applied to Italian attitudes toward the indigenous peoples of Ethiopia and Libya during the Liberal era. The fundamental logic Byrd describes in terms of "Indianness" occurred in the form of Italy's "civilizing mission" in Africa. Much like northern Italians did to southern Italians to justify internal colonization, Italy deemed Ethiopians and Libyans as inherently and scientifically uncivilized and therefore dispensable. Just as Buffalo Bill presented American Indian performers as a dispensable race in need of displacement and elimination to make way for white settlement during his Wild West Show's Italian tour in 1890, Italian elites were attempting to disseminate similar attitudes toward Ethiopians and Libyans believing it would unify the Italian people under a common purpose. The ultimate result was an Italian falsehood: that land theft was a form of humanitarianism. This mimicked a white American settler myth and made brutal and, at times, genocidal violence against Africans palatable.

For lower class, mostly southern Italians, colonizing Africa offered a potential solution to systemic poverty, as emigrating to Africa promised increased economic opportunity. For elite, mostly northern Italians, colonizing Africa offered an opportunity to increase Italy's international standing and prestige and civilize racially-inferior southerners who would emigrate to Africa and settle northern-

managed colonies. Despite the overall apathy toward colonialism in the liberal era, few Italian state initiatives could appeal to large swaths of the population in this way. By comparison, settler colonialism in Africa had a unifying appeal and, therefore, became an early and enduring building block of *Italianità*. The perceived benefits for individual Italians combined with the allure of an imperial Italy on par with the likes of Britain and France interlaced the development of *Italianità* with the settler colonization of Africa and the racist beliefs it entailed.

Settler colonialism in Africa during the liberal era, however, was still far from the sustained and passionately-supported and promoted effort it would be during the fascist period. Instead, colonialism during the liberal era was a series of punctuated attempts driven by a few dedicated politicians. The Italian state's attempts at constructing *Italianità* and grooming a sense of public loyalty to Italy were largely unsuccessful during this time, especially when compared to Mussolini's wild success at uniting the Italian people behind his cause. Nevertheless, the few colonial forays into Africa in the liberal era were motivated by similar desires to establish Italy as a powerful nation on the world stage and to create a common Italian cause that would inspire national loyalty in the Italian people. In addition, colonialism in Africa during the liberal era established the racialized ideologies and inhumane strategies of Italian colonialism that would carry over into the fascist period.

The invasion of Massawa in 1885 was born of the Italian state's urgent desire to assert Italy's role as a major European power and create a cause to unite

its people. Italy participated in the 1878 Congress of Berlin, but was unsatisfied that control of Bosnia and Herzegovina had gone to Austria rather than Italy. Soon after, Italian supporters of colonialism in Africa saw the French invasion of Tunisia as an usurpation of Italian ties to and interest in Tunisia. Frustrated with a perceived exclusion from the top echelon of European powers, Italian Foreign Minister Pasquale Stanislao Mancini saw an opportunity arise when Britain offered nominal support of an Italian imperial presence in Ethiopia. The Italian state had recently gained control of the port of Assab on the Red Sea from a Genoese shipping firm in 1882, and with Britain's endorsement, Mancini moved to increase Italy's landholdings in the region and recover from past foreign relations embarrassments and invaded Massawa.

Ethiopians led by the emperor Yohannis immediately resisted the Italian invasion and challenged Italian authority over the port of Assab. Ras Aloula, an ally of Yohannis, ordered Italians to withdraw in 1887, and when they refused, he led a force of 5,000 Ethiopians in a surprise attack against 500 Italian soldiers, killing nearly the entire Italian force. The defeat occurred on the outskirts of Massawa at a place Italians would call "Dogali," due to the Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry's misreading of the telegram containing first news of event.⁵⁸ The defeat was met with shock and horror by both Parliament and the public. Parliament received the news with anger, and public demonstrations expressing resentment over the defeat occurred throughout Italy. To people in Italy, Dogali

⁵⁸ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 323.

exemplified the incompetency of the Italian parliament and Foreign Ministry. The Italian casualties at Dogali, known as the *cinquecento* (“five hundred”), quickly attained mythical status for their perceived bravery and courage in the face of overwhelming odds and certain death at the hands of “uncivilized” Ethiopians.

The tactic of shifting the narrative to frame resistance to invasion as uncivilized, unprovoked, and brutal violence was one Italians would have seen in American mass culture. Italians knew of Custer’s alleged heroism against unfettered Lakota brutality, and some had seen it reenacted in Italy. By the time of the *cinquecento* in 1887, as Chapter Two will demonstrate, Italians were familiar with U.S. settler practices of myth-making. Just as Custer almost immediately went from fallen soldier to mythical American god, so too did the *cinquecento*. However, in Italy, the *cinquecento* gained a national mythical status in a nation that was struggling to establish itself. At a time when the Italian state consistently tried and failed at national myth-making, people came together and demonstrated on the streets for a cause that racialized the Ethiopians whom their government had invaded.

Despite this brief example of something resembling popular consensus, social unrest and economic instability were challenging the young Italian nation, hindering efforts to foster national unity. Italy was in need of a change to the stagnant status quo, which opened the door for Francesco Crispi—a controversial, previously disgraced, and southern politician—to re-enter Italian politics at the highest level. In 1887, Crispi became prime minister and set to work with a vision

of uniting Italy by conjuring a military victory. After failing at a sustained attempt to provoke war with France, Crispi set his sights on Africa to avenge the *cinquecento* and create his unifying victory. Yohannis had been overthrown by a local warlord, Menelik, who subsequently assumed the title of emperor. In 1889, Menelik signed the Treaty of Wuchale with Italy to help legitimize his power in Ethiopia. However, a misunderstanding led to differences in the Ethiopian version of the treaty written in Amharic and the Italian version. The Italian interpretation claimed the treaty gave Italy extensive landholdings inland from Massawa and made Ethiopia an Italian protectorate. Crispi therefore orchestrated the Italian occupation of the new "Italian" territory and in 1890 officially claimed the region an Italian colony and renamed it Eritrea. Declaring Eritrea an Italian colony overshadowed the embarrassment of Dogali and proved a popular decision. Politicians and intellectuals who were previously opposed to Italian expansion in Africa hopped on board and the declaration of Italy as an imperial power solicited public enthusiasm. It became clearer now more than ever that African colonies could solve the problems holding Italy back from becoming a rich and powerful nation and foster nationalism.

Crispi's successes in laying the groundwork for Italian settler colonialism in Africa, however, did not last long. Soon after the proclamation, Menelik exposed the discrepancy in the Amharic and Italian treaties and denied Italy's role as protectorate and Italy's claim to Ethiopian land. This effectively put Italian sovereignty in Ethiopia in question and foiled Crispi's plans in Africa. From 1890

to 1895 Menelik centralized his power in Ethiopia as Italy continued to slowly push inland, which included establishing Italy's first settlement of Italian farmers in Eritrea in 1893. Despite Ethiopian refusal, Italy attempted to preserve its claims of sovereignty over Ethiopian lands and consolidate their power by taking military action to displace Ethiopians to make room for Italian settlements. This concerted military effort to eliminate Ethiopians from lands on which Italians wanted to settle is clear evidence that even Italy's early efforts in Africa were settler-colonial in nature.

Furthermore, the disagreement over the transfer of land and sovereignty in the Treaty of Wuchale resembles a common trend in the history of U.S. settler colonization and American Indian resistance that Italians celebrated. The establishment of Italy's first Eritrean settlement in 1893 coincided with the world's celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of America at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Chapter Two describes how Italians participated in this event. At the very moment when Italy attempted to break a treaty with Ethiopia, Italians celebrated their nation's rhetorical roots to what the Exposition celebrated as one of America's founding moments. More specifically, Italians joined in the Exposition's celebration of the treaty that solidified the theft of Chicago from the Potawatomi. Not only were Italian and U.S. settler colonialisms acting analogously, Italians were participating in both simultaneously. Although these connections are merely anecdotal and do not reflect any intentional implementation of U.S. settler colonial strategies on the part

of Italy or Crispi, they do exemplify transnational settler colonialism in that the logics stemming from Italian colonialism in Africa and those stemming from Italian participation in U.S. settler colonialism were circulating together to inform *Italianità*.

In Italy, Crispi was facing opposition from a parliament that was increasingly divided along partisan lines. He again sought war to foster national unity and drum up his political support. By now, Italian forces faced a strong Ethiopian state united behind Menelik and supported by French supplies. The result of Crispi's effort was the Battle of Adwa in 1896—the worst defeat for any European power in Africa. Crispi's orders lead a force of 17,700 Italian and indigenous soldiers, known as *askari*, toward an Ethiopian force of 100,000. Five thousand Italian soldiers and 2,000 *askari* died, compared to 12,000-14,000 Ethiopian casualties, which translates to roughly forty percent of the Italian force compared to twelve to fourteen percent of the Ethiopian force. The disaster temporarily destroyed public enthusiasm for colonialism in Africa and the embarrassment of the defeat forced Crispi to resign as prime minister.

The Treaty of Addis Ababa followed the battle and recognized Ethiopia as a sovereign state under Menelik's governance. Italy left the affair humiliated; Ethiopia strengthened. The treaty, however, left Eritrea to Italy and ensured the release of Italian prisoners-of-war. Italy's failure in Ethiopia was a blow to the state's attempts at fostering nationalism. At the same time that Italians celebrated white American settler control of American Indians at Wild West Shows and at the Columbian Exposition, they also lamented their failure to control the indigenous

Ethiopian population in the colony their state wished to settle. Italy continued to keep its eyes on Ethiopia, however, as the most likely opportunity for future Italian colonial expansion from Eritrea. In anticipation of Menelik's death, Britain, France, and Italy signed the Tripartite Treaty in 1906, which determined future spheres of influence within Ethiopia. In the treaty, Italy secured the right to connect Eritrea with their other protectorate in Somalia. For the first time, Italy stood alongside Britain and France as an imperial power with internationally-recognized claims to colonies in Africa. The same year, Italy founded the *Istituto Coloniale Italiano* (Italian Colonial Institute) as part of an effort to reignite the colonial spirit in Italy, and Italians—mostly northern Italians—enjoyed Buffalo Bill's second Italian tour.

Desires to continue Italian colonial expansion remained mostly dormant in Italy until five years later, when Italy's Nationalist Party garnered popular support for invading Libya. In 1911, Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire and invaded Tripolitania. The Italo-Turkish war was brief, but catastrophically violent. Ben-Ghiat and Fuller emphasize the often-overlooked fact that Italy conducted "the world's first military use of airpower and aerial bombardments" during this war.⁵⁹ In addition to an aggressive military strategy, Italian soldiers treated local populations with brutality. In two weeks, an expeditionary force of 34,000 Italians took Tripoli, Benghazi, Homs, and Tobruk. Soon after, the Arabs and Turks retaliated at Sciarra Sciat, killing 500 Italian soldiers. After the attack, the Arabs and Turks mutilated the Italian corpses, castrating the bodies as a reaction to the sexual crimes Italian

⁵⁹ Ben-Ghiat and Fuller, *Italian Colonialism*, 4.

soldiers committed against local women. Italy responded disproportionately to this resistance of their invasion with genocidal tactics. Italians massacred thousands of Arabs, sent thousands to penal islands, and held public executions in response to the attack at Sciara Sciat. Almost exactly a year after the initial invasion, Italy signed a peace treaty with Turkey that gave Italy a small landholding in Libya.

Over the next twenty years, Italy expanded their colony, killing around twelve percent of the Libyan population, all under the auspices of a settler-colonial mission to civilize. Soon after the Italo-Turkish war, Italy entered World War I, and colonial expansion in Africa was temporarily relegated to the back burner. While settler colonialism served as one of the state's main methods of attempting to foster national unity in Italy, it largely fell on ambivalent ears during the liberal era, with a few notable moments of exception. During this time, however, Italy established its foothold in Africa. Ideas about the ways settler colonialism could benefit Italy, ideas about Italian claims to sovereignty in Africa, and colonial logics in general—including U.S. settler colonial logics—became a part of how Italians defined their nation and their relationship to it. The rise of the Fascist Party under the leadership of Mussolini in Italy then catapulted Italian colonialism to become a hallmark of Italian national identity.

Before Italian settler colonialism in Africa became a rallying cry of fascist Italy, however, Italians in Italy, Italian emigrants in the United States, and the Italian state became entrenched in U.S. settler colonialism. As Italy attempted to make settler-colonizers out of its emigrants through establishing settlements in Africa,

Italian emigrants also settled on American Indian land in North America, with the encouragement and endorsement of the Italian government.

Italian Immigrants Settle the American West

Due to Italy's large emigrant population, much of the process of developing *Italianità* occurred beyond Italian borders, including in the American West. The peak of Italian migration began in 1880, when a unified Italy was but a couple of decades old. Mark Choate argues that migration was an essential component of the Italian experience. In fact, "[b]etween 1878 and 1881, Italy's annual migration to the Americas doubled from twenty to forty thousand; it doubled again in 1891 and again in 1904, with more than half a million Italians emigrating across the Atlantic in 1906 and 1913."⁶⁰ Not only was migration an important part of common experiences that informed *Italianità*, it was also a component of the colonial identity the state attempted to imbue. Choate explains that "from 1880 to World War I, the Italian state viewed migration as a form of colonialism, described emigration as irredentism, and developed the economics of remittances and expatriate trade to reach out to emigrants."⁶¹ Although the majority of Italian emigrants did not settle

⁶⁰ Mark I. Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 4.

⁶¹ Mark I. Choate, "The Frontier Thesis in Transnational Migration: The U.S. West in the Making of Italy Abroad," in *Immigrants in the Far West: Historical Identities and Experiences*, eds. Jessie L. Embry, Brian Q. Cannon, and Charles Redd (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014).

"Irredentism" refers to an effort after the creation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 to incorporate remaining Italian regions that remained under Austrian control at the time of geographic unification.

in the American West, those who did become a part of both Italian and U.S. settler colonial projects. In this sense, transnational settler colonialism involved the movement of Italians to the American West as colonizers—both for Italy and for the United States, and constructed part of Italy's complex colonial identity. Once in the United States, Italian emigrants became Italian settlers. They did not only occupy American Indian land, but also became a part of American mass culture. With both actions, Italians—regardless of individual motivations and intentions—entered in to the back-and-forth process of U.S. settler colonization and American Indian resistance.

While Italian emigrants undeniably occupied land stolen from American Indians, the extent to which Italian emigrants are implicated in land theft or the extent to which they are settler-colonizers is debatable. Byrd sees this issue as “the point where diaspora collides with settler colonialism,” and roughly categorizes relevant actors into three groups: “indigenous peoples, settlers, and arrivants.”⁶² She recognizes that, although the United States is foundationally a settler-colonial nation built by the violent theft of American Indian land, there are layered and competing structures of power that go beyond the settler/colonizer struggle:

“[A] cacophony of competing struggles for hegemony within and outside institutions of power, no matter how those struggles might challenge the state through loci of race, class, gender, and sexuality, serves to misdirect and cloud attention from the underlying structures

⁶² Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xix.

of settler colonialism that made the United States possible as oppressor in the first place. As a result, the cacophony produced through U.S. colonialism and imperialism domestically and abroad often coerces struggles for social justice for queers, racial minorities, and immigrants into complicity with settler colonialism.”⁶³

Although Italian emigration to the American West in the nineteenth century hardly qualifies as a struggle for social justice in the sense Byrd intends and was not a result of American imperialism, Italian emigrants entered into an existing settler-colonial structure somewhere below the top of the established hegemony. The economic struggles that forced their migration, and the discrimination they experienced upon arrival to the American West pulled them, perhaps unwillingly or subconsciously, into complicity with U.S. settler colonialism.

Similarly, Veracini identifies the indistinct relationship between settler colonialism and migration as a tool of settler colonialism that serves to cloud its very existence:

“[T]he very shape of the various national historiographies contributes to making settler colonialism difficult to detect. If, in metropolitan historiographies, the ‘settlers’ are undistinguishable from the ‘emigrants,’ and these terms are used interchangeably, in the various national settler historiographies, the settlers are the inhabitants of a polity *to come*: proto-Americans, proto-Australians, and so on. In

⁶³ Ibid., xvii.

both instances, the settler can hide behind the emigrant and the future citizen, and the transfer of a specific type of political sovereignty is blocked out by a failure to adopt a transnational perspective.”⁶⁴

In both Byrd’s and Veracini’s analyses, immigrants/emigrants/arrivants play an important role in settler colonialism. In one sense, they act as a proxy for the original, most powerful echelon of settler society, doing the work of taking up indigenous land and, perhaps, doing the violent work of displacement and elimination. In another sense, they are another object of settler state oppression as lesser members of settler society. To determine the role of Italian emigrants in the American West, therefore, we must look more closely at their relationships with settler society and American Indians.

Italian emigrants in the American West settled mostly in Chicago, which was a major railroad hub and one of the world’s largest cities by the time Italians joined many other European immigrants there. Previously, several different American Indian tribes had inhabited and claimed the land that would become Chicago, including the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Hopi, Iroquois, and Lakota.⁶⁵ However, as John Low has noted, records of American Indians living in Chicago during the nineteenth century are scarce. It is therefore difficult to ascertain what relationships, if any, Italian emigrants had with American Indians living in the city. Instead, Italian

⁶⁴ Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 15.

⁶⁵ John N. Low, *Imprints: The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the City of Chicago* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2016), 4.

emigrant relationships with American Indians are best understood through looking at the Italian state's colonial objectives in the American West and, as Chapter Two will explore, Italian emigrant's exposure to American Indians and American Indian resistance through American mass culture.

Choate explains that, particularly in the American West, Italian state-sponsored institutions encouraged Italian emigrants to take on an *Italian* identity and to build Italian communities. With emigrant communities on the eastern seaboard of the U.S. rapidly overcrowding, Italian emigrants, much like many other groups, began to see the American West as open for business. In Choate's words: "From the Italian perspective of emigration, migration to the American West represented the outside limit of Italian expansion, reach, and influence, more promising than many other destinations in North and South America and more appealing to a dramatic sense of imagination."⁶⁶ Those Italians who sought to fulfill their Western fantasies arrived on the continent in order to expand Westward and take American Indian territory for themselves.

The majority of individuals, however, likely did not characterize their motivations in these terms, as migration was often a result of economic necessity, and many migrants intended to return to Italy. Instead, the Italian state was conscious of the settler-colonial nature of Italian settlers migrating to the American West. Italy wanted to make a mark on the American West and claim territory there for Italians to occupy as part of its effort to align itself with other powerful colonial

⁶⁶ Choate, "The Frontier Thesis in Transnational Migration."

nations. Although Italy never made any assertions of sovereignty over American Indian lands, they did make claims to Native spaces with the intent of creating and spreading Italian culture there. By taking up American Indian space in the American West, Italian emigrants took and occupied Native space *for the United States* in the way that Veracini describes. However, Italian emigrants also operated to some degree as an extension of the Italian state, meaning they took and occupied Native space *for Italy* at the same time, making Italian state sponsorship of emigration to the American West a type of Italian colonialism. This was part of a larger effort to expand the Italian polity and spread *Italianità* by viewing all Italian expatriates and emigrants as Italian citizens. In Choate's words: "Beyond the idealized 'nation-state' of the Kingdom of Italy, uniting all members of the Italian nation in a single state, there was the imagined 'nation-superstate,' a network of Italians worldwide in a supranational global nation."⁶⁷

This construction of a nation-superstate is distinct from empire building. Italy did not aim to conquer or economically exploit the U.S., but instead scrambled to create a definition of "Italian" amongst emigrants to the U.S. that would best reflect the united polity of a European power. Through developing a sense of collective identity amongst emigrants, the Italian state hoped to foster an overall sense of *Italianità* that would circulate throughout the Italian diaspora. In the case of Italians in the American West, this necessarily includes the elimination of American Indian cultures to create space for Italian culture. In order to expand territory occupied by

⁶⁷ Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 6.

Italians in the American West, Italy established institutions and organizations throughout the West to encourage Italian emigrants to define themselves by their association to Italy as a nation, rather than by their association to a particular location within Italy. The most prominent Italian institution acting in the American West was the Dante Alighieri Society for Italian Language and Culture outside the Kingdom. The goal of this organization was to work toward the cultural cohesion and unified national identity of Italy for both Italians in Italy and for emigrants abroad.

The Dante Alighieri Society, with the help of an Emigration Commissariat and an Emigrant Fund founded in 1901, established Italian institutions abroad, including schools aimed at teaching emigrants a standard Italian language. The efforts of the society were meant to solve the perceived problem Italian dialects posed to national unity. Upon unification, the Italian language was not standardized, and most people spoke in local dialects that were not always easily comprehensible throughout the peninsula. This pattern transferred to Italian communities in the American West. For instance, chain migration—when streams of emigrants from a specific Italian locality would settle in a specific locality in the United States—meant that “[i]n Chicago, the Italians divided themselves into sixteen separate neighborhoods, each speaking different regional dialects.”⁶⁸ As its name suggests, the Dante Alighieri Society wanted to establish an official Italian national language that closely resembled the Florentine dialect of Dante. This

⁶⁸ Ibid., 107.

worked toward unifying the new nation under northern Italian norms, which the society viewed as vastly superior to southern Italian norms. As emigrants would ensure this unified Italian language would be preserved throughout the diaspora, the society had to provide for the linguistic education of emigrants, as most were southern Italians who likely spoke in southern dialects.

The Italian state's view of emigrants as an extension of their polity reflected reality. Early Italian emigrants were highly mobile, the majority intended to return to Italy, and many eventually did so. The connections between emigrants and their families in Italy were intimately maintained. As a result, the advent of an Italian American identity distinct from an Italian one was slow to form. Chain migration resulted in small, close-knit emigrant communities with direct and maintained ties to specific localities in Italy. These ties and continuous movement back and forth across the Atlantic ensured that *Italianità* developed not just in Italy, but throughout the Italian diaspora, including the American West, particularly in Chicago.

Scholars of Italian emigration to the United States and to the American West recognize the connection between the Italian emigrant experience and the development of *Italianità*. Thomas Guglielmo describes *Italianità* as a “racial and national consciousness,” that encompassed a wide range of Italian experiences and subcultures.⁶⁹ Choate adds that *Italianità* was “extralegal and nongovernmental” and “a sentimental tradition, rather than legal citizenship.”⁷⁰ As

⁶⁹ Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

⁷⁰ Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 2-3.

Italians asserted themselves on American soil, Guglielmo and Choate suggest that their strongest connections were to each other, even across various pockets of Italian emigrants, rather than to the Italian or the American state. Due to remaining connections to home communities, this increased sense of collective identity flowed back to Italy. However, just as in Italy, in the American West *Italianità* encompassed distinct regional differences. Italian emigrant communities experienced the same weak linguistic and cultural cohesion as Italian communities in Italy. In a foreign space, however, their self-identification as “Italian” tied them together. Even though there was little understanding of what “Italian” really meant, it was how various emigrant communities presented themselves to and contextualized themselves within the reaches of the Italian diaspora.

Part of building a collective understanding of *Italianità*, therefore, involved how Italian emigrant communities, including those in the American West, experienced life abroad. As arrivants in the United States, this often meant facing racialized discrimination, oppression, and violence. However, it also involved settling on American Indian land and enjoying *some* privileges of settlers. While Italians were often viewed as a racial other not congruent with the settler ideal, Guglielmo pushes back against the historiography of European immigration to the United States and its general assertion that European immigrants had to become white in the United States. His *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago in 1890-1945* (2003) argues that, while Italian immigrants experienced

often intense and racially-charged discrimination in the United States during this period, they were always considered and operated as white. In Guglielmo's words:

"Italians' many perceived racial inadequacies aside, they were still largely accepted as white by the widest variety of people and institutions—naturalization laws and courts, the U.S. census, race science, anti-immigrant racialisms, newspapers, unions, employers, neighbors, realtors, settlement houses, politicians, and political parties. . . . If Italians were racially undesirable in the eyes of many Americans, they were white just the same."⁷¹

Despite being othered as Italians, they still enjoyed many privileges of being white that were inaccessible to other marginalized groups. While Italian emigrants were white, they were not perfectly so in American eyes, and were thus often victims of terrible racial violence, including lynching.

As a result of this position as somewhere between not-quite-white-enough and just-white-enough, Italian emigrants' relationship with the settler state was largely one of white settlers, as they enjoyed the official state recognition of whiteness in many ways. However, their role as inferior within the broad category of whiteness allowed them to exculpate themselves from some white settler violence. Italians aligned themselves with settler society by often asserting their whiteness, but denied complicity in white racial violence. For example, Guglielmo explains that while there were instances of conflict between Italian and Black

⁷¹ Guglielmo, *White on Arrival*, 6.

communities in Chicago, there were also many examples of intimacy, including intermarriage and overlapping neighborhoods. He explains that the Italian immigrant newspaper, *L'Italia*, consistently criticized American racial violence:

“[S]ome Italians seemed to associate with different people of ‘color’ in various ways. At a time when Italian lynching was not uncommon, *L'Italia* carried stories almost weekly about brutal killings of African Americans in the South and elsewhere, in which the newspaper often condemned the United States for its rank hypocrisy and bankrupt ‘Civiltà Americana’ (American Civilization).”⁷²

This does not indicate a sense of affinity for American Blackness, but rather that Italians in Chicago saw themselves as morally superior to other white settlers when it came to racial issues. As settlers who were Italian or, later, Italian American, and not just American, Italian immigrants could enjoy some of the benefits of membership in settler society while escaping, in their minds, inclusion in the morally abhorrent practices of the white settler world. Of course, Italian empathy for lynching victims could very well have been genuine, as fear of lynching was also a reality of theirs.

Despite Italian emigrants’ position as arrivants who experienced discrimination and violence and publicly admonished white racial violence toward Blacks, they still occupied American Indian land for the benefit of settler states. As Italian settlers of the American West, Italian emigrants participated in U.S. settler

⁷² Ibid., 36.

colonialism through contributing to American Westward expansion. The Italian state encouraged emigrants to assert a unique Italian identity in the American West and to establish areas in which Italian culture could develop and act as an extension of the Italian state. As emigrants, Italians participated in what the Italian state viewed as a form of colonialism that sought to extend the reach of Italian culture beyond Italian borders and establish spaces for Italians in the American West. They also supported American settler claims of sovereignty over American Indian lands by occupying the regions from which American Indians were forcibly displaced.

This did not, however, translate to full inclusion into the category of “white settler” within the United States. Although Italians often operated as white at the expense of groups that could not, and were recognized by the settler state as white, they also were often viewed as racially inferior by other white settlers. Italians were victims of racial violence from white settlers, but were also implicated in white settler oppression of American Indians through settling on land taken from American Indians and thus joining in the American settler state’s exploitation of American Indians. Although Italian emigrants often left Italy out of economic necessity, when they settled in the American West, they gained from the American settler-colonial project of displacing and eliminating American Indians. So, while Italian emigrants did not come to the American West with a view to colonize American Indians, their presence and assertions of non-Native identity in the American West effectively worked towards American Indian displacement.

Furthermore, they did this with the endorsement of the Italian state. Whatever the intent of individual emigrants, the Italian state desired and worked toward its citizens playing such a role in U.S. settler colonialism. For the Italian state, participation in U.S. settler colonialism and the assertion and construction of *Italianità* in the American West that accompanied that participation, worked toward the betterment of the Italian state.

This connection between the state's efforts to develop *Italianità* and its desire to establish an Italian presence in the American West is demonstrative of transnational settler colonialism. During Italy's first attempts at settler colonialism in Africa, the state also channeled resources toward encouraging Italians to participate in the settler colonization of the American West. Not only were Italy's internal colonialism and settler colonialism in Africa central to Italy's attempts to define itself as a modern state, but so was its concerted attempt to involve Italians in the settler colonization of the American West. The mass emigration that Italy's internal colonialism instigated posed the largest threat to the state's efforts to instill a sense of *Italianità* amongst its people. Their solutions—both in the forms of settler colonialism in Africa and in fostering an emigrant nation superstate—relied on transforming the emigrant experience into a settler experience. *Italianità*, therefore, was built in part by the state's efforts and by the experiences of settler-colonization that flowed from those efforts.

While Italian emigrants did not individually share the same intentionality as the Italian state, they did participate in U.S. settler colonialism in other ways, both

in Italy and as emigrants in the American West. Through actively seeking and consuming American mass culture, Italians fueled the American settler culture machine that aimed to eliminate and replace American Indian cultures and justify U.S. sovereignty over Native lands. As consumers of American mass culture, Italians also became objects of American Indian resistance to colonization. The next chapter will explore the ways this occurred both in Italy and in the American West.

Chapter Three

The Wild West Becomes Italian: The Introduction of U.S. Settler Logics to Italy

“His name domineers everywhere,” claimed the national Italian newspaper, *La Stampa*, during the second Italian tour of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show in 1906. According to this report, “one [could] no longer glance at a shop window without his characteristic figure . . . leaping out in front of you in the most bizarre manner,” surrounded by “a phantasmagoric group of savage or proud or tame faces, of warriors of every race, red, yellow, or black.”⁷³ The image of posters plastering Buffalo Bill’s masculine, triumphant, gritty face in public spaces throughout Italy encapsulates the role of American mass culture in Italy at the turn of the twentieth century. The exportation of the mythology of the American West to Italy was well underway by the time Buffalo Bill first arrived in Italy in 1890. By then, the myth of the American West as the rugged backdrop for righteous white settler conquest of lands occupied by primitive and violent American Indians was a central component in American and foreign understandings of American history and identity. In Italy, this myth was the object of fascination. Buffalo Bill merely played one role in a larger network of cultural exchange between the U.S. and Italy that celebrated white conquest of American Indians. As Buffalo Bill’s show traveled back and forth

⁷³ “Cronaca Cody,” *La Stampa*, April 18, 1906, *La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867*, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod_libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,3/articleid,1209_01_1906_0107_0003_18218083/anews,true/, accessed on May 15, 2018, 3.

across the Atlantic, so did Italian emigrants, each carrying with them the belief in their right to American Indian land. The movement of people, information, impressions, language, and more between the U.S. and Italy solidified Italy's involvement in U.S. settler colonialism.

Italy and Italians joined the U.S. settler state and populace as settlers not only through settling the American West, but also by participating in American mass culture. As consumers of mass culture both in Italy and in the United States, Italians promoted the reproduction of settler logics meant to justify indigenous dispossession and white settler hegemony in the United States and abroad. Both Buffalo Bill's Italian tour and Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition presented American Indian performers as "pacified" or "civilized" representatives of the otherwise "primitive" members of the Indian race. American Indians, however, often used their platform when "on display" to oppose such narratives; and Italians were among the targets of this form of resistance to settler colonization. The appeal of mass culture that focused on the American West hinged on supporting, celebrating, and legitimating settler claims of sovereignty. Italian participation in these spaces that promoted the righteousness of taking American Indian land and putting it in more deserving white hands was an act of settlement. While attending a Wild West Show or taking a stroll on Chicago's Midway Plaisance were not overt acts of land theft, they certainly recognized and supported white American settler claims of sovereignty and rejected American Indian ones on the grounds of white racial superiority.

All of this occurred under the umbrella of transnational settler colonialism. Italy's process of becoming a part of white American settler colonization was mobile. It took place simultaneously on Italian, American, and American Indian soil, during the movement between these spaces, and as these spaces' borders and definitions changed over time. Through exposure to and consumption of American mass culture in all of these spaces, Italians integrated the settler logics American mass culture promoted into their own cultural expression and into *Italianità*.

Italy's third colonialism—it's involvement in transnational settler colonialism—sets it apart from other European colonial powers. Although German, British, and other populations participated in transnational settler colonialism through consumption of American mass culture just as Italy did, Italy's was much more influential in the formation of Italian culture and national identity than it was for other European nations. While transatlantic cultural exchange during the nineteenth century was integral to the development of both European and American cultures, for Italy it was also foundational to *Italianità*. There was no modern sense of *Italianità* that preceded the influence of American mass culture, and, therefore, the two are deeply entangled. Furthermore, the connections between the Italian peninsula and the Italian diaspora broadened the scope of *Italianità*. *Italianità* developed transnationally, including in the United States and under the influence of American mass culture traveling to Italy.

Buffalo Bill's Italian Tour

The legacy that Buffalo Bill brought to Italy was one that celebrated white settler attempts to eliminate American Indians from lands that they desired for themselves. The show promoted settler logics through its portrayal of American Indians as inferior, dangerous, and exotic due to their innate savagery and used the aura of historical accuracy to legitimate these claims. This spectacle of sensationalized history included American Indian performers who traveled with Buffalo Bill's show. Italians, and other Europeans, were fascinated by Buffalo Bill's message and by the American Indians on display. In fact, European audiences often showed much more interest in American Indian performers than American audiences.⁷⁴ According to the show, lands occupied by American Indians were primitive and only American whiteness could bring civilization to those lands. John Low argues that the impact of Buffalo Bill's narrative "was in the unification of the citizenry of the United States under these false hyperrealities."⁷⁵ These hyperrealities were the combination of Buffalo Bill's message laden with settler logics and the perceived authenticity of the "history" his show claimed to reenact. Through presenting a sensationalized version of history, Buffalo Bill spread an idea about America throughout Europe built on the settler logics that fueled American mass culture. In Italy, the extra emphasis on American Indian performers exacerbated the acceptance of the show's hyperrealities in Italy. In fact, as news coverage of Buffalo Bill's Italian tours demonstrates, Italian acceptance of these

⁷⁴ Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*.

⁷⁵ Low, *Imprints*, 128.

hyperrealities often blurred the lines between Italians and American settlers. The spectacle of a subdued indigenous population was particularly appealing to a new nation working toward establishing its own settler colonies, as Italian reactions to the show demonstrated.

Louis Warren explains that Buffalo Bill's show was "a spectacle of 'real' historical actors."⁷⁶ Colonel William Cody, or Buffalo Bill, relied on the perception of his show and his on-stage persona as a piece of living history to achieve success. As Low explains, however, this version of history exaggerated and falsified reality in order to make it exciting for audiences. By blurring the lines between spectacle and reality, Cody created hyperrealities that promoted the settler logics of racialization, elimination, disappearance, and displacement of American Indians. Cody created these hyperrealities through intertwining his life as a cavalry officer with the entertainer Buffalo Bill, making his two lives inseparable and thus capitalizing on settler violence. For instance, In 1876, Cody suspended his show to participate in the U.S. military's encroachment of Lakota territory in the Black Hills War.⁷⁷ Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho forces defeated the 7th Cavalry at the Battle of Little Bighorn, however, before Cody arrived out west. Cody used this timing to his advantage in what Bobby Bridger calls "one of the most singular instances in American history of the absolute obliteration of *any*

⁷⁶ Louis S Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 212.

⁷⁷ Bobby Bridger, *Where the Tall Grass Grows: Becoming Indigenous and the Mythological Legacy of the American West* (Golden: Fulcrum Pub, 2011), 112-113.

separation between theater and reality.”⁷⁸ In the aftermath of the battle, Cody killed a Cheyenne chief named Yellow Hair and “claimed the ‘first scalp for Custer.’”⁷⁹ Cody used this incident to promote his show and his reputation as a performer and successfully propelled his popularity to an unprecedented level in the United States and Europe. He used his taking of American Indian life in reality as an advertisement for his reenactments of similar events on stage. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, therefore, was a way for white settlers to constantly perpetuate, relive, and combine real and imagined settler violence.

When Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show arrived in Naples in January of 1890, Italian cities became immersed in the thrill of spectacular and exotic entertainment and became enveloped in Cody’s hyperreality. Italians attended Cody’s shows in droves, and scrutinized the performers’ every movements as they traveled across Italy. Gauging individual Italian reactions to and perceptions of Buffalo Bill’s show and the American Indian performers who accompanied it, however, is challenging. Firstly, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show did not reach all Italians. Although each show was highly attended and well-received, his tour favored northern cities, leaving out Italy’s large rural population and marginalizing the *Mezzogiorno*. Furthermore, the literacy rates in Italy during the nineteenth century resulted in few remaining records of individual Italian perceptions of the show. In 1871, for instance, sixty-

⁷⁸ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

nine percent of Italians were illiterate.⁸⁰ Newspapers, however, chronicled Buffalo Bill's tours of Italy, including reporting on Cody himself, American Indian performers, the content and popularity of the Wild West Show, and the logistics of the tour. While newspaper reports reflect an elite, northern perspective, they remain the most accessible way to determine how people in Italy reacted to Buffalo Bill and how they may have interacted with American Indian performers.

Buffalo Bill began his Italian tour in Naples in January of 1890. From there, he continued northward to Rome, Florence, Bologna, Milan, Venice, Verona, and other cities.⁸¹ The show returned in 1906, this time focusing even more heavily on northern Italy. As L. G. Moses has observed, Buffalo Bill altered his show when touring Europe "to make the story of the American West merge with the story of European expansion at a time when European colonization reached the far frontiers of its own empires."⁸² For Italy, however, the concept of becoming an imperial power was new. In the same year as Buffalo Bill's first tour, Italy declared Eritrea an Italian colony. Buffalo Bill's second tour coincided with the establishment of the Italian Colonial Institute and a renewed effort to establish Italian settlements in Africa. Italian reactions to the Wild West Show demonstrated that the show

⁸⁰ "Italy in Figures," National Institute of Statistics, Division for Communication and Publishing, accessed February 21, 2019, <https://www.istat.it/en/files/2011/06/Italy2011.pdf>.

⁸¹ L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians: 1883-1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).

⁸² Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna*, 111.

invited Italians to merge their story with Buffalo Bill's and imagine themselves as a part of a broader imperial narrative that included both Italy and the United States.

Two of Italy's oldest newspapers, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa*, followed major cultural events in Italy and elsewhere, including Buffalo Bill's European tours and the World's Columbian Exposition. Founded in 1876, *Il Corriere* was based in Milan, and *La Stampa*, founded in 1867 under the name *Gazzetta Piemontese*, was based in Turin. Their coverage of American mass culture, therefore, represents a primarily northern perspective. This perspective, although one-sided, is particularly useful when analyzing the development of colonial and settler-colonial logics in Italy. The audiences of *Il Corriere* and *La Stampa* overlapped with those who embraced settler-colonial logics the most. Northern Italian readers of newspapers were of the same demographic that sought to colonize the *Mezzogiorno*, develop Italian settler colonialism in Africa, and transform mass emigration into a colonial enterprise. Newspaper accounts of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show demonstrate that elite northern Italians indeed participated in American mass culture and absorbed its settler logics at the expense of American Indians. Furthermore, these newspapers include clues as to how these Italians also encountered American Indians pushing back against the dissemination of settler logics in Italy. In addition, the details of *Il Corriere's* and *La Stampa's* reporting on the Wild West Shows include evidence of its immense popularity beyond Italy's upper class and literate population. Although newspapers do not provide southern or lower-class reactions to Buffalo Bill's show or American

Indian performers, they provide evidence of their presence and access to American mass culture. Between the lines, these newspapers demonstrate the way Italian acceptance and celebration of Buffalo Bill's hyperrealities seeped in to the multidirectional development of *Italianità*. Italian news coverage, in addition to chronicling the show's popularity, bought in to Buffalo Bill's hyperrealities and consistently painted his Wild West Show as instructive of U.S. settler colonialism. From observing the show and what was going on behind the scenes, the Italian media drew conclusions about the tactics of American westward expansion, what it meant to be Indian, and how race structured American society. As a result, Italian perceptions of the American frontier were heavily informed by Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and its hyperrealities that conveyed settler logics of American Indian racial inferiority and inevitable disappearance. For Italians, the line between the frontier and the performance arena was perhaps even more blurred than for American audiences.

Italian news coverage built upon Buffalo Bill's already-established reputation in Europe and awed at its immense popularity as it traveled throughout Italy. Before the show traveled to Italy, Italians anticipated the exciting, violent, heroic, and exotic display of Cody's hyperrealities. In an 1887 review of the Wild West Show in London, *La Stampa* raved, "The show is one of the most alluring and exciting that one could ever attend. The very touching episodes of the adventurous life of the men of the American frontier are reproduced in such a realistic way that one forgets for a moment being seated calmly under a

comfortable and ample awning in London.”⁸³ Buffalo Bill’s show, Italian spectators would have heard, was a realistic portrayal of history. This history, furthermore, emphasized racial difference and authenticity. The same article advertised performances given “by genuine *cowboys*, by real Mexican *vacqueros*, and by legitimate Red Skins . . . under the direction of the legendary Buffalo Bill – the Colonel Cody.”⁸⁴ When Italians attended Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, they were not sold a ticket to a fictionalized dramatization. Instead, they were sold a ticket to a reenactment of history played out by those individuals who were actually there for the real event. Buffalo Bill’s show was not just fun to watch, it was a primary source on recent American history.

Before the show arrived in Italy, Italians had already consumed white American settler tropes and beliefs about what was “authentically” Indian and viewed American Indians as defeated and disappearing colonized subjects. Advertisements and reports of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show portrayed American Indians as possessing a natural penchant for unwarranted violence, general primitivity, a distaste for “civilized” things, incompatibility with modernity, and a commendable dedication to their disappearing way of life. This was always in contrast to Cody, who played the role of the pacifier and civilizer of the lucky few

⁸³ “L’apertura del’Esposizione americana a Londra,” *Gazzetta Piemontese*, May 21-22, 1887, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867, http://www.archiviola stampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1245_01_1887_0140_0001_18183404/ane ws,true/, accessed May 15, 2018, 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

American Indians in his show, and the conqueror of those he encountered in battle. The Italian review of Buffalo Bill's show in London described Cody as "the intrepid general of American troops in the various battles against the Indians." In contrast, the same article identified the American Indian performers as pacified versions of their once-savage selves they now played in the Wild West Show. In describing the performers after the show, the reporter describes the "same Indians, Sioux, Pawnees, Ogallalas . . . that filled our minds with dismay and admiration" in the show as "peaceful, calm, nearly mute in the presence of the public, well-fed, [and] spectacularly painted."⁸⁵ In this assessment, Cody's military defeat of American Indians has transformed these former threats to American expansion into relics of a disappearing race that Cody himself now befriended and protected.

With grand expectations of spectacular demonstrations of living history, it is no surprise that the Wild West Show's performance in Rome in 1890 drew "an immense crowd."⁸⁶ L. G. Moses characterizes Italian audiences as so large and enthusiastic that the show recuperated losses due to a lack of response in Spain. According to Moses, only Germany likely surpassed Italy in its excitement over the Wild West Show.⁸⁷ Italian reporting on individual performances confirms this. // *Corriere* described Buffalo Bill's first performance in Florence as a huge success:

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ "Lettera telegrafica da Roma," *Gazzetta Piemontese*, February 21-22, 1890, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1876, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod_avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1239_01_1890_0052_0001_21210271/aneWS,true/, accessed on May 15, 2018, 1.

⁸⁷ L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*.

“At the first performance of Buffalo-Bill, one could say that all of Florence attended. There was not an empty seat in the enormous paddock. Many people actually had to leave not finding any more seats.”⁸⁸ While Italian news coverage of the Wild West Show’s tour in 1890 was not as extensive as coverage of the 1906 tour, it still provides evidence that Italians reveled in Cody’s hyperrealities.

For instance, Italians made attempts to involve themselves in the Wild West Show during Buffalo Bill’s first Italian tour, including by producing and advertising parody productions.⁸⁹ Most notably, in 1890 a supplementary event was organized to settle a bet between the Duke of Sermoneta and Buffalo Bill. The Duke wagered that Buffalo Bill’s performers could not ride some of his unbroken horses, and arrangements were made for them to try. Between 10,000 and 15,000 Italians

⁸⁸ Gabardi, “Il Buffalo-Bill a Firenze,” *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, March 14, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MzovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MTM5OA%3D%3D>, accessed on May 11, 2018, 2.

⁸⁹ “Il carnevale a Roma,” *Gazzetta Piemontese*, February 15-16, 1890, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod_avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1239_01_1890_0046_0001_21210263/aneWS,true/, accessed on February 12, 2019, 1.

“La vita che si vive,” *Gazzetta Piemontese*, March 29-30, 1890, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod_avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1239_01_1890_0088_0001_21210284/aneWS,true/, accessed February 14, 2019, 3.

“La festa militare al campo di Bazzano,” *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, July 18, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MzovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGM0aWRhY3M0L0A3MjA3Mg%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 1.

attended the event and watched their world collide with Buffalo Bill's.⁹⁰ Italians came out not just to participate in American mass culture as consumers, but also as producers. Through such active participation in the world of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show outside of the performance arena, Italians joined in the settler-colonial project of producing culture that worked to eliminate American Indians. Through imagining themselves as superior horsemen, Italians claimed as their own one of the rough-and-tumble qualities Buffalo Bill championed as a part of American settler-colonial dominance. The spectacle of the bet between Cody and the Duke of Sermoneta allied Italians with white American settler society and further blurred the lines between theater and reality. Buffalo Bill's Cowboy's skills weren't merely theatrical for Italian audiences, they were a reproduction of their actions on the American frontier. Through participating in the spectacle of their horsemanship, Italians became a part of the hyperreality the Wild West Show created. In this case, the hyperreality was one in which Italians participated in the practice and development of the skills needed to conquer and settle American Indian lands.

⁹⁰ "La scommessa di Buffalo-Billi, a Roma," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, March 6, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NjovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MTU4OA%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 2. "Buffalo Bill's Cowboys in Rome," *Globe*, March 5, 1890, The Papers of William F. Cody, The William F. Cody Archive, <http://codyarchive.org/texts/wfc.nsp11918.html>, accessed May 12, 2018. "News from Rome," *London Evening Standard*, March 5, 1890, The Papers of William F. Cody, The William F. Cody Archive, <http://codyarchive.org/texts/wfc.nsp11900.html>, accessed May 12, 2018.

Italians also immersed themselves in Cody's hyperrealities through their direct interactions with American Indian performers. Even the slightest moment of contact between Italians and American Indians was newsworthy during the Wild West Show's 1890 tour. For instance, *Il Corriere* published an article entitled "Indian Scene: The trick of the electric lights," that briefly described an incident in which the power went out in the presence of some American Indians in costume.⁹¹ The sudden loss of light was met with silence by everyone except for the American Indian performers who "emitted their savage cry."⁹² According to the article, the reaction from the rest of the crowd was laughter. In this incident, Italians accepted wholesale the settler logics pertaining to American Indians that Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show promoted. Viewing American Indian performers in the arena of the Wild West Show taught Italians that American Indians were inherently uncivilized and prone to violence. However, it also taught them that individuals like Cody could tame American Indian individuals, ridding the world of their uncivilized nature. In other words, Indianness was disappearing, and the American Indians performers Italians encountered were relics of an inevitably disappearing way of life. *Il Corriere* reported that the American Indians' behavior in this incident was "savage," yet the Italians nearby interpreted the "savage" action as performative and unthreatening. The fact that this seemingly minor moment of contact was of enough interest for *Il*

⁹¹ "Recentissime telegrafiche," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, February 22, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MTovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MTE%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*

Corriere to publish speaks to the eagerness of Italians to adopt and reproduce settler logics at the expense of American Indians.

Similarly, *Il Corriere* published a detailed report of the camp and show program in Milan. It praised the English speaking skills of an eight-year-old American Indian boy who translated for Italian visitors to the Indian Camp. The translator's use of English suggests a language barrier that would have made substantive interaction between Italian spectators and American Indian performers difficult. However, according to the report, the boy communicated to his audience that the American Indian actors were not thriving in their Italian environment and that they "complained of cold and said that the journey had tired them."⁹³ The article also emphasized the ways in which the American Indian actors lived in the camp "like in the mountains or on the prairies of their country," and included descriptions of painted tents and noted that "[o]f the 65 indians only four or five will take accommodations in hotels, the others will sleep beneath their tents."⁹⁴ In this interaction, Cody invited Italians to view American Indians on display as examples colonized subjects. While Cody could not fully rid his American Indian performers of their naturally primitive nature, he did pacify them. They would never completely fit in to modern American—or Italian—life, which was made obvious by their living conditions that differed from others in Cody's camp, and therefore their ways of life

⁹³ "Buffalo-Bill a Milano," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, April 2, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NjovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MTcyMg%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

served as markers of the past and of what settler-colonial expansion rescued the American West from.

In another public stunt that blurred the lines between theater and reality and between Italians and American settlers, Pope Leo XIII—an Italian—held an audience with Cody and several American Indian performers in 1890. This event opened the door for Italians to actively participate in the settler-colonial effort to assimilate American Indians. In fact, the presence of American Indian performers at the meeting was of particular importance to Cody. *The American Register* reported that to arrange the inclusion of American Indians, Buffalo Bill claimed “that he had been the means of the conversion of several heathen Apaches, Nez-percé’s, and other native Americans in his Wild West.”⁹⁵ In order to convince the Vatican to include American Indians in the spectacle of their meeting, Cody constructed yet another false hyperreality in which he himself was responsible for the conversion of his performers to Christianity. In bringing his charges before the Pope, Cody invited Italians into this this hyperreality. The papal meeting, in essence, allowed Italian Catholics to join in on this conversion process and become a part of the “civilizing” effort they saw performed in Wild West Shows.

In the Cody-constructed version of the Papal meeting, the Pope, and with him the Catholic Italians who looked to him as a leader, reiterated common settler narratives. The American Indian performers received special permission to break

⁹⁵ “Italy,” *The American Register*, March 15, 1890, The Papers of William F. Cody, The William F. Cody Archive, <http://codyarchive.org/texts/wfc.nsp11887.html>, accessed May 12, 2018.

the traditional dress code for Vatican guests so they could attend in the same clothing they wore during performances. *Il Corriere* reported that the Pope's interaction with the American Indians was generous and gracious.⁹⁶ The Papal meeting enacted a fantasy of assimilation. The American Indian performers entered the Vatican as civilized and Christianized, yet dressed in a way that indicated their innate savagery and set them apart as inferior to the Pope's white settler guests. The American Indian performers were quite aware of this dynamic and found their Catholic hosts inhospitable. They took offense with the manner in which they were deliberately excluded from parts of the Vatican that their white counterparts were welcomed to.⁹⁷ Through the treatment of American Indian performers in such a way, Italians joined in and put their own spin on American effort to assimilate American Indians. Instead of working to make American Indians more white in an American sense, Italians imagined American Indians becoming more white in an *Italian* sense through imagining them as converted to Catholicism yet still inferior to Italian Catholics.

An article published in *La Stampa* after the meeting reaffirms that Italians read the American Indian performers' acceptance at the Vatican as an indication

⁹⁶ "La solenne commemorazione della incoronazione del Papa Leone XIII," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, March 4, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MzovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MTM0NA%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 1.

"NOTE VATICANE," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, March 9, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NDovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MTYyMA%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 1.

⁹⁷ Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 88.

of their genuine Catholicism and that Italians wanted American Indians to assimilate to Italian ways. The article explains that an Italian Catholic missionary visited Buffalo Bill's mobile city in Florence to oversee the religious care of the American Indians, including performing Catholic ceremonies with them during their stay in Italy. In reality, the sincerity of American Indian participation in Catholic rituals was likely varied, but *La Stampa* takes their sincerity for granted, partially due to the perception that their meeting with the Pope testified to their genuine faith. By providing Italian missionaries as religious stewards for Italy's American Indian guests, Italians worked to make American Indians more like them. The Italian focus on including American Indians in Catholic practices put a spin of "Italianization" on to the settler colonial project of "Americanization."

American Indian performers, however, spoke out against the Italian participation in the settler-colonial suppression of American Indian culture during Buffalo Bill's 1890 tour. American Indian performer Rocky Bear, for instance, was outspoken about his analysis of Italian treatment of himself and his comrades. He reported that Roman crowds treated American Indians with mockery, while towns further north were more friendly.⁹⁸ Rocky Bear made this known while in Rome, and expressed his desire to return to the United States. When speaking of his dissatisfaction with Italy, Rocky Bear alluded to the militaristic history of the Roman Empire and its enduring legacy in Italy while standing in the Roman Forum, saying "This country is no place for an Indian. The Government gives no rations, and

⁹⁸ Ibid., 91.

there are too many soldiers. I have seen the iron clothes that people used to wear. That would have been very bad for the Indian, but the soldiers are worse now.”⁹⁹ Although the audience of this speech is unclear, Rocky Bear created a platform in one of the most famous sites in Rome; one that once served as the seat of Roman imperial dominance. Rocky Bear occupied this space and advocated for himself and his American Indian colleagues in light of Italian behavior he found unacceptable. While many recorded interactions between Italians and American Indians occurred in the highly-controlled space of Buffalo Bill’s camp, Rocky Bear seized an opportunity to create his own space in Italy and speak out against Italian mistreatment of American Indian performers. His doing so demonstrates that, as with white settlers in the U.S., Italians experienced American Indian efforts to resist settler oppression.

The Italian interest in the U.S. settler-colonial expansion into American Indian territories and in American Indian performers lingered after Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show left Italian shores. Just a few months after Buffalo Bill’s first Italian tour, the Ghost Dance movement culminated in the Wounded Knee Massacre. // *Corriere* covered the Ghost Dance movement and in doing so placed the Ghost Dance Movement within the context of narratives from the Wild West Show. Italian reporting presents the Ghost Dance Movement from a white settler perspective—

⁹⁹ “Roman Society: A Touching Incident That Recently Occurred at the Vatican,” *New York Herald (Paris Ed.)*, March 16, 1890, The Papers of William F. Cody, The William F. Cody Archive, <http://codyarchive.org/texts/wfc.nsp11884.html>, accessed May 12, 2018.

as a dangerous, unsolicited Lakota rebellion meant to incite war with the U.S. military. In reality, the Ghost Dance was a peaceful religious movement that U.S. government agents viewed as threatening. Headed by the Paiute religious leader, Wovoka, the Ghost Dance religion spread across American Indian groups in the West, reaching the Lakota in 1889. Sam Maddra characterizes the religion, both in Wovoka's intent and in Lakota practices of it, as "one of universal peace."¹⁰⁰ At a time when the U.S. federal government's policy toward American Indians aimed at forced assimilation, and many American Indian communities, including the Lakota, were divided on how to respond to such policies, the Ghost Dance "played a crucial role in the stand the Lakota took against the engulfing culture of the whites, which was being forced upon them in the name of progress."¹⁰¹ While rejecting assimilation, the Ghost Dance instead argued for accommodation. According to Maddra, "[n]ot only were the Ghost Dancers cautioned not to fight with the whites, they were positively encouraged to work with them," including adopting certain white practices, such as farming and sending children to school.¹⁰² So, while the Ghost Dance was indeed threatening to the U.S. government in the sense that it effectively rejected and resisted assimilation through the assertion of American Indian religious practice, the movement and its

¹⁰⁰ Sam Maddra, *Hostiles? The Lakota Ghost Dance and Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 29.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 42.

followers never advocated for war or violent resistance. On the contrary, it prioritized inclusiveness and peace.

The agents of the federal government who encountered the Ghost Dance, however, misinterpreted the movement. The government's assessment of the Ghost Dance was that it was antiwhite and aimed at inciting violence. As Maddra points out, however, there were ulterior motives that may have encouraged such a misinterpretation. For instance, to the government the Ghost Dance, despite its doctrine, was simply "a shift backward toward pagan ways and thus a rejection of the assimilation programs it was attempting to impose on Plains Indians."¹⁰³ More specifically, Maddra suggests that James McLaughlin, the Indian agent at the Standing Rock Reservation, had been searching for justification to arrest Sitting Bull and painted him as the leader of the Lakota Ghost Dancers in order to do so. Jeffrey Ostler claims that government officials in Washington, D.C. had plenty of reports as to the peaceful nature of the Ghost Dance, yet instead chose to focus on the opinion of the inexperienced agent of the Pine Ridge Reservation, Daniel Royer.¹⁰⁴ In response to the perceived threat of the Ghost Dance, the U.S. government dispatched the cavalry to suppress the practice of the religion. In the efforts to contain the movement, Sitting Bull and his son were killed during an attempt to arrest Sitting Bull at his home. Afterwards, the U.S. cavalry intercepted

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey Ostler, "Conquest and the State: Why the United States Employed Massive Military Force to Suppress the Lakota Ghost Dance." *Pacific Historical Review* 65 (1996).

a group of three hundred Minneconjou and Hunkpapa traveling from the Cheyenne Reservation to the Pine Ridge Reservation. While disarming the captured Lakota, a shot from an unknown source was fired and instigated the massacre of the three hundred Lakota—two-thirds of whom were women and children—by five hundred U.S. cavalrymen.¹⁰⁵

Buffalo Bill capitalized on the tragedy and played a large role in spreading the false narrative that the Wounded Knee Massacre was a successful suppression of a violent, antiwhite American Indian movement. Similar to his blurring of theater and reality surrounding the Battle of Little Bighorn, Cody participated in the suppression of the Lakota Ghost Dancers and in the public demonization of Sitting Bull. Cody's counterpart, Major Burke, and several Lakota performers who worked for him returned to the Pine Ridge Reservation as the U.S. cavalry arrived to suppress Ghost Dancers. As Maddra summarizes, many newspaper reports at the time lauded the Lakota performers for supporting and even aiding in the suppression of the Ghost Dance. Cody also went on a mission covered by the press to arrest Sitting Bull. Having toured with his Wild West Show in 1885, Cody claimed friendship with Sitting Bull, yet was chosen by Washington to secure his arrest upon the assumption he was responsible for the rebelliousness of the Ghost Dance. At the last minute, however, the orders were rescinded and Cody never reached Sitting Bull. Historians have debated whether or not this was

¹⁰⁵ Martin Gitlin, *Wounded Knee Massacre* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2011). Heather Cox Richardson, *Wounded Knee: Party Politics and the Road to an American Massacre* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

merely an elaborate publicity stunt, but tend to agree that the series of events was, at the very least, bizarre.¹⁰⁶ Certainly, it contributed to Cody's construction of hyperrealities in his Wild West Show through positioning himself and his American Indian performers as first-hand witnesses and participants in the major events of Ghost Dance suppression and in westward expansion more broadly.

The Italian reporting of these events reproduced the U.S. government's version of events while contextualizing the Ghost Dance with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. *Il Corriere* emphasized that the intent of Ghost Dancers was to kill "hundreds of soldiers" but also described the Lakota as "an example if they are calm," alluding to the familiarity Italians had with Lakota performers from Buffalo Bill's tour as pacified and civilized through successful assimilation efforts.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Italian context for the Ghost Dance Movement came almost entirely from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. For Italians, there was no distinction between the hyperrealities of the show and the events that lead to the Wounded Knee Massacre. *Il Corriere* placed the Ghost Dance in the genealogy of the history they

¹⁰⁶ For a more detailed account of Cody's mission to arrest Sitting Bull and the historiographic debate surrounding the event, see: Chapter 4 of Sam Maddra, *Hostiles?*.

¹⁰⁷ "L'insurrezione indiana negli Stati Uniti Una congiura - <<La danza dello Spirito > Quel che ne pensa Buffalo Bill," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, November 27, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MjovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MjY3Mg%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 2. "L'insurrezione dei selvaggi americani," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, November 26, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NDovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MzA2Mw%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 2.

understood from Buffalo Bill's reenactment of the Battle of Little Bighorn: "The Sioux climb to 30,000 and are the most powerful of the Indian tribes in North America. The Americans have not forgotten the slaughter of general Custer, with 16 officials and 300 soldiers surprised by the Sioux, commanded by Sitting Bull, in 1876, in the canyon of Little Horn."¹⁰⁸ In this version of events, Italians positioned the stifling of the Ghost Dance, and thus the murder of Sitting Bull and the massacre of three hundred peaceful Lakota, as justified vengeance for Custer.

Il Corriere also referenced Buffalo Bill's role in Ghost Dance suppression, sought his analysis of the matter, and focused on the involvement of his American Indian performers. *Il Corriere* reported that "the Indians of Buffalo Bill intend to put themselves in the middle as pacifiers," keeping with the settler logic of assimilation.¹⁰⁹ The article then summarized Cody's personal assessment of the situation in which he condemned Sitting Bull in particular, and characterized him as incredibly dangerous and rebellious. Of course, this played in to the image he projected in the United States during his rather performative journey to arrest Sitting Bull. In the Italian mind, the Ghost Dance Movement and its violent suppression was yet another act on another stage of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. For Italian audiences, witnessing Buffalo Bill and his American Indian performers in an Italian arena was akin to witnessing American settler-colonial expansion in

¹⁰⁸ "L'insurrezione indiana negli Stati Uniti Una congiura - <<La danza dello Spirito > Quel che ne pensa Buffalo Bill."

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

action.¹¹⁰ The close association Italians imagined between the Ghost Dance Movement and the hyperrealities they consumed from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show qualifies as a settler-colonial practice. Stemming from their understanding of Indianness gained from the Wild West Show, Italians could see no alternative to a Ghost Dance narrative that positioned the Lakota as savage and therefore colonizable.

When Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show returned to Italy in 1906, it was still a popular attraction and was covered in more detail in the now more-established Italian newspapers. In Turin, the third and fourth showings had "the same success as those of the preceding [shows]," and "the bleachers of the ample paddock were squished" with attendees.¹¹¹ In Rome, seven thousand people attended, including representatives from the Italian government, and many spectators were unable to find a place to watch.¹¹² In addition to consistently high attendance to the performances themselves, the mobile camp was also a popular spectacle. The arrival of Buffalo Bill's camp was often a well-attended public event that admired and celebrated the American ingenuity and industrial success that the mobility of

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ "La seconda giornata di 'Buffalo Bill,'" *La Stampa*, April 24, 1906, *La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867*, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod_avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1209_01_1906_0113_0001_18219163/aneWS,true/, accessed February 14, 2018, 3.

¹¹² "Il successo di Buffalo Bill a Roma," *La Stampa*, March 23, 1906, *La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867*, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod_avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,2/articleid,1209_01_1906_0082_0002_18215983/aneWS,true/, accessed February 14, 2018, 2.

the camp and the massiveness of the operation represented. When Buffalo Bill arrived, Italians awed at the mechanics of American mass culture and of settler-colonial expansion. The 1906 tour began in Genoa, the famed birthplace of Columbus, as a gesture to Italy's connections to the beginnings of American empire and recalling the narrative that the World's Columbian Exposition told of the historical connections between the Italian explorer and U.S. settler colonialism. Buffalo Bill's arrival in Genoa was met with overwhelming excitement. As the train carrying the troupe arrived, *La Stampa* reported that,

“an enormous crowd gathered around from the Terralba rail yard, where the trains arrive, to the Piazza d'Armi. The unloading of the materials occurred in a marvelous way, and in less than three hours the whole colossal circus was installed in the Piazza d'Armi. A numerous crowd held back by guard ropes or policemen, attended the strange exposition.”¹¹³

In Genoa, Italians marveled at the efficiency and scale of Buffalo Bill's operation. The fascination with the mobile camp in conjunction with the show itself further blurred the lines between fiction and reality for Italian audiences. Buffalo Bill's grandeur was not just in the spectacles he put on, but in the example he provided of modernization.

¹¹³ “Buffalo Bill a Genova,” *La Stampa*, March 14, 1906, *La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867*, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component?option=com_lastampa/task/search/mod_avanzata/action/viewer/Itemid,3/page,2/articleid,1209_01_1906_0073_0002_18215891/aneuws,true/, accessed February 14, 2018, 2.

The fascination with the camp did not end in Genoa. The next month in Turin, “abundant rain” did not deter Buffalo Bill’s welcoming committee.¹¹⁴ *La Stampa* reported:

“Yet – oh! the great strength of human curiosity! – the horrible weather did not scare the public at all. A genuine crowd of people – men, gentlemen, children – on foot, by wagon, by streetcar braved almost..... serenely the inconvenience of the water.”¹¹⁵

Once again, the spectacle of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show in Italy extended well beyond the location and timeframe of a single performance. Colonel Cody was a symbol of the military and industrial success brought by U.S. settler colonialism, and Italian spectators took it all in.

Both inside and outside of the performance arena, Italians viewed Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show as a source of information about American empire. *La Stampa*’s coverage of the 1906 tour indicates that Italians looked to the Wild West Show to learn about the specific imperial tactics of American westward expansion. In a comparatively lengthy article entitled “That which Buffalo Bill teaches from a military point of view,” *La Stampa* examined the logistical operations of the traveling show as an example of American military organizational and logistical

¹¹⁴ “Cronaca: La prima rappresentazione di Buffalo Bill. L’arrivo della ‘Troupe,’” *La Stampa*, April 23, 1906, *La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867*, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,2/articleid,1209_01_1906_0112_0002_18218554/aneWS,true/, 3-4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

practices.¹¹⁶ The article even argued that prominent members of the Italian military attended shows in multiple cities in order to learn from the show's operation and from its representation of the American military. The article laid out specific lessons the Italian military could learn from Buffalo Bill's use of the Italian train system and argued that the Italian military should mimic Buffalo Bill's efficient movement of people, animals, arms, and materials in a potential time of war.

This came nearly a decade after the notoriously humiliating Italian defeat in Adwa, Ethiopia that temporarily halted Italian imperial efforts in Africa and just before Italy began actively exploring imperial opportunities in Libya. In Italian eyes, Cody's operation was, "especially from a military point of view, . . . [an] admirable example of American organization."¹¹⁷ Italians admired American settlement of the West and settler displacement and elimination of American Indians just as they sought to establish themselves in a similar way in Ethiopia and Libya. As Italian elites looked to settler colonialism as a way to foster *Italianità*, Buffalo Bill brought a massive celebration of settler colonialism to Italy and invited Italians to adopt the settler logics his show promoted.

The settler logics that set American Indians apart from modern society and were disseminated during Buffalo Bill's first tour were present during his 1906 tour

¹¹⁶ "Ciò che insegna Buffalo Bill dal lato militare," *La Stampa*, April 27, 1906, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod_avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1209_01_1906_0116_0001_18218940/aneWS,true/, 3.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

as well. In 1906, Italians actively engaged with American Indian performers in a way that celebrated Italian superiority over American Indians and aligned *Italianità* with the settler qualities they identified in the Wild West Show. As Moses suggests, American Indian performers were perhaps the largest single attraction of Buffalo Bill's show in Italy. Indeed, one reporter expressed that he was "[i]nterested more than anything in the Indian camp."¹¹⁸ A *La Stampa* interview with Cody's counterpart, Major Burke, reveals that Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was intended to instruct Italian audiences about American constructions of race.¹¹⁹ *La Stampa* included the following assessment from Major Burke about the show:

"It is a miracle of precision that Cody has obtained by the strength of patience. You will see how everyone agrees: Cossacks, Japanese, Indians, cowboys, English lancers, American horsemen, artillerymen, Arabs, Mexicans, chicos, gauchos, Cubans. You are amongst these intrepid men and marvelous mounts that seem welded to the saddle, they are so secure. The representations have in themselves an educational objective, since one does not happen every day to see these diverse human races or get to know their customs."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Gabardi, "Il Buffalo-Bill a Firenze."

Major Burke is misidentified in the article as "Maggior Bunker."

¹¹⁹ "Cronaca Cody," 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

One of the central appeals of the Wild West Show, and indeed of most mass settler culture, was its distinct layout of a racial hierarchy that put white settlers at the top. In the Italian experience of the 1906 tour, they enjoyed a spot at the top. In a sense, Buffalo Bill's display of racial hierarchy taught his Italian audiences that *Italianità* inherently included settler dominance.

Buffalo Bill actively fostered this sense of Italian superiority over American Indians through arranging meetings between Italians and American Indian performers. Records of these interactions come from Italian and American settler sources, and refer to interactions set up, highly surveilled, and controlled by Cody. As interactions between Italians and American Indian performers were nearly always under the auspices of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, it is difficult to ascertain the American Indian perspective. While many American Indian performers joined Buffalo Bill's show in order to take advantage of economic opportunities otherwise unavailable to them, Low notes that Buffalo Bill's show still "represented a hegemonic discourse where simulation could secure the consent of the subaltern when the real might not suffice."¹²¹ This same dynamic traveled to Italy. Interactions between Italian spectators and American Indian performers, therefore, were likely a kind of performance due to their controlled nature. The American Indian performers involved may have viewed these meetings as inconvenient annoyances, or as interesting opportunities to interact with and learn more about Italians, or as something else entirely. They may have felt the often

¹²¹ Low, *Imprints*, 129.

oppressive nature of the Italian presence—there to assess their authenticity and learn about the characteristics of their race—beneath their employer’s surveillance. They may also have created space for resisting or counteracting this oppression in the moment, as Rocky Bear did in the Roman Forum in 1890. In any case, the American Indian side of these stories is beyond the reach of the Italian records.

The false narrative of American Indian savagery and righteous white settler conquest was reproduced again and again in interactions between Italians and American Indian performers, which often occurred in Buffalo Bill’s camp. In Turin in 1906, Cody invited *La Stampa* journalists to observe and interview American Indian performers at an official breakfast at his camp. *La Stampa* reported:

“The invitees had for a little while the illusion of finding themselves in an encampment from the prairies, maybe prisoners . . . The ‘red-skins’ who, in spite of their evil, are truly authentic, appear fundamentally good and friendly people and excellent hosts. In an English very.problematic one of these dear friends, responding to the question asked of him on his impressions of Italy, responded with complete seriousness that he had not yet understood exactly why whites ‘build houses one on top of the other!!’ Accustomed to

the ground floor of their native huts, the Indians are always surprised by our buildings of several floors.”¹²²

Similar to the *Il Corriere*'s report of the young American Indian boy in 1890, this report dehumanized the American Indian performers and positioned them as incompatible with Italian and American modern life. Both articles preserve the “authenticity” of the performers by suggesting their living conditions in camp replicate their typical living conditions. They then highlight the ways that even Buffalo Bill's “civilized” Indians fail to integrate into modern life—going so far as to suggest that the performers cannot even fully grasp the concept of a multi-storied building. In these interactions, in which Cody clearly constructed a display of his performers for the benefit of the Italian media, further blurring the lines between theater and reality, American Indians are excluded from the Italian spaces of modern hotels and buildings, and instead relegated to their place in Buffalo Bill's camp. In the Italian mind, the distinct American Indian space was so incompatible with Italian space that the *La Stampa* reporter imagined himself as a prisoner in the camp. Italians in these interactions were, in a sense, enacting their role in U.S. settler colonialism. They participated in reconstructing the false narrative of American Indian racial inferiority in Italy, and attempted to control American Indians by keeping them at the margins.

¹²² “Cronaca: La prima rappresentazione di Buffalo Bill. L'arrivo della ‘Troupe,’” 3-4.

As Italians attended Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and participated in mass settler culture, they became immersed in Buffalo Bill's hyperrealities and the settler logics they promoted. This came at a time when the Italian state was beginning to enhance its own colonial endeavors in Africa, as part of an effort to foster a sense of *Italianità* that equated Italianness with settler dominance. Although few attendees to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows would have drawn explicit connections between American settler colonialism and Italy's other colonialisms, they both worked to inform the development of any sense of collective Italian experience around the turn of the century. Italian exposure to settler logics and participation in U.S. settler colonialism, however, did not occur solely in Italy. With patterns of Italian emigration funneling expatriots across the Atlantic, and with the continued spread of American mass culture throughout the world, Italians also fell under the influence of events such as the World's Columbian Exposition, which celebrated and legitimated U.S. settler logics.

“All (rail) roads lead to Chicago”¹²³: Italians and Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition

No resident of Chicago in 1893, including Italian emigrants, could have escaped the sensation that was the World's Columbian Exposition. An excellent

¹²³ Julian Ralph, *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair: The Chapters on the Exposition Being Collated from Official Sources and Approved by the Department of Publicity and Promotion of the World's Columbian Exposition* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1893), F548.5 .R16 1893, Larry Zim's World's Fair Collection, 1841-1988, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

example of American mass culture, this World's Fair celebrated Chicago as a symbol of the American industrial dominance of the wild west and aimed to prove that Chicago was a world-class metropolis on par with past World's Fair hosts such as Paris, London, and New York. Materials that the Exposition's Department of Publicity and Promotion produced placed Chicago's rapid growth and success in a broad narrative of the progress of western civilization. *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair* claimed that "Chicago paraphrases an ancient Roman boast. She likes to say that 'all (rail) roads lead to Chicago.'"¹²⁴ The World's Columbian Exposition was intended to showcase Chicago as a new and important seat of American empire and demonstrate how far west industrial progress had brought the United States.

Chicago was remote when compared with former host cities of World's Fairs, and as such the Exposition advertised it as a bastion of American progress and civilization in an otherwise culturally, industrially, scientifically, and agriculturally void region. The fair commemorated the four-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus's "discovery" of America. The narrative the Exposition created tied Columbus's story to the history of Chicago. In doing so, it connected American westward expansion to a history and legacy that Italians viewed as theirs, thus including Italians in the celebration of white progress. In the stories the Exposition told through published promotions and exhibits, Columbus discovered America and set in motion a freight train of progress, which, the fair emphasized,

¹²⁴ Ibid.

often involved actual trains traveling through Chicago. As the fair told it, civilization forged westward and reached Chicago, where innocent pioneers encountered the savagely violent Potawatomi, who instigated war with the United States and eventually voluntarily surrendered the land upon which Chicago was built. This narrative far from accurately describes the historical events that led to the Potawatomi displacement from Chicago, and Native activist Simon Pokagon made this known at the Exposition. The emphasis of Columbus as the beginning of this false narrative, however, minimized the divide between Italians and the Potawatomi.

The Columbian Exposition not only celebrated U.S. settler colonialism and its extension as a European legacy, but itself actively colonized. Those who were a part of the Exposition—as performers, exhibitors, or visitors—participated through either actively or passively bolstering the proclaimed legitimacy of U.S. settler sovereignty over American Indian lands and justifying settler violence to displace or eliminate American Indians from their lands. Italians living in Chicago and in Italy would have been well aware of the Exposition, and many would have taken part in various ways. Even though Italy did not officially participate in the Exposition and the number of Italian visitors is unknown, Italy and Italians were part of the global community that produced and consumed World's Fairs and as such would have received the messages of settler authority the Columbian Exposition emitted to a global audience.

As Robert Rydell and others have proven, World's Fairs near the turn of the century were extremely significant cultural, economic, and political affairs that were highly attended and represent some of the first steps toward a more globalized cultural consciousness in the United States and Europe. In the United States, World's Fairs brought an economic boost to host cities and "deeply influence[d] the content of many individual and collective beliefs and values."¹²⁵ At the very least, World's Fairs held in the United States helped define American national identity for the rest of the World. World's Fairs created and disseminated American exceptionalist narratives constructed by "the country's political, financial, corporate, and intellectual leaders" and backed by the U.S. government.¹²⁶ These narratives were a celebration of "progress and white supremacy" dependent on the "popularization of evolutionary ideas about race and progress."¹²⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis was famously delivered to the American Historical Association during the World's Columbian Exposition and exemplifies the Exposition's explicit purpose of celebrating American westward expansion and the resulting perceived white racial dominance in the region. With Columbus's figure and name inescapable at the fair, the Columbian exposition clearly tied white settler progress back to Columbus as a starting point.

¹²⁵ Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

At the heart of these narratives of white progress were American settler claims to American Indian land. The Columbian Exposition celebrated American Indian disappearance as a natural side effect of progress. Exhibits throughout the fair promoted racist ideologies that used the monikers of science and anthropology to argue that American Indians were an inherently uncivilized race that would naturally succumb to American progress lest they chose to accept the civilizing, assimilationist policies of the U.S. government. Much like Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, making a spectacle out of human difference made this narrative entertaining. Fairgoers in 1893 stepped into a space where everyone was classified and organized. The world was divided into cultures defined by race, and those cultures were divided into the categories of civilized and uncivilized.

The Exposition itself was a colonial enterprise in several ways. Firstly, the Fair took place on Potawatomi land, and explicitly celebrated the American forceful acquisition of that territory as a symbol of progress during ceremonies on Chicago Day. Secondly, European colonial powers were portrayed as civilized and successful while indigenous peoples of the world were portrayed as backward and either threatening or made docile by the civilizing efforts of European colonization. Thirdly, the Fair's anthropological and ethnological exhibits were the result of extracting Native cultural objects from Native communities regardless of those communities' consent.

27,529,400 people attended The World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park. For the fairgoers, the grounds were a marvel of architectural achievement.

From spectacular domed buildings to waterways traversed by Venetian gondoliers to larger-than-life sculptures, everywhere a fairgoer looked, he or she found extravagance. Exhibits celebrated manufacturing, agriculture, architecture, fine art, natural science, anthropology, and more. States and foreign nations contributed their own buildings, exhibits, and pavilions. Perhaps the most popular attraction of the Exposition, and one that made it stand apart from previous World's Fairs, was the famous Midway Plaisance.

A narrow strip of land connected to the main fairgrounds, the Midway fell under the purview of the Department of Ethnology. Along the Midway, people the Department of Ethnology deemed uncivilized and therefore exotic and worthy of public study and scrutiny were put on display in their "natural habitat." Each group lived in a model of a dwelling the Department of Ethnology believed typical of their culture. The Midway was much like a zoo for white fairgoers to study others' whose race made them less-than-fully human. In fact, the Midway also included a zoo of sorts in the form of Hagenbeck's Circus. The juxtaposition of an exhibition of animals being tamed and "uncivilized" people in a controlled setting further emphasized the intended purpose of the Midway as a place for fairgoers to educate themselves on the progress of mankind. On the Midway, visitors could gaze upon the living human past, and were invited to compare themselves with these primitive, inferior individuals who were, quite literally, closer to animals than white people were.

The same messages were reiterated throughout the Fair, particularly in the Smithsonian's exhibit in the U.S. Government Building, in the Anthropology Building, in the Midway-like Penobscot Village, and in the replicas of Cahokia mounds and Ancestral Puebloan dwellings. Just off the fairgrounds, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show provided a popular ancillary activity for visitors in Chicago. Buffalo Bill was denied a spot in the fair due to a desire to avoid the lack of scientific authority in his representation of human anthropology. However, as his Italian tour demonstrated, his Wild West Show reiterated many of the same narratives of settler colonial progress and dominance that the Exposition promoted.

Italians were privy to the centrality of the science of race at the Exposition and to the fair's message that American westward expansion was due to white superiority over American Indians. Although no records were kept on the national origins of fairgoers, the 1892 census placed Chicago's Italian population at 9,921.¹²⁸ Italians participated in the Exposition both in Italy and in the United States as exhibitors, newspaper readers, and as visitors. Those participating in or from Italy were likely among the northern elite, as wealth and literacy were concentrated in the north. Italians participating in Chicago, however, or traveling from elsewhere in the United States, were likely less economically advantaged as the vast majority of Italian emigrants hailed from the rural south. The Exposition's messages, therefore, had pathways in to diverse Italian communities. With Italians both actively and passively participating in the Columbian Exposition, Italy again took

¹²⁸ Ralph, *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair*.

part in U.S. settler colonialism. It is difficult to determine exactly what Italians specifically experienced at the fair, or the extent to which individual Italians participated. The overall Italian state participation and general fairgoer experience, however, give an approximate idea of what Italians likely were exposed to.

Italy did not officially contribute as a full participant in the Columbian Exposition, but they did offer isolated exhibits. A report on the Foreign Department of the Exposition claims this was due to diplomatic tensions resulting from the 1891 lynching of eleven Italian emigrants in New Orleans.¹²⁹ However, an issue of *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, a periodical dedicated to the fair during its construction, published two months after the lynchings, claimed Italy acted "from motives of economy."¹³⁰ While the lynchings may have been a factor in Italy's decision or their reasoning to the Foreign Department, it is likely that the latter explanation was what ultimately prohibited formal Italian participation. The King of Italy had appointed a World's Fair commissioner to coordinate Italy's many contributions, and the financial aspects of contributing to the fair were an issue of public concern in Italy.¹³¹

¹²⁹ John J. Flinn, *Hand-Book of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: The Standard Guide Co, 1892), T500.A2 F66X 1892, World's Fairs and Expositions Collection, Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

¹³⁰ James B. Campbell, etc. ed., "Italy Will Not Take Part," *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated: Devoted to the Interests of the Columbian Exposition, Art and Literature* 1, no. 4 (May 1892): 10, T500.B1 W92 folio, World's Fairs and Expositions Collection, Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Library, New York, New York.

¹³¹ James B. Campbell, etc. ed., "Italy Coming.," *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* 2, no. 1 (March 1892): 22, T500.B1 W92 folio, World's Fairs and

Despite not participating at the level of some other European nations, Italy was still present throughout the Exposition. Firstly, the prominence of Christopher Columbus at the Exposition wove Italy into the thematic foundation of the Exposition itself. Statues of him, a replica of the Convent of La Rabida—where Columbus lived and prepared for his voyage, a Columbus exhibit, and replicas of the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria comprised Columbus’s palpable presence in Jackson Park. While many of the allusions to him referred to his Spanish patronage, Columbus himself was always portrayed as Italian and represented the Italian contribution to American empire. Official and unofficial reports of the fair often began their narratives of how the Exposition came to be conceptualized with biographies of Columbus, which began in Genoa.¹³² To reconcile the dueling contributions of Spain and Italy to Columbus’s legacy, one volume detailing the Exposition declared, “Spain was the Father of the New World, Italy its Mother.”¹³³ Clearly, the Exposition’s understanding of *Italianità* included the claiming of Columbus as Italian.

Expositions Collection, Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum Library, New York, New York.

¹³² Campbell, *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*.

Tryon Edwards, *The Story of Columbus: And the World's Columbian Exposition* (Detroit, Mich: F.B. Dickerson Co, 1892), E111 .E39 1892, World's Fairs and Expositions Collection, Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

¹³³ H. G. Cutler, *The World's Fair: Its Meaning and Scope, Its Old-World Friends, Their Countries, Customs and Religions, What They Will Exhibit: The United States at the Fair, the City and the Site, the Colossal Structures* (San Francisco, Calif. : Chicago, Ill: King Publishing Co. ; Star Publishing Co, 1892), 10, T500.B1 C88 1892, Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Italy's major concrete contributions included the Italian Pavilion, Venetian gondolas and gondoliers, small contributions to larger exhibits, and an Italian lace exhibit in the Women's Building, which was often noted as one of the most stunning elements of the Women's Building. These contributions, along with the role Italians played as consumers of the Exposition made Italy an involved part of the fair, albeit to a lesser extent than other European nations that played larger roles. Although there is no telling how many Italians from Italy traveled to the Fair, how many Italian emigrants traveled there from within the United States, or how many Italian residents of Chicago attended the Fair, they certainly had opportunities to attend. Italian newspapers advertised voyages from Milan to the Exposition and published reports of a few who made the journey.¹³⁴ Northern Italian elites who did not travel to Chicago would have been on the receiving end of news coverage of the event.

Italians who attended the Exposition, read about it, or heard about it through other means would have known of its extravagance. The Columbian Exposition was housed on massive fairgrounds over a six-month period and included an overwhelming number of exhibits, sights to see, shows, and events. All of these were for the purpose of celebrating American progress in a location in the West. This history of Chicago, therefore, was important to the Exposition, and many of the materials the Department of Publicity and Promotion disseminated highlighted

¹³⁴ "Esposizione di Chicago," *Gazzetta Piemontese*, June 3, 1893, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component?option=com_lastampa/task/search/mod_avanzata/action/viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1233_01_1893_0153_0001_18443608/, accessed February 21, 2019, 3.

Chicago's history. For those who did not read those materials, Chicago Day on October 9, 1893 put Chicago history center stage and educated fairgoers about it.

The Exposition's written histories of Chicago counted westward expansion as a sign of overall American progress and celebrated America's conquering of the West at the expense of American Indians. These written accounts informed the narratives peddled on Chicago Day at the fair. They nearly always began with what they called the Fort Dearborn Massacre, an isolated battle that American Indians—mostly Potawatomi—won. These histories decontextualized the Battle of Fort Dearborn, asserted that the Potawatomi were the unprovoked aggressors, and included dramatic accounts of the Potawatomi killing of twelve children. Italian newspaper coverage identified the beginning of Chicago history in a similar way. In a special issue of *Corriere della Sera* dedicated to the Exposition, an article entitled "Chicago" opens with the statement, "In the location where Chicago is, nothing existed in 1830 but the small advance endeavor of a fortification constructed by the federal Government to keep in consideration the Indians."¹³⁵ In the Italian reproduction of the fair's official narrative, American Indian presence in the region was both insignificant before white arrival and threatening once settlement began.

¹³⁵ "Chicago," *Corriere della Pomeriggio: Altri Supplementi*, October 30, 1893, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NTovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3AxL0AxMTQxNDU%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018.

In reality, a much longer history of settler invasion, theft of American Indian land, and violence on both sides characterize this region and period. The immediate cause of tensions that resulted in the battle was the destruction of supplies that Fort Dearborn's commander had promised to the Potawatomi. John Low explains that "[who] fired the first shot is unclear, as we are left primarily with the subjective written accounts of the non-Native survivors," like those used at the Exposition.¹³⁶ In contrast, Low notes that Potawatomi accounts of the battle emphasize provocations from the United States, that "it is quite possible that the Americans attacked the Potawatomi first," and that the commander of Fort Dearborn may have made an unsuccessful attempt "to ride into a nearby Potawatomi village to attack the women and children there."¹³⁷ These elements were left out of the constructed narrative that the Exposition would promote on Chicago Day. However, fairgoers attending Chicago Day may also have encountered Native resistance to the rampant settler narratives repeated throughout the fair.

Chicago Day was by far the most heavily-attended day of any World's Fair to date. With 718,881 tickets sold, Chicago Day more than doubled the sales of the second highest sales day, which sold 309,294.¹³⁸ One record estimated that

¹³⁶ Low, *Imprints*, 180-181.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹³⁸ William Evelyn Cameron, *The World's Fair: Being a Pictorial History of the Columbian Exposition ... with a Description of Chicago, Its Wonderful Buildings, Parks, Etc* (Chicago: Chicago Publication & Lithograph Co, 1893), 830, T500.B1C3, World's Fairs and Expositions Collection, Dibner Library of the

combining tickets sold on Chicago Day with previously-purchased passes indicated an attendance of “more than three quarters of a million souls—twice as many as ever had been gathered on one day in one inclosure at any previous exposition.”¹³⁹ On Chicago Day, Simon Pokagon, a Potawatomi leader, author, and activist, was invited to speak and delivered his famous speech, “Red Man’s Rebuke,” which he printed on birchbark and sold. The speech was a passionate condemnation of the Exposition itself, the Exposition’s celebration of the white settlement of Chicago, and consistent settler abuse of Native trust and Native people.

In this speech, Pokagon asked his audience to question the accepted historical narrative that the Exposition promoted and consider the American Indian perspective. Pokagon intended his presence at the fair to assert and represent an enduring Potawatomi presence in Chicago, which contrasted with the fair’s displays of American Indians as inevitably disappearing. John Low describes the fair’s presentation of American Indians as either “those deemed capable of assimilation/civilization versus those who were not.”¹⁴⁰ Pokagon’s involvement and his speech, however, “served as a third alternative to the ‘civilized Indians’ under government control within the fairgrounds and the ‘savages’ in Buffalo Bill’s Wild

History of Science and Technology, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

¹³⁹ Rossiter Johnson, *A History of the World’s Columbian Exposition Held in Chicago in 1893* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897), 453, T500.B1 J6X 1897, Larry Zim’s World’s Fair Collection, 1841-1988. Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴⁰ Low, *Imprints*, 62.

West show playing just outside the Exposition.”¹⁴¹ In this way, Pokagon altered the narratives on the most well-attended day in World’s Fair history. Settlers, including Italians, attending on Chicago Day, therefore, encountered resistance to their colonizing presence in Jackson Park.

“Red Man’s Rebuke” explicitly spoke out against the unbalanced interpretations of history the fair promoted that vilified American Indians as naturally “savage,” saying: “our worst acts of cruelty should be viewed by all the world with Christian charity, as being but the echo of bad treatment dealt out to us.”¹⁴² He spoke directly to his audience, and implored, “pause here, close your eyes, shut out from your heart all prejudice against our race.”¹⁴³ Pokagon used his position at the Exposition to flip the narrative and make an impassioned appeal to one of the largest single cultural gatherings in recent history. In the conclusion of his speech, Pokagon tells a story that, like his very presence at the fair, challenged the inevitability of American Indian disappearance and the endurance of white settler dominance. In his final vignette, he tells of a scene in a hybrid Potawatomi and Christian afterlife where “Tche-ban-you-booz, the Great Spirit” summons Europeans to his left and American Indians to his right. To the American Indians, he says:

¹⁴¹ Low, 62.

¹⁴² Simon Pokagon, *The Red Man’s Greeting, 1492-1892* (Hartford, MI: C.H. Engle, 1893), E77.6.P76 1893, Special Collections, Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

“Sons and daughters of the forest, your prayers for deliverance from the iron heel of oppression through centuries past are recorded in this book now open before me, made from the bark of the white birch, a tree under which for generations past you have mourned and wept. On its pages silently has been recorded your sad history. It has touched my heart with pity and I will have compassion.”

To some Europeans, he says:

“Sons and daughters of the East, all hear and give heed unto my words. While on earth I did great and marvelous things for you—I gave my only Son . . . A few of you have kept the faith; and through opposition and great tribulation have labored hard and honestly for the redemption of mankind regardless of race or color. To all such I now give divine power to fly on lightning wings throughout my universe.”

To “the remaining shame-faced multitude,” he says “with a voice of thunder”:

“Hear ye : it is through great mercy that you have been permitted to enter these happy hunting-grounds. Therefore I charge you in the presence of these red men that you are guilty of having tyrannized over them in many and strange ways.”

He then lays out a lengthy and detailed explanation of sins committed against American Indians, and finally concludes:

“Therefore know ye, this much-abused race shall enjoy the liberties of these happy hunting-grounds, while I teach them my will, which you were in duty bound to do while on earth. But instead, you blocked up the highway that led to heaven, that the car of salvation might not pass over. Had you done your duty, they as well as you would now be rejoicing in glory with my saints with whom you, fluttering, tried this day in vain to rise. But now I say unto you, Stand back ! you shall not tread upon the heels of my people, nor tyrannize over them any more. . . . And know ye, ye cannot buy out the law or skulk by justice here ; and if any attempt is made on your part to break these commandments, I shall forthwith grant these red men of America great power, and delegate them to cast you out of Paradise, and hurl you headlong through its outer gates into the endless abyss beneath—far beyond, where darkness meets with light, there to dwell, and thus shut you out from my presence and the presence of angels and the light of heaven forever and ever.”¹⁴⁴

Even though this story is imagined in the afterlife, its message is one of American Indian persistence in the face of settler atrocities. With his rebuke at the Columbian Exposition, amidst hundreds of thousands of colonizers, Pokagon rejected their attempt to make him comply with a celebratory recognition of American rights to Native land. Instead, he explained history from his perspective, encouraged his

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

audience to question their accepted knowledge, and quite literally condemned those who wronged American Indians, including those who stood idly by. Any Italian travelers or emigrants who may have been in the audience, or heard of his speech indirectly, certainly fell into the category of the condemned. Despite Italy's distance from American Indian lands, and comparatively rare interactions with American Indians, Pokagon's speech on Chicago Day demonstrates that Italians were not immune to exposure to Native resistance to the settler colonization in which they took part.

The Exposition presented Pokagon's presence as it did that of other American Indians—as a celebration of American Indian defeat and disappearance. In this case, Pokagon was intended as a relic to the American taking of Chicago from the Potawatomi. Pokagon was a pervasive presence on Chicago Day. In addition to his speech, he participated in a ceremonial ringing of the Liberty Bell, a lacrosse game, and played a part in a parade float commemorating the Fort Dearborn "Massacre." The fair's official accounts of Pokagon's role on Chicago day downplayed his speech and instead focused on him as proof of the legitimacy of white settler sovereignty in Chicago. An account of the parade identifies Pokagon as the "Pottawattamie chief . . . whose father formerly owned the land on which Chicago now stands."¹⁴⁵ Another history of the Exposition describes his role in the ringing of the Liberty Bell:

¹⁴⁵ Johnson, *A History of the World's Columbian Exposition Held in Chicago in 1893*.

“Mayor Harrison then sounded the Liberty Bell in honor of the thirteen original States, using a rope made of fibers contributed by the thirty-six different foreign countries. Chief Pokagon, of the Pottawatomie tribe of Indians, then presented to the Mayor the original deed by the terms of which the site of which Chicago stands was ceded to the United States. The instrument bears date October 9th, 1833, and conveyed 700,000 acres of prairie land at three cents per acre. The Mayor responded in a characteristic address, in which he alluded to his own descent from Pocahontas.”¹⁴⁶

This description reveals the message the Exposition hoped to convey with Pokagon’s presence. Chicago Day was held to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Pokagon’s father signing the Treaty of Chicago, which ceded the land on which Chicago stood to the United States. Pokagon’s involvement in the ceremonies of the day was meant to convey the continued Potawatomi recognition of U.S. sovereignty. Accounts of his involvement, therefore, downplay Pokagon’s speech. Instead, the account highlighted the Mayor’s attempt to justify continued settler presence in Chicago. The Mayor claimed not only Native ancestry, but descent from someone settlers would have considered Native royalty. In this version of the story, Chicago was fairly purchased from the Potawatomi and its current inhabitants also had legitimate claims of rightful inheritance of the land due to his Native ancestry. The attempted silencing of Pokagon’s speech, however, was

¹⁴⁶ Cameron, *The World’s Fair*, 809.

unsuccessful, as it lived on in the form of text printed on birchbark that fairgoers could take home with them as a souvenir.

Italian fairgoers on days other than Chicago Day would have consumed settler narratives as well. These were on display most ostentatiously on the Midway. Reporting in *Corriere della Sera* described the Midway's displays of people, including American Indians, as "grotesque" and "not made to please people of good taste" in one article and as "enchanted" and "fun" in another.¹⁴⁷ Both reflect the manner in which fairgoers were encouraged to compare themselves to peoples on the Midway who were presented as inferior to them. This included American Indians. In addition to the American Indian Village, the Midway included Sitting Bull's Cabin. Through Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, Sitting Bull would have been a known figure to Italians. The cabin was relocated to the fair for display on the Midway and was advertised as significant because it was the location of Sitting Bull's death. Within the Cabin, a museum of general American Indian relics and personal items of Sitting Bull's were on display. In addition, his niece, Pretty Face, displayed and likely sold beadwork. This played in to the Midway's overt and intentional celebration of American Indian defeat. The

¹⁴⁷ "L'Esposizione di Chicago," *Corriere del Pomeriggio: Nazionale*, July 10, 1893, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MzovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3AxL0AxMTE4NTE%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018.
 "L'Esposizione di Chicago," *Corriere della Sera*, May 30, 1893, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NDovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3ODQ5OA%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018.

transformation of Sitting Bull's cabin into a museum celebrated his murder at the hands of the U.S. government and satisfied a public desire of vengeance for Custer. Furthermore, the physical removal of his cabin from its original location to the Midway was but one of many examples of the Exposition's theft of Native patrimony.

As in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, the legend of Custer was popular at the fair. In the American Indian Village, Rain-in-the-Face, a participant in the Battle of Little Bighorn, was catalogued as an item on display. His presence in the government-run environment of the fair was meant to convey the control the U.S. had attained over he who had participated with Sitting Bull in—as the official catalog of the Midway put it—the “Custer massacre.”¹⁴⁸ Any Italian visitors of the Midway would have been well aware of the settler version of the Battle of Little Bighorn. It's prominence in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, at the Columbian Exposition, and in other forms of American mass culture made the Battle of Little Bighorn a well-known and popular story in Italy. Italians visiting Sitting Bull's Cabin and encountering Rain-in-the-Face would have implicitly been joining in the celebration of what was portrayed as the inevitable decline of the once powerful Lakota, made satisfying by Custer's legendary demise.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ *Official Catalogue of Exhibits on the Midway Plaisance. Part XVII, 1893, Group 176: Isolated Exhibits, Midway Plaisance* (Chicago: W.B. Conkey, 1893), T500.H1 W67 1893, World's Fairs and Expositions Collection, Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴⁹ *Official Catalogue of Exhibits on the Midway Plaisance.*

Descriptions of the American Indian performers such as Rain-in-the-Face in the American Indian Village make it clear that the intended purpose of including them in the Midway was to portray them as threatening, yet soundly defeated or tamed by American progress. A description of Lone Dog, for instance, claims he found “infinite delight in checking off his record of atrocities in peace and war,” and explains that, for now, he “has returned to his agency to be a ‘good’ Indian until he thinks it will pay him to be a bad one.”¹⁵⁰ In the official portrait of Lone Dog as he likely dressed on the Midway, he is wearing a bone shirt and has feathers in his hair—a look that Italians would already have associated with ideas about American Indians they learned from things like Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. By seeing what they likely expected in the American Indian Village, Italian visitors may have been reassured in their knowledge of American Indians. By seeing American Indians in the context of a living ethnographic exhibit, and in fact positioned quite closely to the military camp on the Midway, Italian visitors would have received the intended message of the Exposition that American Indians had been effectively colonized.

Italian visitors also would have had the opportunity to interact with American Indians. Although this occurred during Buffalo Bill’s tours of Italy, this experience would have been much more accessible on the Midway. The fair’s description of Lone Dog’s behavior of listing his “record of atrocities” was meant to be an example

¹⁵⁰ *The Columbus Portfolio of Midway Plaisance Types at the World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893, Part 2* (Chicago, Ill: American Engraving Co, 1894), GN340 .C65 1894, World’s Fairs and Expositions Collection, Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

of his innate savagery, but this certainly was not the case. While the veracity of the report of Lone Dog's behavior is unknowable, if Lone Dog did indeed use the Midway as a space to speak of his triumphs over the U.S. military, he could have done so for many deliberate reasons. He may have been pandering to the desires of his audience for personal gain, using his role in the Exposition to his own advantage. Alternatively, he may have been personally celebrating his resistance to settler colonization and continuing that resistance by reiterating his successes in hindering settler encroachment. Of course, it is impossible to determine Lone Dog's intentions or even his true actions. More importantly, on the Midway, he was at least partially in control of how he interacted with visitors, meaning he may have had and taken opportunities to shape the narrative fairgoers received in any way he may have wanted.

In addition to the Midway, the other displays that fell under the purview of the Departments of Anthropology and Ethnology also promoted the settler logic that American Indians were racially incapable of progress and thus destined to disappear. These exhibits included many items extracted from Native communities for the purposes of display at the fair. In the Anthropology Building, racialized social science was made interactive with an exhibit in which guests could get a physical evaluation to see where they stacked up in relation to other races.¹⁵¹ In the

¹⁵¹ Francis Arthur Banther, *Natural science at the Chicago Exposition* (London: Rait, Henderson, Ltd., printers, 1893), 341, Q105.U62 C4n 1893, World's Fairs and Expositions Collection, Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

Government Building, the Smithsonian exhibit included wax figures of American Indians. Much like the Midway, these exhibits reduced Native life, culture, and peoples to objects to be studied. An article published in *Corriere della Sera* described these wax figures in detail for its readers. Few exhibits received such specific attention with explanations of individual displays in Italian reporting. The description concludes with the analysis that the exhibit “makes [one] involuntarily think of the doctrine of Darwin.”¹⁵² Of course, the association this journalist made fits the exhibitors’ design, as the mission of the anthropological and ethnological displays at the Exposition was indeed to provide scientifically-based evidence for similar theories regarding the racialized progress and evolution of mankind.

Every corner turned at the Columbian Exposition presented another celebration of American progress and westward expansion as part of a legacy that began in Genoa, Italy with Columbus. The Exposition occurred at the height of World’s Fairs’ influence and popularity in European and American mass culture. Its influence reached far and rippled throughout the western world. Through its influence, the settler logics it promoted were disseminated to audiences who attended, read about, or heard of the Exposition. This, of course, included Italians who may have traveled to Chicago from Italy, from within the United States, or from across town. As with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, Italian participation in the Columbian Exposition as consumers bolstered the settler colonial claims the fair made about American Indian inferiority and white settler sovereignty over

¹⁵² “L’Esposizione di Chicago,” May 30, 1893.

American Indian land. With this involvement in U.S. settler colonialism, however, came exposure to American Indian resistance, most notably through Simon Pokagon's famous influence.

Conclusion

Early in Italy's post-unification history, when the state was still working towards defining and promoting a common sense of *Italianità*, the Italian state and Italians began participating in U.S. settler colonialism. As one component of a more complex and emerging identity as a colonial nation, Italy's involvement in U.S. settler colonialism played a role in the development of collective Italian cultural experience. The unusually common emigrant experience in Italy was deeply tied up in U.S. settler colonialism as Italian emigrants in the American West functioned as Italian settler colonizers who claimed Native space for both Italy and the United States. During the long period of mass Italian emigration, Italians in both Italy and the American West participated in mass settler culture that constituted the circulation of settler logics throughout Italy. Italians' role in supporting and promoting U.S. settler colonialism became a common experience for Italians at a time when little tied the new nation together. However, the centrality of settler colonialism in the formation of *Italianità* included more than Italy's role in U.S. settler colonialism. Italy's other forms of colonialism also greatly informed Italians' understandings of themselves in relation to their nation and their understandings of their nation in relation to the world. The role of settler colonialism in the formation

of *Italianità*, moreover, became even more central after the rise of fascism in Italy. With renewed zeal, the Italian state and the Italian people set their sights on establishing settlements in Africa, all the while drawing upon their understandings of settler-colonial logics gleaned from their consumption of American mass culture in the nineteenth century.

Chapter Four

Expressing a New Identity: Italy's Fascist Settler Colonialism, the *Brava Gente* Myth, and Western *Fumetti*

As *Italianità* became imbued with settler logics gleaned from American mass culture and from Italy's three colonialisms, Italy's settler-colonial desires and those desires' connections with *Italianità* only strengthened. Despite the relative failure of Italian elites and government officials to instill a sense of national unity during the first half-century of Italy's history as a modern nation, the exposure of Italians to American mass culture ensured that settler logics were circulating throughout Italy and playing a role in the slow, loose development of *Italianità*. When fascism rose to popularity after World War I, however, the Italian people came together like they never had before. For the first time, the Italian populace got behind the government's efforts to equate *Italianità* with settler-colonial expansion into Africa. The period between the rise and fall of fascism in Italy saw the greatest increase in national unity the nation had seen. Therefore, when the fascist state was abruptly disassembled and Italy immediately lost control over their colonies in Africa, the nation faced an identity crisis. Out of that identity crisis, however, settler logics became even more deeply engrained in *Italianità* as Italians continued to engage with transnational settler colonialism as Italian popular culture found ways to live out settler fantasies and continue the reproduction of settler logics in Italy.

Settler Colonialism in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943

Mussolini's immense popularity was unprecedented in Italy, as was the loyalty to the state that fascism quickly engendered among the populace. Christopher Duggan, in his *Fascist Voices* (2013), describes the influence Mussolini's fascist regime had on the Italian people:

“[It] was in terms of emotions that Mussolini's Italy was simultaneously so powerful and so insidious. In stressing the moral and political superiority of faith and obedience over rationality and criticism, the regime was able to mobilise huge swathes of previously untapped popular support. But at the same time, the ethos and institutions of fascism undermined constructive dissent at both individual and public level, fostered conformism and weakened the sense of personal responsibility. No less dangerously, the culture of enthusiasm promoted a pernicious disjuncture between words and reality. As crowds roared their support for the inflammatory rhetoric of Mussolini, the substance of what was being said – and the potential implications – easily became lost in the fog of collective euphoria. The consequences in terms of human suffering and death were to be incalculable.”¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (London: Vintage Books, 2013), xxiii.

The role of morality in sparking public interest and dedication was a large part of Mussolini's imperial goals in Africa, and some of the human suffering and death that Duggan refers to occurred in Africa. In fascist thinking, Italy's surplus population transformed from a problem to an asset. Mussolini believed that a high birth rate was morally good, and his demographic campaign to encourage an increase in the Italian birth rate was a significant part of his vision for Italy. Good, moral Italians would produce more good, moral Italians, which would multiply the number of patriots loyal to the state. More importantly, Mussolini believed that the emigration of the surplus population worked for the further empowerment of Italy. Italy needed to consistently extend its global presence or suffer grave consequences.¹⁵⁴ In fascist rhetoric, Italy could be either the colonizer or the colonized. Mussolini sought to transform Italy into an imperial nation that returned Italy to the status and glory of the Roman Empire, and this meant creating a populace with a moral code that glorified behaviors Mussolini found beneficial to the state.

As in liberal Italy, the fascist state turned to Africa when searching for places to build a reputation as an imperial power and as a location for Italy's surplus population to expand. Libya became the initial focus of the regime's colonial efforts. Fascist leaders saw the Libyan coast as the key to the Mediterranean and thus the key to restoring Italy's hold on the region to the level of Ancient Rome. Mussolini had the support of many Italians who believed in the fascist claim that modern Italy

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

had the right and duty to reclaim former Roman territories, influence, and power. Mussolini concentrated Italian imperial efforts, therefore, in Libya, and later in Ethiopia, due mainly to Italy's past presence there and its proximity to Eritrea and Somalia.

Libya

Since Italy had taken control of the Libyan coast from the Ottoman Empire, only a small but influential population of Italians lived in Libya. Libya's interior remained controlled by indigenous populations, and the leaders of the *Istituto Coloniale Italiano* believed that the key to controlling the Libyan interior was settling a permanent population of Italian emigrants there. Count Giuseppe Volpi became governor of Libya in 1921 and implemented strategies to accomplish his goal of military conquest of Libya before Mussolini became prime minister. Volpi wanted no indigenous claims of sovereignty in Libya challenging the Italian claim, and his effort to militarily conquer the interior of Libya was known as "reconquering" due to Ancient Rome's former claim to Libya. Volpi ended all former practices of dealing and cooperating with indigenous leaders, instead seizing any uncultivated land as "public domain" and employing Libyan soldiers in order to exacerbate internal divisions and infighting amongst Libya's indigenous groups.

Volpi and the fascist state adopted the racialized justifications for seizing indigenous lands that the state employed during the Liberal era and that Italians had observed in American mass culture. The fascist state emphasized indigenous

people's inability to use the land to its full potential. Italian geographers conducted studies of indigenous groups in Libya and ranked them on scale that equated their Italian-defined race with their ability to become civilized. Of course, as David Atkinson explains, "even 'racially pure' groups such as the Taureg were categorized as 'degenerate' and 'inferior' to Europeans."¹⁵⁵ The similarity between this and social science theories popular in the United States at this time was not coincidental. Each were part of an extensive system of logic and scientific scholarship that many imperial and colonial nations employed to prove their natural superiority over indigenous peoples and that were celebrated in the anthropological exhibits of the Columbian Exposition.

Despite the relative seamlessness in colonial ideology between the liberal and fascist periods, Volpi's methods in Libya differed from the ones that would soon characterize the fascist period. Instead of prioritizing the political goal of using Libya as an outlet for the overpopulated *Mezzogiorno*, Volpi insisted on capital investment to first prepare Libya's interior for demographic colonization. In 1923, Volpi instituted a system by which wealthy investors could purchase cheap land in Libya in exchange for making improvements on the land. The purchaser would not receive his land grant in full until the agreed upon improvements were completed.

In 1926, less than a year after Volpi resigned from his post, Mussolini made the first visit of any prime minister to Italy's African colonies. The trip was widely

¹⁵⁵ David Atkinson, "Constructing Italian Africa: Geography and Geopolitics," in *Italian Colonialism* eds. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 21.

advertised and accompanied a propagandistic push to rouse enthusiasm for settler colonialism among the Italian public. Mussolini took great interest in African colonization as he saw it as an important part of supporting a growing and expanding Italian population. Volpi's policies, however, were attracting northern investors, not southern emigrants, and so Volpi's policies were replaced by the "De Bono laws." These new policies emphasized settlement. Libya was broken into zones for settlements of emigrant populations and zones for economic development. Land concessions now included requirements for resettling landless Italians as well as requirements for developing the land. The De Bono laws also increased the amount of government funding available to aid in land development.

Initially, these changes increased Italian settlement in Libya, but did not nearly meet the 53,000 new Italian emigrants in five years that the policy promised. Instead, the number of Italians in the Tripolitania region of Libya, a large portion of whom were Sicilian, increased from 1,778 individuals to 7,000 from 1929 to 1933.¹⁵⁶ The reasons for this failure were mostly financial. Neither Italian investors nor the Italian government had the capital necessary to develop and settle Libya's "public domain." This and later experiments under De Bono to increase colonization were simply too expensive.

The Italian population increase in Tripolitania under the De Bono laws did not translate to other areas of Libya. In Cyrenaica, the influx of settlers was much

¹⁵⁶ Claudio G. Segrè, *Fourth Shore: The Italian Colonization of Libya* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 69.

more gradual, partly due to resistance from the people of Cyrenaica. The impact of the Italian presence, however, was catastrophic. Mussolini ordered the creation of concentration camps in Cyrenaica that operated from 1930 to 1933. These were by no means the only instances of the Italian state using deportation and internment in attempts to govern and control both Italians and indigenous Africans.¹⁵⁷ Instead, they exemplify a pattern of strategic violence that characterized Italian colonialism. In Cyrenaica, Italians forcibly removed and interned somewhere between 90,000-100,000 individuals from the Jabal-Akdhar region of Libya.¹⁵⁸ This constituted about twenty percent of the Jabal-Akdhar population and nearly half of the population of eastern Libya.¹⁵⁹ According to Nicola Labanca, “[punishments], executions, and deaths by starvation were daily occurrences” in the camps.¹⁶⁰ All told, an estimated 50,000 Libyans died in the camps during their three years of operation.¹⁶¹ The intent of these camps were to ensure the segregation of Italian settlers and Libyans. This, along with anti-miscegenation laws passed in 1937, derived from the fascist desire to preserve the purity of the Italian race. In their function, however, they also worked toward

¹⁵⁷ Nicola Labanca, “Italian Colonial Internment,” in *Italian Colonialism* eds. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

¹⁵⁸ Anna Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation: Colonial Legacy, Exile and the Emergence of a New Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 48.

¹⁵⁹ Labanca, “Italian Colonial Internment.”

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶¹ Labanca, “Italian Colonial Internment,” 32.
Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation*, 48.

eliminating a rebellious indigenous population that threatened Italian demographic colonialism.

After the closing of the concentration camps, the Italian population in Italy was still small. When Italo Balbo became the Governor of Libya in 1934, the total Italian population in Africa was only 70,000—less than one third the annual population increase in Italy at the time.¹⁶² Balbo took advantage of existing colonization companies to increase Italian settlement in Libya. These companies were created for the express purpose of choosing Italians from the lower classes to relocate to Libya. The government ceded Libya's "public domain" to these companies and helped finance their efforts. The colonies the companies established, however, failed to attract the desired population of settlers and paled in comparison to Balbo's main contribution, known as the *Ventimila*. A decree in 1938 laid out the plan for twenty thousand Italians to settle in Libya every year for five years. In addition, Italy would end its official, genocidal policy of exterminating indigenous peoples. Instead, Libyans who had participated in Italy's Ethiopia campaign would receive a limited form of Italian citizenship, while other indigenous Libyan communities would have their governing structures dissolved, fall under Italian control, and be segregated from the Italian population. So while genocidal elimination was officially abandoned, forced displacement and subjugation was still key to Italian efforts.

¹⁶² Segrè, *Fourth Shore*, 83.

The *Ventimila* was a fleet of ships and its 20,000 passengers that journeyed to Libya in 1938. According to Claudi Segrè, “the *Ventimila* ranked as one of Fascism’s spectacular feats, as important for its propaganda value as for its substance.”¹⁶³ The *Ventimila* and their settlement in Libya received immense praise from both the fascist Italian and international press. The following year, Balbo’s organized mass migration settled 10,000 Italians in Libya, but without the fanfare of the *Ventimila*. Large concerted efforts to encourage settler colonization of Libya such as these abruptly ended, however, as Italy entered World War II in 1940 and the state’s priorities shifted. Italy’s settler colonialism in Libya would officially end three years later when British and French forces defeated Italian forces in Libya.

Ethiopia

In 1935, with victory in Libya squarely secured through genocidal tactics, the fascist regime looked to Ethiopia to continue its expansion of the Italian empire. Mussolini began exploring the possibility of an invasion in 1932, and on October 2, 1935 Mussolini declared war on Ethiopia to a large crowd in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome. The invasion of Ethiopia was immensely popular in Italy. When the League of Nations and Great Britain condemned Italy for violence in Ethiopia, the Italian public viewed the condemnation as a sign that Italy had become a powerful threat to other European imperial powers. People wrote letters to Mussolini offering

¹⁶³ Ibid., 102.

their support for the invasion, and sometimes included passionate attacks on Ethiopians that encouraged the regime to engage in total war against Ethiopia to avenge the loss of the battle of Adwa. Again, this mimicked attitudes prevalent during the nineteenth century when Italians engaged in American mass culture. For instance, the view espoused in Italy that Ghost Dance suppression, and the resulting Wounded Knee Massacre and murder of Sitting Bull, was successful revenge for the Battle of Little Bighorn entailed the same settler logics promoting indigenous racialization and elimination that this desire to avenge Adwa did.

As in Libya, the fascist regime abhorred what they viewed as the liberal humanitarian tactics of Italy's early colonialism. Mussolini ignored the Geneva Protocol that Italy had ratified and deployed chemical weapons to conquer Ethiopia. Italy poured millions of Lire into the production of chemical weapons, and after the conquest of Addis Ababa in 1936, embarked on a campaign to exterminate Ethiopians resisting Italian rule. According to Alberto Sbacchi, during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, Italy dropped "roughly 2,100 poison gas bombs, conservatively equivalent to five hundred tons of poison gas."¹⁶⁴ Mussolini gave the orders to use chemical weapons directly. To attempt to justify chemical warfare to the international community, Italy invoked the settler strategy of racializing indigenous peoples as innately savage and portrayed Ethiopian resistance to

¹⁶⁴ Alberto Sbacchi, "Poison Gas and Atrocities in the Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-1936)," in *Italian Colonialism* eds. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 49.

Italian occupation as barbaric, unprovoked violence that necessitated drastic retaliation.

The use of chemical weapons, however, was well-hidden from the Italian public due to the efficacy of fascist censorship—whereas the fascist opposition media railed against concentration camps in Cyrenaica. Italian troops in Africa were forbidden from reporting chemical warfare to their compatriots back home. The result of Italy's inhumane violence in Ethiopia was an incredibly one-sided war. Between 70,000 and 275,000 Ethiopians were killed compared to 4,500 Italians.¹⁶⁵ In one incident in 1937, two Eritreans killed seven and injured fifty Italians with grenades thrown into a crowd of Italian officials. Within two days, Italian troops had killed between 3,000 and 6,000 Ethiopians in retaliation. The Italian public closely followed successes and victories in Ethiopia, and news of defeats were downplayed or not reported. However, as a result of fascist censorship and propaganda, the news of chemical warfare in Ethiopia after World War II was met with shock by the Italian public.¹⁶⁶

In addition to genocidal tactics, Italy instituted mechanisms for controlling portions of the Ethiopian population through isolation. Part of this effort came from the Catholic church. Despite the legacy of overwhelming violence in Italian colonialism, the Catholic church supported the invasion of Ethiopia, believing it would provide opportunities for missionary efforts. The missions the church

¹⁶⁵ Duggan, *Fascist Voices*, 267.

¹⁶⁶ Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 505.

established in Ethiopia helped Italian occupation by isolating Ethiopians under their charge and claiming space and authority for Italy.¹⁶⁷ In 1937, the fascist regime issued a decree forbidding the intermarriage of Italians and Ethiopians. This stemmed from the proclaimed fear that Italian troops' solicitation of Ethiopian prostitutes would produce a class of mixed-race people who would be disloyal to Italy. To enforce this rule, the regime instituted strict segregation in Ethiopia. Italy designated separate Ethiopian and Italian sectors and forcibly relocated Ethiopians to establish them. In urban centers, Italians needed permits to enter Ethiopian ghettos and Ethiopians and Italians were forbidden to interact except for business purposes.

As in Libya, the fascist regime attempted to foster mass settlement of Italians in Ethiopia. This, however, failed even more spectacularly than in Libya. All told, however, fewer than 400 Italians relocated to Ethiopia as a part of government resettlement programs. Italy never achieved its goal of firmly establishing demographic colonialism in Ethiopia. In 1941, Ethiopian resistance and the British Army gained control of Ethiopia. Not long after, Italian colonialism collapsed altogether and the fascist regime crumbled.

This abrupt end to settler colonialism and to fascist power sent Italy spiraling into a national identity crisis. The loyalty to the state that fascism developed came with the notion that *Italianità* depended on imperial dominance akin to that of the

¹⁶⁷ Haile Larebo, "Empire Building and its Limitations: Ethiopia (1935-1941)," in *Italian Colonialism* eds. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 84.

Roman Empire. Before Italian settler colonialism in Africa became anywhere near what Mussolini and the Italian public envisioned, postwar Italy entered into a period of attempting to cover up their settler-colonial crimes. The memory of the horrific violence Italy inflicted on Libyans and Ethiopians in order to eliminate and displace them to make way for Italian settlement was intentionally erased from records of the Italian past. Instead, the idea of the *brava gente*—that of Italians as a “good people”—replaced the role of settler-colonial dominance in *Italianità* while preserving practices of racializing nonwhites and non-Italians. Despite Italy’s best attempts, however, settler-colonial logics remained wrapped up in Italian expressions of identity and in the Italian daily experience due to the influence of transnational settler colonialism in Italian postwar cultural production.

***Fumetti*, Italian Postwar Cultural Production, and the Emergence of the *Brava Gente* Myth**

To preserve settler colonial logics in postwar *Italianità*, Italians continued to participate in transnational settler colonialism—primarily through postwar cultural production, and in particular on the pages of *fumetti*. The shelves of newsstands and bookstores throughout Italy are filled with *fumetti*. Since their rise to popularity in the postwar era, *fumetti* have been a part of daily Italian life. As such, their pages have provided space for the formation and expression of *Italianità* and have influenced generations of Italians. This began with the role *fumetti* played in Italians coming to terms with the sudden end of Italian settler colonialism in Africa. On the pages of *fumetti*, as well as elsewhere, Italians began redefining themselves as

the *brava gente* after the loss of World War II, the fall of the Fascist regime, and the forfeiture of their African colonies. Unlike other European empires, Italy was thrust into its postcolonial era abruptly. This did not signify, however, the end of Italian settler-colonial desires or the end of the influence of settler-colonial logics on Italian life. As Christina Lombardi-Diop, Alessandro Triulzi, Luca Acquarelli, and others have argued, after the end of large-scale Italian colonial endeavors in Africa, Italians engaged in simultaneous neglect and nostalgia of racialized colonial violence in Africa.¹⁶⁸ This neglect and nostalgia remains in Italy today, as relics of the postwar era still constitute daily Italian experience. Ever since their surge to popularity in the 1940s, Italian *fumetti* have embodied the Italian struggle to outwardly forget while still re-living its colonial past. The very first publications have been consistently re-printed and re-sold, each time preserving and reproducing their original purpose for the next generation of Italian fans.

Angelo del Boca argues that Italy's widespread denial of colonialism in Africa is due to the fact that, unlike other European nations that claim a postcolonial identity, Italy never had a "severe and definitive debate about the colonial

¹⁶⁸ Cristina Lombardi-Diop, "Postracial/Postcolonial Italy," in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, eds. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Alessandro Triulzi, "Hidden Faces, Hidden Histories: Contrasting Voices of Postcolonial Italy," in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, eds. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Luca Acquarelli, "Sua altezza imperiale. L'obelisco di Axum tra dimenticanza e camouflage storico," *Zapruder*, no. 23 (September-December 2010).

phenomenon.”¹⁶⁹ Jacqueline Andall explains that Italy experienced “an unusual form of external decolonization in the immediate post-war period and was dispossessed of its colonies.”¹⁷⁰ Although the continuation of colonial practices, including *fumetti*, makes the moniker “postcolonial” problematic for Italy and other nations with colonial histories, Italy’s complete lack of the public ritual of decolonization played a large role in Italy’s postwar national identity crisis. Fascism and its foundational emphasis on establishing a settler-colonial Italian empire in Africa had made *Italianità* more effectively than anything in Italy’s short history as a modern nation-state. It is no surprise then that when fascism and settler colonialism were outwardly rejected and forgotten after World War II, their functional linkage with *Italianità* changed little. As any acknowledgement of settler-colonial violence became taboo almost immediately after the fall of fascism, Italy repressed its colonial desires. However, Italian cultural production failed to shift into post-fascism or postcoloniality and continued to subtly, if not outwardly, reproduce fascist and settler-colonial ideologies.

As Italians collectively experienced their still young nation’s postwar political, economic, and social struggles, *Italianità* evolved. A collective sense of Italian nationhood had to reconcile the sudden unacceptability of its foundational

¹⁶⁹ Angelo Del Boca, “The Obligations of Italy Toward Libya,” in *Italian Colonialism* eds. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 195.

¹⁷⁰ Jacqueline Andall, “Immigration and the Legacy of Colonialism: The Eritrean Diaspora in Italy,” in *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*, eds. Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 191.

elements. In dealing with racialized settler-colonial violence in Africa, the *brava gente* myth—the idea that Italy was made by a “good people”—emerged as the solution and was both reflected in and promoted by postwar *fumetti*. The myth of Italians as the *brava gente* preserved much of the rhetoric surrounding Italian attempts at settler-colonialism in Africa. For instance, the *brava gente* myth confirmed the fascist message that the Roman Empire’s connections to Northern Africa made claim over African territory a part of Italian historical and cultural patrimony. The *brava gente* myth downplayed the overall violence and significance of settler colonialism in Africa in the recent Italian past. According to the myth, the *brava gente* were rightfully occupying territory that was already theirs, improving it for both Italians and for Eritreans, Ethiopians, and Libyans. Any memory of violence against Eritreans, Ethiopians, and Libyans was intentionally suppressed. In addition, the *brava gente* myth obscured racial diversity within Italy, which carried the overtly, passionately, and violently racist aspects of Italian colonial ideologies into concepts of *Italianità* that would later affect African immigrants to Italy—a minority of whom came from former Italian colonies. The *brava gente* myth became an integral part of *Italianità* during the postwar era, in part through its consistent development and reproduction in Italian modes of self-expression and shared experience. Among these expressions and experiences were *fumetti*. These affordable and widespread comic books were easily accessible to the Italian public and issues and series from the postwar era remain classics today. Although at times *fumetti* have experienced successful international distribution and

popularity, as Elizabeth Leake argues, they are fundamentally Italian productions intended solely for Italian audiences, and thus reflect a collective Italian psyche.¹⁷¹

Writer Giovanni Luigi Bonelli and his early publications spearheaded the transformation of *fumetti* into a pop cultural phenomenon. The search for a new way to express what it meant to be an Italian is palpable in the earliest iterations of Bonelli's most successful *fumetti*. This is especially true for *Tex*, Italy's longest-running and most consistently popular *fumetto*. *Tex*, along with the subsequent Bonelli *fumetti* it inspired, cultivated and expressed the *brava gente* myth by appropriating many of practices and tropes from U.S. settler colonialism that Italians had long been exposed to and a part of. Bonelli *fumetti* employ language and imagery that recall the Italian understanding of U.S. settler colonialism that developed near the turn of the nineteenth century. The *brava gente* myth intentionally elided Italian memories of Italian colonialism and its anti-African racism and violence. In this process of redefining Italians as a *brava gente*, Italians produced and consumed *fumetti*. The coincidence of these processes made *fumetti* into a space where Italy created and performed its developing senses of self.

The *Brava Gente* and Italian Postcolonial Memory

¹⁷¹ Elizabeth Leake, *Tex Willer: un cowboy nell'Italia del dopoguerra* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2018), 14, Apple Books.

The concept of Italians as a *brava gente* or “good people” refers to the unchallenged, persistent, and intentional “partial reading, revisionism, and opportunistic amnesia over . . . the Fascist colonial campaigns and in general the entire colonial enterprise.”¹⁷² This cultivation of memory began in the 1940s and dominated Italian popular culture and scholarship. The *brava gente* myth was both widely accepted and long lasting, and scholars of postcolonial Italy recognize it as essential to the Italian postwar project of redefining *Italianità*. Luca Acquarelli argues that this type of “forgetfulness” toward the past is not “a passive process but a precise mechanism that becomes established in the soul of a culture.”¹⁷³ In this case, Italy’s forgetfulness toward its settler-colonial violence in Africa sets it apart from other colonial nations in that Italy only recently began reckoning with the violence and atrocity of its colonial past. According to Acquarelli, the myth of the *brava gente* and of a benevolent Italian colonialism persisted into the 1980s, despite the myth’s complete disregard of historical fact.¹⁷⁴

Chiara Ottaviano notes counter narratives that challenge the veracity of the *brava gente* myth emerging as early as the 1960s, but agrees that until then the existence of Italy’s former African colonies was rarely acknowledged.¹⁷⁵ The *fumetti* that transnational settler colonialism produced, however, do not present

¹⁷² Teresa Fiore, “Italy’s Colonial Memories and Postcolonial Cultures,” *Italian Studies* 66, no. 3 (November 2011): 445.

¹⁷³ Luca Acquarelli, “Sua altezza imperiale. L’obelisco di Axum tra dimenticanza e camouflage storico,” *Zapruder*, no. 23 (September-December 2010): 67.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁷⁵ Chiara Ottaviano, “Riprese coloniali. I documentari luce e la ‘settimana income,’” *Zapruder*, no. 23 (September-December 2010): 11.

these counter narratives and continue to reproduce the *brava gente* myth even today. Bonelli *fumetti* consistently produce stories and characters that promote the *brava gente* myth by imagining an Italian, *brava gente* version of U.S. settler colonialism. While the images and ascetics of Bonelli *fumetti* are borrowed from American culture, the fictional world of the *fumetti* and the culture it engages with is entirely and distinctly Italian. The juxtapositions of American settler-cultural practices and expressions of *Italianità*, however, functionally reproduces both U.S. settler-colonial and Italian settler-colonial ideologies in a way that directly targets and marginalizes American Indians. In effect, the Italian pop-cultural expression of the *brava gente* myth both preserves Italian racialized colonial logics and participates in U.S. settler-colonial practices of appropriating and distorting Native American culture for settler purposes.

The false notions that constructed the *brava gente* myth revolve around defining Italian identity using understandings of settler and indigenous identities that circulated in Italy as part of transnational settler colonialism. Much like Cody's creation of hyperrealities and his blurring of lines between theater and reality, the *brava gente* myth and its expression in *fumetti* work to alter historical narratives in a way that justifies past settler violence. In essence, the *brava gente* myth is the lack of public recognition of Italian settler-colonial violence in Africa. This occurred in Italian government, academia, and popular culture. Therefore, the components of the *brava gente* myth are what filled the void left from discarded public memory. In Bonelli *fumetti*, as in American and Italian settler-colonial systems of logic,

racialization of the indigenous is central in distancing Italians from settler violence. To fully understand the pervasiveness and definition of the *brava gente* myth, it is helpful to break it down into five main components, all of which are reflected in the proposed notions of Italian national identity presented in Bonelli *fumetti*. When viewing these five components combined as a cohesive mythology, the *brava gente* identity is characterized by the simultaneous perceptions of Italians as humanitarian colonizers and as rightful owners of the African lands they attempted to settle.

I. The *brava gente* myth was made by and for Northern Italians.

First of all, the *brava gente* myth portrays an imagined and fictional unified Italian national identity that elides complicated social structures and histories. The *brava gente* identity does not accurately define what it means to be an Italian, nor does it represent every individual Italian's sense of belonging in or relationship to their national community. Instead, the *brava gente* myth represents a constructed component of *Italianità* that the most powerful classes in Italy chose to project to the Italian public and to the rest of the world. The success of the *brava gente* myth, however, has made it a central and influential component of how Italian cultural and political expression has constructed *Italianità* since the fall of fascism. Many Italians have consumed and continue to consume the *brava gente* myth and perceive it as based in truth. Acquarelli and Ottaviano observe that the extent to which the *brava gente* myth was widely accepted diminished over time. The

enduring popularity of Bonelli *fumetti*, however, is demonstrative of the myth's persistent and looming presence in Italian cultural production. Even if the *brava gente* myth has been exposed as false, it remains a popular indulgence for Italian readers of *fumetti*.

The myth itself is less than inclusive of all Italians and rests on the concept that Italy is a postcolonial and patriarchal nation. As will be detailed below, the *brava gente* myth does not include colonized African populations, but instead claims original, Italian sovereignty rights over their lands. In addition, the *brava gente* myth excludes non-European immigrants and privileges northern over southern Italy, thus embodying the colonial logics inherent in *Italianità* since the Risorgimento. Indeed, Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo note that the long history of "Italy's South as a case of internal colonialism" is a large factor in Italy's identity as a postcolonial nation.¹⁷⁶ They argue that "the postcolonial condition of Italy . . . is strictly tied to the question of national identity and its formation process," and that Italian identity is "historically constructed as homogenous but in fact [is] always deeply diverse and complex."¹⁷⁷ They explain that southern Italians are not represented in the Italian identity that the *brava gente* myth imagines. Northern Italian infrastructure and wealth were spared during World War II to a much larger extent than those of southern Italy. As a result, most

¹⁷⁶ Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, "Italy's Postcolonial 'Question': Views from the Southern Frontier of Europe," *Postcolonial Studies* 18, no. 4 (2018): 367.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 368.

of Italy's postwar cultural production, including Bonelli *fumetti*, came out of the north. The *brava gente* myth, therefore, is equally bound up in Italy's three colonialisms and represents the north's influence in top-down constructions of *Italianità*.

II. The *brava gente* myth is a capitalist product.

Secondly, the construction of the *brava gente* Italian identity is deeply entangled with postwar capitalism. Cultural products, initially influenced by government censorship, promoted and developed the *brava gente* myth. The myth itself, therefore, was a way of commodifying *Italianità*. Just as American mass culture is deeply bound up in U.S. settler logics and contributes to their promotion and survival, so is and does Italian postwar culture. What Lombardi-Diop and Romeo call the "Northern capitalist hegemony" in Italy developed in tandem with the *brava gente* myth and made the myth a means of asserting that hegemonic power. Northern Italy leveraged its economic advantages over southern Italy after World War II to market a racially-homogenous Italian identity defined on Northern terms. The emerging *fumetti* industry, based largely out of Milan, played a large part in this collective and commodified process of national identity formation. As Bonelli *fumetti* were bought and sold, so was the definition of *Italianità* that the *brava gente* myth created. The regional specificity that defined *Italianità* from the Risorgimento up to World War II had dramatically shifted toward a more widely-applicable form with the success of fascism and fascist propaganda. The *brava*

gente myth built on this and, much like American mass culture did in the nineteenth century, relied on cultural production to develop, express, and entrench settler logics into *Italianità*.

III. The *brava gente* were humanitarians in Africa.

Thirdly, the foundational aspect of the *brava gente* myth is the idea that Italians were humanitarian colonizers.¹⁷⁸ Both the early historiography of Italian colonialism and popular perception erroneously define Italian colonialism as a humanitarian mission to Africa, rather than the violent, often genocidal invasion it was. In Teresa Fiore's words, Italian colonialism was portrayed as "a civilizing mission in an idealized environment of mutual respect between Italians and Africans in [the] post-World War II years."¹⁷⁹ Similar to common narratives championed in American mass culture, the *brava gente* myth embodies a patriarchal settler fantasy in which a racially superior nation does the generous work of lifting a racially inferior population out of primitivism and into civilization. This distorted method of sugar coating settler-colonial violence had already been circulating in Italy for generations as a part of transnational settler colonialism. It is no wonder, then, that the basis of the *brava gente* myth mimicked U.S. settler logic. The *brava gente* myth treats the impossible settler fantasy of humanitarian colonization as historical truth and engrained it as such in the postwar reformation

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 369.

¹⁷⁹ Fiore, "Italy's Colonial Memories and Postcolonial Cultures," 445.

of *Italianità*, partly through inserting the *brava gente* myth into portrayals of U.S. settler colonialism in *fumetti*. This method of expressing an imagined Italian settler identity with images borrowed from American settler culture successfully eliminated the indigenous Africans whose land Italians attempted to steal from collective Italian memory, and instead reproduced American settler colonial practices in a sort of proxy that allowed the *brava gente* to continue re-living their outwardly-suppressed colonial desires.

IV. The *brava gente* did not colonize Africa.

The next component of the *brava gente* myth entails the intentional amnesia of Italian colonial violence and of Italian racial diversity, in part to support the idea of the *brava gente* as humanitarian colonizers.¹⁸⁰ Along with the erasure of Italian colonial violence from Italian history and memory came the intentional elimination of Africans from Italian history. In an effort to replace the now-absent enthusiasm for settler colonialism that had recently united Italians, the *brava gente* takes colonized subjects completely out of the equation and defines Italians as exclusively white and Catholic, and privileges masculinity. In this way, the *brava gente* departs slightly from American settler attitudes toward indigenous peoples. As Philip Deloria argues in *Playing Indian*, settler-constructed notions of Native American identity have consistently been essential components in the history of

¹⁸⁰ Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, *Postcolonial Italy*.

American identity formation.¹⁸¹ The *brava gente*, however, do not define themselves in relation to the indigenous peoples of their former African colonies. Instead, as a result of transnational settler colonialism, Italians too rely on racializations of American Indians in their postwar construction of *Italianità*, as the following analysis of *fumetti* will demonstrate. Since Italian colonialism failed in its effort to create permanent Italian settlements in Africa, the formation of the *brava gente* myth did not reconcile Italian identity with indigenous African identities. Instead Italians relied on their much fuller understanding of indigeneity as signified by Indianness as the “other” to which Italian whiteness was compared.

The relative absence of Africans from postwar expressions of Italian settler-colonial logics comported with the *brava gente* myth’s positioning of Africans and African-descended peoples as separate, far away recipients of Italian humanitarianism. In postwar popular culture, including Bonelli *fumetti*, Italians lived out this fantasy of humanitarian colonization, and, as the final tenet of the myth will explain, simultaneously claimed Italians as an unjustly dispossessed people.

V. The *brava gente* are a dispossessed people.

The final component of the *brava gente* myth is imagined dispossession. This notion is carried over from fascist propaganda that portrayed Italians as the rightful sovereigns of their African colonies. In both the fascist and *brava gente* versions of history, Italians were the original peoples to possess rights over lands

¹⁸¹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*.

in northern Africa, due to the presence of the Roman Empire there.¹⁸² Acquarelli offers an explanation of how the fascist government asserted this myth and communicated it to Italians and the world. Acquarelli explains that the theft of the Obelisk of Axum from Ethiopia and its relocation to Rome in 1937 directly mimicked the Ancient Roman practice of stealing obelisks from Egypt and reconstructing them in Ancient Roman piazzas.¹⁸³ This excavation of Ancient Roman practice sent the message that the Italy of the 1930s maintained territorial claims to Africa that the Ancient Roman Empire first laid. As Acquarelli explains, this linkage went hand-in-hand with the settler-colonial logic that defined the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa as peoples without history or culture.¹⁸⁴ Italy, on the other hand, from the fascist Italian perspective, directly and historically descended from Ancient Rome, and therefore Italian culture of the 1930s could draw a direct line to the earliest iterations of culture itself. In this imagined narrative, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia was not an act of colonization, but rather a reclaiming of land that was rightfully Italian. The obelisk of Axum symbolized to fascist Italy that Ancient Roman rights to sovereignty over Africa extended to modern Italy. In this way, the *brava gente* myth performs settler colonialism by claiming African space as belonging to the settler.

By reaffirming a narrative that situates everything before the rise of the Roman Empire as prehistorical, the fascist claim to Africa embodied settler-colonial

¹⁸² Acquarelli, "Sua altezza imperiale."

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

logics. Consistently reasserting that indigenous populations are inherently prehistorical, primitive, or anti-modern is a textbook U.S. settler strategy that circulated in Italy as a part of transnational settler colonialism. However, Italians adopted this practice and revised it to fit their specific purposes. The U.S. has consistently employed this strategy to argue that settler society has the right to American Indian space due to discovery. Since Europeans deemed American Indian peoples unable to appropriately cultivate and extract the land's resources, the legitimate claims to North American land went to the European power who first "discovered" it. Both the American and Italian fascist claims rest on the central argument that white racial superiority justifies land theft, and Italy's claim to settler colonies in Africa are similarly rooted in historical claims of original sovereignty.

In manifestations of the *brava gente* myth found in *fumetti*, as Chapter Four will demonstrate, this imagined dispossession of Italy's rightful territories in Africa often translated to an Italian imagination of affinity with American Indians—a practice that reproduces U.S. settler colonialism for Italian purposes. In the Italian world of *fumetti* the roles of both the settler and the American Indian are accessible to the Italian audience. The reality of Italian history and experience aligns Italians with colonizers. However, the *brava gente* myth aligns Italians with the forcibly dispossessed. Due to the intentional and widespread amnesia over Italian settler colonialism in Africa, *fumetti* could not express Italian colonial desires through representations rooted in their own history. Instead, they turned to the familiar backdrop of the American West and, in doing so, entangled their own colonial

practices with American ones. Through reenacting Italy's past colonial dominance and imagining Italy's recent dispossession, *fumetti* preserved Italian colonial logics. As a result of transnational settler colonialism, however, *fumetti* repurposed American settler cultural ascetics to accomplish this preservation of their own colonial logics. This forever entangled the two for Italians, made American settler cultural practices a part of *Italianità*, and made upholding U.S. settler colonialism an international project.

The Rise of *Fumetti* as an Expression of the *Brava Gente* Myth

Fumetti in their present form began to gain popularity after World War II. Since its inception near the turn of the century, the *fumetto* print industry has consistently produced products that appeal to a wide range of consumers, are financially accessible, and have made significant contributions to Italian popular culture and *Italianità* in general. This cultural significance began with early *fumetti* as educational tools and as a form for fascist propaganda. In the mid-1940s, *fumetti* shifted into serialized stories that featured long-lasting and prevalent series that influenced broader Italian popular culture, including the film industry. In the 1960s, a subgenre called *fumetti neri* pushed the boundaries of the Italian entertainment industry and further entrenched *fumetti* in their role as a pervasive, accessible form of Italian cultural production and space for identity formation. *Fumetti* have always been a part of Italy's larger entertainment industry, at times reflecting the Italian film industry and at times departing from film trends. In the

case of the postwar *fumetto*, *Tex*, Leake has argued that it reflects broader trends found in fascist filmmaking, thus serving as a relic to Italy's recent fascist past. With its flagship *Tex*, Sergio Bonelli Editore represents the most successful publisher of *fumetti*, and their publications played a part in developing and were essential in marketing the new, postwar *brava gente* myth and its role in shifting constructions of *Italianità*.

The first *fumetti* came from the newspaper, *Il Corriere della Sera*, which added a supplement, *Il Corriere dei Piccoli*, on December 27, 1908.¹⁸⁵ Initially intended as an educational tool, early issues of *Il Corriere dei Piccoli* featured illustrations with captions, rather than a story with the characters' speech in word bubbles.¹⁸⁶ Over time, this form became more like the commonly-known American form of newspaper comics and *fumetti* as a genre took on a much broader definition than the early instructional cartoons. Throughout their evolution, however, the perception of *fumetti* as an educational, and thus propagandistic, tool persisted, even as the form evolved beyond this capacity. Until its last issue on August 15, 1995, *Il Corriere dei Piccoli* developed beloved comic characters and

¹⁸⁵ Renato Genovese, *L'avventurosa storia del fumetto italiano: Quarant'anni di fumetti nelle voci dei protagonisti* (Rome: Alberto Castelvechi Editore, 2009), 17.

¹⁸⁶ Roberto Curti, *Diabolika: Supercriminals, Superheroes and the Comic Book Universe in Italian Cinema* (Baltimore: Midnight Marquee Press, 2016), 11. "27 dicembre 1908: nasce il Corriere dei Piccoli, la prima rivista italiana a fumetti," *Corriere della Sera*, accessed February 23, 2019, http://www.corriere.it/foto-gallery/cronache/15_dicembre_27/27-dicembre-1908-nasce-corriere-piccoli-prima-rivista-italiana-fumetti-8d6d969a-a1b9-11e5-80b6-fe40410507f1.shtml?refresh_ce-cp.

series, which many *fumetti* writers and illustrators credit for their initial interest in the genre.¹⁸⁷

With the dominance of *Il Corriere dei Piccoli*, early *fumetti* catered mostly to young children. The *fumetto* audience expanded to young adults in the 1930s with the rise in popularity of Italian translations of American comics and the Italian magazines that American comics inspired.¹⁸⁸ The most popular of these Italian magazines, *L'Avventuroso*, began in 1934, and in 1938 “sold nearly 600,000 copies per week, doubling the success of contemporary literary bestsellers.”¹⁸⁹ *Fumetti*'s role as an educational tool survived this transition in target audience. In recognition of the pervasive popularity and educational potential of *fumetti*, Italian translations of American comics and a few Italian magazines garnered the attention of the fascist regime. Mussolini briefly banned American comics, and *L'Avventuroso* was subject to censorship and used for fascist propaganda from 1938 to 1943.¹⁹⁰ The fascist youth organization, *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, also adopted *fumetti* as a propagandistic educational tool disseminated in Italian schools.¹⁹¹ A widespread success, these early magazines not only represent the influence of *fumetti* on youth culture and development in prewar Italy, but also the success of *fumetti* as a contributor to the construction and evolution of Italian

¹⁸⁷ Genovese, *L'avventurosa storia del fumetto italiano*.

¹⁸⁸ Simone Castaldi, *Drawn and Dangerous: Italian Comics of the 1970s and 1980s* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 12.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12

Curti, *Diabolika*, 11-12.

¹⁹¹ Curti, *Diabolika*, 10-12.

culture. Not only was the original purpose of *fumetti* to reach and influence children and adolescents, but their success in doing so led to fascist regime's appropriation of the genre. For a brief, yet influential period of the early history of *fumetti*, they played a role in Mussolini's intentional construction and dissemination of a top-down definition of *Italianità*. From the beginning, *fumetti* were spaces where *Italianità* was constructed and sold to the Italian public.

These early forms of *fumetti* set the stage for the more widespread version of the genre that emerged in the late 1940s and remains popular today. Their role in culture-building continued into the postwar period and contributed to the development of the *brava gente* myth. The earliest comics in the forms of *Il Corriere dei Piccoli*, magazines, and propagandistic fascist publications established *fumetti* as a broadly accessible medium meant to influence the most impressionable members of society. As *fumetti* shifted from newspapers, translations of American comics, and magazines to the form of serialized adventure stories with consistent and beloved heroes, they not only maintained their broad appeal and influence, but evolved as a form of Italian self-expression.

The most successful publishing house to come out of this shift was Sergio Bonelli Editore, which evolved from the popular magazine *L'Audace*. Giovanni Luigi Bonelli, more commonly known as Gianluigi Bonelli, began writing *fumetti* for magazines in 1936, and in 1940 bought *L'Audace*, which quickly evolved into one of many small, local *fumetto* presses in the north during the immediate postwar period. Control of the company soon switched to Gianluigi's wife, Tea Bonelli, who

transformed *L'Audace* into Edizioni Audace—a successful, lucrative publishing house that produced her husband's *fumetto* series. Gianluigi and Tea Bonelli's work revolutionized the Italian *fumetto* industry. Shifting away from magazines, which published parts of stories that would span several issues, the Bonellis' small operation began publishing complete stories. This quickly shifted to the current form of *fumetti*, in which a single publishing house produces several series made up of monthly episodic issues. Beginning with Tea Bonelli's guidance, Edizioni Audace created the production model for the entire *fumetto* industry, worked with hundreds of collaborators, and became the hub for professional *fumetto* writers and artists.¹⁹² This success, of course, relied on the marketability of Gianluigi's stories, which always fell into the adventure genre, and were almost always Westerns inspired by American films.

Tex championed the very first *brava gente* hero and was among the first set of series Edizione Audace published. *Tex* quickly became, and remains today, the most popular Italian *fumetto*. Although sales data is unavailable for the early decades of *Tex*'s publication, and existing data is sporadic at best, it is widely-recognized as the most successful *fumetto* in Italy.¹⁹³ Today, some of *Tex*'s more dedicated fans claim it is the best-selling comic series in the world. Although available data makes this uncertain at best, and no further data or explanation

¹⁹² Michele Ginevra, ed., *Gli archivi Bonelli: Guido Nolitta* (Milano: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 2012), 565, PN6767.N6 A7 2012, Comic Art Collection, Michigan State University Library Special Collections, East Lansing, Michigan.

¹⁹³ Curti, *Diabolika*, 15.
Leake, *Tex Willer*, 14.

supports these assertions, this apocryphal belief demonstrates the passion of *Tex*'s fan base. The first available sales data puts *Tex*'s sales numbers at 500,000 copies per month in 1977, dropping to 330,000 in 1992, 240,000 in 2006, and 190,000 in 2014.¹⁹⁴ These numbers, however, address the new issue of the month and do not include sales of reprints or used copies. By comparison, Sergio Bonelli Editore's much more recent success and second-best-selling series, *Dylan Dog*, only superseded *Tex* in sales at its zenith in 1995 with 480,000 copies sold per month to *Tex*'s 330,000.¹⁹⁵ The next year of available data in 2008, however, puts *Dylan Dog* sales at 170,000 copies per month to *Tex*'s 230,000.¹⁹⁶ The third-most sales that year went to *Nathan Never* with only 55,000 copies per month.¹⁹⁷ The drop in sales in 2014 was not specific to *Tex* and reflects an overall trend in the *fumetto* industry that Sergio Bonelli Editore is currently striving to reverse. The popular perception of *Tex* as the most prominent, foundational, and defining *fumetto* on its own affirms *Tex* as a highly influential element of Italian popular culture, especially when considering the financial accessibility of the comic book genre. Although few numbers are recorded and disseminated to support this perception, the limited available data supports this popular belief.

¹⁹⁴ "I dati di vendita delle singole serie Bonelli," Comicus, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://www.comicus.it/index.php/mainmenu-news/item/60101-dati-bonelli-2014/60101-dati-bonelli-2014>.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Tex, the focus of Chapter Five, features the hero Tex Willer, a Texas-Ranger-turned-Navajo-Chief and his partners—a Texas Ranger, Kit Carson; Tex’s son, Kit Willer; and a Navajo warrior, Tiger Jack. Bonelli’s development of *Tex* is intertwined with the development of the *brava gente* concept in postwar Italy. As Chapter Five will demonstrate, *Tex* embodies the values of the *brava gente* and reproduces settler-colonial logics in a way that provided the *fumetto*’s Italian readers a means of erasing memories of Italian colonialism in Africa while living out a settler colonial fantasy from a moral high ground. Gianluigi Bonelli built the world of *Tex* based on popular American Western films, but filled that landscape with characters defined by Italian values. *Fumetti* historian Simone Castaldi attributes the genesis and popularity of *Tex* to the Italian postwar search for identity, which he characterizes as a “love/hate relationship with everything American,” that was “one of the defining traits of [Italian] post-war cultural history.”¹⁹⁸

Elizabeth Leake’s book, *Tex Willer: A Cowboy in Postwar Italy* (2018), provides a thorough analysis of *Tex* as a reflection of postwar Italy and represents the definitive scholarly work on *Tex*. She argues that, unlike other postwar Italian cultural production, such as neorealist films, that have received much more scholarly attention, *Tex* is insularly Italian. In her words, “[f]ar from paying homage or conforming to growing American cultural hegemony, *Tex* was instead from the beginning obstinately Italian, without any desire of reaching an international

¹⁹⁸ Curti, *Drawn and Dangerous*, 13.

audience.”¹⁹⁹ This quality, combined with the fact that *Tex* “reached more readers than any other cultural product of its time,” leads Leake to define *Tex* as an “existential handbook for Postwar Italy.”²⁰⁰ She explains that “*Tex* (the comic strip) was constantly in contact with the events and the state of mind of the period, but was not based on, however, a unilateral relationship. By virtue of its nature as a mass cultural product, *Tex* offers a widely shared imaginary, and above all made reference to a world that at its time alluded to daily discourse. In this sense, *Tex* is not limited to reflecting a given *Zeitgeist*, but actively participated in its construction.”²⁰¹ Leake’s work convincingly lays out how, during the postwar era, *Tex* represented an extension of fascist cultural production that elevated Italian heroes that embodied fascist ideas of a hyper-masculine version of *Italianità*.

According to Leake, *Tex* engaged in the process of forging a postwar Italian identity. She sees the setting of the American West as particularly important for this purpose. Many of the traditional themes found in Westerns correlated with the struggles facing Italy and Italians during the postwar era, including an ill-defined relationship between individuals and the state, corruption, and violence. When *Tex*’s heroes navigated such issues in Bonelli’s fictional world that resembled the American West, so did Italian readers in reality. In essence, Leake’s work reveals that *Tex* reflects how Italians were defining themselves in the postwar era. For Leake, the most significant component of the *Italianità* reflected in *Tex* is an

¹⁹⁹ Leake, *Tex Willer*, 14.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

emphasis on heterosexual masculinity and a sense of moral superiority and justice that supersedes the state. *Tex* helped create a world that both accommodated the fascist past, carried it into the future, and created space to move beyond it.

Although Leake does not reference *Tex*'s contribution to the construction of the *brava gente* myth explicitly, she does speak to *Tex*'s commentary on imperialism and racism. For instance, she explains the *Tex* deals with racial politics, reflecting the role it played in postwar Italian life, but attributing racism to "abuses of power, corruption and above all greed."²⁰² In relation to different racial groups in the series, the hero stands out as "foreign to any group and superior to all of them."²⁰³ When themes reflective of colonialism or imperialism in general arise—clearly dealing tangentially with Italy's settler colonialism in Africa—the hero "is systematically taciturn."²⁰⁴ By shrugging off racism as yet another symptom of a government failing its people and modeling an attitude distinctly ambivalent towards issues of colonialism and imperialism, *Tex* wove the *brava gente* myth and its constituent settler-colonial logics into the sense of *Italianità* it was reflecting and constructing.

While Leake does not focus primarily on *Tex*'s at times ambivalent and at times inconsistent treatment of racial politics, it is this aspect of *Tex* that connects it to U.S. settler colonialism and makes it an integral part of transnational settler colonialism in postwar Italy. Leake asserts that "the message of *Tex* did not extend,

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 94.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

at least in principle, outside of Italian confines.”²⁰⁵ In function, however, *Tex* participates in something the spatial dimensions of which are not defined by Italian borders. By imposing Italian life on the backdrop of the American West, *Tex* inherently invokes U.S. settler-colonial practices that legitimate American settler claims to American Indian land. Chapter Five will detail the ways in which *Tex*'s relationship with the mythology of the American West, the role of American Indian characters, and the hero's racial fluidity construct and uphold both the *brava gente* myth and U.S. settler culture. Fundamentally, Tea and Gianluigi Bonelli sold one of the earliest definitions of the developing Italian *brava gente* identity to the Italian public and, in doing so, perpetuated Italy's contribution to transnational settler colonialism.

Italian audiences found the *brava gente* myth as represented in *Tex* appealing, and Italian children for decades turned to *Tex* when forging their own identities. Michele Ginevra, editor of a 2012 volume dedicated to the memory of Sergio Bonelli, Gianluigi and Tea's son and *Tex* author, recalls the immense impact of *fumetti*, and *Tex* in particular, on Italian children in the 1970s:

One was very rarely at home, even in winter. . . . Courtyards and little squares were instead the realm of epic adventures pulled exactly from *fumetti*: a broom handle became a horse and one was using toy pistols . . . It did not suffice to become *Tex*. The roles were distributed according to the power relations of the group: the most “adult”

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

performed Tex; the most silent but strong was Tiger Jack . . . ; Kit Carson was a secondary role and the smallest was obviously Kit Willer. Then there were the blue jackets and the Navajos, the bands of outlaws and the posse in pursuit. The more there were, the more racket there was.²⁰⁶

Through the *brava gente* myth that *Tex* helped construct, young readers internalized the power structures in the fictional worlds of *fumetti* and applied them to their lives. Due to transnational settler colonialism and the *fumetti* it produced, Italian children enacted a settler fantasy that superimposed American settler structures and stereotypes on their own re-enactment of their nation's colonial desires. As the most "adult" of the children pretended to be *Tex*—the character that most exemplified the *brava gente* myth—Italian children defined for themselves the adults they expected to one day become. With the vast popularity of *Tex* among Italian youth, the *brava gente* became a marketable commodity that would be reproduced for generations.

When Gianluigi and Tea Bonelli's son, Sergio, took over Edizioni Audace in 1957, *Tex* remained the publishing house's flagship publication.²⁰⁷ Sergio Bonelli had been writing *fumetti* under various pen names, the most famous of which was Guido Nolitta, and had developed his own artistic style.²⁰⁸ Sergio Bonelli continued

²⁰⁶ Ginevra, *Gli archivi Bonelli*, 568.

²⁰⁷ "The Dream Factory," Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergiobonelli.it/section/3127/the-dream-factory>.

²⁰⁸ Vittorio Zincone, "Nella terra di avventura," in *Gli archivi Bonelli*, ed. Michele Ginevra (Milano: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 2012), PN6767.N6 A7 2012, Comic Art

writing issues of publications his father created and added his own series to his expanding publishing house. Upon Sergio's inheritance, Edizioni Audace became Edizioni Araldo and went through several name changes, including Cepim, DaimPress, and Altamira, before settling on its current name, Sergio Bonelli Editore.²⁰⁹ Sergio continued the traditions laid down by his parents, and under his charge the publishing house grew more successful. Sergio Bonelli Editore never strayed from the adventure genre, and until the 1980s, most publications were Westerns that reproduced the *brava gente* themes found in *Tex*.

Throughout these changes, however, Sergio maintained the perception of *fumetti* as an educational tool. Sergio's style relied on a reputation for accuracy and authenticity. Sergio Bonelli Editore's main location includes a library focusing on American cinema, and the history, geography, and literature of the American West.²¹⁰ Many of Sergio Bonelli Editore's publications are advertised as historical fiction. They take place in the past and are portrayed as accurate representations of that time period, but with fictional characters, stories, and, at times, places. In this way, Bonelli Westerns continue the Italian indulgence in hyperrealities that work to circulate settler logics, just as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and the World's Columbian Exposition did in the late-nineteenth century. Aside from *Tex*, the most notable of Bonelli Western is *Zagor*, first published in 1961, which

Collection, Michigan State University Library Special Collections, East Lansing, Michigan.

²⁰⁹ "One Publisher, One Adventure," Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergiobonelli.it/section/3144/one-publisher-one-adventure>.

²¹⁰ Ginevra, *Gli archivi Bonelli*, 566.

represents one of Sergio's most influential creations and follows the story of the son of an American soldier who "fights to maintain peace, protect the Indian tribes and hunt down criminals" in the early twentieth century.²¹¹ Sergio Bonelli even introduced a non-fiction series in 1974 called *I Protagonisti (The Protagonists)* that claims to tell the histories of well-known historical figures from the nineteenth-century American West. Sergio Bonelli Editore, even after Sergio's death in 2011, has maintained throughout its history a focus on Westerns. Each of these publications trace their lineage back to *Tex* and continue to express the *brava gente* Italian identity as products of transnational settler colonialism by inserting Italian characters and stories into American settler landscapes.

In the 1960s, the broader history of *fumetti* departed from the specific history of Sergio Bonelli Editore. Throughout this departure, however, Sergio Bonelli Editore's publications retained their ubiquitous status while *fumetti* as a whole gained in cultural influence. In his anthology of Italian films inspired by *fumetti*, Italian cinema historian, Roberto Curti, views *fumetti* as deeply intertwined with the history of Italian filmmaking. Not only have Italian films often mimicked the themes and visual styles of *fumetti*, but there are many film adaptations of *fumetti*.²¹² For instance, Curti argues that Federico Fellini admired *fumetti* as an art form and that

²¹¹ "My Name is Zagor," Who is Zagor, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergiobonelli.it/section/2462/my-name-is-zagor>.

Although *Dylan Dog* is undeniably the most prominent series produced under Sergio Bonelli's tenure, he did not create the series.

²¹² Curti, *Diabolika*.

his work drew from his longtime fandom of comic books.²¹³ Indeed, even in the postwar era, *fumetti* were but a part of broader postwar pop-cultural and literary trends. Sergio Bonelli Editore publications, however, did not translate to the silver screen with the profundity or success of other Italian *fumetti*. This is partially due to the rise of *fumetti neri* (black *fumetti*), a subgenre of *fumetti* that focused on adult themes and were popular during the 1970s and 1980s.

Much like the *fumetti* of the immediate postwar years, *fumetti neri* emerged in a time of economic, political, and social upheaval.²¹⁴ Simone Castaldi sees *fumetti neri* as a product of the economic troubles of the late-1960s and 1970s and a part of the accompanying counterculture movement in Italy. In the national identity crisis of the immediate Postwar years, *fumetti* emerged as a space for solving that crisis. When the counterculture movement then looked to shift their cultural identity, it turned to *fumetti* as an established form of Italian self-expression and drew upon the genre's long history as a barometer of the Italian experience. Unlike Sergio Bonelli Editore publications, *fumetti neri* focused on anti-heroes and catered to adults, rather than young adults, and did not enjoy long-lasting success. Many *fumetti neri* were pornographic in nature and were definitive of Italy's pornography industry as a whole.²¹⁵ Furthermore, many Italian films inspired by *fumetti* drew from *fumetti neri*'s ascetics and anti-hero themes. *Fumetti neri* are the most studied subgenre of *fumetti* due to their unique contribution; however, they

²¹³ Ibid., 10.

²¹⁴ Castaldi, *Drawn and Dangerous*.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

are not representative of *fumetti* as a whole due to the longer history of *fumetti* that preceded and followed *fumetti neri*. Even though their presence deviated from the norm, *fumetti neri* demonstrate the overall pervasiveness of *fumetti* as a significant form of popular expression and production in Italy. Just as *Tex* helped Italians define themselves as the *brava gente* in the 1940s, *fumetti neri* helped Italians define their counterculture movement in the 1960s and '70s.

As *fumetti neri* remained popular through the 1980s, so did Sergio Bonelli Editore publications. Although *fumetti neri* edged out Sergio Bonelli Editore *fumetti* when it came to film adaptations, Curti attributes the lack of films based on more traditional *fumetti* to timing. When Sergio Bonelli Editore publications began experiencing a boom alongside *fumetti neri* in the 1980s, the Italian film industry was beginning to decline due to the increased dominance of television.²¹⁶ At the time when traditional *fumetti* were most ripe for film adaptation, the film industry could not support them. Furthermore, attempts to adapt *fumetti* into television shows failed, as they produced “anemic copies of their paper models” that could not replace *fumetti* as a popular form.²¹⁷ Regarding *Tex* in particular, several attempts to create film adaptations never came to fruition due to Gianluigi Bonelli’s insistence on retaining detailed control of the representations of his characters and stories—a tendency that still characterizes the *Tex* brand. When Gianluigi finally made a deal that allowed him the control he desired, *Tex* fell victim to bad timing.

²¹⁶ Curti, *Diabolika*, 36-37.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

Tex e il signore degli abissi (*Tex and the Lord of the Deep*, 1985) was a poorly-received film that failed in its attempt to spark a *Tex* television series.²¹⁸

In addition to the failed foray into film, Sergio Bonelli Editore consistently rebranded and tried new marketing and production strategies to maintain *Tex*'s relevance throughout its seventy-year history. Through much of this time, Sergio Bonelli Editore has consistently released special reprints and compilations of past issues of *Tex*, and much like American comic books, original copies are often valuable collectors' items. The inherent reproducibility in popular *fumetti* like *Tex* amplifies the impact of the cultural ideas they reflect and develop. Not only did Italians of the postwar era live-out the *brava gente* myth and reproduce the settler logics in *Tex*, but readers of the reprints continue to do so. For *Tex*, the initial concept of the fictional world and its characters have remained untainted since its first publication. Throughout the *fumetto*'s history, Sergio Bonelli Editore has retained tight control over the *Tex* brand. Isolated examples of attempts to diversify the brand appear on the back covers of a few *Tex* issues from the 1980s. Issue number 240, "Ombre del passato" ("The Shadow of the Past"), featured an advertisement for a record, *La ballata di Tex Willer* (*The Ballad of Tex Willer*), and issue number 252, "Il volto del traditore" ("The Face of the Traitor"), advertised a clothing line inspired by Tex Willer's classic cowboy look.²¹⁹ These modest efforts

²¹⁸ Duccio Tessari, *Tex e il signore degli abissi* (1985; Italy: Millennium Storm, 2007), DVD.

²¹⁹ G. L. Bonelli, "Ombre del passato," *Tex* no. 240 (Milan: Daim Press, 1980), PN6768 .T4024 1980, Comic Art Collection, Michigan State University Library Special Collections, East Lansing, Michigan.

represent an anomaly for *Tex* and Sergio Bonelli Editore. However, after overall sales for Sergio Bonelli Editore dropped in 2014, the publishing house has increased its social media presence and added to its typical production of reprints and anthologies. T-shirts, coffee mugs, figurines, puzzles, and special editions of Trivial Pursuit and Monopoly encompass some of the *Tex*-related products available in 2018 and 2019.²²⁰ Despite its long-standing tradition of relegating *Tex* to the pages of *fumetti*, Sergio Bonelli Editore is shifting its strategy in order to maintain relevancy. As it does so, Sergio Bonelli Editore also continues to preserve and reiterate the *brava gente* myth for new generations of Italians.

The long-lasting success of Sergio Bonelli Editore signifies both the widespread cultural influence of *fumetti* and the role of northern capitalist hegemony as an extension of Italy's internal colonialism in the development of the *brava gente* myth. Just as with Buffalo Bill's tours of Italy, Bonelli *fumetti* are concentrated in the north. Milan provides the hub of the *fumetto* industry, just as major northern cities hosted the majority of Buffalo Bill's performances. The Italian identity that *fumetti* readers performed as they read *fumetti* and played pretend in town squares was one created and sold by northern Italians. Western-themed Bonelli *fumetti*, in particular *Tex*, provide a prime example of what transnational settler colonialism produces. Wealthy northern Italians had the most access to

G. L. Bonelli, "Il volto del traditore," *Tex* no. 252 (Milan: Daim Press, 1981), PN6768 .T40252 1981, Comic Art Collection, Michigan State University Library Special Collections, East Lansing, Michigan.

²²⁰ Shop, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://shop.sergiobonelli.it/>.

American settler culture in the late-nineteenth century, and their descendants adapted that same culture for their own purposes in the postwar era. In doing so, Italians functionally reiterated many harmful aspects of American settler culture, which will be detailed in Chapter Five's analysis of *Tex* as a transnational-settler-colonial product.

Chapter Five

***Italianità* in the American West: Tex and a Settler-Colonial Language for an Italian Identity**

Italy's most popular *fumetto*, *Tex* appears to be a classic American Western film translated to the Italian graphic novel. In fact, the *fumetto* intentionally and specifically references American Westerns. A scene in "Pony Express," the 73rd issue originally published in 1966, shows the protagonist in nearly the same position as John Wayne in his first appearance on screen in John Ford's iconic film *Stagecoach*. In both the *fumetto* panel and the film, a young man stands alone in the desert, wearing a shield-front shirt, bandana, and gun holster, and holding a rifle in his right hand and a saddle in his left as he flags down a passing stagecoach.²²¹ The character description of Tex on Sergio Bonelli Editore's website confirms that such visual homages are foundational to the series: "The West of Tex is that of John Ford and of Howard Hawks: the appropriate actor to portray [Tex] would be John Wayne or Charlton Heston."²²² Upon closer examination, however, *Tex* does not represent simply another iteration of the American Western, but instead constructs a uniquely Italian world. Although aesthetically modeled after and inspired by American Westerns, Gianluigi Bonelli created an Italian spin on a classic American genre whose popularity and

²²¹ John Ford, *Stagecoach* (1939; Burbank: Warner Home Video Inc., 2006), DVD.

G. L. Bonelli, "Pony Express," in *Il tesoro del pirata*, Tex: Collezione storica a colori, no. 35 (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 2007), 276.

²²² "Chi è Tex," Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://www.sergiobonelli.it/sezioni/365/il-mio-nome-e-tex>.

production endured much longer in Italy than Western films. *Tex* is set in the midst of American settler colonization, and the stories and characters that develop within this world both reveal the *brava gente*'s perspective on and encourage Italian vicarious participation in American settler colonialism.

Tex is a product of transnational settler colonialism that developed alongside the *brava gente* myth. The *fumetto*'s prevalence and persistence in Italy since its first publication resulted from circulations of people and cultural products since the nineteenth century that piqued Italian interest in the American West. *Tex* itself and the stories it tells are expressions of Italian colonial desires and reflect the influence of American settler logics that transnational settler colonialism ingrained in those desires. The stories of *Tex* work to define the *brava gente* through imagining Italians on the American frontier. *Tex* encourages Italian readers to imagine themselves as a superior and lone force for good within an American settler-colonial landscape, which reinforces the idea of the *brava gente* as humanitarian colonizers. The series' overt critiques of settler colonialism and the heroes' fluid relationships with settler authority and American Indian groups send the message that the American version of settler colonialism is flawed and unjust. Despite its negative aspects, however, settler power remains alluring, and the main characters attain that power benevolently as perfected settlers. These perfect settlers differ starkly from the rest of the characters in the world of *Tex*, and the *fumetto* leads readers to identify with them. Through relating to and imagining the experiences of *Tex*'s main heroes, Italians engage with the fantasy of the *brava*

gente settler, a uniquely Italian vision of a just settler colonizer who exercises peaceful dominance over a contented and appeased colonized population.

However, the act of imagining the *brava gente* settler is itself an act of colonization. Firstly, the construction of the *brava gente* settler necessitates forgetting Italian colonial violence in Africa. Secondly, the *fumetto* replicates the aesthetics and tropes of American mass culture which reproduce the harmful representations and stereotypes of American Indians and the myth of the American frontier. The constant reiteration of these myths and their prevalence in mainstream culture keep American settler colonialism ongoing. Thirdly, the construction of the *brava gente* settler entails the Italian audience's acceptance of a constructed version of Indianness that exists independently, cooperatively, peacefully, and contentedly, and accepts settler dominance. In essence, the production of *Tex* exemplifies the circulation of settler logics that uphold U.S. settler colonialism as Italians become participants in reproducing those logics, particularly the settler tactic of racialization. At the same time, Italians also falsely imagine themselves as postcolonial and imagine a racially, culturally, and religiously homogenous Italian identity. Settler colonization necessitates the elimination of the indigenous, and the *brava gente* necessitates the marginalization of those outside of its constructed purview. By combining the *brava gente* myth with myths of the American frontier that transnational settler colonialism circulates, *Tex* continues both American and Italian colonial logics to the point that the two begin to intertwine.

Tex as cultural product of transnational settler colonialism serves two functions. In one sense, the mere existence and popularity of the *fumetto*, its aesthetic, and its basic narrative construction promote both Italian and American settler-colonial logics through reproducing them. In another sense, the details of the stories *Tex* tells and the heroes it champions offer overt critiques of settler colonialism and white racism against American Indians. Together, these dual functions serve to encourage and fulfill colonial desires in *Tex*'s Italian audience while simultaneously upholding would-be *brava gente* settler colonizers as superior to American settler colonizers and as relatable to the indigenous—in *Tex*'s case, American Indians.

The ways in which *Tex* perpetuates settler colonialism with its reliance on the imagery and narrative patterns of American mass culture, including Western films, are glaringly obvious upon flipping through any issue of the series. If anything, *Tex* relies even more heavily on stereotypical representations of American Indians than the Western worlds of John Ford and Howard Hawks. American Indian characters are more common in *Tex* and are intimately connected with its heroes than in most American Westerns. Unlike in the genre of American Western films, American Indian characters in *Tex* can be more than relics, props, or characters designed to be disposable. Although these types of American Indian characters exist in *Tex*, there are also American Indian characters essential to the series. These characters, both secondary heroes and villains, are developed over the course of the series. Rather than surviving the length of a film—and often not

nearly that long—American Indian characters in *Tex* can survive with the series, experiencing development and remaining significant to the plot for decades of new issues. This is not to say that portrayals of Native American characters in *Tex* are not colonial in nature, but to say that the role of Native American characters in *Tex*'s narratives set the *fumetto* apart from the American Western genre and are part of what makes *Tex* uniquely Italian.

Many scholars have noted how the commonplace stereotypes of American Westerns function to create settler-defined notions of Native authenticity and incorporate myths of the American frontier into popular settler understandings of the American past. Iterating here the exact ways that visual representations in *Tex* consistently mimic specific stereotypes of American Indians and the American frontier only serves to reproduce them once again, providing another space for potential indulgence in them. Instead, a broad look at the effects of the worlds of American Westerns and *Tex* will suffice to prove its colonizing effects.

The Italian Frontier Myth

Richard Slotkin argues that cultural representations of the American West, of which films are an influential component, have shaped the moral landscape of America along lines of wilderness vs. civilization and Indian vs. white. He argues that American culture and politics have been shaped by what he calls the "Frontier Myth," which is a dramatized symbol of a constructed imagining of American

history that works to produce American society's moral consciousness.²²³ The Frontier Myth was historically created through mass culture and tells the following narrative of progress: "the conquest of the wilderness and the subjugation or displacement of the Native Americans who originally inhabited it have been the means to our achievement of a national identity, a democratic polity, an ever-expanding economy, and a phenomenally dynamic and 'progressive' civilization."²²⁴ This narrative is as central to *Tex* as it is to the films it draws inspiration from. In fact, this narrative of American progress at the regrettable but inevitable expense of American Indians is the entry point for *Tex*'s construction of the *brava gente* myth into its American Western backdrop. The *brava gente* can relate to both white settlers and American Indians in this narrative. As the *brava gente*, Italians were a better version of white settlers since they imagine their colonial past as a humanitarian effort. At the same time, the *brava gente* can claim similarity to American Indians since they imagine themselves as dispossessed of their rightful claim to African lands.

Tex embraces the inevitable freight train of American progress, just like classic Westerns. *Tex* exemplifies other aspects of Slotkin's Frontier Myth as well, but with a *brava gente* spin. For instance, *Tex*'s heroes embody similar contradictions that Slotkin argues are essential to the Frontier Myth's presentation of history:

²²³ Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998). *n*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

The moral landscape of the Frontier Myth is divided by significant borders, of which the wilderness/civilization, Indian/White border is the most basic. The American must cross the border into “Indian country” and experience a “regression” to a more primitive and natural condition of life so that the false values of the “metropolis” can be purged and a new, purified social contract enacted. Although the Indian and the Wilderness are the settler’s enemy, they also provide him with the new consciousness through which he will transform the world. The heroes of the myth-historical quest must therefore be “men (or women) who know Indians”—characters whose experiences, sympathies, and even allegiances fall on both sides of the Frontier. Because the border between savagery and civilization runs through their moral center, the Indian wars are, for these heroes, a spiritual or psychological struggle which they win by learning to discipline or suppress the savage or “dark” side of their own human nature. Thus they are mediators of a double kind who can teach civilized men how to defeat savagery on its native grounds—the natural wilderness of the human soul.²²⁵

The main characters in *Tex* participate in this same Frontier crossing, and thus the world of *Tex* presents American culture as divided along these racialized lines of wilderness vs. civilization and Indian vs. white. However, in *Tex*, the *Italian*, rather

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

than the American, must cross into Indian country, and doing so does not signify “regression,” but enlightenment.

Indeed, *Tex*'s heroes have interests on both sides of the Frontier, just like the American heroes Slotkin describes; but, *Tex* diverges from American cultural engagements with the Frontier Myth in that *Tex*'s heroes embrace, rather than suppress, the “savage” side of their nature. Instead of aiming to defeat savagery, *Tex* aims to preserve a segregated indigenous presence and influence within the settler world. *Tex*'s heroes never use their familiarity with and connections to Indian country to defeat savagery, but rather to negotiate its co-existence with civilization. As Bonelli inserted the *brava gente* into the American West, he altered the Frontier Myth to fit the *brava gente*'s perception of being a dispossessed people. According to the *brava gente* myth, Italians had recently experienced a massive loss of lands intended for Italian settlement and political power at the expense of other European powers. Therefore, this Italian spin on the Frontier Myth made both settler and American Indian identity accessible to Italians.

This reimagining also envisions a different settled landscape. Rather than a Frontier Myth that presents a constantly Westward-moving border between savagery and civilization, *Tex* produces a patchwork world in which its heroes work to make Native spaces and settled spaces co-exist. In a certain sense, this landscape is more reflective of Italian colonialism in Africa, which failed to effectively displace indigenous Africans enough to accommodate large-scale and enduring Italian settlements. The strictly-enforced borders between the Indian and

white worlds exist in *Tex*, but the Indian spaces persist throughout the series. In this Italian version of the Frontier Myth, the *brava gente*'s strong connections to the American Indian world save American Indians from the inevitable disappearance that U.S. settler narratives propose. Unlike in Slotkin's observations of American cultural production, border-crossing in *Tex* never leads to the elimination of the Indian or wilderness parts of the divide, but rather to their preservation in their own spaces. In fact, white border-crossing in *Tex* is often what saves Native characters and spaces from colonization. Instead of conflict resulting in the movement of the Frontier further west after heroes successfully resist the natural appeal of savagery, *Tex* uses the Frontier-crossing of its heroes to create imagined worlds of good Indians and *brava gente* settlers that preserve both the wilderness and civilization in adjacent spaces.

The popularity of the Frontier Myth is intricately entangled with myths of Native authenticity as well. Joanne Barker argues that notions of Native authenticity are essential to the complicated legal relationships between Native nations and the United States. According to Barker, Native authenticity is "defined in nationalism to uphold relations of domination between the United States and Native nations."²²⁶ Constructions of perceived authenticity provide part of the settler strategy Jodi Byrd refers to as racialization. *Tex* engages in both of these processes. Firstly, the fumetto promotes the racialization of American Indians

²²⁶ Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 7.

through its reliance on stereotypes in its visual representations. Secondly, *Tex* provides a space for Italians to live out a settler fantasy and romanticize colonization by invoking Slotkin's Frontier Myth and inviting Italians to imagine themselves as a part of that myth.

The content of *Tex* reproduces American iterations of the Frontier Myth, American settler claims of Native authenticity, and American cultural products that engage in processes of colonization and racialization. At the same time, however, *Tex* alters American logics to accommodate and promote the idea of Italians as the *brava gente*. It's mimicking of American Westerns does the colonizing work of celebrating the Frontier Myth; however, it ultimately takes a stance that is critical of U.S. settler colonialism, albeit with contradictions built in to the critique. *Tex* accomplishes this through the characterization of its main hero as a *brava gente* settler, its construction of "good" and "bad" Indians, the centrality of space and territory in its narratives, and its explicit critiques of settler colonization and anti-American Indian racism that veil its perpetuation of colonization and racialization.

Italians Go West in "Il totem misterioso"

Tex's main hero is Tex Willer, a former Texas Ranger who is sometimes an outlaw, sometimes law enforcement, sometimes a settler, and sometimes a Navajo. His sidekicks include Kit Carson—a Texas Ranger, Tiger Jack—a Navajo warrior, and Kit Willer—his half-Navajo son. *Tex*'s Italian readers are meant to identify primarily with these four characters. Readers are invited to imagine

themselves in the shoes of these heroes as they cross back and forth between settler and American Indian worlds. Tex Willer is the John Wayne-esque Frontier Myth hero that Bonelli attempted to replicate and through which the *fumetto*'s narrative makes moral assertions about the world. Tex differs from the typical Frontier Myth hero, however, in his embodiment of the *brava gente* identity and his deep connections to Indianness. Although typical American Western heroes often have sympathy for, or even concrete ties to American Indians, Tex's connections run so deep that he is often able to pass as Navajo and carries the title of Navajo Chief.

This dual belonging in both the settler and Native worlds is established early on in the series. However, when Tex is introduced, he perfectly embodies Slotkin's description of a Western hero. Tex then quickly evolves into a *brava gente* version of a white American settler, heretofore referred to simply as the *brava gente* settler. By the seventh issue, Tex becomes a victim of settler colonialism and a Navajo Chief, and thus the *brava gente* settler is born. Two of the issues that establish Tex's backstory—"Il patto di sangue" (1950) and "Il giuramento" (1969)—make this shift and represent Tex's character in all but the first few issues of the series. Before the shift into narratives and characters that promote the *brava gente* myth, *Tex* builds its fictional world divided along lines of race and sets Tex Willer up as the character through which the *fumetto* portrays the dichotomies of savagery and civilization.

Tex's position between civilization and wilderness and Indian and white worlds is established in the series' first issue, "Il totem misterioso" ("The Mysterious Totem"), published in its first form in 1948. This first story fully embraces the Frontier Myth and represents an Italian photocopy of classic narratives and themes from American Westerns. The *fumetto* does not yet claim that Tex is Native in any sense, thereby invoking the imagined dispossession element of the *brava gente* myth; but he is still a hero of American Indians. Before the *fumetto* added the elements that masked Tex's colonizing as becoming, Tex was simply a white savior of a weak Native culture. At this early part in Tex's character development, he is a hyper-masculine white hero, embodying the fascist Italian ideal. This emphasis on masculinity remains in Tex's character throughout the series. While it represents his only characteristic in "Il totem misterioso," it continues to comprise a central component of Tex's increasingly complex character over time and is emblematic of the *Italianità* that the *brava gente* myth imagines.

"Il totem misterioso" tells a story that revolves around Tex rescuing a Native woman named Tesah several times. Tex's masculinity is highlighted throughout the story. He gains masculine energy from drinking whisky, and throughout the story develops sexual tension with and saves Tesah. Along the way, he overpowers both white and American Indian enemies. Tesah, on the other hand is Tex's and the audience's sexual object. An introduction to a 2013 reprint of the story describes Tesah as "delicious" and "one of the many sexy pin-ups that cross

Tex's path" as the early issues worked to establish Tex's character.²²⁷ The first drawings of Tesah were so risqué, in fact, that they were censored. Tesah was redrawn and the original version was not released until a 1996 reprint.²²⁸ In this first concept of *Tex*, the story and the entire world it builds is founded on the concept that Native survival depends on white masculinity, particularly of the Italian fascist variety. Indianness is feminized and fetishized through Tesah's character, and it only survives because of Tex's aid. Tesah's character is soon reconceptualized as Tex's Navajo wife, Lilyth, to better fit the *brava gente* myth of humanitarian colonization. With Lilyth, Tex's objectification of Indianness is veiled by his appreciation and love for his wife.

Tex's hyper-masculine traits remain throughout the series. Moreover, the series itself celebrates masculine strength as a trait of both the *brava gente* settler and American settlers. As the *brava gente* settler, Tex serves as the key component of the series' simultaneous circulation of American and Italian settler colonial logics and values and critique of those logics and values. In just a few issues, Tex becomes a white Texas Ranger who has settled in Navajo space, seized control of the Indian world, and appropriated Indianness for himself. This narrative, however, is advertised to Italian readers as the story of a perfect settler who has both settler and Navajo racial and cultural identities. *Tex* takes the colonizing aspects of American mass culture and makes its own Italian version.

²²⁷ Franco Bussata, ed., *Tex story: Il patto di sangue* (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 2013), X.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, X.

Tex has brought U.S. settler colonialism to Italy and used it as a template for Italian postwar self-expression, thus continuing the Italian involvement in transnational settler colonialism that became a part of *Italianità* during the nineteenth century.

The *Brava Gente* Settler Defined in “Il patto di sangue”

“Il patto di sangue” (“The Blood Pact”), first published in 1950 and one of the most significant issues in setting up *Tex*’s world and backstory, demonstrates *Tex*’s speedy evolution from a colonizer stealing American Indian land, to a liminal part-white, part-Navajo vigilante whose sense of justice stands apart from white and American Indian conflicts over territory. At the beginning of the story, the U.S. Marshall asks for *Tex*’s help in addressing groups of Navajo and Black Foot Indians who have escaped from their reservations. When he receives his assignment, *Tex* observes, “Indians that escape from reservations!.. An ugly affair!,” establishing that the central conflict of the story, and in fact one of the central reoccurring conflicts of the series, is about land. The adventure that defines *Tex*’s origin story and his character for the hundreds of issues that follow also defines settler colonial conflict as the driving narrative of *Tex*.²²⁹ In order to understand who *Tex* is, the Italian audience must first understand his world as one in which control over space is constantly in question, and in which white Americans

²²⁹ Bonelli, G. L., “Il patto di sangue,” in *Tex story: Il patto di sangue*, ed. Franco Busatta (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 2013), 153.

are working to confine American Indians to reservations and American Indians threaten white American lives with their resistance.

The world of *Tex* is spatially divided along lines of race. There is a white settler world and an American Indian world. Each is vying for valuable space and characters must cross both imagined and literal borders between the two worlds. Of course this very construction serves as the basis for the U.S. settler-colonial practice of racializing American Indians that *Tex* replicates. Tex comes from the settler world, but in “Il patto di sangue” begins to sympathize with an American Indian perspective and eventually Navajos accept him as one of their own. By the end of the series’ seventh issue, Tex fully belongs in both the settler world and the American Indian world and is able to pass as racially belonging to both.

This shift occurs early in “Il patto di sangue.” Tex’s initial viewpoint is established as he contemplates his mission while riding through the desert to locate the rebellious Navajos. This introduces the reader to the status quo of the fictional fumetto world from which Tex and his comrades will set themselves apart. He concludes: “The reservation Indians do not have any interest in putting themselves on the war path ...and if they are thinking of doing that, it is really necessary that they have good reasons.”²³⁰ This is the first glimpse of Tex’s initial thoughts regarding American Indians. Clearly, he does not see the loss of American Indian territory that created reservations as reason enough for conflict. This thought also indicates that he views American Indians on reservations as a

²³⁰ Ibid., 154.

group either mollified or weakened by settlement. In his initial thinking, the Navajos he is searching for are a defeated group of people whose resistance to colonization is futile.

Tex's viewpoint begins to shift quickly, however, as he crosses into and makes connections with the Indian world. While on his mission, Tex is pursued and then captured by a group of Navajo warriors and taken back to their camp. His first conversation with Freccia Rossa (Red Arrow), the Navajo Chief, exemplifies the dynamic between the settler and American Indian worlds of *Tex*:

...*Tex regains his senses*...

Tex: "Bison's blood! An Indian camp!"

Freccia Rossa: "Yes! A camp of those Indians that the pale faces want to exterminate."

Tex: "The red man speaks with a forked tongue. He knows well that the pale faces have left land to the red brothers."

Freccia Rossa: "What land?.. The pale face perhaps means to allude to the reservations where the living never reach and the great red people slowly die out?"²³¹

In this scene, Tex has yet to take on his role as the heroic *brava gente* settler, and the Navajos are not yet established as good Indians. However, the *fumetto's* language emphasizes the racialized nature of the divide between the colonizer and the colonized. Both white and Native characters use terms such as "pale face" and

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

“red people” to signify settlers and American Indians. This terminology reproduces the racialization of Native peoples as an other and thus contributes to the *fumetto*'s reproduction of U.S. settler logics. By engaging in racialized language, Italian creators and consumers of *Tex* participate in defining Indianness in opposition to whiteness and become complicit in the maintenance of settler-constructed racial hierarchies. Racialized language appears throughout *Tex*, even though the events that follow this conversation attempt to justify the employment of racialized stereotypes by making Tex both white and American Indian.

After Tex regains consciousness and he and Freccia Rossa speak, the Navajos begin a ceremony to determine which warrior will receive the honor of executing Tex. In the process, Tex is tortured by a Navajo who burns a circle onto his chest to serve as a target for his executioner.²³² During this sequence, the *fumetto* offers its assessment of U.S. settler colonialism. Tex represents the typical white settler. His heroic efforts to do his duty on behalf of the U.S. Marshall are threatened by brutal American Indian violence. The audience of course assumes their hero is in the right. Freccia Rossa and the Navajos, on the other hand, are fighting a losing battle with excessive violence against the *fumetto*'s hero. In this Italian presentation of U.S. settler colonialism, The Navajos led by Freccia Rossa are losing the struggle over space and resources.

At this point in the story, the U.S. Marshall and Tex represent the settler state. Tex's conversation with Freccia Rossa indicates that the settler state views

²³² *Ibid.*, 164.

the reservation system as a fair arrangement by which the U.S. has occupied its rightful share of land while graciously leaving designated land for American Indians. The settler world is both triumphant over American Indians, having taken land they desired, and benevolent in their victory by establishing reservations. However, the settler world still fears American Indian resistance, as Tex's and the Marshall's anxiety over the Navajo's off-reservation movements indicates. Thus the *fumetto* establishes the U.S. frontier as a conquered space, ruled by settlers who view themselves as nobly in the right and undeserving of Native violence against their claims to land. This landscape is not only an example of an Italian perception of the American West, but also evocative of Italy's settler colonialism in Africa. Just as Italians were justified in their claims to African land, so is the American settler state in *Tex*. At this point, therefore, the *fumetto* has blurred any lines between the its analyses of and referenced to the U.S. settler state and the Italian settler state.

The *fumetto* criticizes this landscape, however, with Freccia Rossa's perspective. Through his observations, the audience must encounter the idea that the settler world—of which their hero is a leader—harbors malicious, even genocidal, intentions toward American Indians. The land that settlers “left to” American Indians is neither useful nor desirable from both white and American Indian points of view. Reservations are exposed as a tool of the settler-colonial process of elimination.²³³ In this moment, the villains who have captured and

²³³ Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.”

threatened the life of the hero establish the stark division and tension between the white world and the American Indian world of the *fumetto*. The white settler world is appealingly dominant, yet utterly unethical, while the American Indian world is defeated, and mounting a brutal resistance in the face of a fate of slow death. The Navajos are in need of a hero in the very moment they have captured the audience's hero.

This marks the beginning of Tex's speedy transition from a white settler, conveniently ignorant of the dire situation on reservations—just as the Italian public was ignorant of Italy's use of chemical weapons in Ethiopia, to a border-crossing hero for both the Navajos and white settlers in the *fumetto*, and for the Italian audience. In the same movement, Tex's Navajo captors shift from villains to victims that the audience is encouraged to relate to. In the landscape that *Tex* has just established as deeply flawed and unjust, only the *brava gente* settler can repair the world. This paralleled Italian reality in which *Italianità* and settler colonialism in Africa were intertwined, yet Italy's African colonies were suddenly an aberration. However, imagining Italians as the *brava gente* in an American landscape helped to reconcile the tensions surrounding the legacy of Italian settler colonialism. This story in *Tex* posits that were Italians, that is the *brava gente*, the settlers in this situation, the resulting relationship between the settlers and the indigenous would not be a colonial one. Instead, the *brava gente* would perform humanitarian missions and actually *become* indigenous. In the *brava gente* myth, indigeneity is not only accessible, but understood. Therefore Tex, as the *brava gente* settler in

this fictional landscape, must also become indigenous in order to continue as the series' morally superior hero.

In the last moment before Tex's execution, this is accomplished. Freccia Rossa's daughter, Lilyth, steps in between Tex and his executioner and declares, "The pale face will be my husband!"²³⁴ The crowd is shocked, and Freccia Rossa confirms with Lilyth that she is sure of her decision. Tex accepts the engagement "provided that [Freccia Rossa] explains to [him] why the red brothers have attacked without any provocation."²³⁵ Tex is untied and he and Lilyth speak before the sacred ceremony that will marry them. In their conversation, Lilyth reveals that she saved Tex because she "was educated in the mission of the white sisters of Alamosa and hates this useless war."²³⁶

With this statement, Lilyth becomes the first good Indian of the series. Not only has colonization made Lilyth peaceful, but it has also made her relatable to an Italian audience. Lilyth received what was presumably a Catholic education from white women at a mission school. As the Navajo Chief's daughter, her Indianness is undeniable, yet her exposure to a Catholic worldview puts her in a space that many Italians would be familiar with, that falls within many components of the *brava gente* myth, and that mimics Italian impressions of American Indian performers who visited the Vatican in 1890. Furthermore, her Catholic education has elevated her Indianness to one above her Navajo peers by making her a

²³⁴ G. L. Bonelli, *Il patto di sangue*, 165.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

pacifist voice of reason in her community—again, similar to how Italians viewed the Lakota performers that they believed were helping suppress the Ghost Dance Movement. She even credits her education's influence for her decision to save the *fumetto's* white hero. Her heroism provides an example of the benefits of "humanitarian colonization." By saving and marrying Tex, Lilyth creates a bridge for Tex to cross between the white settler world and the Navajo world; and it is her characteristics that most closely mirror Italian life that help her accomplish this.

After Lilyth emerges as a sort of Navajo-Italian heroine for the audience, Tex takes on the same role. Tex and Lilyth are married in a ceremony that involves them mixing their blood together in a chalice and drinking from it. The *fumetto's* depiction of this ceremony comes across as a Navajo take on the Catholic Eucharist rather than something resembling Navajo culture. The Navajo medicine man—who the *fumetto* positions as the spiritual leader—presides over the religious ceremony in which blood is imbibed from a chalice in the style of those used for the Eucharist but painted with a pattern that follows what the *fumetto* has established as a Navajo aesthetic. The ceremony itself connects the fictional Navajo world of the *fumetto* to the Italian world of the *fumetto's* audience. Rather than depicting Lilyth and Tex's wedding as either a Navajo wedding or a Catholic wedding, the *fumetto* mimics a sacrament in which the participants commune with Christ through the consumption of his transubstantiated blood. By doing so, the *fumetto* sends the clear message that Tex is becoming Navajo. Just as Catholicism

holds that one becomes Christ by taking the Eucharist, Tex becomes Navajo by drinking Lilyth's blood.

On a symbolic level, the images of the wedding perpetuates the common stereotype of American Indian culture as inherently brutal and primitive, thus reproducing the settler notions of American Indian culture that do the harm of depicting American Indian life as incompatible with the modernity that Italians became familiar with in the late-nineteenth century. On a narrative level, Tex and Lilyth's wedding serves as a moment where the fictional Navajo and settler worlds, and the Italian world of the audience collide and combine. The ceremony requires both Tex and Lilyth to make "il patto di sangue"—the blood pact. The pact transforms both Lilyth and Tex into world-crossing characters and into *brava gente*. Through the blood pact, Tex becomes, by blood, a Navajo, and Lilyth solidifies her already-established position as a Navajo who can reach into the settler world. For the audience, the realm over which Tex dominates as the hero expands from the white settler world to include the American Indian world. Furthermore, the good Indian Lilyth officially creates the bridge between the white settler world—the world the audience is most likely to identify with—and the American Indian world, making Indianness accessible to Italian readers. The fact that Lilyth, the daughter of a Navajo Chief, opens this connection and invites a white man into the American Indian world, is the *fumetto's* way of justifying Tex's takeover of the Navajos and of marking the takeover as joining and becoming, rather than colonizing. As the son-in-law of the Chief, Tex has a right to Navajo land, just as the *brava gente*

myth argues that Italians had a right to African lands they inherited from the Roman Empire.

This situates the Italian readers where they will remain in relation to the *fumetto* for the rest of the series. Tex was the readers' hero from the beginning. As such, the readers are meant to identify most closely with Tex and the worlds he inhabits. Initially, this is the white settler world where bold American men forge a new society on lands they earned fighting bravely for the noble cause of westward expansion. After the blood pact, however, Tex's world expands to include the Navajo one. Not only is Tex now associated with Navajo society through marriage, but he is of Navajo blood and is given the title of Chief due to Lilyth's status. Tex *is* Navajo and Tex *is* white, and thus has both indigenous and settler claims to any space he occupies. Since readers were encouraged to make a hero of Tex and imagine themselves in his shoes as a white leader of frontier society, they are now equally encouraged to imagine themselves in his shoes as a Chief of the Navajos. This Navajo world that was, up until this moment, the world of the *fumetto*'s villains is made safe, comfortable, and relatable by Lilyth. Even before she is officially made white by blood, she benefitted from a Western, religious education that taught her that her Navajo and settler worlds could co-exist as long as Navajos acted peacefully—an idea pulled directly from narratives found in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and the World's Columbian Exposition. With Tex's and Lilyth's marriage, the good Indian and the *brava gente* settler are introduced. Tex and the Italian audience emerge from the blood pact as *brava gente* settlers, and Lilyth,

Tex, and the Navajos they lead emerge as good Indians. The world of *Tex* no longer mimics the worlds Slotkin describes, but becomes a unique Bonelli Western.

The role of both the audience and Tex as *brava gente* settlers is further established later in *Il patto di sangue* and maintained throughout the series. Immediately following Tex and Lilyth's wedding the *fumetto* nuances its position regarding its settler-colonial landscape. Freccia Rossa, Lilyth, and Tex retreat to Freccia Rossa's tent to discuss why the Navajos have decided to leave their reservation in rebellion. Freccia Rossa begins by explaining that the government agent had failed to deliver promised supplies to the reservation and that several Navajo warriors had been killed within the bounds of the reservation. Then a man named Jerry Stone, who Freccia Rossa describes as "the only pale face that shows himself to be a friend," explained to the Navajos that "the pale faces act this way by order of the White Father from Washington, who intended to exterminate the red race by taking possession of the reservations."²³⁷ Tex assures Freccia Rossa that these intentions are not true, but Freccia Rossa remains skeptical because "the Indian agent of the reservations steals from the red people...while instead Jerry Stone gets us provisions and weapons to defend ourselves against the pale faces."²³⁸ Tex politely praises Freccia Rossa for speaking "with an open heart and honest tongue" and requests that Freccia Rossa consider his

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

perspective, which Freccia Rossa allows since Tex is now of Navajo blood and is a Navajo Chief.²³⁹ Tex explains to Freccia Rossa that the “Great White Father of Washington” sent him to investigate the very injustices that Freccia Rossa described and that the Navajos will be repaid. After confirming that Freccia Rossa and the Navajos purchased arms from Jerry Stone, Tex also points out to Freccia Rossa that Jerry Stone is not benevolently offering advice to Freccia Rossa, but is an illegal arms dealer who is taking advantage of the Navajos’ struggles for his own profit.

This first part of Freccia Rossa and Tex’s first exchange as two Navajo Chiefs confirms the inherent injustice of U.S. settler colonialism by acknowledging the U.S. government’s failure in establishing a working, reliable reservation system. As Leake points out, this theme of an inadequate government failing to provide for its people is something Italians would have found extremely relatable in the postwar era. Tex and Freccia Rossa both agree that the current state of the Navajo reservation is neither adequate, sustainable, nor the fault of the Navajos. Instead, corrupt Indian Agents are to blame for the poor state of reservations. Thus, the *fumetto* accomplishes its task of criticizing U.S. settler colonialism as a structure that functions in a way that, as Freccia Rossa blatantly argues, is leading to the extermination of American Indians. Settler colonialism itself is the underlying antagonist of the *fumetto*’s world, and by observing the violence of settler

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 168.

colonialism the *fumetto* attempts to exculpate itself from the colonizing work its images, language, and narratives accomplish.

The audience is not supposed to see themselves as “the Great White Father of Washington,” but as the *brava gente* settler, Tex. In this discussion with Freccia Rossa, Tex is uniquely positioned to be the only hero that can function in the inherently unjust landscape U.S. settler colonialism built. As a spokesperson for the U.S. government, he has the power to advocate for better treatment for the Navajos. As a new Chief of the Navajos, he has Freccia Rossa’s trust, which quickly turns into the authority to speak on behalf of the Navajos—indeed as one of them. Furthermore, as a member of both worlds, Tex is uniquely capable of identifying Jerry Stone as an enemy. Not only is Jerry Stone an enemy to the settler world by illegally selling arms to American Indians, but he is also an enemy to the Navajos for duping them into rebelling against the U.S. government. He is therefore the perfect villain for the *brava gente* settler to face. What Stone threatens the most is the peaceful landscape the *brava gente* settler imagines and works to create and defend. Due to Stone’s actions, the settler state needs saving because it allows for too much corruption that leads to violence. The Indian world needs saving because the *fumetto* defines the American Indian race as too weak and uninformed to save themselves. Tex alone can rescue the settler world from Navajo rebellion, and the Navajos from the self-destruction this rebellion would bring, due to his ability to uncover the true villain. Similarly, Tex alone can solve

the Navajo's problems by using his influence to force the U.S. government to fulfill their responsibilities to the Navajos.

This position belongs only to the *brava gente* settler. As the *brava gente* settler, Tex is the benevolent and nearly omniscient arbiter of settler-colonial authority who genuinely sympathizes with and understands American Indian needs and desires. He can cross between and belong in both worlds, and can utilize his Indianness or whiteness whenever it is most convenient and effective for him to achieve his series-long goal of creating a world where both settler and American Indian needs are met. This ability would have been particularly appealing to Italians disillusioned with their government. Of course, the very existence of a *brava gente* settler romanticizes colonial structures by imagining a way in which they could exist without intending to forcefully displace and eliminate indigenous peoples and cultures.

Nevertheless, this is how the Italian audience is meant to see themselves. As readers of the *fumetto*, they are inherently complicit in the colonizing effects of the *fumetto*'s circulation of harmful stereotypes and romanticization of settler colonialism. However, by creating a hero that operates apart from and as morally superior to the injustices of settler colonialism, the *fumetto* positions its audience to vicariously live out a settler fantasy. When reading *Tex*, the audience gets to be Slotkin's world-crossing hero with an Italian spin. The reader gets to abhor American settler violence while indulging in the fantasy of colonial dominance, without acknowledging Italy's recent settler-colonial past. The Italian audience at

the time of *Tex*'s creation was deep in the process of forging its collective memory of Italy's colonial history in Africa in a way that characterized Italian colonization as benevolent if it recognized it at all. *Tex* as a hero embodies this idea of Italians as the *brava gente* while still existing in a violent and oppressive world. Through *Tex*, readers quench the thirst for colonial dominance, criticize U.S. settler colonialism, and save American Indians. In this way, the readers of *Tex* take the *Italian* concept of the *brava gente* and superimpose it on an American settler-colonial landscape. As *Tex* champions both the American Indian and settler worlds, the audience is taken on a journey in which the Italian *brava gente* settler corrects the errors of U.S. settler colonialism.

Freccia Rossa and *Tex*'s conversation continues to establish *Tex*'s role as the *brava gente* settler by presenting *Tex* with the opportunity to establish his authority in the Navajo world. Freccia Rossa and *Tex* end their discussion of who is to blame for the problems on the Navajo reservation with an agreement:

Freccia Rossa: "My white brother will give his word to act in support of the Navajos?"

Tex: "The white brother promises to act loyally toward the red people!"

Freccia Rossa: "Ugh! For an entire moon Freccia Rossa will keep his warriors far from the war path... ..But if within that time the pale face

has not given proof of having spoken with an honest tongue, then the Navajos will act.”²⁴⁰

Freccia Rossa tentatively places his trust in Tex, who is still gaining acceptance in his new Navajo world. Tex leaves in order to confront Jerry Stone. Here, Tex and his Italian audience embark on their first of many adventures as the *brava gente* settler. “Il patto di sangue” does its work of defining Tex as both a Native and settler hero and of defining the evil he fights as corruption in the settler-colonial system.

Before Tex leaves to save the Navajos, his relationship with Lilyth begins its speedy transformation into a loving marriage. Lilyth offers Tex advice, informing him that Grosso Tuono (Big Thunder), the Chief of the Black Feet tribe and friend of Jerry Stone, is influencing her father’s thinking. Lilyth warns Tex that he needs to be wary of Grosso Tuono. Tex assures her that he will remember her advice and promises to return not just to prevent war, suggesting that he will return for Lilyth. This establishes Tex’s connection to Navajo interests as genuine and also legitimates his authority to operate on behalf of the American Indian world even when he has crossed over into the settler world.

When Tex reaches the nearby town of Durango, he finds Jerry Stone in a saloon with its tough, cigar-smoking, overweight but voluptuous, female owner Bessie. Especially when compared to the beautiful, sexualized, and heroic Lilyth, Bessie disrupts the *fumetto*’s definitions of femininity and masculinity. Lilyth represents a *brava gente* woman in the Catholic virtue she displays and her central

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 169.

role of supporting Tex. Bessie, on the other hand, threatens the *brava gente* virtues Lilyth promotes. She engages in masculine behaviors like smoking and drinking, has a rough disposition, and is a powerful and influential woman in the predominantly masculine industry of saloons. Bessie's deviation from the feminine mold signifies her immediately as a villain, just as all villains in Tex do not conform to the *brava gente* myth. Despite the obvious hints that the audience should not like Bessie, she too is a sexual object much like Lilyth. Both women, despite being complete opposites, are drawn in a way that emphasizes their sexuality for the audience's enjoyment. This trend continues in Tex. Since the *brava gente* settler is decidedly masculine, the only women in the series are intended as objects for the *brava gente* settler's satisfaction. In this way, the paternal aspects of the *brava gente* myth—that is its celebration of white, Northern Italian masculinity—are reflected and reproduces by both the producers and consumers of *fumetti*.

After the introduction of Bessie to the story, Tex confronts Stone in her saloon about the rifles he sold to the Navajos and never delivered. Stone claims that the failure to deliver the rifles is no fault of his own and that he is a legitimate arms seller whose shipments have been stolen during train robberies. Tex suspects Stone is lying and through a long, convoluted series of events, Tex eventually discovers that Stone is a small part of a much larger scheme. Stone and Durango's Sheriff in fact work for Bessie, who has a deal with the Brennan and Trenton shipping company in Denver to buy rifles and ammunition that Bessie then sells to the Navajos and Black Feet. Bessie hires outlaws to stage train

robberies to intercept the rifle shipments, and the corrupt Sherriff launches fake investigations in order to cover their tracks. During Tex's journey to find all the pieces to this puzzle, the qualities of the *brava gente* settler, the corruption of the settler colonial system, and the roles of good and bad Indians are established.

Early in Tex's investigation, he travels to the site of the train robberies where the information he gathers from railway workers makes him realize they are staged. Bessie, suspicious of Tex from their first meeting, has already hired an ex-convict, Ben Testadura, to murder Tex. Testadura first attempts to shoot Tex from afar, but accidentally hits an innocent railway worker instead. Tex flees and is pursued by Testadura's sidekick, an Indian named Ta-hu-nah. Tex narrowly escapes—a common theme throughout the series—and it is revealed that Ta-hu-nah works for Testadura in exchange for whisky. Motivated by the promise of this payment, Ta-hu-nah ventures on his own to kill Tex, and follows him to the office of the region's Indian Agent. Tex discovers that the Indian Agent is corrupt, and is helping Stone and Bessie convince American Indian Chiefs to buy their weapons. Ta-hu-nah accidentally shoots and kills the Indian Agent when aiming for Tex, but believes Tex to be dead as the Indian Agent fired upon Tex as he died. After Ta-hu-nah reports the news of Tex's death, Testadura and Durango's Sherriff call him a drunk and decide they must confirm his story. At the Indian Agent's office, they discover that Tex is still alive, and arrest Tex so they can frame him for the murder of the Indian Agent.

In this sequence of events, Ta-hu-nah emerges as the first “bad Indian” of the series. He stands in juxtaposition to Lilyth, who represents the ability of “good Indians” to adopt and live by Italian values. Ta-hu-nah’s actions begin two key trends the *fumetto* uses throughout the series to distinguish good Indians from bad Indians. Firstly—like with white villains in the series—Ta-hu-nah attacks Tex without warning and shoots at his back. Secondly, the story establishes that Ta-hu-nah has an abusive relationship with alcohol. Throughout the series, *Tex* treats whisky as something that settlers can consume and that represents white settler masculinity. American Indian characters do not drink unless they are bad Indians, and women do not drink unless they are in some way deviant, much like Bessie.

The stereotypes of American Indians as susceptible to alcoholism, of American Indians allying with settlers solely to acquire whisky, of upstanding women as abstaining women, and of whisky as a symbol of white masculinity are borrowed from American Westerns. The perpetuation of these stereotypes racializes Indianness and supports settler colonial systems of hierarchy in which American Indians are painted as natural victims of colonization and white men dominate social hierarchy. The stereotype of an American Indian whose physical nature cannot properly process white masculinity—represented by whisky consumption—promotes the idea that American Indians are tragically, but naturally and thus unavoidably, victims of settler colonization. In *Tex*, it isn’t Ta-hu-nah’s fault that he is addicted to whisky, but Testadura’s fault for providing him with whisky to begin with. Similarly, it is not Freccia Rossa’s fault that the Navajos have

left the reservation, but Jerry Stone's fault for tricking Freccia Rossa into thinking resistance was the best course for his tribe. In *Tex*, "bad Indians" are made bad by U.S. settler colonialism. This removes almost all agency from American Indian characters, which contributes to the *fumetto's* support of U.S. settler logics by only having passive American Indian characters whose actions always revolve around the actions of white, male characters.

For characters like Ta-hu-nah, settler colonialism has driven them to villainy through no fault of their own. However, once they are villains, the audience can enjoy the common settler "cowboys vs. Indians" fantasy guilt-free since the true enemy is the settler colonial system that tragically forced bad Indians into existence. For characters like Freccia Rossa, Italians can save them from settler colonialism through *Tex*. Furthermore, Italians can imagine themselves as becoming Indian, just as *Tex* does when he marries Lilyth. Through this act of saving via belonging, Italians are simultaneously indulging in the fantasy of the white savior and appropriating imagined Indianness as their own. This overt cultural appropriation makes *Tex* a colonizing force of its own that reproduces U.S. settler practices in an Italian world, despite its success in making its readers feel as if they are criticizing U.S. settler colonialism and exposing its inherent violence.

The very existence of bad Indians as common characters made evil by colonization presents a problem. As Italians use stereotypes to mark good Indians from bad, they incorporate American-born racialization of American Indians into Italian popular culture and into their understandings of *Italianità* that culture is

reflecting and constructing. This not only expands the reach of an American settler culture that works to eliminate American Indians, but makes the idea of American Indians an as other a part of Italian self-consciousness. In this way, *Tex* itself colonizes. On top of this, *Tex* promotes the intentional erasure of Italian settler-colonialism in Africa, thus carrying the marginalization of Africans into postwar reconstructions of *Italianità*. Only *Tex*—the embodiment of the Italian audience—knows how to properly garner peace in the *fumetto*'s world, which only seems possible if memory of Italy's settler-colonial violence in Africa is repressed. Ta-hu-nah is corrupted by settlement via whisky consumption, and that corruption drives him to such evils as attacking the *fumetto*'s unsuspecting heroes from behind. Therefore, *Tex* protects good Indians from corruption by abstaining from whisky whenever he is a part of their world. "Il patto di sangue" establishes many times over that Navajos respect *Tex* and will trust in and follow his leadership. *Tex* has, in fact, colonized, despite the *fumetto*'s claim that *Tex*'s *brava gente* settlement is a force for good that benefits both the settler and Indian worlds due to his dual identity as both white and Navajo. With his dual identity, *Tex* performs the *brava gente* myth and claims imagined Indianness for Italians by expressing affinity for American Indians and embracing his new Navajo life. In doing so, *Tex* is living out the *brava gente*'s role as the humanitarian non-colonizer.

After Ta-hu-nah emerges as a bad Indian, *Tex* escapes prison through a dazzling series of events just before he is to be executed for the murder of the Indian Agent. Reproducing yet another trope of John Wayne westerns, *Tex* leads

the corrupt Sherriff into the very trap the Sherriff had set for Tex, resulting in the Sherriff's death and Tex's escape. Tex immediately heads for the nearest Texas Ranger station, from where he intends to expose the corruption in Durango, bring down the illegal arms trade, and save the Navajos and Black Feet from self-destruction. However, when he arrives at the Ranger station and tells his story to the Ranger Captain, he learns that Jerry Stone is the new Sherriff of Durango and has already sent a telegram telling the Captain a different story. The Captain, Tex learns, is also compromised by corruption as he is the nephew of a powerful Senator and has ulterior motives guiding his actions. Tex must again evade arrest, this time from his beloved Texas Rangers, and decides he must act as a vigilante in order to bring peace to the region.

Before he begins dispensing justice, however, Tex returns to the Navajo reservation to update Freccia Rossa. Upon arriving, he learns from Lilyth that "the Navajo warriors have given [Tex] the name of Aquila della Notte" (Eagle of the Night) and that "many of them would follow him voluntarily" if he wished for their aid.²⁴¹ Tex is now fully accepted in the Navajo world. However, in heroic *brava gente* fashion, Tex refuses this offer, stating "I do not want the Navajo warriors to become caught up in this dirty affair." Here he confirms himself, once again, as the only one in the position to effectively act in a way that helps the Navajo cause. Freccia Rossa then enters the scene and affirms this position, saying "Aquila della Notte has spoken with wisdom!" and "Freccia Rossa is proud of Aquila della

²⁴¹ Ibid., 233-4.

Notte!”²⁴² With this new relationship of Tex and Freccia Rossa as equals established, the *fumetto* begins a trend of using strategy sessions between Tex and Freccia Rossa to build the fictional world:

Tex: “I am pleased to ascertain that Freccia Rossa has opened his eyes to the truth! The government of the Great White Father is not responsible for the failed arrival of provisions to the Indian reservations!”

Freccia Rossa: “Freccia Rossa is convinced of what Aquila della Notte says! But why does the Great White Father not punish those at fault?”

Tex: “The Great White Father has been misled by his unworthy sons and does not know what they have done! The Great Father believes that his red sons want to march on the war path!”

Freccia Rossa: “Ugh! Aquila della Notte knows that this is not true!”

Tex: “Aquila della Notte is working to bring about the exposure of the culprits! Provided that Freccia Rossa continues to help me by sending his warriors to gather information on how much is happening in the region, then the peace will return to the Indian lands!”²⁴³

Again, the atrocities of settler colonialism are blamed on the inadequacies of the system, not the intention of the U.S. federal government, reflecting the widespread

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 234.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 234-5.

postwar Italian mistrust of the state. This makes Tex's position as a go-between valid. The federal government needs an agent they can trust to look at American Indian concerns without being tempted to use his power to exploit reservations for personal gain. This conversation between Tex and Freccia Rossa demonstrates that there is no failsafe within U.S. settler colonial structures. From the *fumetto's* viewpoint, the U.S. government's paternalism toward American Indians is unjust and corrupt. The *brava gente* settler Tex, however, can use his genuine whiteness and his genuine Indianness to police settler institutions and remove the paternalism from the relationship. Once again, the Italian audience is positioned to imagine themselves as the *brava gente* settler hero. postwar Italian tensions regarding the relationship between society and the state are expressed in parallels in Tex's world. Due to the positioning of Tex as the *brava gente*, however, Italians get to be the heroes of this unstable world. By the end of "Il patto di sangue," Tex is fully established as the series' bridge between and hero for both the settler world and the American Indian world.

Tex then leaves the Navajo reservation and single-handedly robs Jerry Stone's train shipment, effectively undermining Bessie's plan to provide the Black Feet with rifles and instigate a war that would increase the demand and value of her product. Tex confronts Bessie and Stone in order to threaten them so they will leave Durango. This is unsuccessful, and Tex must refuse a bribe from Bessie. During this exchange, the true villain of the story is revealed. Tex tells Stone and Bessie: "With your filthy trade you have earned a lot of gold...gold that is dirty with

innocent blood...gold that has cost the life of honest settlers who were slaughtered by the redskins, incited by you, armed by you...you, disgusting rifle traffickers!"²⁴⁴ Although this statement recognizes the violence of American Indians against settlers, he positions them as victims of the corrupt components of the U.S. settler-colonial system: arms dealers. Individual settlers and American Indians are innocent while corrupters of the colonial government are the villains. Once again, Tex sets himself apart as both the perfect settler and the perfect Indian by preventing violence that would disrupt peace.

Tex further establishes the Navajo portion of his identity as the story continues. After his confrontation with Stone and Bessie, a new Black Feet villain is introduced. Volpe Rossa (Red Fox) is sent by the Black Feet Chief, Grosso Tuono, to find out why they never received their shipment of rifles from Bessie. Bessie blames Tex, and Volpe Rossa agrees to kill Tex in exchange for Tex's horse and ten rifles. Volpe Rossa follows Tex and learns of his relationship with Lilyth through a Navajo friend of his. He betrays and kills his Navajo friend and kidnaps Lilyth in order to lure Tex into danger. Upon discovering Lilyth's kidnapping, Tex must again prevent Freccia Rossa from starting a war—this time with the Black Feet. Tex realizes that Volpe Rossa was working for Bessie, not Grosso Tuono, when he kidnapped Lilyth. Tex finally meets the new villain when, in keeping with the behavior of bad Indians and other villains in *Tex*, Volpe Rossa

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 244-245.

attacks Tex from behind without warning. Tex wins the long fight that ensues, however, and brings Volpe Rossa before Grosso Tuono.

As Tex travels with Volpe Rossa's unconscious body, Tex's thoughts reveal that he aims to find out why Grosso Tuono desires war with settlers. When he appears before Grosso Tuono, Tex establishes that his credibility as a Navajo extends beyond the Navajo reservation.²⁴⁵ Firstly, in his conversation with Grosso Tuono, Tex explicitly describes his relationship with Lilyth as one of love for the first time in the series.²⁴⁶ Secondly, Tex refers to himself in the third person by his Navajo name, Aquila della Notte. This trend continues for the rest of the *fumetto* series. When speaking to American Indian characters, Tex mimics the conversational structure of American Indian characters in the *fumetto* by speaking in the third person.²⁴⁷ He also identifies himself as Navajo by using his Navajo name. Furthermore, Tex proves his legitimacy as someone who belongs in the American Indian world by listing his associations. He tells Grosso Tuono: "Aquila della Notte is a courageous warrior, and came to the village of Grosso Tuono. Aquila della Notte is not afraid of the red warriors, seeing as how he has become a friend of Orso Grigio [Grey Bear], of Mano Gialla [Yellow Hand]...and of many other Indian chiefs, with one of whom, Freccia Rossa, he has bonds of blood! Aquila della Notte knows the red warriors are loyal, and comes to them without

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 275.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

²⁴⁷ This detail is yet another way in which *Tex* reproduces tropes meant to other American Indians.

fear!”²⁴⁸ Grosso Tuono is skeptical at first, but agrees to release Lilyth and listen to Tex. The conversation that follows is a long discussion of the relationship between Native governments and the U.S. federal government. By the end of the debate, Tex is fully established in his dual American Indian and white identity beyond Navajo borders. Tex begins the conversation by updating Grosso Tuono on recent events and admits to robbing Stone’s train in order to prevent the Black Feet from receiving their shipment of rifles. Then their debate ensues:

Grosso Tuono: “Grosso Tuono buys arms to fight the pale faces that have broken their promises! The Great White Father of Washington promised many things to the red people... .. He promised that he would send provisions, blankets, many things... He promised that the Indian reservations would always belong to the Indian people... ..and instead what have the red warriors had?... Few provisions, few old blankets...and the reservations become continually violated by the pale faces! The red people die, Aquila della Notte! If this is the will of the Great Father of Washington...well, the red people will die as a people of warriors and not of slaves!”

Tex: “Grosso Tuono has spoken with a straight tongue, and Aquila della Notte knows that it is true that the many things promised to them by the Great White Father have not been delivered to the red warriors... ..but Grosso Tuono listen now to the words of Aquila

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 276.

della Notte. And listen with wise ears, since Aquila della Notte speaks as a friend of the red people!”

Grosso Tuono: “Grosso Tuono listens!”

And Tex explains to his attentive audience how the fault of the missing delivery of the goods promised by the government should be attributed only to the shady operations of a handful of dirty speculators who did not hesitate to provoke discontent amongst the Indians, just to be able to sell them arms.

Tex: “... and when the warriors of Grosso Tuono become even more impoverished buying many other rifles what will they do?... Grosso Tuono is wise. He has seen many things ... He has gotten to know the courage of the Blue Jackets...so...Does Grosso Tuono perhaps think he can defeat the Blue Jackets of the Great White Father?...”

Grosso Tuono: “Grosso Tuono thinks he can only die a hero at the head of his warriors.”

Tex: “Grosso Tuono has spoken as a courageous and respectable chief of the Black Feet, but not as a wiseman! Provided that the Chief of the Black Feet listens to the advice of Aquila della Notte he will save his tribe from a lot of sorrow...”²⁴⁹

At this point, Volpe Rossa interrupts the conversation. He has regained consciousness, and tries to kill Tex by shooting him with an arrow. Grosso Tuono

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 278-279.

sentences Volpe Rossa to death for attacking a guest with peaceful intentions. However, seeing an opportunity to prove his worth, Tex requests that Volpe Rossa instead be given a warrior's sentence and challenges Volpe Rossa to a fight to the death, or "the test of the knife."²⁵⁰ Tex eventually wins the fight and thus the right to decide if Volpe Rossa lives or dies. He chooses to let Volpe Rossa live, but cuts off his hair—which the *fumetto* implies is a symbol of his success as a Black Feet warrior. This act of violently defeating an Indian enemy does not compromise Tex's role as a hero of the American Indian world, because Volpe Rossa is already established as a bad Indian. Not only is this display of dominance over a Native character acceptable, but it also serves as a way that Tex can save American Indians from themselves. When he defeats Volpe Rossa, Tex allows the audience to indulge in experiences of colonial dominance and of the white savior. Tex uses his *brava gente* qualities of masculine strength and unique sense of justice to save both the Indian world and the white settler world from the ills of government corruption and organized crime, problems that characterized postwar Italy. The vicarious experience of solving society's problems accompanies an experience of white colonial dominance over the Black Feet as Tex acts as their puppet master. This colonization, however, is justified by Tex's newly established Navajo identity—a quality only available to the already-Indigenous *brava gente*.

Grosso Tuono then banishes Volpe Rossa, thus separating himself and the other Black Feet from the bad Indian. Here the *fumetto* establishes the stark divide

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 283.

between good and bad Indians. They cannot exist together in the same tribe. Grosso Tuono's rejection of Volpe Rossa signifies that he and the Black Feet belong with Tex and the Navajos as good Indians. After the interruption and Tex's display of power over bad Indianness, Tex and Grosso Tuono continue their conversation.

Tex, listened to attentively by Grosso Tuono and the elders of the tribe, explains with great clarity the reasons that they have provoked discontent within the Indians of the reservations ...

Tex: "and it is for this that I tell you ... red brothers! Do not buy more arms from the treacherous pale faces that want only your gold! ...and that, for their criminal craving for profit, they are ready to spill not only the blood of brave red warriors, but also that of the courageous Blue Jackets! Permit that Aquila della Notte works for the good and the prosperity of the red warriors, and see that peace and justice will return to sit next to the fires of the villages!"²⁵¹

Grosso Tuono and the elders then vote on their next course of action, and decide—much like Freccia Rossa did—to give Tex time to gather proof that the U.S. government indeed wants peace. Tex has accomplished among the Black Feet what he has among the Navajos. He is now Aquila della Notte—a respected member of the Indian world. The *fumetto* once again views itself as a platform for exposing the evils of settler colonialism by having Tex agree that Grosso Tuono's

²⁵¹ Ibid., 289-290.

complaints and accusations are honest and indicate horrible mistreatment. However—just as with Tex’s earlier conversation with Freccia Rossa—the *fumetto* establishes corrupt settlers as the true enemy, exculpating the individual and paving the way for the *brava gente* settler to repair a broken and oppressive American settler colonial system.

As Tex leaves to gather proof for Grosso Tuono, he is again attacked by his enemies. He narrowly escapes and returns again to the Navajo reservation. By now, the Navajo reservation is firmly established as Tex’s home base. After entering the Navajo world as an enemy and leaving it as a trusted leader at the beginning of the story, the pattern of the narrative morphs in to one where the Navajo chief, Aquila della Notte, ventures into the settler world where he becomes Tex, the Texas Ranger of legends, and does the vigilante work of sniffing out corruption, thus saving both American Indians and the U.S. federal government from the consequences of that corruption. Even in issues with no Native characters, Tex is still known as just half of the white-Navajo, Tex-Aquila della Notte Chief and settler leader. *Il patto di sangue* is crucial in setting up this pattern that creates the foundation for Tex’s character and the worlds he inhabits for the rest of the nearly seven hundred issues of the *fumetto*. Upon this early re-entering of Tex into the Navajo world, Freccia Rossa refers to Tex as “his son” and calls him a “courageous and wise warrior.”²⁵² In return, Tex says he is “full of joy at the

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 301.

sight of his Navajo friends.”²⁵³ Tex has quickly escalated from a captured enemy to a respected leader.

Amidst the swift transformation of Tex into the *brava gente* settler in the Indian world, the settler world must contend with his existence. Not only do the arms traders need to adjust to the problems Tex is causing for them—at this point in the story, the Denver-based shipping company that Stone and Bessie worked for is laying a trap for Tex—but the Texas Rangers and the U.S. Marshall are unsure if he is a friend or an enemy. While Tex is planning another vigilante mission to single-handedly stop the next shipment of rifles from Denver, his friend and sidekick Kit Carson is discussing Tex’s loyalty with the U.S. Marshall. Carson is also a Texas Ranger and views Tex as a hero and friend. He tries to convince the Marshall that the accusations against Tex are all untrue and that the Ranger captain that told the Marshall Tex was a traitor is motivated by his connections in Washington and therefore is not trustworthy. But at this point in the story, a *brava gente* settler whose interests perfectly align with those of both the Texas Rangers and the Navajos does not fit in with the Marshall’s understanding of the world. Although the Marshall is conflicted, he orders Carson to go find Tex and return with him dead or alive. Reluctantly, Carson leaves, and on his way out, a guard calls Tex a scoundrel, and Carson punches him in response. In this moment, Carson establishes himself as Tex’s ally through his transition into the *brava gente* settler.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 301.

At the end of this sequence, Tex and his sidekick Carson begin their tenuous relationship with settler authority that will last throughout the series. At times, Tex is viewed as an outlaw, and at other times a hero. Sometimes, Tex is temporarily deputized and works for settler authorities, and other times he is on the run from them. Carson, on the other hand, remains in good enough standing with settler authorities to preserve Tex's genuine connection to the settler world. This secures Tex's ability to pass back in to the settler world after living on the Navajo reservation as their Chief, Aquila della Notte. In an act that establishes this connection for the rest of the series, Carson joins Tex to help him on his vigilante mission rather than turning him in to the Marshall. However, Tex must also convince Carson that his new position in the Indian world has not compromised his integrity or loyalty as a settler.²⁵⁴

At this point in *Il patto di sangue*, all the characters are gearing up for the final conflict. Tex is on the Navajo reservation once again nobly refusing help from Lilyth in order to protect his Navajo friends—despite the fact that Lilyth emphasizes their enthusiasm to help Tex.²⁵⁵ Tex again single-handedly stops the train carrying the illicit shipments, this time by setting a train car on fire. During the long struggle on the train, Carson and another Texas Ranger arrive and Carson must save Tex from the Ranger who is trying to capture Tex to bring back to the Marshall. After Carson helps Tex stop the train, they head back to the Navajo reservation. As they

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 306-307.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 308.

travel, Carson expresses his surprise that Tex is married and has settled down. Tex explains that, while the choice to marry Lilyth was a practical one made out of necessity to save his own life, “Lilyth is not only a beautiful girl, but also good and courageous, and [he] is happy to have married her.”²⁵⁶ When they arrive at the Navajo village, they go to “Tex’s tent,” and it is clear that Tex and Lilyth have established a permanent home in the American Indian world of the *fumetto*.²⁵⁷ There, Carson convinces Tex to advocate for himself in the settler world and send a message to the Marshall to clear his name. In order for the *brava gente* settler to function most effectively, he must eventually resolve his contentions with settler authority, so the story’s falling action revolves around Tex doing so while still maintaining his link to the American Indian world.

While Tex and Carson are in Durango to send the exonerating message to the Marshall, the conflict comes to a head as Sherriff Stone attempts to arrest Tex and a shootout ensues. Tex and Carson are trapped in the Post Office, are running out of ammunition, and Carson has been shot in the arm. Luckily for Tex and Carson however, an unnamed American Indian character overhears Stone’s men discussing the situation. He realizes that “Tex Willer . . . is the white name of Aquila della Notte” and thinks: “Freccia Rossa will be very angry if the men of Durango kill little Lilyth’s husband! Aquila della Notte is a friend and brother of the Navajos . . . and the Navajos will fight for him.”²⁵⁸ He rides out of town to alert Freccia Rossa

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 319.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 329.

that Tex is in danger, and Freccia Rossa and Lilyth lead a posse of Navajos in to Durango to rescue Tex and Carson. Tex's reputation as the *brave gente* settler has spread fast. His fame as Tex the Texas Ranger is now coupled with his fame as Aquila della Notte the Navajo.

When the Navajos arrive, Stone's men scream and flee through the streets. When Tex realizes what is happening, he says, "If I do not stop them, a horrible slaughter will follow!"²⁵⁹ The entire town of Durango, including Tex, reacts strongly to the presence of the Navajos. They all assume that a Navajo attack is so life threatening that the mere presence of the Navajos elicits their surrender. As the *brava gente* settler, Tex jumps out of the window of the Post Office to stop Freccia Rossa, Lilyth, and the Navajo posse. By doing this, he protects the settler world from Native violence—something that the other settlers' reactions suggest is terrible. On top of rescuing Durango, Tex almost immediately saves the Navajos as well. Carson and Tex realize that the Navajos have put themselves in a dangerous position by leaving their reservation armed. Tex swiftly rectifies the situation by accompanying the Navajos back to their reservation.

In this scene, Tex acts as the settler Chief that he is. He uses his unique position between worlds to regulate Navajo behavior in a way that is compatible with the settler-dominated landscape. Since the Navajos are operating in space firmly established as settled space, Tex knows the rules they must behave by in order to maintain peace. The *brava gente* settler is the secret ingredient that makes

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 342.

the Navajos good Indians. Without Tex—made Navajo by the choice of the Western-educated daughter of the Chief—the Navajos act as bad Indians by operating in spaces settlers view as theirs. Just enough settler influence makes peaceful Indians an appropriate fixture in the *fumetto*'s construction of the American frontier. Due to Tex's racial identity as Navajo, his control over how and when the Navajos access what territory does not appear paternalistic or colonial on the surface. Without the Italian *brava gente* hero, Indianness could not exist in *Tex*'s world. While the *fumetto* itself racializes American Indians in ways identical to American settler cultural production—for instance, the assumption of the Navajo's inherent and terrible violence—it inserts an Italian hero to nullify the undesirable effects of racial difference. Instead of demonizing or diminishing the indigenous, *Tex* makes the indigenous just as Italian and the settler and thus puts an Italian spin on the colonizing strategies of cultural production.

At the end of this saga, Tex emerges as the hero of both Durango and the Navajos and Black Feet. He has freed Durango from the control of corrupt law enforcement and he has freed the Navajos and Black Feet from the Bessie's scam. As a result of the breakdown of arms shipments, Bessie and Stone flee Durango. Tex and the Navajos pursue them and Stone and the rest of the men accompanying them are killed. Bessie, on the other hand is stuck in a wagon pulled by a team of runaway horses that falls over a cliff—Tex is too gentlemanly to kill a woman, which is taboo throughout the series. With loose ends neatly tied up in Durango, Tex returns to the Navajo reservation to await word from the Marshall.

Eventually, Tex hears that, while the Marshall personally believes in Tex's innocence, he is under too much pressure and must launch a full-scale investigation into Tex's actions. Therefore, Tex sets off yet again into the settler world to exonerate himself. This time he travels to Denver to confront the owners of the Brennan and Trenton shipping company. After gathering evidence against the shipping company, all the while avoiding arrest, Tex approaches the Marshall again to convince him not to investigate. The Marshall, however, remains under the control of the corrupt settler system and refuses to fully exonerate the clearly-innocent Tex. As a result, Tex officially resigns from the Texas Rangers, stating that he will not serve the "potbellied nephews of governors."²⁶⁰ The issue ends with the Marshall and Tex expressing their enduring personal friendship despite this professional dispute. Thus the *fumetto* preserves Tex's functional connection to the settler world as his official ties break down.

At the beginning of "Il patto di sangue," Tex is a white man firmly entrenched in the society of the American frontier. He is a hero amongst the famous Texas Rangers and counts Navajos and other American Indians as his enemies. He is undeniably a colonizer. However, when the Navajos capture him and Lilyth rescues him from execution, he transforms. His transformation creates the *brava gente* settler—the example of a perfect colonizer of the American frontier who has the ability to access Indianness while preserving his white settler masculinity. With his marriage to Lilyth and his subsequent adventure proving his loyalty to the

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 366.

Navajos, the *fumetto* paints Tex as a full-fledged member, leader, and hero of both the American Indian and settler worlds.

Despite this image, however, the events of “Il patto di sangue” exemplify the illogic and impossibility of the *brava gente* settler. Despite his invitation into Navajo life and his acceptance by Freccia Rossa and those who follow him, Tex’s move into the American Indian world and his constant shifting between the American Indian and settler worlds is an overt act of colonization. The *fumetto* attempts to solve this by making Tex racially Navajo through the marriage ceremony that connects Tex and Lilyth by blood. The entire series struggles with reconciling the critiques it makes of settler-colonial violence with its stereotypical and racist portrayals of American Indians, and the colonizing effects of having the same white hero for both Native and white society. This tension is evident in the many ways that later issues of the series reaffirm the aspects of the *fumetto*’s world and Tex’s characteristics set up in “Il patto di sangue.”

The *Brava Gente* Settler in “Il giuramento”

Originally published in 1969 as the 104th issue of the series, “Il giuramento” (“The Vow”) revisits Tex’s origin story to fill in some of the gaps that “Il patto di sangue” leaves in order to reiterate and legitimize Tex’s identity as Navajo. In a flashback, Tex tells his son, Kit, Carson, and Tiger Jack about the story of Lilyth’s death. Remembering his life with Lilyth before her death, he says, “for a few years, in fact, I would not leave the village except to follow the Navajos on the hunting

path and that was certainly the happiest time of my life.”²⁶¹ By this point in the series, Tex dresses differently as his Navajo self to signify his shift between worlds. He dresses as the typical Western hero when he is Tex in the settler world, and he dresses in buckskin when he is Aquila della Notte in the Indian world.

In the story of Lilyth’s death, Tex relates how his infant son, Kit Willer, is taken to the mission where Lilyth was educated to receive treatment for a persistent cough that the Navajo shaman cannot cure. Kit’s illness was part of a large epidemic that took over Freccia Rossa’s camp. Tex discovers that the source of the epidemic was infected blankets delivered to the Navajos by the same arms traffickers from Denver whose operation Tex destroyed in “Il patto di sangue.” The blankets were meant to avenge their losses and kill Tex. Much like in “Il patto di sangue,” the Navajos assume that the U.S. government is responsible for the blankets and Tex must assuage their anger and find the true culprits. The Indian Agency, however, is not completely innocent as Freccia Rossa is having a difficult time securing medicine and supplies from the Indian Agency to treat the epidemic. Eventually, however, the epidemic reaches Lilyth and she dies. Now Tex himself has become a victim of settler colonialism, which secures his belonging in the American Indian world and his *brava gente* identity. The *fumetto* balances the colonizing act of making a white hero into a Navajo Chief by making him also a victim of settler-colonial violence. Furthermore, Lilyth’s absence makes Tex’s

²⁶¹ G. L. Bonelli, “Il giuramento,” in *Tex story: Il giuramento*, ed. Franco Busatta (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 2013), 20.

continued loyalty to the Navajos and decision to raise his and Lilyth's son as a Navajo an even stronger display of his Indianness.

"Il giuramento" emphasizes this through Tex's grief over Lilyth's death and his dedication to moving freely between the Indian and settler worlds despite blockades set up by the cavalry to contain the epidemic. Even though Tex's initial connection to the Navajo world is gone, he remains more dedicated than ever to their cause. When returning from investigating the source of the blankets, Tex meets a man hired to assassinate him and employs the aid of the cavalry to subdue his enemy and beat him until he reveals information. Even though the cavalry has demonstrated they are on Tex's side of the issue by helping him, he must force his way through their blockade. When the Sergeant tells Tex he cannot let him through, Tex is defiant:

Tex: "Listen, Sergeant. I do not have anything against you, and the last thing that I wish is to be forced to use persuasive ways against you and your men...but let me clarify one thing. Whoever would prevent me from going to my wife, would have to use force!"

Sergeant: "Darn it!... if I do not do it, they will place me under arrest!"

Tex: "I know. I know the regulations. But what are fifteen or thirty days at most in the cells of the fort, compared to an eternity in a dark and cold grave?"

*And without adding more, Tex spurs his horse toward the pass ...*²⁶²

²⁶² Ibid., 72.

Tex demonstrates respect for the cavalry, yet values his goals over theirs. Tex's need to freely cross between the Indian and settler worlds is so important that he threatens the cavalry with violence should they force a separation between him and Lilyth.

The Sergeant stages a half-hearted attempt at stopping Tex from continuing past the blockade and orders his men to report that they did all they could to stop Tex. Even though a simultaneously white and Native figure does not fit in the world the cavalry represents, the Sergeant sympathizes with Tex and bends the rules in order to accommodate him. Just as in the end of "Il patto di sangue," Tex's heroism allows him to remain friendly with settler authority even though he cannot abide entirely by their policies while maintaining his Navajo identity. This particular scuffle with a cavalry Sergeant demonstrates the unique ability of the *brava gente* settler to construct this special relationship with settler authority that allows for full dedication to and belonging amongst good Indians and non-corrupt settlers.

When Tex finally reaches the Navajo reservation, he learns that Lilyth has died. He joins Freccia Rossa at her grave and requests to be left alone there. He removes his cowboy hat and stands alone holding a spear with feathers attached to it. He hears Lilyth's voice on the wind saying goodbye to him and curses three times, increasing in passion each time. Upon his last curse, he hurls the spear into Lilyth's grave and shouts:

"I have listened to your voice, Lilyth, and now you listen to mine!

From this moment, I will not have peace until I have killed all of those

who sent the death to cut the strings that bind our lives! From this moment, I will be the revenge that relentlessly follows the footsteps of our enemies! Hatred and fear will march at my side...and behind me I will leave tracks soaked in tears and blood! This I vow to you, Lilyth, and I take as my witness heaven and hell, and the stars of the night and the immense dark of the infinite.”²⁶³

He then declares that he will leave his spear in her grave to symbolize his quest to avenge her death. All the while, Freccia Rossa, Ta-hu-nah (This is not the same Ta-hu-nah as in “Il patto di sangue,” but a different character of the same name.), and Tiger Jack have been watching Tex and observe:

Freccia Rossa: “I have seen white men cry, and find comfort in their tears!”

Ta-hu-nah: “Aquila della Notte cannot cry! Even though grief and desperation cling to his heart with a fierce grip, not from tears does he ask for comfort to soothe his anguish, but from the blood of his enemies!”²⁶⁴

Tex’s intense display of grief not only brings legitimacy to his relationship with Lilyth that was hastily formed back in the seventh issue of the series, but further nuances the concept of Tex as the *brava gente* settler. He desires revenge for Lilyth’s death because of his deep love for her. Tex’s life has been destroyed

²⁶³ Ibid., 85-86.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 86-87.

by colonization through the death of the Navajo wife he loves and the destruction of his Navajo family. He displays no guilt over the fact that he was the target of the infected blankets. Instead, he reacts in a way that preserves his masculine toughness and gains him more respect in his Navajo community. Instead of severing his ties to Indianness, Lilyth's death only makes Indianness more accessible to Tex.

Due to this deepening connection between the Navajos and Tex, the attack on Tex *is* an attack on the Navajos. The narrative places no distinction between the two. Tex is now both a colonizer—due to his enduring status as a hero in the settler world and his position as a white leader of Navajos—and a victim of colonization. Furthermore, Ta-hu-nah's analysis of the form Tex's grief has taken distances him from weaker qualities of whiteness. Before he begins expressing his despair, Tex removes his cowboy hat—something he typically only wears in the settler world. He then uses a Navajo weapon to symbolize his grief. Freccia Rossa establishes what he believes to be the common practice for grieving white men, then Ta-hu-nah points out how Tex defies these expectations. Tex grieves for his Navajo wife the way a Navajo would, not the way a settler would, thus accessing his Native identity to achieve the *brava gente* myth's ideal masculine toughness. Furthermore, he vows to not rest until the Navajos' enemies are destroyed. Tex has in actuality settled in the Navajo community even more by rededicating himself to being their hero and leader. However, the *fumetto* will have its audience believe that Tex further entrenching himself in Navajo life is not another form of white

settlement of Native lands or white appropriation of Native culture, but a creation of affinity between a part-white, part-Navajo hero and his Navajo family.

Leake views Lilyth's role in the series from a somewhat different angle. Due to the genre of the Western and the emphasis on fascist masculinity, *Tex*, according to Leake, has an inconsistent approach to its female characters, especially in its early publications. In short, women do not belong in the world *Tex* imagines. Throughout the series, romantic encounters involving Tex are almost non-existent, and even his marriage to Lilyth is, at first, forced. According to Leake, it is Lilyth's racial difference from Tex that allows for the breaking of this trend. In Leake's interpretation, nothing in *Tex* can undermine the dominance of white masculinity, which explains the dearth of female characters. However, because of Lilyth's fundamental Indianness, no matter how admirable her character, she can never reach Tex's status as a white man. In addition, Leake argues that Tex having an American Indian wife opens up many more narrative possibilities than if he had a white wife. These narrative possibilities, however, serve more than a merely plot-based function. As Lilyth's roles in "Il patto di sangue" and "Il giuramento" demonstrate, her racial difference from Tex is also crucial to establishing him as a particularly Italian, *brave gente* hero.

Tex's "Pards" Upholding the Settler Fantasy

Tex's "pards," or partners, uphold his position as the fumetto's *brava gente* settler and constantly define and redefine the qualities of the *brava gente* settler.

As the role of sidekicks evolved with the series, so did the fumetto's target audience and overall message. When Bonelli created *Tex* in 1948, he mimicked a common trope from John Wayne's early career and made *Tex*'s main sidekick his horse, Dinamite (Dynamite). This also reflected the initial target audience of *Tex* and other fumetti of the immediate postwar resurgence in *fumetti*. To appeal to adolescents, *Tex* relied on his animal sidekick to get him out of trouble. However, as *fumetti* grew in popularity, and their readers aged, Gianluigi Bonelli's decided to have *Tex* mature along with his audience. In order to make *Tex*'s character more appealing to older fans, Bonelli added sidekicks that furthered the development of *Tex*'s character and thus evolved the concept of the *brava gente* settler. With each sidekick, Bonelli secured *Tex*'s position in the changing world of *fumetti* as a classic that would always appeal to adolescents, but would also maintain their interest as adults.²⁶⁵

Bonelli drew his inspiration for *Tex*'s pards from his love of Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* and from common hero tropes of the time. These influences led Bonelli to consciously decide to kill Lilyth to eliminate her as a potential sidekick. This lack of a female sidekick says as much about the *brava gente* settler as the sidekicks Bonelli created, and supports Leake's position that femininity in the series was seen as inherently threatening to white male dominance in the series. When "Il giuramento" was published in 1969, Bonelli was looking to make *Tex* a more mature character. Not only did Lilyth's death bring

²⁶⁵ Castaldi, *Drawn and Dangerous*, 36.

depth to Tex's backstory, but it also solved several problems that her ambiguous presence in the series caused. Bonelli designed *Tex* as a particularly masculine world in which most female characters are sexy villains.²⁶⁶ In order for the *brava gente* settler to set the example of ideal morality and masculinity for both the settler and Indian worlds, he could not have a female sidekick emasculating him. Like other typical heroes, Bonelli did not want Tex tied down by a wife.

This allows Tex to experience and resist temptation and engage in flirtations without wronging a heroine, and allows Tex's world to portray women as mostly evil temptresses. As "Il giuramento" makes clear, Tex remains in love with and dedicated to his deceased wife. The rest of Tex and Lilyth's relationship is constructed outside of issues of the *fumetto* in supplemental art, online descriptions of Tex, and introductions to compilations of past issues. As Tex remains nobly dedicated to Lilyth, he again sets himself apart as morally superior to other characters. Although he encounters female villains, his love for Lilyth makes him immune to their temptations. In this way, the *brava gente* settler does not only possess the perfect racial identity (i.e. a fluid one that masks the racial diversity of postwar Italy), but also embodies perfect masculinity. With Lilyth gone, Tex avoids any possible criticisms for flirtatious or titillating interactions with female villains. At the same time, his decision to go no further than flirtation demonstrates

²⁶⁶ "Tex e le donne," *Chi è Tex*, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://www.sergiobonelli.it/sezioni/374/tex-e-le-donne>. Franco Busatta, "Lilyth in the Sky with Diamonds," in *Tex story: Il giuramento*, ed. Franco Busatta (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 2013).

his unusual masculine strength. Tex will not be brought down by a villainous woman, and will not be confined to his home by an admirable one. The *brava gente* settler's ideal masculinity is one in which his heterosexuality is affirmed and one that is in stark contraposition to the femininity that threatens to hold Tex back.

This establishes the ideal *brava gente* settler landscape as a hyper-masculine world in which the *brava gente* settler and his sidekicks enjoy the privileges of patriarchal power. With Lilyth out of the picture, Tex is not only the master of the racialized worlds of settlers and Indians, but also genders those worlds with his masculine dominance. Therefore, the deliberate avoidance of Lilyth developing into a sidekick further defines the *brava gente* settler as a figure whose power is based not just on his fluid racial identity, but also his decided masculinity. In this way, the ideal settler society that *Tex* imagines attempts to reconstitute racial aspects of patriarchal hierarchy while preserving the interconnecting gendered power structures. Franco Busatta, in his analysis of the role of Lilyth and other female characters in *Tex*, explains that early issues of *Tex* featured female characters he describes as "provocative pin-ups."²⁶⁷ Later on, however, female characters are notably absent, which he suggests was a deliberate choice made to avoid accusations of misogyny.²⁶⁸

This, perhaps, represents a concerted effort to distance *Tex* and other Bonelli publications from criticisms of the pornographic *fumetti neri* of the time in

²⁶⁷ Busatta, "Lilyth in the Sky with Diamonds," VI.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

order to maintain Tex's reputation as a hero that is morally superior to the rest of society. Busatta explains that avoiding misogyny in the series necessitated the transformation of Lilyth from a sexual object for the audience to a "redskin Madonna."²⁶⁹ Her function in the story was necessary for Tex's character development into someone more mature that audiences could relate to and for establishing the *brava gente* settler as someone who could pass freely between the Indian and settler worlds. However, after fulfilling those purposes, Bonelli saw no further use for her character within the series, and so made her into an almost religious relic where the audience could admire her safely from a distance without her interfering with Tex or the construction of the ideal settler world of the *fumetto*.

Instead of maintaining Lilyth as a character and sidekick for Tex, Bonelli developed three parads that secure Tex's position as the *brava gente* settler that he used Lilyth's character to help establish. The first of these is Kit Carson. The Sergio Bonelli Editore website emphasizes this character's distance from the historical figure of the same name: "Scout, gunslinger, gambler, Indian hunter, Texas ranger...all of this was the Kit Carson of reality. A controversial hero who should not be confused with our Kit Carson."²⁷⁰ Here, again, *Tex* demonstrates how Italians can perfect American settlement. Bonelli chose a well-known character from the mythologized narratives of the American frontier and created a new-and-improved version that fit into the particularly Italian version of the myth that *Tex*

²⁶⁹ Ibid, VI.

²⁷⁰ "I suoi parads," Chi è Tex, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 20, 2019, <http://www.sergiobonelli.it/sezioni/371/i-suoi-parads371>.

created. Instead of a life perpetuating violence against American Indians, the Kit Carson of *Tex* is meant to help the hero navigate the world in a way that minimizes violence and maintains peace.

As his role in “Il patto di sangue” exemplifies, Carson’s connection to the settler world legitimates Tex’s place there, even when he is acting as an outlaw or a vigilante. Despite Tex’s inconsistent weaving in and out of lawlessness throughout the series, Carson remains firmly entrenched as a respected member of the settler world who can defend Tex to settler authorities when needed and who is welcome in the Indian world when Tex accompanies him. Carson is a Texas Ranger, is Tex’s best friend, and was an early mentor. He is depicted as older and, although Tex always knows best, is a sounding board for Tex and their conversations are often used for Tex to provide commentary on a situation and to work through plans of action and to advance the story’s plot. Although decidedly not a member of the Indian world, he visits Tex on the Navajo reservation and the Navajos know him as Capelli d’Argento, or “Silver Hair,” indicating their comfort with him and their respect for his experience and wisdom.

While Carson anchors Tex in the settler world, Tiger Jack anchors him in the Indian world. Tiger Jack entered the series in 1951 in “La banda dei Dalton” (“Dalton’s Band”). Tiger Jack is a Navajo whose wife was murdered by a Mexican outlaw. His character embodies many common tropes borrowed from American Westerns and therefore exemplifies the ways in which *Tex* reproduces settler strategies in Italy by reducing Native culture to stereotypes while claiming to

accurately represent them. Tiger Jack is mostly silent and stoic. He is known for his physical endurance, his skills as a tracker—although his skills equal and do not exceed those of Tex—and his expertise with a tomahawk.²⁷¹ Tiger Jack represents the only American Indian protagonist who border-crosses as Tex does, however he rarely does so without Tex accompanying him. When he does venture into the settler world alone, he does so by identifying himself as Tex's friend. Tiger Jack also fills a gap left by Lilyth's death. By including an American Indian protagonist and hero, *Tex* attempts to portray itself as something positively portraying Native culture, thus playing in to the audience's simultaneous indulgence in and criticism of American settler society's othering of American Indians.

Tex's third sidekick is his and Lilyth's son, Kit Willer. Kit was developed as a potential main protagonist to exist on par with Tex and had episodes that featured him as the main hero. However, Bonelli quickly realized that children protagonists in *fumetti* often lead to a series' failure and changed course.²⁷² Kit, therefore, appears as a young child only in flashbacks and in supplementary art and literature. Kit mimics Tex's character in almost every way, only slightly less mature. This helped accomplish Bonelli's goal of advancing Tex's character while preserving his main audience of adolescents. Like Tex, Kit's racial identity is fluid. When he is on the Navajo reservation, where he makes his home with his father,

²⁷¹ Ibid.

Busatta, *Tex story: Il giuramento*.

²⁷² Ibid.

Franco Busatta, *Tex story: Il figlio di Tex* (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 2013).

he goes by his Navajo name, Piccolo Falco (Little Falcon), and wears Navajo clothing. He also switches between his white and Navajo names in order to pass in both settler and Indian worlds just as Tex does. The existence of Kit defines the *brava gente* settler as something that is reproducible. Because Kit reproduces Tex's border-crossing abilities and racial fluidity, the *brava gente* settler that Tex exemplifies becomes something that can potentially spread. Tex entered the American frontier and his Italianness allowed him to create the unique role of *brava gente* settler. Kit represents the potential for the *brava gente* settler to expand in influence and make the imperfect American settler landscape into a perfect, more Italian one.

Conclusion

Although the *fumetto* attempts to alter Tex's character in a way that decolonizes after "Il totem misterioso," it does not succeed. Tex's dual identity and avowed Indianness only serve as weak justifications for indulging in a settler fantasy. The Italian audience is meant to see Tex as a benevolent arbiter between the American Indian and white worlds and the coexistence of these worlds that Tex facilitates is meant to exemplify a version of the American frontier perfected by Italian interpretation. However, no matter how much the *fumetto* emphasizes Tex's ability to access Navajo racial identity, it is still manufactured. Despite the *fumetto's* attempt to make Tex *actually* Navajo, he still is fundamentally appropriating an Italian-conceived construction of Indianness. This sends the message that Indianness is something Tex's Italian audience can imagine for

themselves and use for their own *brava gente* settler fantasy. In the postwar era, as these narratives developed in *Tex*, Italian readers practiced the collective forgetting of their colonial past and redefining their understanding of Italian identity to fit the *brava gente* mold.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Transnational settler colonialism lived in the performance arena and mobile camp of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, the fairgrounds of the World's Columbian Exposition, and on the pages of postwar *fumetti*. In the 1890s, as *Italianità* was in its infancy, Italians, American Indians, and white Americans traveled between the United States and Italy as migrants and as performers, along the way contributing to the evolution of U.S. settler colonialism. Settler-colonial logics that worked to eliminate American Indians and their cultures and Native assertions of their continued role in modern American and European life pervaded American mass culture that influenced the development of *Italianità* during the nineteenth century. At the same time, the Italian state encouraged its citizens to embrace a role of settlers in Africa and in the American west. Both Italian state efforts to foster *Italianità* and common Italian experiences that contributed to the organic formation of *Italianità* were heavily influenced by U.S. settler logics that invoked Indianness to communicate otherness.

While settler logics circulated and became inseparable from *Italianità* during the nineteenth century, a collective sense of what it meant to be Italian failed to fully take hold until the rise of fascism in Italy after World War I. At this time, Mussolini's fascist machine united the Italian people around the allure of settler-colonial dominance in Africa. After decades of inconsistency in *Italianità*, the settler-colonial logics that transnational settler colonialism had instilled in Italians

became even more foundational to both top-down and ground-up constructions of *Italianità*. When Italy lost its settlements in Africa after World War II, and with it a sense of *Italianità* compatible with postwar Europe, Italy faced its largest identity crisis since the Risorgimento. Italians then turned to the *brava gente* myth and its alluring promise of forgetting Italy's recent past and replacing it with a common settler fantasy that had been a part of Italian cultural consciousness since Buffalo Bill first set foot on Italian shores. Beginning with the *fumetto Tex*, Italians adopted the form of the American Western and made it distinctly Italian. As *Tex* took Italy by storm, the *brava gente* myth it reproduced further ingrained U.S. settler logics in *Italianità* at the expense of American Indians.

In all of this, Italians acted as settlers in a U.S. settler-colonial framework. The work of the *brava gente* myth in *Tex* not only erased memories of Italian settler colonialism in Africa, but also reiterated U.S. settler logics of elimination through producing images and stories of American Indians that made them relics of the past incompatible with modernity. *Tex*, however, did not exist in isolation, but represented a larger trend in Italian *fumetti* that continues to embroil Italians in U.S. settler colonialism to this day. The inculcation of U.S. settler logics into *Italianità* that transnational settler colonialism caused have endured beyond the postwar era and into the twenty-first century. In doing so, Italians have maintained a relationship with American Indians as settlers, due to the overt Italian production of racializations of American Indians that support American settler claims to American Indian lands.

Reinforcing the Italian Settler Fantasy: Sergio Bonelli Editore's "Historical" Westerns and the Persistence of Transnational Settler Colonialism in Italy

Within the world of *fumetti*, in particular Sergio Bonelli Editore publications, *Tex* represents the most prominent example of a larger and pervasive trend. Settler logics are woven into the foundational fabric of *fumetti* as a genre and are most apparent in that they are based on themes of the American West, like *Tex*. Three subsequent Bonelli *fumetti*—*Zagor*, *Magico Vento*, and *Saguaro*—demonstrate the continual reproduction of themes that construct and promote the imagined *brava gente* settler, and the settler logics that accompany that performance. The enduring presence of the *fumetti* engaging in transnational settler colonialism demonstrates the depth to which *Italianità* has been and continues to be informed by U.S. settler logics. These and *Tex* are fictional works whose worlds all contain supernatural elements. However, Gianluigi and Sergio Bonelli always intended for the American Western backdrop to be historically based and represent accurate portrayals of historical reality.

I protagonisti, a nine-part series released in 1974 and re-released in 1994, goes one step further by presenting itself as a work of history. These biographies-in-*fumetto*-form of famous historical figures from the nineteenth-century American West are backed by introductions providing historical analysis and bibliographies of primary and secondary sources. As such, *I protagonisti* exemplifies the preserved educational role underlying *fumetti*, the Italian perception of American

settler-colonial history, and the extent to which Bonelli's other fictional worlds are meant to present historical reality.

In 1961, Sergio Bonelli created *Zagor* under the penname Guido Nolitta. Despite the desire to distance himself from his father with a pseudonym, Sergio's first major solo work thematically mimicked his father's magnum opus, *Tex*. Much like *Tex*, *Zagor* is an Italian Western. However, Sergio took greater liberties with the genre than his father, and over the course of its history, *Zagor*'s writers dabbled in trendier *fumetto* genres that "range[d] from horror themes to science fiction, from magic to psychological tales."²⁷³ For instance, rather than taking place in the Southwest, like *Tex* and the many Western films that inspired its settings, *Zagor* takes place in Darkwood, a fictional, supernatural swamp-like forest in the Great Lakes region—what Sergio Bonelli Editore calls "the old American frontier."²⁷⁴ The Sergio Bonelli Editore website describes Darkwood as "a borderline region of fantasy, where anything can happen, from Indian revolts to extraterrestrial invasions, and where, in addition to the usual inhabitants such as Indians and trappers, you can find thugs, Eskimo bandits, vampires, werewolves, witches and every type of unsettling character on loan from all sorts of adventures."²⁷⁵ Despite these distinctions from *Tex*, *Zagor* still positions its protagonist, and titular character, as the *brava gente* settler.

²⁷³ "My Name is Zagor."

²⁷⁴ "The World of Zagor," Who is Zagor, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergioibonelli.it/section/2465/the-world-of-zagor>.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Zagor is the pseudonym for Patrick Wilding, *Zagor's* hero. His origin story, much like Tex's, set him up as the *brava gente* settler that can claim belonging in both Indian and white settler worlds. As a child living on the "old American frontier" with his Army-official-turned-pioneer father, Wilding sees his parents killed by an Abenaki band. He grows up wanting to seek revenge, but before avenging his parents has a revelation only the *brava gente* settler could. Upon learning of his father's role in massacres of American Indians, Wilding's new "understanding of the relativity of the concepts of good, evil and justice compels him to transform himself" into a vigilante hero defending American Indians.²⁷⁶ Wilding takes on the name Za-Gor-Te-Nay, Zagor for short, which the *fumetto* defines as translating to "The Spirit with the Hatchet" in an unspecified Native language. Zagor then moves to Darkwood, and the series relocates from a specific geographic region in the United States, to a fictional forest.

The purported purpose of Darkwood is to allow for the creative freedom to mix genres and characters from diverse geographical areas. However, the functional—and likely underlying—purpose is to imagine a place where multiple racially-stereotyped characters can co-exist for the audience's voyeuristic enjoyment, much like the purpose of the Columbian Exposition's Midway Plaisance. Among Zagor's allies are his main sidekick Cico, described as "the Mexican version in flesh and blood of Donald Duck," and minor characters such as "Zarkoff, the fair-haired athletic Russian; Ramath, the thin Bengali Fakir with the

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

hypnotic gaze and extraordinary extrasensory powers; Tarawa, the Melanesian cannibal; Orsovic, the gigantic Albanian helmsman[, and] Gaston, the ship's cook skilled in French cuisine."²⁷⁷ In this world, Italian readers imagine themselves as Zagor, whose main goal is to fight crime and protect American Indians from supernatural villains. In this world, the *brava gente* settler is Zagor, and the Italian audience enjoys his settler-Indian identity in Darkwood by setting themselves up as racially superior to all others in the world.

As a white man from the settler world, Zagor is made a legitimate protector of American Indians through the setting in Darkwood. By creating Darkwood along with Zagor, the audience can more easily imagine Zagor as indigenous to the spaces he occupies. His "settling" in Darkwood is in fact the only reason for its imagined existence. By transplanting the Western genre from a geographically specific region with an accompanying understood history to a fictional region, the *brava gente* settler can more easily imagine himself as truly indigenous. Zagor's claim to indigeneity is upheld and reconnected to history by his friendships with American Indian characters. Firstly, and nearly exactly like Tex, Zagor is blood brothers with his Mohawk sidekick, Tonka. Not only is he the *brava gente* settler, but also claims some of the same racial fluidity between being American Indian and being white that Tex does.

²⁷⁷ "His Friends," Who is Zagor, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergiobonelli.it/section/2463/his-friends2463>.

In addition, Zagor often encounters American Indian characters that are meant to represent well-known aspects of different Native histories. For instance, Satko, a Cherokee lawyer, resembles the famous John Ross. Lupo Grigio (Grey Wolf) is a Comanche who fights Texas Rangers and Manetola is a Seminole leader rebelling against the American army. These characters ground Darkwood and Zagor in an historical aura, mimicking the trend Buffalo Bill first brought to Italy, despite the series fantastic elements. This, in turn, makes Zagor's racial identity as simultaneously white and Native seem more authentic and less imaginary.

Furthermore, the setting of Darkwood makes Zagor particularly accessible to Italian imaginations. By mixing fictional and historically-inspired worlds, *Zagor* invites its Italian readers to play the part of the *brava gente* settler perhaps even more explicitly than *Tex*. In Darkwood, Italians are the benevolent saviors of their fellow indigenous peoples—American Indians. They have taken up space and territory for Italians, but in the only acceptable way, and thus created a perfected version of the criminal American settler colonialism. This accessibility persists today.

The online series *Bonelli Kids*, aimed at young children, encourages young *fumetti* fans to imagine themselves in the shoes of their favorite heroes. The series follows a group of children who are fans of Bonelli *fumetti* and who assume the identities of Bonelli heroes in their everyday lives.²⁷⁸ Among the young characters

²⁷⁸ "Arrivano I Bonelli Kids," Iniziative bonelliane, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://www.sergiobonelli.it/news/2017/02/20/news/arrivano-i-bonelli-kids-1000650/>.

are two boys with the alter-egos of Zagor and Cico. New comic strips are published on the Sergio Bonelli Editore website and on Facebook three times a week, and the first print version of the series was published on March 8, 2018.²⁷⁹ With *Bonelli Kids*, Sergio Bonelli Editore is encouraging Italian children to replicate the practice of young *Tex* fans of the 1970s and preserve *fumetti*'s role in informing *Italianità*. Through *Bonelli Kids*, young Italians draw connections between their self-understanding and the *brava gente* qualities Zagor represents.

Even though *Zagor* is decidedly less popular than *Tex* and *Dylan Dog*—Sergio Bonelli Editore's other major publication, Italians still have deep and nostalgic connections to the *fumetto*. For instance, the Italian pop star Jovanotti is a long-time *Zagor* fan and is featured in the 632nd issue of the series in a story called "Il richiamo della foresta" ("The Call of the Forest"). The promotion for the issue emphasizes Jovanotti's passion for *Zagor* and presents this story, in which Jovanotti is transported to Darkwood, as a thank you for his outspoken fandom.²⁸⁰ This special issue is yet another example of the ways that *fumetti*, and Bonelli publications in particular, invite Italians to imagine themselves in the worlds of

²⁷⁹ "Bonelli Kids: Tutte le stricse!," *Bonelli Kids*, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://www.sergiobonelli.it/iniziativa-bonelliane/2017/02/20/news/bonelli-kids-si-comincia-1000624/>
Bonelli Kids-Sergio Bonelli Editore, Facebook, accessed February 23, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/Bonelli-Kids-Sergio-Bonelli-Editore-1847598975481552/>.

Shop, Sergio Bonelli Editore.

²⁸⁰ "Jovanotti incontra Zagor!," *Zagor*, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://www.sergiobonelli.it/home/2018/02/23/gallery/jovanotti-incontra-lo-spirito-con-la-scure-1002502/>.

fumetti. In many cases, this means imagining an Italian role in a fictional, yet historically-based world of settler colonization of what is now the United States.

Magico Vento (Magic Wind), a much smaller series than *Tex* or *Zagor* was first released in 1997 and again reproduces the *fumetto* trope of a white hero that becomes American Indian. Like other Bonelli Westerns, *Magico Vento* follows the pattern of drawing visually from American films as the main character is modelled after Daniel Day-Lewis's character in the 1992 film, *The Last of the Mohicans*.²⁸¹ A victim of a corrupt U.S. military plot, the main character, Ned Ellis, is left for dead with a bullet fragment in his brain. A Lakota shaman, Cavallo Zoppo (Lame Horse), rescues Ned due to a vision he received that presented Ned as a "messenger from the Great Spirit."²⁸² Cavallo Zoppo nurses Ned back to health and Ned is "reborn" as *Magico Vento*.²⁸³ His injury left *Magico Vento* with no memory of his past—except for ones he receives in nightmarish flashbacks—and with a supernatural ability to see into the future. The Lakota adopt *Magico Vento* and make him a Shaman. The stories of *Magico Vento* are a cross between Westerns and horror stories. The Sergio Bonelli Editore website describes the series as presenting a Native perspective:

²⁸¹ "Magico Vento FAQ," Frequently Asked Questions, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergiobonelli.it/section/3012/faq3012>.

²⁸² "My Name is Magico Vento," Who is Magico Vento, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergiobonelli.it/section/3003/my-name-is-magico-vento>.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

“By siding with the Indians, *Magico Vento* not only portrays their desperate struggle to survive but also their passionate quest for spirituality, amid rites, visions, dreams of deliverance and terribly real nightmares. For whites, Ned Ellis is a rebel, a renegade, a killer; for the Sioux, who have welcomed him into their community and given him the new name of *Magico Vento*, he is a Strange Man, in other words a shaman, a warrior and a restless spirit, unpredictable and beyond the confines of any law.”²⁸⁴

This assertion that *Magico Vento* sides with American Indians in their conflicts with whites suggests that the *fumetto* sees itself as positively interacting with American Indians and American Indian history, unlike American Westerns. The website’s description of *Magico Vento*’s allies begins with the description: “All the Native Americans, of course.”²⁸⁵ However, the *fumetto*’s portrayal of what it claims are Lakota people and culture plays in to common American tropes of defeated and disappearing American Indians and appropriates, reduces, and distorts American Indian “spirituality” in order to create a supernatural element of the *fumetto*’s world. By doing so, *Magico Vento* makes Indianness accessible to Italian imaginations. Once again, Italians indulge in the *brava gente* settler fantasy by imagining themselves as both the white settler and the American Indian.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ “His Friends,” *Who is Magico Vento*, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergiobonelli.it/section/3004/his-friends3004>.

As with other Bonelli westerns, *Magico Vento*'s portrayal of the American settler colonial landscape is reinforced by an illusion that the *fumetto*'s world is based in historical fact. Just as in *Tex* and *Zagor*, *Magico Vento* replicates Buffalo Bill's settler strategy of blurring fact and fiction to construct hyperrealities and incorporates historical figures as temporary and/or reoccurring characters. Custer, Red Cloud, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and Wild Bill Hickok all make appearances in *Magico Vento*.²⁸⁶ In fitting with the *brava gente* settler, *Magico Vento* interacts with each of these characters in a way that demonstrates his more informed or superior perspective. His dual whiteness and Indianness gives *Magico Vento*, and therefore the *fumetto* and its audience, the authority to pass both positive and negative judgement on all of these characters. *Magico Vento*'s opinions of and relationships with these characters are complex, and the historical characters are not presented as solely good or solely evil, but usually somewhere in between. This adds to the illusion that *Magico Vento*, and other Bonelli Westerns, represent an accurate presentation of history, thus reproducing the racializing and colonizing work of Wild West Shows in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The most recent and short-lived Bonelli Western, *Saguaro*, published from 2012 to 2015, differs slightly from the pattern of previous Bonelli westerns but still, and perhaps even more directly, upholds the concept of the *brava gente* and the Italian sense of affinity with American Indians. *Saguaro*'s hero, instead of the

²⁸⁶ "Historical Figures," Who is *Magico Vento*, Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergiobonelli.it/section/3007/historical-characters>.

typical simultaneously white and Native man, is a Navajo Vietnam veteran named Thorn Kitcheyan and nicknamed Saguaro. For the first time, a Bonelli Western hero is actually American Indian, rather than a white man who is made able to legitimately represent and protect American Indian interests. Saguaro and his story, however, use the terms and language of American Indian history to represent the Italian postwar psyche, thus strengthening the perceived affinity Italian audiences are encouraged to develop with American Indians in Bonelli westerns.

Instead of a white man passing as American Indian, Saguaro is a Navajo whose experience in the U.S. Army has made it difficult for him to fit in with his Navajo community. Italian creators of *Saguaro* have appropriated their perceived understanding of Navajo history to tell the common story of an outcast struggling to find his place. Saguaro struggles with his connections to cultural traditions, yet remains a champion for his community. However, while the *fumetto* claims to tell a Navajo story, it is a textbook example of cultural appropriation. The research that *Saguaro's* writers used to create the *fumetto's* stories and world is less than thorough, fact-based, or inclusive of an American Indian perspective. When asked about his research, creator Brunno Edda responded: "I read anthropology and history books, specialized magazines, devoured a good number of novels (the 'mandatory' ones by Cormac McCart[h]y, but also Tony Hillerman's good thrillers, that take place in the Navajo Reserve, by the way) and watched documentaries. Movies had a relevant part, new ones like '*No Country for Old Men*', '*The Three*

Burials of Melquiades Estrada, and less recent films like some New-Hollywood flicks of the 1960s-70s, such as *Jeremiah Johnson*, *Badlands*, *Vanishing Point*, *Easy Rider* and so on.”²⁸⁷ Once again, we see Bonelli creations emphasizing a basis in history, but in reality relying on fictional, imagined portrayals of American and American Indian histories. Even the creation of Saguaro’s appearance is based on an effort to “‘Indianize’ actor Tom Berenger.”²⁸⁸

Saguaro ultimately represents a failed effort when compared to other Bonelli Westerns, as it only ran for three years. The vast and enduring popularity of the Western *fumetto*, however, surely is not to blame as *Tex*, *Zagor*, and *Magico Vento* continue to enjoy success. Instead, *Saguaro*’s failure likely derives from its main difference from other Bonelli westerns. *Saguaro* is undeniably Navajo. Even though *Saguaro*’s character acts white in his rejection of Navajo cultural and religious traditions, he lacks the racial fluidity that other Bonelli Western heroes experience. While Italians can access Indianness, American Indians cannot access whiteness to the same extent. As a result, Italians are less likely to imagine themselves in *Saguaro*’s shoes. The Italian experience of reading *Saguaro*, like other Bonelli Westerns, is a practice of cultural appropriation. However, other Bonelli Westerns attempt to work around this issue by creating an illusion that inserting a racially fluid character defined by Italian characteristics in fact does the positive work of exposing the violence of U.S. settler colonialism. *Saguaro* does

²⁸⁷ “Saguaro FAQ,” Frequently Asked Questions, accessed February 23, 2019, <http://en.sergiobonelli.it/section/2807/faq2807>.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

not have this, and therefore is more obviously an Italian extension of U.S. settler colonial practices. If Italian readers could not see themselves in Saguaro's world, it was not worth experiencing.

The pseudo-historical basis for these fictional Bonelli Westerns is based on Sergio Bonelli Editore's reputation for its dedication to historical accuracy. *I protagonisti* demonstrates more than any other Bonelli Western the attempt to make historical accuracy part of the Bonelli brand and the Italian tendency to conflate history and mythology that Italians gained through transnational settler colonialism. This series of nine biographies of famous figures from the American West was first published in 1974 and then rereleased in full color in 1994. The collection tells the life stories of Geronimo, Custer, Billy the Kid, Jed Smith, Sitting Bull, Wyatt Earp, Wild Bill Hickok, Frank Canton, Bill Doolin, and Herman Lehmann. Throughout the collection, an air of scholastic authority is reinforced, an assumption of the readers' common knowledge about the American West in general, and a portrayal of Italian perceptions of what it means to be American and American Indian.

I protagonisti was written by Rino Albertarelli. The second page of the 1994 edition of "Billy the Kid: Il destino di uccidere" ("Billy the Kid: The Destiny to Kill") includes an obituary of Albertarelli written by Sergio Bonelli. In it, Bonelli describes Albertarelli as a "well-known historian of the West and of America" and explains that he was immediately drawn to the project of *I protagonisti*, which Bonelli

describes as a “collection on the history of the West without myths.”²⁸⁹ In this obituary, Bonelli asserts the scholarly qualifications of Albertarelli and the accuracy of the history presented in his *fumetti*. This was communicated in other ways in the first publication of *I protagonisti* as well. Each issue begins with an introduction that briefly explains the historical context of the biography to follow. The introductions are followed by bibliographies of primary and secondary sources, thus establishing the Bonelli brand as historically accurate, and boasting of the *fumetto*'s scholastic merit.

Much of the content of these introductions assume a basic familiarity with the mythology of the American West that exceeds even common knowledge in the United States. Beyond an understanding that readers already know of each “protagonist,” the introductions often make references to other historical events or characters that the audience presumably knows of. For instance, the introduction to “Geronimo: Apache vuol dire nemico” (Geronimo: Apache Means Enemy) makes references to other famous American Indian figures: “Geronimo does not enjoy a good reputation among historians of the West. One could say that among all the Indian leaders that have made history, he is the only one who does not earn sympathy. Certainly, he does not have the nobleness of Joseph, the chief of the Nez Perce; nor the concerned solemnity of Red Cloud, nor the unyielding character

²⁸⁹ Bonelli, Sergio, in “Billy the Kid: Il destino di uccidere,” *I protagonisti del West* no. 3, Rino Albertarelli (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 1994), PN6767.A37 B5 1994, Comic Art Collection, Michigan State University Library Special Collections, East Lansing, Michigan.

of Crazy Horse, chief of one and another of the different bands of the Oglala Sioux; nor the messianic fanaticism of Sitting Bull, chief and priest of the Hunkpapa Sioux, who is considered the Savior of all the Indians of North America. And we are not speaking of greatness without comparing to Tecumseh, the Shawnee chief to whom also his white enemies paid the great tribute of respect.”²⁹⁰ A familiarity with these figures and their claims to fame are assumed and given no more explanation. Furthermore, even though this *fumetto* claims to be a biography of Geronimo, the introduction assumes that the reader is already aware of Geronimo as the leader of an Apache rebellion and is familiar with other Apache figures that will appear in the *fumetto*, such as Mangas Coloradas and Cochise. The same assumed familiarity, however, does not apply to non-Native historical figures that appear in this story. The overall role of the U.S. Army falls under assumed knowledge, but not necessarily the particular military individuals.²⁹¹

This attitude toward the audience flatters the readers’ knowledge. The relationship between the Albertarelli and *fumetti* readers is one of peers. Although Albertarelli is the recognized expert, he expects his audience to be already entrenched in an understanding of the basic history of the nineteenth century American West and of famous American Indians living at that time. *I protagonisti* encourages its readers to view themselves as amateur historians of sorts who are

²⁹⁰ Rino Albertarelli, “Geronimo: Apache vuol dire nemico,” *I protagonisti del West*, no. 1 (Milan: Daim Press, 1974), PN6767.A37 G4 1974, Comic Art Collection, Michigan State University Library Special Collections, East Lansing, Michigan.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

well-informed on the people and periods these historical *fumetti* address. This keeps with the foundational tradition of *fumetti* as an educational tool that serves as a source of facts and accurate representations. This illusion invites readers to indulge in a settler fantasy without recognizing they are doing so and extends the transnational settler colonial trend of claiming historical knowledge in order to justify the racialization of Indianness.

In reality, the histories that *I protagonisti* present are informed more by the mythology of the American West than on historical fact. The U.S. military and settler colonization is often criticized while *fumetti* creators and readers position themselves as respectful defenders of American Indian legacies. American Indian individuals are often characterized in slightly more detail than is common in American popular culture. For instance, *I protagonisti* almost always recognizes the specific sub tribe its characters belong to. This postures an intimacy of knowledge, but it stops at the surface. As with many widely-available resources from the 1970s, the bibliographies in *I protagonisti* lack American Indian perspectives, and the source material and stories were not updated for the 1994 reprints. The visual representations in *I protagonisti* reproduce common tropes, familiar images, and stereotypes derived from American Western films, Spaghetti Westerns, and previous Western *fumetti*.

The perceived intimate understanding of American Indian cultures and histories that *I protagonisti* both expects of and creates for its readers encourages the *brava gente* mentality and expresses it in relation to U.S. settler colonialism.

As the *brave gente*, Italian readers believe they are able to see the relationship between American Indians and settler society objectively and without bias. As the *brava gente*, Italian readers of *I protagonisti* have the equal ability to sympathize with American Indians and with settlers. This derives from the *brava gente* myth's central tenant that Italians are simultaneously a dispossessed people and benevolent colonizers. This encourages the imagined intimacy and perceived ease-of-understanding that *I protagonisti* expresses toward American Indians.

An important part of maintaining this illusion of objectivity throughout *I protagonisti* comes from presenting what Albertarelli presents as an American Indian perspective and a settler perspective. These most clearly come through in the second and fifth issues of the series, "George A. Custer: Cacciatore di gloria" (George A. Custer: Hunter of Glory) and "Toro Seduto: Il profeta dei Sioux" (Sitting Bull: The Prophet of the Sioux). The series as a whole opens with an alleged American Indian perspective with the first issue about Geronimo. However, of the two issues that culminate with the Battle of Little Bighorn, the settler perspective—that of Custer—was published before that of the purported American Indian perspective—that of Sitting Bull. Functionally, of course, both represent an Italian, U.S. settler-derived perspective informed by transnational settler colonialism.

Viewed in conjunction, Albertarelli's portrayal of the events that led up to Little Bighorn in both Custer's and Sitting Bull's lives reinforce the common narrative of inevitable settler domination over American Indians. Custer's biography is full of criticism, but ultimately he is portrayed as a controversial hero.

Sitting Bull, on the other hand, is praised as a protector of his people, yet is not ultimately placed in the category of hero. Both of these issues keep with the pattern of the entire series in reproducing images of American Indians that suggest primitivism and savagery alongside images of the U.S. Army that suggest civilization and technological advancement and superiority. The narratives and history presented in these issues comport with the *brava gente* perceived defense of American Indians while actually promoting settler logics.

In “Custer: Cacciatore di gloria,” Albertarelli presents Custer as a controversial figure. The *fumetto* criticizes his unnecessary violence, hatred toward and outspoken desire to exterminate American Indians, and what Albertarelli views as hypocritical inconsistencies in his personal choices and military leadership. Despite these criticisms, however, Albertarelli preserves considerations of Custer as a hero and makes many attempts to nuance Custer’s reputation. Albertarelli presents Custer as a loving and caring individual in his personal life and as someone who nobly sticks to his principles regardless of directions from authority. These directly parallel prominent characteristics of Tex Willer, the fictional white Western hero whom Albertarelli’s readers would likely be very familiar with or fans of.

The opening lines of Albertarelli’s introduction to the *fumetto* summarize his struggle to place Custer on the spectrum of good and evil: “Among the characters that the legend of the West have glorified, George Armstrong Custer is perhaps the least decipherable. Is he a hero? Is he a blunt soldier thirsty for blood? Could

he be counted among the great architects of conquest or belong to one of the many less noble, or even ignoble, consequences of [conquest]? Historians do not agree[.]”²⁹² Albertarelli continues to explain that Custer’s contradictory positive and negative qualities make him somewhat of a mystery man. This wishy washy analysis appeals to the *brava gente* by criticizing settler violence and simultaneously preserving Custer’s heroism just enough for the audience to still enjoy the potential indulgence in a settler fantasy.

Albertarelli’s issue on Sitting Bull, “Toro Seduto: Il profeta dei Sioux,” also promotes the idea of the *brava gente* as genuinely empathetic with American Indians as another dispossessed people. Albertarelli takes a strong stance that Sitting Bull was wronged and that the Lakota were victims whose violent actions were out of necessity and self-defense. This stance contradicts Albertarelli’s forgiving portrayal of Custer, and in fact Albertarelli criticizes American memories of Custer and Sitting Bull, arguing that the memorial at Little Big Horn is unfairly biased in Custer’s favor. This strong position works to forgive Albertarelli’s indulgence in Custer’s appealing and legendary heroism and Albertarelli’s use of harmfully stereotypical images in “Toro Seduto.” As a part of this effort to position Italians as genuine sympathizers while simultaneously indulging in a settler fantasy, Albertarelli ultimately relies on a typical settler racialization strategy—the

²⁹² Rino Albertarelli, “Custer: Cacciatore di gloria,” *I protagonisti del West*, no. 2 (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 1994), PN6767.A37 G37 1994, Comic Art Collection, Michigan State University Library Special Collections, East Lansing, Michigan.

idea that the U.S. Army's ultimate defeat of American Indians was inevitable. In his words, "Even though they were right, the Sioux had to lose."²⁹³

The authority with which *I protagonisti* tells stories about the American West implies that historical accuracy is a key component of the series, of the Bonelli brand, and of *fumetti*'s role in bringing transnational settler colonialism out of the postwar era. Bonelli *fumetti* helped ingrain U.S. settler logics in postwar reformations of *Italianità* and preserve them since that time. Due to *fumetti*'s role in postwar Italian identity reformation, and their continued prevalence today, these themes have become ways that Italians understand themselves as a collective. Furthermore, these understandings have given Italians a language for articulating racial politics in Italy today. Through invoking settler-colonial understandings of American Indians kept alive in Italy through *fumetti*, Italians have combined their role in transnational settler colonialism with their domestic racialized politics, particularly in regards to African immigration.

Transnational Settler Colonialism in the Twenty-First Century: Images of American Indians in Italian Anti-Immigration Politics

Through transnational settler colonialism, Italians enact their own settler fantasy through participating in U.S. settler colonialism. As Italians replaced overt acknowledgement of their nation's colonial violence in Africa with celebrations of

²⁹³ Rino Albertarelli, "Toro Seduto: Il profeta dei Sioux," *I protagonisti del West*, no. 5 (Milan: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 1994), PN6767.A37 T6 1994, Comic Art Collection, Michigan State University Library Special Collections, East Lansing, Michigan.

U.S. settler colonialism and as Italy's internal colonialism continued, the logics and cultural images associated with Italy's three colonialisms have woven together. The legacies of Italian colonialism in Africa and Italy's internal colonialism pervade Italian society and politics, yet the mythology surrounding U.S. settler colonialism has become the more accessible and understood lexicon of colonial iconography. The confluence of Italy's postcolonial identity, Italy's shift from an emigrant nation to a hub of African immigration, Italy's continuing internal colonialism, and Italy's participation in U.S. settler colonialism is exemplified in the anti-immigration, federalist, and, at times, separatist politics of the Lega Nord (Northern League) political party. This is especially evident in their 2008 anti-immigration campaign that used images of American Indians to position northern Italians as an indigenous people under threat of invasion.

The Lega Nord builds its political stance on one main principle—that native Italians are those from the north, in particular the regions of Lombardy and Veneto.²⁹⁴ According to Michel Huyseune, the Lega Nord works to maintain an ethnic hierarchy that excludes non-European immigrants and marginalizes “non-native citizens”, (a category that refers to southern Italians, but may even include northerners from other regions).²⁹⁵ In essence, the Lega Nord claims that white northerners are truly Italian, southern Italy is a drain on northern Italian resources,

²⁹⁴ Thomas W. Gold, *The Lega Nord and Contemporary Politics in Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Michel Huyseune, *Modernity and Secession: The Social Sciences and the Political Discourse of the Lega Nord in Italy* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

²⁹⁵ Huyseune, *Modernity and Secession*, 188.

and non-European immigrants are invaders of Italian land. Umberto Bossi founded what was initially called the Lega Lombarda in 1982. The party began as a small regional political party but quickly grew into a significant party in Italian national politics. Focusing on the economic wealth of the Lombard region, the Lega argued that southern Italians—and later African immigrants—were undeserving benefactors of northern economic prosperity. Lega Lombarda built its support first as part of a larger coalition of northern regionalist groups, and grew to be the most powerful of those groups.

In 1991, Bossi founded the Lega Nord, which effectively put himself and his Lega Lombarda at the forefront of the coalition of northern regionalist parties. Bossi's charismatic, anti-establishment, and brash politics played in to the rising populism throughout Europe. This came at a time when many desired a reform of Italy's political system. The national political crisis known as the *Mani Pulite* ("Clean Hands") trials opened the door for a surge in Lega Nord's influence. *Mani Pulite* exposed corruption in the financing of Italian politicians and severely affected all of Italy's major political parties.

The Lega Nord seized on the opportunity to position itself as an alternative to corruption and implemented their most common tactic—blaming the south. According to Thomas Gold, the Lega Nord "played up *Mani Pulite* as a battle between a clean North and a corrupt Rome that favors the South."²⁹⁶ During the trials, the Lega Nord shifted to a more practical focus on Federalism, temporarily

²⁹⁶ Gold, *The Lega Nord and Contemporary Politics in Italy*, 90.

placing its secessionist rhetoric on the back burner, and even opening offices in the south. During the early 1990s, the Lega Nord gained in electoral success and achieved one of its greatest early victories when it took over the mayoral seat in Milan in 1993. The Lega Nord, however, was too regionally focused to replace Italy's major political parties that fell during *Mani Pulite*, and briefly joined Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia coalition.

This, alliance, however, was short lived and pushed the Lega Nord back toward its secessionist roots and it fully adopted an ethno-regionalist platform. At the party's 1996 meeting, the Lega Nord declared the north as a region called "Padania." The concept of Padania rejects the existence of an Italian national identity and instead claims that Italy's northern regions are defined by ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and historical traditions that are separate from those in the rest of the Italian peninsula. However, much like during the nation-building efforts of the Risorgimento, the Lega Nord's nation-building efforts often elide or subdue regional differences. To make up for this, the Lega Nord claims that Padania entails a unique ethnic identity with Celtic roots. This new radical position preceded the Lega Nord's best electoral results up to that point. In the 1996 national elections, the Lega Nord secured 10 percent of the vote nationwide and 20 percent of the vote in the north.²⁹⁷ Subsequent flashy efforts at posturing moves toward secession were "met with a mixture of fear, scorn, and veiled support" in Italy.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 104.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 107.

Since this shift, the Lega Nord has remained radical and taken on some authoritarian qualities.

The Lega Nord's radicalization in the mid-1990s entrenched the party in the portions of its ideology that draw on colonial logics. According to Gold, "the Lega's call for secession has further politicized the division between the wealthier North and the poorer South" and "[t]he Lega has also exploited long-standing animosities toward southerners that exist, and have existed for generations."²⁹⁹ The Lega's exacerbation of the tensions between the north and south are rooted in Italy's internal colonialism. In addition to arguing for northern secession and the falsehood of an Italian national identity, the Lega has strongly supported federalism, decentralizing the Italian government, and increasing the power of local government in order to eliminate what they see as the redistribution of northern wealth in the south. The efforts to position the *Mezzogiorno* as an inferior region incapable of advancing to northern standards continues to popularize the colonialist northern rhetoric that has plagued Italy since the Risorgimento. The Lega Nord also invokes discourses used during Italian colonialism in Africa to bolster its anti-immigration stance. As Gold points out, the Lega Nord "was really the first party in Italy to take an explicitly anti-immigrant position, a move that not only politicized the issue considerably, but also put the party squarely in the camp

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

of other new populist Right parties, which were emerging across the continent at the time.”³⁰⁰

The Lega Nord’s anti-immigrant discourse is laden with colonial logics. A particularly inflammatory campaign strategy the Lega employed in 2008 exemplifies how the party’s employment of colonial logics remains a part of transnational settler colonialism. As a part of their national campaign, the Lega Nord produced several posters that featured images of American Indians as examples of the dangers of immigration. The most prominent of these portrayed a bust in profile of an expressionless American Indian man wearing an elaborate feathered headdress and featured captions such as, “They endured immigration, now they live on reserves! Think about it!” or, “They did not put regulations on immigration, now they live on reserves! Think about it!”³⁰¹ This campaign fits perfectly with the Lega Nord’s typical populist political tactics that intentionally shirk political correctness and seek to offend and inflame. Indeed, many Italians looked at these posters critically. *Il Corriere della Sera* columnist Sergio Romano proposed that there were two appropriate reactions to the campaign. The first was to view it as a flippant absurdity simply intended to provoke controversy. In his words, “Not all preposterous ideas deserve to be corrected or contradicted. Many

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁰¹ “Manifesto leghista con l’indiano,” *Corriere della Sera*, accessed February 23, 2019, https://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Politica/2008/03_Marzo/07/pop_lega_pellero_ssa.shtml.

disappear from the sun, crushed by the weight of their own absurdity.”³⁰² On the other hand, Romano observes, “the Lega is looking to take advantage of the feeling of insecurity that is common in these years in Italian society.”³⁰³ When looked at in the context of transnational settler colonialism, however, this campaign takes on alternate meanings.

The message the campaign sends is one that focuses on and distorts indigeneity. The Lega Nord’s ideology is based in the belief that an ethnically-defined group of northern Italians are indigenous to northern Italy. The party’s radical ethno-regionalism aims to exclude non-European immigrants and southern Italians from the Padanian polity. The campaign aligns the perceived and constructed indigeneity of Padanians to the indigeneity of American Indians. To the Lega Nord, white northern Italians have the right to northern Italian land due to their descent from Celtic origins. This political campaign proposed that immigrants—primarily from Africa and India—threatened their sovereignty. As Sergio Romano suggested, the inflammatory nature of the Lega Nord’s tactics and the absurdity of this idea do not indicate that supporters of the Lega actually fear colonization by potential non-European immigrants. Instead, the campaign intentionally appropriated perceived American Indian history and culture to take advantage of and ignite social anxiety surrounding the increase in immigration to

³⁰² Sergio Romano, “Il Pellerossa Della Lega Smargiassate e Buon Senso,” *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, June 11, 2009, Archivio Corriere della Sera. <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MjovZXMvaXQvcmlNzZGF0aW1ldGhvZGUxL0A1NTM3Nw%3D%3D>, accessed on August 16, 2018.

³⁰³ Romano, “Il Pellerossa Della Lega Smargiassate e Buon Senso.”

Italy. By framing the issue with images that evoked U.S. settler colonialism, the Lega Nord made citizenship and political and social belonging about land and space. In the Lega Nord's eyes, not only do non-European immigrants not deserve the rights of Italian citizenship and the benefits of social belonging in Italian communities, but they also are not qualified to occupy Italian space. In doing so, the comparison to American Indian history suggests, non-European immigrants would take over Italian space and overrun Italian culture, contaminating and eliminating it.

In essence, the Lega Nord campaign represents the colonizer imagining themselves as the colonized—a practice that *fumetti* have shown is familiar to Italians. As with *fumetti*, this imagining is itself a colonizing act. With these posters, the Lega Nord was performing a colonizing act with respect to all three of Italy's colonialisms. Although the population of immigrants from former Italian colonies is comparatively low, the Italian attitude toward Africans in general is rooted in Italy's colonial history in the continent. Just as in Italy's colonies, the Lega Nord could not imagine a shared space between Italians and Africans because of the belief in African racial inferiority and inherent barbarity. By suggesting that the very presence of African immigrants in Italy is threatening, the Lega Nord reinforced this racist colonial logic and assisted in its integration into Italian immigration politics. The same thinking that legitimized Italian colonial violence in Africa legitimizes the Lega Nord's current attempts to marginalize African immigrants and

their descendants and exclude them from Italian society and from *Italianità* altogether.

With regards to Italy's internal colonialism, this campaign reinforces the fundamental purpose of the Lega Nord, which is to enhance the divide between northern and southern Italy. The territory that the poster imagines being invaded is Padania, not Italy as a whole. In fact, the Lega Nord sees migration from the *Mezzogiorno* as a threat akin to that of non-European immigration. The function of positioning southern Italians as potential colonizers of Padania further others and marginalizes southerners from the perspective of Lega Nord. In addition, it supports the belief that southern Italians are racially separate from and inferior to northern Italians.

Perhaps most obviously, this campaign contributes to transnational settler colonialism in several ways. Firstly, the campaign reproduces common U.S. settler colonial strategies of racialization to legitimate colonialization. The poster is a prime example of "playing Indian." The Lega Nord is imagining themselves as a dispossessed indigenous people, which works to mask the reality of the colonial violence the campaign itself perpetuates. The campaign also draws on stereotypical imagery and narratives that continue to create the false perception that American Indians are an inevitably disappearing people and culture. Just as with *fumetti*, the Lega Nord's campaign is an example of Italians participating in and upholding U.S. settler colonialism and legitimating its claims and colonial logics from Italy. In addition to this mode of participation in transnational settler

colonialism, this campaign intertwined U.S. settler colonial logics with Italian colonial logics to continue Italy's colonialisms.

The meshing of these ways of thinking have made Italy's involvement in all of its three colonialisms inseparable and part of one larger colonial narrative driven by intertwining and overlapping colonial logics that work to create and maintain racialized hierarchies within Italy. The United States' settler colonialism and Italy's colonialisms are made international through this relationship. Through the relationship between U.S. settler colonialism and Italy's colonialisms, each are broadened. Neither Italian colonialism nor U.S. settler colonialism exist in a vacuum. Instead, they exist in overlapping environments that make each systems upheld by one another. As the politics of the Lega Nord and *fumetti* represent, this relationship takes place in both political and cultural spheres and permeates Italian cultural and political experiences.

Conclusion

The culmination of transnational settler colonialism in the anti-immigration politics of the Lega Nord reiterates the depth with which *Italianità* is intertwined with U.S. settler logics. U.S. settler colonialism and its persistent work to eliminate American Indian culture occurs not only within the borders of the United States, but also in European nations whose cultural understandings of the world have been informed by transatlantic cultural exchange and American mass culture. In Italy, this is particularly evident due to the advent of American mass culture in

Europe during the first decades of Italy's history as a modern, unified nation. From the internal colonialism out of which Italy was born, to settler colonialism in Africa in both the liberal and fascist eras, to Italian involvement in transnational settler colonialism through settlement of the American west, consumption of American mass culture, and producing an Italian version of settler culture that replicates the work of U.S. settler culture in an Italian context, Italy and *Italianità* are inseparable from the influence of U.S. settler-colonial logics and Native resistance to those logics. Although more work is needed to examine exactly how American Indians today may or may not be affected by the continuation of Italian settler cultural production and the reproduction of U.S. settler logics in Italian politics, it is clear that the Italian relationship with American Indians is one of settlers to the indigenous. While Italians do not occupy American Indian land—except in the form of American descendants from Italian arrivants—Italians are active contributors to the racialization that justifies continued white American presence on American Indian soil. Through transnational settler colonialism, Italy has done the work of further legitimating white American settler claims to American Indian land, effectively transforming U.S. settler colonialism into an international, rather than solely American, project.

Appendix I: Original Italian of Translated Quotations

Chapter Three

The Wild West Becomes Italian: The Introduction of U.S. Settler Colonial Logics to Italy

73. "Cronaca Cody," *La Stampa*, April 18, 1906, *La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867*,
http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,3/articleid,1209_01_1906_0107_0003_18218083/anews,true/, 3.

"Il suo nome spadroneggia dappertutto. I manifesti dai colori pomposi e dalle dimensioni inverosimili hanno invaso gli angoli delle case, i pilastri dei portici, ogni pezzetto di muro dove si possa attaccare un pezzo di carta. Non siete più in grado di dare uno sguardo alle vetrine dei negozi senza che la sua caratteristica figura . . . non vi balzi dinanzi nel più curiosi atteggiamenti. E attorno a lui, quasi non bastasse, ecco tutta una fantasmagoria di visi selvaggi o fieri o miti, di guerrieri d'ogni razza, rossi, gialli o neri, vestiti di tutte le fogge"

83. "L'apertura dell'Esposizione americana a Londra," *Gazzetta Piemontese*, May 21-22, 1887, *La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867*,
http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1245_01_1887_0140_0001_18183404/anews,true/, 1.

"Lo spettacolo è uno dei più attraenti ed ammiranti ed eccitanti a cui si possa mai assistere. Gli episodi toccantissimi della vita avventurosa degli uomini delle frontiere americane sono riprodotti in un modo tanto realistico che vi fa a momenti scordare di essere seduti tranquillamente sotto una comoda ed ampia tettoia a Londra."

84. *Ibid.*

"da *cowboys* genuine, da *vacqueros* messicani reali e da Pelli Rosse legittime . . . sotto la direzione del leggendario Buffalo Bill – il colonello Cody."

85. *Ibid.*

"l'intrepido generale della truppe americane nelle varie lotte contro gli indiani," "stessi Indiani, Sioux, Pawnees, Ogallalas . . . che empiono la nostra mente di sgomento e di ammirazione," "pacifeci, calmi, quasi muti in presenza del pubblico, ben nutriti, sfarzosamente dipinti."

86. "Lettera telegrafica da Roma," *Gazzetta Piemontese*, February 21-22, 1890, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1876, http://www.archiviola stampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1239_01_1890_0052_0001_21210271/ane ws,true/, 1.

"una folla immensa"

88. Gabardi, "Il Buffalo-Bill a Firenze," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, March 14, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MzovZXMvaXQvc mNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MTM5OA%3D%3D>, accessed on May 11, 2018, 2.

"Alla prima rappresentazione del Buffalo-Bill, può dirsi assistette tutta Firenze. Non c'era nessun posto vuoto nell'immenso recinto. Moltissime persone anzi dovettero andarsene non trovando più posto. . . . Interessò più di tutto l'accampamento indiano."

92. "Recentissime telegrafiche," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, February 22, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MTovZXMvaXQvc mNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MTExOQ%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 3.

"emisero le loro grida selvaggie"

93. "Buffalo-Bill a Milano," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, April 2, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NjovZXMvaXQvc mNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MTcyMg%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 3.

"si lamentavano del freddo e dicevano che il viaggio le aveva stancati."

94. Ibid.

"[d]ei 65 indiani soltanto quattro o cinque prederanno alloggio in alberghi, gli altri dormirano sotto le loro tende."

107. "L'insurrezione indiana negli Stati Uniti Una congiura - <<La danza dello Spirito > Quel che ne pensa Buffalo Bill," *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, November 27, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MjovZXMvaXQvc mNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MjY3Mg%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 2.

"centinaia di soldati"

“L’insurrezione dei selvaggi americani,” *Corriere della Sera: Nazionale*, November 26, 1890, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NDovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3MzA2Mw%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018, 2.

“da un pezzetto se ne stavano tranquilli”

108. “L’insurrezione indiana negli Stati Uniti Una congiura - <<La danza dello Spirito > Quel che ne pensa Buffalo Bill.”

“I Sioux ascendono a 30,000 e sono la più potente dello tribù indiane nell’America del Nord. Gli Americani non hanno dimenticato l’occidio del generale Custer, con 16 ufficiali e 300 soldati sorpresi dai Sioux, comandati da Sitting Bull, nel 1876, nella gola di Little Horn.”

109. Ibid.

“[s]embra che gli Indiani di Buffalo Bill intendano mettersi di mezzo come pacificatori.”

111. “La seconda giornata di ‘Buffalo Bill,’” *Gazzetta Piemontese*, April 24, 1906, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867, http://www.archiviola stampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1209_01_1906_0113_0001_18219163/ane ws,true/, accessed February 14, 2018, 3.

“con successo uguale a quelle precedenti”
“La gradinate dell’ampio recinto erano stipate”

113. “Buffalo Bill a Genova,” *La Stampa*, March 14, 1906, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867, http://www.archiviola stampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,2/articleid,1209_01_1906_0073_0002_18215891/ane ws,true/, accessed February 14, 2018, 2.

“Una folla straordinaria si assiepava dallo scalo Terrabla, dove giunsero I treni, fino alla Piazza d’Armi. Lo scarico del material avvenno in modo meraviglioso, e in meno di tre ore tutto il colossale Circo era impiantato nella Piazza d’Armi. Numerosa folla, trattenuta da cordoni di guardie o carabinieri, assistera allo strano spettacolo.”

114. “Cronaca: La prima rappresentazione di Buffalo Bill. L’arrivo della ‘Troupe,’” *La Stampa*, April 23, 1906, La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867,

http://www.archiviola stampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod ,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,2/articleid,1209_01_1906_0112_0002_18 218554/ane ws,true/, 3-4.

“una pioggia dirotta”

115. Ibid.

“Eppure – oh! gran forza della curiosità umana! – il tempo orribile non ha affatto spaventato il pubblico. Una vera folla di gente – uomini, signore, ragazzi – a piedi, in vettura, in tranvia ha affrontato quasi.... serenamente i disagi dell’acqua.”

117. “Ciò che insegna Buffalo Bill dal lato militare,” *La Stampa*, April 27, 1906, *La Stampa: Archivio Storico dal 1867*, http://www.archiviola stampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod ,avanzata/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,1/articleid,1209_01_1906_0116_0001_18 218940/ane ws,true/, 3.

“soprattutto dal punto di vista miliatre, . . . mirabile esempio di organizzazione americana.”

118. Gabardi, “Il Buffalo-Bill a Firenze.”

“[i]nteressò più di tutto l’accampamento indiano.”

120. “Cronaca Cody,” 3.

“è un miracolo di precisione che Cody ha ottenuto a forza di pazienza. Ella vedrà come tutti sono d’accordo: cosacci, giapponesi, indiani, cowboys, lancieri inglesi, cavalieri americani, artiglieri, arabi, messicani, chicos, gauchos, Cuban. Vi sono fra essi uomini intrepidi e cavalatori meravigliosi che sembrano soldati in arcione, tanto sono sicuri. Le rappresentazioni hanno in sè anche uno scopo istruttivo, poichè non accado tutti I giorni di vedere queste disparate razze umane e conoscerne anche la loro usanze.”

122. “Cronaca: La prima rappresentazione di Buffalo Bill. L’arrivo della ‘Troupe,’” 3-4.

“Gli invitati per poco ebbero l’illusione di trovarsi veramente in un attendamento delle praterie, prigionieri magari . . . I ‘pelli-rosse’, che, a dispetto dei maligni, sono proprio autentici, ci apparvero in fondo buone ed amabili persone ed ospiti eccellenti. In un inglese molto.problematico uno di quei cari amici, rispondendo alla domanda fatagli sulle sue impressioni d’Italia, ci ha risposto con tutta serietà di non aver compreso ancora esattamente perchè i bianchi si ‘fabbicano le case

una sull'altra!!' Abituati al pianterreno delle loro capanne natie, gli indiani si stupiscono sempre dei nostril edifizii a diversi piani."

135. "Chicago," *Corriere della Pomeriggio: Altri Supplementi*, October 30, 1893, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NTovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3AxL0AxMTQxNDU%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018.

"“Nel luogo dov'è Chicago, non esisteva nel 1830 che piccolo opera avanzata di fortificazione costruita dal Governo federale per tenere in rispetto gli indiani.”

147. "L'Esposizione di Chicago," *Corriere del Pomeriggio: Nazionale*, July 10, 1893, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/MzovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3AxL0AxMTE4NTE%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018.

"grotteschi"

"non sono fatti per piacere alle persone di buon gusto."

"L'Esposizione di Chicago," *Corriere della Sera*, May 30, 1893, Archivio Corriere della Sera, <http://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view.shtml#!/NDovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aWRhY3M0L0A3ODQ5OA%3D%3D>, accessed May 11, 2018.

"incantevoli"

"divertenti"

152. "L'Esposizione di Chicago," May 30, 1893.

"fa involontariamente pensare alla dottrina di Darwin"

Chapter Four

Expressing a New Identity: Italy's Fascist Settler Colonialism, the *Brava Gente* Myth, and Western *Fumetti*

173. Luca Acquarelli, "Sua altezza imperiale. L'obelisco di Axum tra dimenticanza e camuflage storico," *Zapruder*, no. 23 (September-December 2010): 67.

"dimenticanza"

"un processo passive ma un preciso meccanismo che si instaura all'internodi una cultura"

199. Elizabeth Leake, *Tex Willer: un cowboy nell'Italia del dopoguerra* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2018), 14, Apple Books.

“[I]ungi dall’omaggiare o dal conformarsi alla crescent egemonia culturale americana, *Tex* fu invece fin dall’inizio ostinatamente italiano, senza alcuna velleità di raggiungere un pubblico internazionale.”

200. Ibid., 12-13.

“hanno raggiunto più lettori di qualsiasi altro prodotto culturale della loro epoca”

201. Ibid., 18-19.

“*Tex* (la striscia) era costantemente in contatto con gli eventi e gli stati d’animo dell’epoca, ma non si trattava, tuttavia, di un rapporto unilaterale. In virtù della sua natura di prodotto culturale di massa, *Tex* offriva un immaginario diffusamente condiviso, e soprattutto faceva riferimento a un mondo che a sua volta lo citava nel discorso quotidiano. In questo senso, *Tex* non si limita a riflettere un determinate *Zeitgeist*, ma partecipava attivamente alla sua costruzione.”

202. Ibid., 94.

“abusi di potere, corruzione e soprattutto avidità”

203. Ibid., 95.

“estraneo a qualsiasi gruppo e superiore a tutti quanti”

204. Ibid., 95.

“essere sistematicamente taciturno”

205. Ibid., 25.

“il messaggio di *Tex* non si estendeva, almeno in principio, al di fuori dei confine italiani”

206. Michele Ginevra, ed., *Gli archivi Bonelli* (Milano: Sergio Bonelli Editore, 2012), 568.

“Si stave molto poco in casa, anche in inverno. . . . Cortili e piazzette erano invece il regno di avventure epiche tratte proprio dai fumetti: un manico di scopa diventava un cavallo e si usavano le pistole giocattolo . . . Bastava poco per diventare *Tex*. I ruoli si distribuivano secondo i rapporti di forza del gruppo: il più ‘adulto’ interpretava *Tex*; quello silenzioso ma robusto faceva *Tiger Jack* . . . ; *Kit Carson* era un ruolo di contorno el il più piccolo faceva ovviamente *Kit Willer*. Poi c’erano

le giacche blu e i navajos, le bande di fuorilegge e le posse all'inseguimento. Più si era, più baccano si faceva.”

Chapter Five

***Italianità* in the American West: *Tex* and a Settler-Colonial Language for an Italian Identity**

222. “Chi è Tex,” Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://www.sergiobonelli.it/sezioni/365/il-mio-nome-e-tex>.

“Il West di Tex è quello di John Ford e di Howard Hawks: l'attore adatto per interpretare [Tex] sarebbe stato John Wayne o Charlton Heston.”

229. Tex Story, *Il patto di sangue*, 153

“Indiani che scappano dalle riserve!..Un brutto affare!”

230. Ibid., 154.

“Gli indiani delle riserve non hanno alcun interesse a mettersi sul sentiero di Guerra ...e se stanno pensando di farlo, bisogna proprio che abbiano buone ragioni ...”

231. Ibid., 162.

“...*Tex riprende i sensi...*

Tex: Sangue di bisonte! Un campo indiano!

Freccia Rossa: Sì! Un campo di quegli indiani che i visi pallidi vogliono sterminare.

Tex: L'uomo rosso parla con lingua forcuta. Egli sa bene che i visi pallidi hanno lasciato terre ai fratelli rossi.

Freccia Rossa: Quali terre?.. Il viso pallido intende forse alludere alle riserve dove i viveri non arrivano mai e il grande popolo rosso si spegne lentamente?”

234. Ibid., 165.

“Il viso pallido sarà il mio uomo!”

235. Ibid., 166.

“a patto che [Freccia Rossa] si spieghi perchè i fratelli rossi lo hanno attaccato senza alcuna provocazione.”

236. Ibid., 166.

“è stata educate nella missione delle sorelle bianche de Alamosa e odia questa inutile guerra”

237. Ibid., 167-168.

“il solo viso pallido che dimostrò di esserci amico”

“i visi pallidi agivano così per ordine del padre bianco di Washington, il quale intendeva sterminare la razza rossa per impadronirsi delle riserve”

238. Ibid., 168.

“L'agente indiano delle riserve ruba al popolo rosso...mentre invece Jerry Stone ci procura viveri e armi per difenderci dai visi pallidi”

239. Ibid., 168.

“con cuore aperto e lingua diritta”

240. Ibid., 169.

“Freccia Rossa: Il mio fratello bianco dà la sua parola di agire in favore dei Navajos?”

Tex: Il fratello bianco promette di agire lealmente verso il popolo rosso!

Freccia Rossa: Ugh! Per una intera luna Freccia Rossa terrà i suoi guerrieri lontano dal sentiero di guerra... ..ma se entro tale termine il viso pallido non avrà dato prova di aver parlato con lingua diritta, allora i Navajos agiranno.”

241. Ibid., 233-234.

“I guerrieri Navajos [...] hanno dato [a Tex] il nome di Aquila della Notte”

242. Ibid., 234.

“Aquila della Notte ha parlato con saggezza”

“Freccia Rossa è orgoglioso di Aquila della Notte!”

243. Ibid., 234-235.

“Tex: E io sono content di constatare che Freccia Rossa ha aperto gli occhi alla verità! Il governo del gran padre bianco non è responsabile del mancato arrivo del viveri alle riserve indiane!

Freccia Rossa: Freccia Rossa è convinto di ciò che dice Aquila della Notte! Ma perchè il grande padre bianco non punisce i colpevoli?

Tex: Il grande padre bianco è stato ingannato dai suoi figli indegni e non sa ciò che essi fanno! Il grande padre crede che i suoi figli rossi vogliono marciare sul sentiero di guerra!

Freccia Rossa: Ugh! Aquila della Notte sa che questo non è vero!

Tex: Aquila della Notte sta lavorando per indurre i colpevoli a scoprirsi! Che Freccia Rossa continui ad aiutarmi mandando i suoi guerrieri a raccogliere informazioni su quanto accade nella regione, e allora la pace tornerà sulle terre indiane!”

244. Ibid., 244-245.

“Con il vostro lurido traffic avete guadagnato molto oro...oro che è sporco di sangue innocente...oro che è costato la vita di onesti coloni che furono trucidati dai pellirosse, sobillati da voi, armati da voi, schifosi mercanti di fucili!”

248. *Il patto di sangue*, 276.

“Aquila della Notte è un valoroso guerriero, è venuto al Villaggio di Grosso Tuono. Aquila della Notte non teme i guerrieri rossi, poichè è stato amico di Orso Grigio, di Mano Gialla... ..e di molti altri capi indiani, con uno dei quali, Freccia Rossa, ha vincoli di sangue! Aquila della Notte sa che i guerrieri rossi sono leali, e viene a essi senza paura!”

249. Ibid., 278-279.

“Grosso Tuono: Grosso tuono compra armi per combattere is visi pallidi che hanno violato le loro promessi! Il gran padre bianco di Washington ha promesso molte cose al popolo rosso... ..ha promesso che avrebbe mandato viveri, coperte, molta roba... ha promesso che le riserve indiane sarebbero sempre appartenute popolo indiano... ..e invece cosa hanno avuto i guerrieri rossi?... pochi viveri, poche vecchie coperte...e let riserve vengono continuamente violate dai visi pallidi! Il popolo rosso muore, Aquila della Notte! Se questa è la volontà del gran padre di Washington...ebbene, il popolo rosso morirà come un popolo di guerriere e non di schiavi!

Tex: Grosso Tuono ha parlato con lingua diritta, e Aquila della Notte sa che è vero che ai guerrieri rossi non sono state consegnate le molte cose promesse loro dal gran padre bianco... ..ma Grosso Tuono ascolti ora le parole di Aquila della Notte, e ascolti con orecchie sagge, poichè Aquila della Notte parlerà come amico del popolo rosso!

Gross Tuono: Grosso Tuono ascolta!

E Tex spiega al suo attento uditorio come la colpa della mancata consegna delle merci promesse dal governo sia da attribuirsi solo alle losche manovre di un pugno di sporchi affaristi che non hanno esitato a provocare il malcontento frag li indiani, pur gli indiani pur di poter vendere le loro armi...

Tex: ...e quando i guerrieri di Grosso Tuono si saranno ancor più impoveriti comperando molti altri fucili cosa faranno essi?... Grosso Tuono è saggio. Ha visto molte cose...ha conosciuto il valore delle giacche azzurre...ebbene...pensa forse, Grosso Tuono, di poter sconfiggere le giacche azzurre del grande padre bianco?...

Grosso Tuono: Grosso Tuono pensa solo di poter morire da valoroso alla testa dei suoi guerrieri.

Tex: Grosso Tuono ha parlato da valoroso e degno cap dei Piedi Neri, ma non come un saggio! Che il capo dei Piedi Neri ascolti il consiglio di Aquila della Notte e molti lutti saranno risparmiati alla sua tribù..."

250. Ibid., 283.

"la prova del coltello"

251. Ibid., 289-290.

"Tex, ascoltato attentamente da Grosso Tuono e dagli anziani della tribù, spiega con molta chairezza le cause che hanno provocato il malcontento negli indiani delle riserve..."

Tex: ...ed è per questo che vi dico...fratelli rossi! Non comperate più armi dai traditori visi pallidi che vogliono solo il vostro oro!...e che, per la loro sete criminosa di Guadagno, sono pronti a far scorere non solo il sangue dei prodi guerrieri rossi, ma anche quello delle valorose giacche azzurre! Lasciate che Aquila della Notta lavori per il bene e la prosperità dei guerrieri rossi, e vedrete che la pace e la giustizia torneranno a sedere accanto ai fuochi dei villaggi!"

252. Ibid., 301.

"suo figlio"

"valoroso e saggio guerriero"

253. Ibid., 301.

"pieno di gioia alla vista dei suoi amici Navajos"

256. *Il patto di sangue*, 319.

"Lilyth non è soltanto una bella ragazza, ma anche buona e coraggiosa, e [è] content[a] di averla sposat[a]"

257. Ibid., 321.

"tenda di Tex"

258. Ibid., 329.

“Tex Willer...è il nome bianco di Aquila della Notte”

“Freccia Rossa sarà molto arrabbiato se gli uomini di Durango uccideranno il marito della piccolo Lilyth! Aquila della Notte è amico e fratello dei Navajos...e i Navajos lotteranno per lui.”

259. Ibid., 342.

“Se non li fermo succederà un orribile massacro!”

260. Ibid., 366.

“nipoti di panciuti governatori”

261. *Il giuramento*, 20.

“Per un paio d’anni, infatti, non lasciai il Villaggio se non per seguire i Navajos sui sentieri di caccia... ..e quello fu certo il tempo più felice della mia vita!”

262. Ibid., 72.

“Tex: Sentite, Sergente. Io non ho niente contro di voi, e l’ultima cos ache mi auguro è di essere costretto a usare maniere persuasive contro voi e i vostri uomini...però lasciatemi chiarire una cosa. Chiunque vorrà impedirmi di andare da mia moglie, dovrà usare la forza!

Sergente: Accidenti!... se non lo faro, mi metteranno agli arresti!

Tex: Lo so. Conosco i regolamenti. Ma cosa sono quindici o trenta giorni al Massimo nelle guardine del forte, in paragone a un’eternità in una buia e fredda fossa?”

263. Ibid., 85-86.

“Io ho ascoltato la tua voce, Lilyth, e tu ora ascolta la mia! Da questo momento, io non avrò pace fino a che non avrò ucciso tutti coloro che hanno mandato la morte a tagliare i fili che legarono le nostre vite! Da questo momento, io sarò la vendetta che segue implacabile le orme dei nostril nemici! Al mio fianco marceranno l’odio e il terrore...e dietro di me lascerò tracce bagnate di lacrime e di sangue! Questo io ti guiro, Lilyth, e prendo a testimoni il cielo e l’inferno, e le stele della notte e l’immenso buio dell’infinito.”

265. Ibid., 86-87.

“Freccia Rossa: Ho visto uomini bianchi piangere, e trovar conforto nelle loro lacrime!

Ta-Hu-Nah: Aquila della Notte non può piangere! Anche se il dolore e la disperazione stringono il suo cuore con morsa spietata, non alle lacrime egli chiederà conforto per lenire la sua angoscia, ma al sangue dei suoi nemici!”

267. Tex Story Vol. 3, p. VI

“provocanti pin-up”

269. Tex Story Vol. 3, p. VI

“Madonna pellirossa”

270. “I suoi pards: Il figlio Kid, l’indiano Tiger Jack, il ranger Kit Carson. Insieme sono tre autentici tizzoni d’inferno!” Sergio Bonelli Editore, accessed February 20, 2019, <http://www.sergiobonelli.it/sezioni/371/i-suoi-pards371>.

“Scout, pistolero, giocatore, cacciatore di indiani, ranger del Texas... tutto questo era il Kit Carson della realtà. Un eroe controverso che non deve essere confuso con il nostro”

Appendix 2: Timeline

1861

- Italy is born as a modern nation as The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and Piedmont join for Italy's political unification.

1870

- The Risorgimento comes to an end as the Papal States join Italy, geographic unification is achieved, and Italy's capital is moved to Rome.

1885

- Italian invasion of Massawa, Ethiopia

1887

- Italians suffer embarrassing defeat in Ethiopia at Dogali.

1889

- The Treaty of Wuchale is signed.

1890

- Italy declares Eritrea an Italian colony.
- Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show conducts its first tour of Italy.

1893

- First settlement of Italian farmers is established in Ethiopia
- The World's Columbian Exposition opens in Chicago. Simon Pokagon delivers "The Red Man's Rebuke" on Chicago Day on October 9.

1895

- Italy passes the Education Act in an attempt to instill northern Italian language and values in the *Mezzogiorno*.

1896

- Ethiopian force defeats Italian force at the Battle of Adwa.

1901

- Italy founds the Emigration Commissariat

1906

- The Tripartite Treaty includes Italy in establishing European spheres of influence in Africa.
- The Istituto coloniale italiano (Italian Colonial Institute) is founded.
- Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show conducts its second Italian tour.

1908

- *Il Corriere dei Piccoli* begins and *fumetti* begin their journey toward becoming culturally significant.

1911

- Italy invades Libya (Tripolitania).

1921

- Count Giuseppe Volpi is named the governor of Libya and begins his policy of "reconquering" Libya.

1930-1933

- Italian concentration camps in Cyrenaica are operational.

1934

- Italo Balbo named governor of Libya and increases efforts to encourage migration from the *Mezzogiorno* to Libya.
- Popular *fumetto* magazine, *L'Avventuroso*, is founded.

1935

- Mussolini publicly declares war on Ethiopia on October 2.

1936

- Gianluigi Bonelli begins writing *fumetti* for magazines.

1937

- Italy passes antimiscegenation laws in Libya and Ethiopia.
- Italy relocates the Obelisk of Axum from Ethiopia to Rome.

1938

- The *Ventimilla* brings 20,000 Italian settlers to Libya.

1938-1943

- *L'Avventuroso* is used for fascist propaganda.

1940

- Gianluigi Bonelli buys the popular *fumetto* magazine, *L'Audace*.

1941

- Ethiopian and British Forces gain control of Ethiopia.

1942

- Italy surrenders its African colonies to Allied powers.

1948

- The first issue of *Tex*, "Il totem misterioso" is released.

1950

- *Tex* becomes a Navajo Chief in "Il patto di sangue"

1957

- Sergio Bonelli takes over Sergio Bonelli Editore (then called Edizione Audace).

1961

- First issue of *Zagor* is released.

1974

- The short series, *I protagonisti*, is released.

1991

- Umberto Bossi founds the Lega Nord.

1997

- First issue of *Magico Vento* is released.

2008

- The Lega Nord launches an anti-immigration political campaign, employing images of American Indians.

2012-2015

- *Saguaro* is created and subsequently folds.

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