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Settler Colonial Studies

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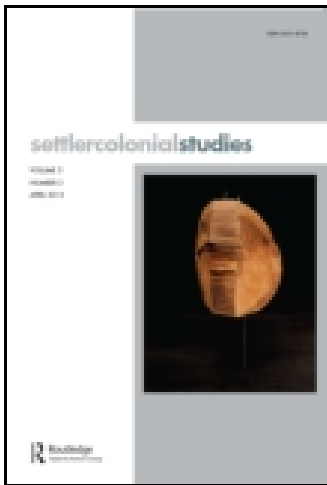
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Mark Rifkin^a

^a University of North Carolina, Greensboro, USA

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Settler common sense

Mark Rifkin*

University of North Carolina, Greensboro, USA

Settler colonialism has been characterized as a structure, a system, and a logic. However, how do varied administrative projects of settlement and accompanying legal categories, geographies, and subjectivities become part of the everyday life of non-Natives? How do they come to shape settler self-understandings in ways that are not experienced as falsifiable philosophical propositions or as an integrated public policy program? Affective networks need to be explored as part of understanding how settler colonial governmentality comes to be lived as the self-evident conditions of possibility for (settler) being. This essay addresses that feeling of givenness and the kinds of social trajectories from which it emerges and which it engenders – a set of dynamics that can be described as settler common sense. Instead of suggesting that quotidian forms of settler sensation, self-hood, and possession follow axiomatically from policy formulations and official legal geography, it argues that the (shifting) parameters of settler governance help provide orientation, inclination, and momentum for non-Native experiences of the everyday.

In *Walden* (1854), Henry David Thoreau offers a vision of personhood divorced from the state, characterizing his experience of “Nature” during his time at Walden Pond as providing him with a sense of his own autonomous embodiment and a related set of ethical resources that enable him to reject the demands of contemporary political economy.¹ The invocation of “Nature” appears to bracket the question of jurisdiction, opening into a different conceptual and phenomenological register that displaces the problem of locating oneself in relation to the boundaries of the state. However, the very feeling that one has moved beyond geopolitics, that one has entered a kind of space that suspends questions of sovereignty or renders them moot, depends on the presence of an encompassing sovereignty that licenses one’s access to that space. If the idea of “Nature” holds at bay the question of jurisdiction so as to envision a kind of place for cultivating a selfhood that can oppose state logics/politics, it also effaces the ways that experience/vision of personhood itself may arise out of the legal subjectivities put in play by the jurisdictional claiming/clearing of that space as against geopolitical claims by other polities, specifically Native peoples. Thoreau offers an example of how settlement – the exertion of control by non-Natives over Native peoples and lands – gives rise to modes of feeling, generating kinds of affect through which the terms of law and policy become imbued with a sensation of everyday certainty.

This affective experience productively can be characterized as an instantiation of what more broadly may be characterized as *settler common sense*. The phrase suggests the ways the legal and

*Corresponding author. Email: m_rifkin@uncg.edu

political structures that enable non-Native access to Indigenous territories come to be lived as given, as simply the unmarked, generic conditions of possibility for occupancy, association, history, and personhood. Addressing whiteness in Australia, Fiona Nicoll argues that “rather than analysing and evaluating Indigenous sovereignty claims..., we have a political and intellectual responsibility to analyse and evaluate the innumerable ways in which White sovereignty circumscribes and mitigates the exercise of Indigenous sovereignty”, and she suggests that “we move towards a less coercive stance of reconciliation *with* when we fall from perspective into an embodied recognition that we already exist within Indigenous sovereignty”.² Addressing the question of how settlement as a system of coercive incorporation and expropriation comes to be lived as quotidian forms of non-Native being and potential, though, may require tactically shifting the analytical focus such that Indigenous sovereignties are not at the center of critical attention, even as they remain crucial in animating the study of settler colonialism and form its ethical horizon. “An embodied recognition” of the enduring presence of settler sovereignty, as well as of quotidian non-Native implication in the dispossession, effacement, and management of indigeneity, needs to attend to everyday experiences of *non-relation*, of a perceptual engagement with place, various institutions, and other people that takes shape around the policies and legalities of settlement but that do not specifically refer to them as such or their effects on Indigenous peoples.

In order to conceptualize the mundane dynamics of settler colonialism, the quotidian feelings and tendencies through which it is continually reconstituted and experienced as the horizon of everyday potentiality, we may need to shift from an explicit attention to articulations of Native sovereignty and toward an exploration of the processes through which settler geographies are lived as ordinary, non-reflexive conditions of possibility. In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams argues for the necessity of approaching “relations of domination and subordination” as “practical consciousness” that

saturat[es] ... the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense.³

Understanding settlement as, in Williams’s terms, such a “structure of feeling” entails asking how emotions, sensations, psychic life take part in the (ongoing) process of realizing the exertion of non-Native authority over Indigenous peoples, governance, and territoriality in ways that *saturate* quotidian life but are not necessarily present to settlers as a set of political propositions or as a specifically imperial project of dispossession. In the current scholarly efforts to characterize settler colonialism, the contours of settlement often appear analytically as clear and coherent from the start, as a virtual totality, and in this way, the ongoing processes by which settler dominance actively is reconstituted as a set of actions, occupations, deferrals, and potentials slide from view. We need to ask how the regularities of settler colonialism are materialized in and through quotidian non-Native sensations, inclinations, and trajectories. Moreover, administrative initiatives and legalities become part of everyday normalizations of state aims and mappings but in ways that also allow for an exceeding of state interests that potentially can be turned back against the state, giving rise to oppositional projects still given shape and momentum by the framings that emerge out of the ongoing work of settler occupation – such as in *Walden*. The essay will close with a brief reading of Thoreau’s text that illustrates how its ethical framing emerges out of, and indexes, everyday forms of settler feeling shaped by state policy but not directly continuous with it.

1.

The figure of the vanishing Indian still remains prominent within US popular and scholarly discourses, both explicitly and implicitly. Within this narrative, Native peoples may have had prior claims to the land, but they, perhaps tragically, were removed from the area, or died out, or ceased to be “really” Indian, or simply disappeared at some point between the appearance of the “last” one and the current moment, whenever that may be.⁴ As against this tendency, scholars who seek to track the workings of settler colonialism face an entrenched inattention to the ways non-Native conceptions and articulations of personhood, place, property, and political belonging coalesce around and through the dispossession of Native peoples and normalization of (the) settler (-state’s) presence on Native lands. Insistence on the systemic quality of such settler seizures, displacements, identifications responds to this relative absence of acknowledgment by emphasizing its centrality and regularity, arguing that the claiming of a naturalized right to Indigenous place lies at the heart of non-Native modes of governance, association, and identity. However, such figurations of the pervasive and enduring quality of settler colonialism may shorthand its workings, producing accounts in which it appears as a fully integrated whole operating in smooth, consistent, and intentional ways across the socio-spatial terrain it encompasses. Doing so, particularly in considering the exchange between the domains of formal policy and of everyday life, may displace how settlement’s histories, brutalities, effacements, and interests become quotidian and common-sensical. Looking at three different models, I want to sketch varied efforts to systemize settler colonialism, highlighting some questions that emerge when they are read in light of issues of process and affect.

In *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, Patrick Wolfe argues, “Settler colonies were (are) premised on the elimination of native societies. The split tensing reflects a determinate feature of settler colonization. The colonizers come to stay – invasion is a structure not an event.”⁵ Offering perhaps the most prominent definition of settler colonialism, Wolfe’s formulation emphasizes the fact that it cannot be localized within a specific period of removal or extermination and that it persists as a determinative feature of national territoriality and identity. He argues that a “logic of elimination” drives settler governance and sociality, describing “the settler-colonial will” as “a historical force that ultimately derives from the primal drive to expansion that is generally glossed as capitalism” (167), and in “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” he observes that “elimination is an organizing principle of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence”, adding, “Settler colonialism destroys to replace.”⁶ Rather than being superseded after an initial moment/period of conquest, however, colonization persists since “the logic of elimination marks a return whereby the native repressed continues to structure settler-colonial society” (390), and “the process of replacement maintains the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim” (389). Yet, when and how do projects of elimination and replacement become geographies of everyday non-Native occupancy that do not understand themselves as predicated on colonial occupation or on a history of settler-Indigenous relation (even though they are), and what are the contours and effects of such experiences of inhabitation and belonging? In characterizing settlement as a “structure”, “logic”, and a “will”, Wolfe seeks to integrate the multivalent aspects of ongoing processes of non-Native expropriation and superintendence, but doing so potentially sidesteps the question of how official governmental initiatives and framings become normalized as the setting for everyday non-Native being and action in ways that cannot be captured solely by reference to “the murderous activities of the frontier rabble” (392–3).

In Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s work, whiteness functions as the central way of understanding the domination and displacement of Indigenous peoples by non-Natives.⁷ In “Writing Off Indigenous Sovereignty,” she argues, “As a regime of power, patriarchal White sovereignty operates

ideologically, materially and discursively to reproduce and maintain its investment in the nation as a white possession”, and in “Writing Off Treaties”, she suggests, “At an ontological level the structure of subjective possession occurs through the imposition of one’s will-to-be on the thing which is perceived to lack will, thus it is open to being possessed,” such that “possession ... forms part of the ontological structure of white subjectivity”.⁸ Whiteness, then, instantiates a property logic in which subjectivity, placemaking, and political belonging turn on the exertion of a right to untrammelled ownership and in which that process of manufacturing legitimacy for non-Native occupation appears as a self-evident, unquestionable, and invisible frame through which to assess Indigenous voices, claims, and presence. She further observes, “it is the legally defined and asserted territorial sovereignty [of the settler nation] that provides the context for national identifications of whiteness” while “one benefits everyday from being tied to a nation that has and continues to constitute itself as a white possession” (85). Tracing a dialectical relation between policy and the everyday, she notes in “Writing Off Indigenous Sovereignty” that the “possessive investment in patriarchal white sovereignty is enhanced through private property ownership. This security produces affect that is encapsulated in a sense of home and place, mobilising an affirmation of a white national identity” (95). Thus, her work raises the issue of how the legal discourses that sustain the settler-state’s “territorial sovereignty” become ordinary through the “affect” of belonging and emplacement generated by “private property”, which reciprocally reinvests in the “white national identity” as its condition of possibility. Yet, “whiteness” names the juridical assertion of authority over Indigenous peoples and lands, the quotidian experience of selfhood and embodiment as a settler subject, and the movement(s) between them in ways that can cast settler affect as merely the passive vehicle for a pre-constituted set of state initiatives which settler subjects, in their investment in whiteness (as identity and/or identification), inherently extend and realize.⁹ The processes by which legislative and administrative agendas come to function as an animating part of daily life, the differences such realization and localization make in the terms and trajectories of those explicit projects, and the possibilities for forms of disjuncture between the state apparatus and everyday experience are bracketed by the positing of a clear, direct, and inevitable relation characterized as “ontological”.

For Jodi Byrd, the deployment of Indianness as a mobile figure works as the principal mode of US settler colonialism. She observes that “colonization and racialization ... have often been conflated”, in ways that “tend to be sited along the axis of inclusion/exclusion”.¹⁰ Doing so places emphasis on the belonging of citizenship as remediation for past and present violence, thereby “mask[ing] the territoriality of conquest by assigning colonization to the racialized body, which is then policed in its degrees from whiteness” (xxiv). Suggesting that the “cacophony of competing struggles for hegemony ... misdirect and cloud attention from the underlying structures of settler colonialism” (xvii), she argues that the latter work through translating indigeneity as Indianness, casting place-based political collectivities as (racialized) populations subject to US jurisdiction and management: “the Indian is left nowhere and everywhere within the ontological premises through which U.S. empire orients, imagines, and critiques itself”; “ideas of Indians and Indianness have served as the ontological ground through which U.S. settler colonialism enacts itself” (xix).¹¹ In presenting Indianization as providing the “ontological premises” and serving as the “ontological ground” for US identity and policy, Byrd powerfully links the (re)production of Indianness to a range of political and critical projects and the displacement of the geopolitics of Indigenous sovereignty. She observes that “imperialism has forced settlers and arrivants [her term for non-White non-Natives] to cathect the space of the native as their home” (xxxix), but how is such cathexis contingently engendered in everyday ways? Although Byrd gestures in this direction, her focus on the foundationality and historical continuity of the dynamics she addresses emphasizes their role as a coherent and consistent “underlying structure” rather than how they

gain scope, motion, and force through reiterative yet shifting formations, practices, and inclinations.

Developing a notion of common sense that is understood neither as a structure, ontology, nor logic allows for thinking of settlement as pervasively active without being totalized as a singular, self-generating, somewhat uniform whole. In developing a notion of “hegemony”, in opposition to the more mechanical and prefabricated sense of ideology, Raymond Williams characterizes it as “a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming” (110), but he adds, “A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure ... In practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular,” instead needing “continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified” (112). While one might analytically shorthand the formation and processes under discussion as a “system”, they remain practically and materially in flux, in need of constant reiteration and recirculation. He adds, “The strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products,” such that “relationships, institutions and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted, by this procedural mode, into formed wholes rather than forming and formative processes” (128). Following this line of thought, a “procedural” account of settlement as always-already a “formed whole” leaves aside the ways the institutions of the settler-state become “actively involved” in the daily life of non-Natives, serving as “formative” but in ways that cannot be understood as “finished” – as always taking the same shape and thus known beforehand. If the jurisdiction of the nation appears as given, that very sensation of self-evidence of the state’s claim to “domestic” space needs explaining. Flipping over Nicoll’s call for “an embodied recognition that we already exist within Indigenous sovereignty”, such analysis begins by investigating the conditions of possibility for the historical and persistent deferral of Native sovereignty, the ways settler sovereignty continually is activated, circulated, and materialized within and through the “lived hegemony” of everyday experience. The notion of settler common sense, then, seeks to address how the legalities, administrative structures, and concrete effects of settler governance get “renewed” and “recreated” in quotidian phenomena by non-Native, non-state actors, in ways that do not necessarily affirm settlement as an explicit set of imperatives/initiatives or coordinate with each other as a self-identical program.

In the absence of such a processual (as opposed to “procedural”) methodology, settlement can appear as a de facto monolith, forestalling discussion of the divergence and attendant (uneven) relations among its manifestations, the mediums and modes of its non-official proliferation/realization, and the character and contours of its abiding influence in situations in which Native people(s) do not lie at the center. In *Reassembling the Social*, Bruno Latour argues against kinds of sociological investigation in which “the social” functions as an explanatory tool that exceeds and precedes the particular sets and sites of relations under discussion: “every activity – law, science, technology, religion, organization, politics, management, etc. – could be related to and explained by the same social aggregates *behind* all of them”.¹² Doing so short-circuits the investigation by a priori positing an integrated set of connections that is then treated as a sufficient cause for the “activity” in question which itself functions in the analysis as merely a bearer of that self-same “social aggregate”, not doing anything on its own. Latour observes, “If inertia, durability, range, solidity, commitment, loyalty, adhesion, etc. have to be accounted for, this cannot be done without looking for vehicles, tools, instruments, and materials able to provide such a stability” (35). If settlement operates as a continuing force – via elimination/replacement, whiteness, Indianization, etc. – characterizing it in these overarching terms not only can produce the sense that one needs to choose among them (each presenting itself as foundational in ways that tend to cast the others as secondary effects rather than as sometimes independent, competing, or interanimating dynamics), but that the durability, consistency, scope, and consolidation of the phenomenon/a in question inheres within

settlement as an immanently unfolding entity. How, though, do non-Natives actively participate in the ongoing remaking of settlement as a shifting assemblage of ordinary actions, occupancies, ethics, aspirations, dispositions, and sensations in ways that meaningfully affect its operation and effects, as opposed to merely following a course understood as more or less predetermined? Forestalling the positing of an always fully coherent and integrated system *behind* the dynamics one analyzes, though, does not displace the need to address what happens *beneath* them, to the “territoriality of conquest”. Work on affect, the everyday, and phenomenology tends to emphasize moments of perception and its possibilities for introducing new or unexpected relations rather than its capacity actively to enact forms of continuity,¹³ and they largely do not investigate the enframing (geo)political ground on which these moments occur. By contrast, the notion of settler common sense seeks to address how settler occupancy and jurisdiction are realized, regularized, and actively produced as if inert context in everyday articulations, interactions, practices, and sensations in which Native people(s) may or may not appear.

2.

Without invoking settlement as a version of Latour’s “social aggregate”, we can understand the settler-state’s existence and legalities as achieving “stability” and “durability” through the mediation of ordinary, unofficial connections, including forms of feeling. Attending phenomenologically to how the world enters subjectivity and becomes comprehensible as such provides the means for tracing how the settler-state’s modes of land tenure and governance as well as the dispossession, regulation, and effacement of Indigenous peoples are, in Williams’s terms, “renewed, recreated, defended, and modified” in mundane ways. Settler jurisdiction inhabits the everyday experience of non-Natives, less determining effects and relationships than inducing inclinations and coalescing/catalyzing possibilities.

Aspects of law and policy orient, shape the trajectory of, and provide momentum for quotidian modes of sensation and contextualization. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests, “since sensation is a reconstitution, it pre-supposes in me sediments left behind by some previous constitution”, adding, “The *person who* perceives is not spread out before himself as a consciousness must be; he has historical density, he takes up a perceptual tradition.”¹⁴ The “previous constitution” of the space one occupies as part of the US nation-state provides non-conscious “historical density” to non-natives’ engagement with the landscape, *reconstituting* settlement as part of assessing the material “field of possibility” for present action (509): “I do not so much perceive objects as reckon with an environment” (483). In this way, the assertion of US control over the space claimed as internal to the nation; the carving of that space into nested jurisdictional hierarchies; the enactment of privatizing forms of property-law materialized through practices of documentation, surveying, and sale; and the sequestration and regulation of particular plots of land as protected or “public” cumulatively contribute to the construction and experience of an environment in which Indigenous peoples appear to have no place.

Attending to the ways settler law operates as a historically dense field of everyday possibility enables a consideration of what precedes non-Native subjects in their individual inhabitation, how state policies engender inclinations and tendencies. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed suggests,

Familiarity is shaped by the ‘feel’ of space or by how spaces “impress” upon bodies... The familiar is an effect of inhabitation; we are not simply in the familiar, but rather the familiar is shaped by actions that reach out toward objects that are already within reach,

and she adds, “The work of inhabitation involves orientation devices; ways of extending bodies into spaces that create new folds, or new contours of what we could call livable or inhabitable

space.”¹⁵ “Orientation” suggests a positioning with respect to other bodies and things, but it also implies a direction, a disposition toward a particular trajectory through which to navigate that space. If the familiarity of inhabitation depends less on the inherent character of the place one inhabits than the iterability and duration of occupancy itself, the sensation of belonging – of properly extending into the place one occupies – arises out of an “impress” that also *orients*, directing attention to some things and not others while providing a working map of extant relations and potentials in the space of inhabitation as well as an animating impetus in traversing it. Governmental acts and agencies can be understood as providing such orientation through mechanisms like property-law, zoning ordinances, rules of inheritance, regulation of commerce, police presence, and the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. While themselves arising out of processes of contestation, negotiation, and compromise, such state-enacted geographies in their (albeit mutable) implementation help provide shape and structure to the quotidian networks that individuals engage, and the sense of relative stability they generate facilitates the normalization and becoming-given of the ways they contour place, association, and belonging as well as the particular kinds of actions, connections, and dispositions they incite and incentivize.¹⁶

Reciprocally, everyday practice realizes and projects those geographies, materializing them by drawing on them as a guide in processing and responding to affective and sensory input and thus (re)constituting them as given in ordinary modes of meaning-making, feeling, and movement. Ahmed notes, “we do not have to consciously exclude those things that are not ‘on line.’ The direction we take excludes things for us, before we even get there” (15). The legalities in and through which placemaking occurs bear a propulsive force, not simply installing something like a social cartography or diagram but endowing it with a dynamic character that incites kinds of engagement, practice, and subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty suggests that “the normal person *reckons with* the possible, which thus, without shifting from its position as a possibility, acquires a sort of actuality” (125), and that ongoing process of actualization illustrates the “momentum of existence” (159). Inasmuch as law and policy help define and delimit the horizon of the possible, providing a nonconscious frame that informs and guides the phenomenological experience of selfhood, situatedness, and connection to others, they bear a “momentum” that contributes to their material (re)actualization. To be oriented, then, involves not simply facing a particular direction but being impelled toward it.¹⁷

The legal and political mappings that influence everyday life in the US remain predicated on the assertion of an underlying and incontestable national sovereignty that itself animates the work of law and policy-making in putatively domestic space. The routine actualization of state-licensed mappings depends upon reactivating the jurisdiction-setting procedures that establish settler presence and governance as given, as a necessary context through which commonplace sense-making occurs. Merleau-Ponty observes,

it is essential to the alleged fixed points underlying motion that they should not be posited in present knowledge and that they should always be ‘already there.’ They do not present themselves directly to perception, they circumvent it and encompass it by a preconscious process, the results of which strike us as ready made (326),

and in this way they provide “anchorage” in nonconsciously composing varied affective impressions into a sense of locatedness and possible movement, of the potential for engagement with the world (326–7). The apparent absence of struggle among incommensurate claims to sovereignty over one’s space of occupancy, and an attendant’s impression of one’s dwelling in that place as itself having no inherent political dimension or as not conditioned on state action,

provides non-Natives with a “ready-made” background against which to register opportunities for agency and for interaction with their surroundings.

More than simply clearing away or containing Native presence and claims, such sovereignty-making policies, ideologies, and practices affect the composition of the ensuing/encompassing legal regime. As Ahmed suggests, “Histories shape ‘what’ surfaces: they are behind the arrival of ‘the what’ that surfaces” (44). Conceptions of sovereignty, territoriality, and personal identity inherited from shared Anglo-American legal and philosophical traditions, operative within the relatively integrated political economy of the transatlantic British colonial system, and recontextualized in the struggle for independence gain new implications and momentum in its wake.¹⁸ The American Revolution emerged out of assertions of the authority to govern the space of the colonies not as subordinate entities and subjects of English imperial rule, in which Native peoples often were figured as equivalently dependent entities also under the Crown’s protection, but as autonomous polities filiated to the Crown who properly exert preemptive authority over Indian lands “within” their boundaries. Such contentions often were legitimated through the citation of Lockean claims, that the colonists collectively had improved the colonies absent substantive aid from England and thus held property rights to their lands and the right to govern themselves as distinct (if not fully independent) polities. While arising as part of an argument about which government can exert jurisdiction over the colonies, this assertion of a politically unmediated relation to a place shaped only by one’s own private labor, and of an autonomous pre-political self who labors, deeply affects notions of placemaking and personhood in the wake of the Revolution, casting both as ultimately extralegal phenomena rather than as themselves dependent on extant policy and emerging from debates over competing claims to political sovereignty. The movement for a break with England further was driven by the resistance to taxation that funded efforts to define and defend the boundary between English settlement and Native peoples, an imperial project dating from the Proclamation of 1763 that popularly was understood as thwarting non-Native access to such lands and as penalizing (rather than protecting) existing settlements in the backcountry. Such communities largely were organized around family-based agriculture, and given the increasing land crisis in the east as a result of the exponential growth in population and the organization of land tenure around privately owned and generationally transmitted commercial farms, movement to the backcountry (soon to become “the frontier”) served as a means of gaining access to enough land for existing modes of agricultural production as well as to the kind of personal independence (for White men) that constituted the basis for political subjectivity and participation (as opposed to being a slave, servant, or apprentice). The challenge to existing social hierarchies intensified in the early-republic, leading to increased calls for greater access to land as a pre-political, human right as well as escalating incursions into Native territories. The desire to satisfy demands for access to Indigenous lands (including extended speculative claims by elites), along with the need to define national boundaries as against Spanish and English claims just beyond the borders, galvanized government claims to exert authority over Native peoples “within” the US. Initially articulated as a right of “conquest”, the government’s exertion of such sovereignty and acquisition of Native territory for non-Native inhabitation soon comes to depend on the treaty-system, its idioms of contract and consent largely (though not entirely) replacing those of invasion and military occupation, and these federal developments did not prevent a parallel process of absorption in the existing states (absent the sense/scene of diplomatic negotiation), with those states in the northeast claiming virtually complete immunity from federal Indian policy.

One can see, then, a historical interdependence among the assertion of an ostensibly extra-political form of personal independence through landholding (which also indicated qualification for political participation), the assertion of exclusive US sovereignty over “domestic” space (whose boundaries were asserted to be self-evident), and the erosion/displacement/erasure of Indigenous

sovereignty and landedness. That dialectic of individual autonomy and state sovereignty, in which the former mirrors and is made possible by the latter while being narrated as an extra-political quality immanent within personhood itself and as the animating basis for and limit of political authority, further drives assault on and appropriation of Indigenous territory. While perhaps somewhat speculative, one can suggest that the geographic and demographic extension of this nexus in the nineteenth century (through public land laws, the government-organized and funded construction of vast transportation networks, and the management of trade and land transfers with Native peoples) involves an increasing role for the state in making possible forms of non-Native residence, production, and movement while simultaneously articulating, validating, and implementing such policies in ways that proliferate a sense of selfhood and occupancy as preceding/exceeding the terms or influence of the government.¹⁹ Thus, everyday experiences of dwelling, relation to others, and (non)relation to the state remain anchored in settler sovereignty, in the sense of being dependent on forms of state jurisdiction and policy that themselves subsume and displace Indigenous presence and territoriality. Merleau-Ponty observes, “former experience is present to” current perception “in the form of a horizon which it can reopen” (26), and state-endorsed geographies, shaped in their initial construction by extant political discourses and pressures, function as such experience due to the ways they are materialized as given in the contours of everyday occupancy, providing both the background and implicit horizon for present thought, feeling, and action.

The transmission of such affective orientations also exceeds the more immersive sensory connotations conveyed by terms such as “environment” and “direction”. When discussing the absence of an “underlying hidden structure”, Latour observes, “this is not to say that there doesn’t [*sic.*] exist *structuring templates* circulating through channels most easily materialized by techniques – paper techniques and, more generally, intellectual technologies being as important as gears, levers, and chemical bonds” (196), and he describes the effects of such “techniques” on the experience of subjectivity as “plug-ins” (207). The intellectual and political technologies for justifying the assertion of jurisdiction over Native peoples and expropriation of their lands do not simply disappear when Indians are (declared to be) no longer there. Rather, they remain vital in the ongoing performance of quotidian modes of inhabitation and selfhood, which rely on the reiteration of settler sovereignty and its accompanying legal and normative templates (like the extra-political character of place and personhood). Relevant plug-ins might include narrations of national history as progress or expansion into politically empty space, stories of Native disappearance, articulations of the extralegal autonomy of individual agency, the categorization of non-commercial or public land as authentic/pure “nature”, depictions of capitalistic modes of property (including with respect to land) as necessary for the existence of a polity, characterizations of domestic issues as necessarily distinct from foreign/international ones, equations of political existence and peoplehood with the nation-state form, and calls to increase intimacy with one’s place of inhabitation. These framings reaffirm, normalize, and propel settlement as the “ready-made” against which new information, sensation, experience affectively is managed.

Reciprocally, the orientations and momentum emerging out of everyday life – including the templates circulating through and actualized in it – give rise to texts (and other forms of cultural production) for which US legal and political mappings serve as the unacknowledged frame. Such texts (including Thoreau’s *Walden*, to which I will turn soon) certainly do not merely reproduce experience, instead engaging in imaginative explorations and reflexive meditations that allow for a reconsideration and refashioning of the everyday (as well as breaks from its contours and normalizations), but while recognizing the ways writing cannot be understood as merely an extension of phenomenological immersion and processing, it also should not be conceptualized as somehow untethered from quotidian sensation and the fields of possibility, anchorings, trajectories, and modes of constancy that shape the latter. Any act of representation foregrounds some things

and not others, highlighting particular persons, objects, events, ideas, relations for consideration while treating others as given, as the background against which the main action occurs. Ahmed suggests that the background can be conceived of

as produced by acts of relegation: some things are relegated to the background in order *to sustain* a certain direction; in other words, in order to keep attention on what is faced. Perception involves acts of relegation which are forgotten in the very preoccupation with what is faced (31),

and she adds, “The background [can] be understood as that which must take place in order for something to appear,” as “what explains the conditions of emergence or an arrival of something as the thing it appears to be in the present” (37–8). Characterizing settlement as operating as a form of embodied “common sense” suggests that the normalized legalities and geographies of settler policy – its displacement, containment, and erasure of Indigenous landedness and implementation and routinization of modes of non-Native dwelling – function largely as background, as unacknowledged conditions of emergence for textual representations in which other issues occupy the foreground. Such texts then themselves circulate as possible templates, potentially influencing ordinary experience by providing part of the “perceptual tradition” through which sense data are processed.

The kinds of influence I have been sketching, though, suggest less the immanent unfolding of a coherent program than the work performed by a range of cross-referencing legal and administrative agendas, mappings, and projects in constructing the “field of possibility” of daily settler feeling, perception, and agency in moments, relations, and locations in which Native peoples are not (or at least are not perceived by non-Natives as) central objects of action or participants. In this sense, non-Natives need not function as agents of the state or as conscious purveyors of state aims in order to rematerialize state-effects by drawing on extant geographies, discourses, and normative frames as an anchor in processes of affective sense-making and “recon[ing] with [their] environment”. Moreover, such reinvestments in processes of settlement need not appear, or be experienced as, affirmations of the state, instead operating as the unreflexive, generic, given conditions of personhood, occupancy, and belonging, and these actualizations, enactments of “familiarity”, may not be identical or congruent with each other, inasmuch as multiple histories of state action that inhabit, orient, and stimulate the present “impress” in ways that might produce different (even incommensurate) forms of engagement. A Thoreauvian inclination toward “nature” as a space of escape from the extant regime of property ownership, comfort in the (Lockean) privatized autonomy of one’s home(stead), and immersion in the obscure anonymities of urban dwelling do not resemble each other and arise out of disparate affective – and perhaps ethical – commitments, but all iterate, to varied effects, the geopolitical self-evidence and security of the state whose unquestioned endurance anchors and animates them. Yet, inasmuch as they all continue to depend on treating the “historical density” of the settler-state – including its territorial coherence and overriding sovereignty in that space – as the “already there”, they participate in the regularization and becoming obvious of the settler colonial occupation of Native lands. In addition, that very (re)production of the nation as self-evident, or of its political geography as ethically neutral, may serve as a shared frame/experience through which to mediate, negotiate, and reconcile conflicts over land tenure, access to political and economic resources, personal identity, and membership in the polis. The continuing assertion and exertion of settler sovereignty may be described, returning to Williams’s formulation addressed earlier, as *saturating* rather than determining, as exerting pressures on the everyday life of non-Natives in ways that are formative and that influence “practical consciousness” without taking a singular form and without producing an inherent and unchanging alignment of “relationships, institutions, and formations”.

Given the continued presence of Native peoples, including in areas from which they putatively have “vanished”, the question remains as to how the endurance of indigeneity and non-Natives’ encounters with Natives intersect with the kinds of settler orientation and momentum I have been addressing.²⁰ In describing how sensation gets resolved into a coherent perceptual field, Merleau-Ponty observes,

Our perception in its entirety is animated by a logic which assigns to each object its determinate features in virtue of those of the rest, and which ‘cancel out’ as unreal all stray data; it is entirely sustained by the certainty of the world,

providing a sense of “the primordial constancy of the world as the horizon of all our experiences” (365),²¹ and he later notes, “My thought, my self-evident truth is not one fact among others, but a value-fact which envelops and conditions every possible one,” such that the various phenomena apprehended “must figure in my universe without completely disrupting it” (463). To the extent that the legal geography of the settler-state engenders ordinary modes of personhood, placemaking, and belonging, it provides “fixed points” through which one “reckons with the possible”, and from that perspective, Indigenous landedness, sovereignty, collectivity appear as “stray data” that function as “unreal”, challenging the apparent “constancy of the world” in non-Native experience. In this way, discourses and accounts of Native disappearance may function as the conscious translation of disturbances to the perceptual “self-evident truth” of the US jurisdiction and attendant geographies of everyday life.

Furthermore, following this line of thought, tropes of Indianness may be understood as a kind of plug-in in Latour’s sense that allows Native presence to “figure” in settler phenomenologies without “completely disrupting” them. Returning to Byrd’s argument about the ways Indianness (the racializing construction of Native peoples as a population for assault/management/ inclusion) displaces indigeneity (place-based polities with legitimate claims to sovereignty over their homelands), that process could be interpreted less as “the ontological ground through which U.S. settler colonialism enacts itself” (xix), than as a form of crisis-management that enables non-Natives to accommodate and engage with Indigenous presence in ways that contain the threat it poses to quotidian modes of affective anchorage in which the settler-state and its legal and political mappings are lived as given.²² In other words, the deployment of various modes of *Indianization* through which Native peoplehood and sovereignty are converted into forms of anomaly – conceptually and perceptually segregated from the space of routine experience as a kind of categorical, geographic, political, and/or temporal aberration – can be understood as an expression of an ongoing process of making “unreal” Native sovereignties in the ordinary enactment and stabilization of US sovereignty as the basis for non-Native sensation. This approach can be distinguished from the interpretation of such figuration as part of an explicit project of dispossession that articulates directly with existing institutional aims (although such exceptionalization also operates as a vital mechanism of state practice).²³ Moreover, the coding of Native people(s) as Indians allows for the articulation of propositional statements about them – including expressions of ambivalence, support, sympathy, and guilt – in ways that may still make constant the regularity of the legalities, jurisdiction, and mappings of the (settler-)state. However, in seeking to manage potential disruptions to settler certainty, the process of Indianization also may signal possibilities for reorientation, moments when settler phenomenologies might shift into something new. In this way, the “Indian” emerges both as a figure of dismissal and foreclosure and of potential transformation: implicitly marking the unacknowledged presence of a quotidian settler phenomenology which serves as the condition of emergence and circulation for that trope while also holding out the possibility for opening into an engagement with enduring Native presence, landedness,

and self-determination as well as the routinized and ongoing violences through which the self-evidence of settler inhabitation is secured. With that very doubleness in mind, I now turn to *Walden*.

3.

The kinds of sensations, orientations, and momentum I have been sketching enter public discourse through articulations of identity, place, and (the absence of) political belonging that do not take Native peoples and Indian policy as their central topic. In this vein, Thoreau's *Walden* offers a compelling example of how settler law and governmentality informs everyday affects and experiences in ways that do not necessarily lead to direct affirmations of extant legal structures and political discourses but in which the mechanisms for securing settler sovereignty provide the unspoken perceptual frame for ethical imagination. In "Economy", Thoreau engages in a process of Indianization that helps throw into relief the ways his critique of the state relies on the making given of settlement:

Not long since, a strolling Indian went to sell baskets at the house of a well-known lawyer in my neighborhood. "Do you wish to buy any baskets?" he asked. "No, we do not want any," was the reply. "What!" exclaimed the Indian as he went out the gate, "do you mean to starve us?" Having seen his industrious white neighbors so well off, – that the lawyer had only to weave arguments, and by some magic wealth and standing followed, he had said to himself; I will go into business; I will weave baskets; it is a thing which I can do. Thinking that when he had made the baskets he would have done his part, and then it would be the white man's to buy them...I too had woven a kind of basket of a delicate texture, but I had not made it worth any one's while to buy them. Yet not the less, in my case, did I think it worth my while to weave them, and instead of studying how to make it worth men's while to buy my baskets, I studied rather how to avoid the necessity of selling them. (12)

As many others have noted, the mention of Thoreau's "basket of a delicate texture" likely refers to *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, which he published in 1849 and which sold extremely poorly. To be an author, from this perspective, is to cultivate a kind of independence without depending upon the remuneration for one's efforts, suggesting that the act of imaginative exploration necessitates a space of (self-)cultivation that frees you from reliance on others. This lesson is precisely what "the Indian" cannot understand. Where, though, is the space of the basket-maker's autonomous self-elaboration? Thoreau describes the lawyer and other prosperous residents as the man's "neighbors", so he must live fairly close-by. Moreover, his exclamation – "do you mean to starve us?" – indicates a collective situation, presumably one he shares with other local Indians. Who are they (we hear nothing of a tribe living in the vicinity), and what has produced the dire circumstances that leave them at the verge of starvation?²⁴ The idea that "the Indian" could inhabit a place apart from the market that would allow him, and others, to "avoid" participation in it brackets the continuing history of settler occupation and expropriation that directly produces his *starving* condition.

Thoreau consistently presents his residence at Walden as divorcing him from the state, casting it as a particular kind of space from which he can distance himself. Early in the text, he notes, "I began to occupy my house on the 4th of July" (30), and while he does not elaborate on this fact, it clearly signals a connection between the act of living in his cabin and the American Revolution. However, more than presenting his practice of economy as a more truly national way of living, he draws on the sense of the movement for independence as a transformation in the political meaning of the space one occupies – as a breaking away from the jurisdictional sphere of an unjust government. His presence in a "solitary" place insulates him from the operation of the state, placing him beyond its reach such that it only can gain access to him when he returns to "the village":

One afternoon, near the end of the first summer, when I went to the village... I was seized and put into jail, because... I did not pay a tax to, or recognize the authority of, the state which buys and sells men, women, and children, like cattle at the door of its senate-house. I had gone down to the woods for other purposes. But, wherever a man goes, men will pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions. (115)

The “institutions” of the government may seek to “pursue” him, but they do not actually enter the “woods”, presenting the latter as a space separate from the workings of the state in which to achieve a perspective not encumbered by it – a place of independence.²⁵

Being in a place apart from the workings of the state and the sphere of its influence gives rise to a kind of selfhood that supplants national subjectivity. In speaking of conversations with guests who visited his cabin, he observes, “Individuals, like nations, must have suitable broad and natural boundaries, even a considerable neutral ground, between them” (95), but more than suggesting the need for something like personal space, the use of the idiom of nationhood, especially in light of the text’s initial declaration of independence, suggests a kind of political distinction. In presenting his relation to himself and to others as *nation-like*, Thoreau casts himself as rightfully having exclusive authority over a delimited area, as living personhood in a way that resembles statehood. Being *like a nation* entails embodying a selfhood that has the properties of sovereignty, occupying a sphere in which the powers of the state are suspended or held in abeyance. *Walden* offers nature as a place in which the self can exercise sovereignty in ways unconstrained and unaffected by the policies, interests, and imperatives of “nations” that come and go around it.

The announcement of his separation from the state invokes nature as beyond the reach of political authority, as a kind of place to which legal order does not apply. However, how might we understand this sensation of separation as, in Merleau-Ponty’s terms, the effects of “institutions as I carry them within me and experience them” as part of ordinary perception (515)? Thoreau continually figures himself as in some sense becoming one with his surroundings (“I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself” [87]), but that supposed merger into the natural landscape can be understood less as an escape from state sovereignty into the “woods” than as exercising potentials for settler personhood made possible by state action. Ahmed notes, “To be comfortable is to be so at ease with one’s environment that it is hard to distinguish where one’s body ends and the world begins,” but that sense of comfort and fit arises due to the fact that places are organized around some bodies more than others: “White bodies are comfortable as they inhabit spaces that extend their shape” (134). Feeling merged into “Nature”, then, may indicate the fact that one’s experience of personhood and embodiment takes shape around legally endowed categories (like whiteness) that allow one to occupy particular places as an extension of one’s selfhood. Beginning in the 1820s, there was a radical expansion of the franchise to include all White men, eliminating prior property qualifications and thereby offering legal confirmation of the sense of oneself as a self-governing, self-possessed subject.²⁶ The expansion of the franchise in the east may be thought of as part of an effort to retain people there, given the possibility of both more land and greater political privilege in territory further west.²⁷ This vision/experience of autonomous personhood derives from the particular kinds of inhabitation made possible through Indian policy and the Indian wars. By 1850, the federal government held approximately 1.2 billion acres in public land, not including what already had been granted,²⁸ and *all of that land* was gained through purchase from and/or the removal of Native peoples. Inasmuch as political and propertyholding possibilities in the west helped spur the opening of suffrage in the east (including in Massachusetts, which dropped its property qualification in 1821),²⁹ the emergence of the institutionally sanctioned kinds of autonomous (White, male) personhood addressed above were made possible by the potential for settlement opened by the

exceptionalization of Native polities, the legal and administrative narration of them as other than fully sovereign polities that allowed for the incorporation of Indigenous territories into US jurisdiction as private property – space that could *extend the shape* of emergent modes of autonomous selfhood. The extension of suffrage in Massachusetts and increasing decline in access to land may have helped engender everyday forms of subjectivity in which the ideal of land was still important but in which possessing it was neither necessarily feasible nor crucial in the defining of independent personhood and full political rights, possibly creating an experience of place in which supposedly already self-possessing individuals long for land but that longing does not (have to) take the form of ownership. That dynamic is precisely the mode of selfhood in *Walden*, with the deferral of propertyholding per se portrayed not as a loss but as itself an ethical good. Moreover, the dearth of available land propelled non-Native intrusion on state-recognized Native lands, in which Native territory comes to be experienced as “wilderness” available for either usufruct purposes or for direct appropriation.³⁰ That relation is recast in *Walden* as immersion in the wilderness rather than extraction from it.

Thoreau’s conception of “Nature” further can be understood as unfolding from the legal narration of Native lands as both a space apart and as lacking distinct political status. Native peoples in New England did not have treaties with the federal government as did peoples elsewhere, and Indian affairs were considered to be state matters. By the 1840s and 1850s Massachusetts had eight reservations whose boundaries had been determined and regulated under colonial and then-state law, and the maintenance, usage, and sale of such tribal lands were administered largely by state-appointed guardians or overseers. Written in response to a legislative mandate, the Bird report (1848) repeatedly describes the legal and political situation of Native peoples and their lands in the state as “imperfectly defined”, “anomalous”, and “peculiar”.³¹ These terms refer not only to the ambiguity of the relevant statutes as to certain key points, but also to the general fact of having persons and places governed by a set of policies not applicable to the rest of the population and property in the state. It describes these peoples as “among the ‘stricken few’ who remain of the once undisputed sovereigns of the Western World. The blood of Samoset and Massasoit runs in their veins” (5), and in decrying the fact that Indians do not hold citizenship in the state or the nation, the report observes, “The Indian alone, the descendant of monarchs, is a vassal in the land of his fathers” (49). Further, as the 1861 report on Indian affairs in the state, authored by John Milton Earle, notes of the Gay Head Indians,

the whole civil polity of the tribe, ... a community residing in the State, and nominally of the State, and subject to its laws, is yet a sort of *imperium in imperio*, not governed by the laws to which it is nominally subject, but have its own independent law, by which all its internal affairs are regulated.³²

The reports continually suggest that they should be made citizens even as they repeatedly note that the peoples who continue to hold tribal lands themselves do not wish to see the existing system changed.³³ The reports circle around a conceptual impasse: Indian tribes once were “sovereign”, but now they are not; they cannot live as subjects of the state/nation and not be citizens, but they do not desire citizenship. That disjunction, and the threat it poses, is narrated as an oddity they and their lands bear, literalizing them and the space they occupy as anomaly. The sovereignty of the state of Massachusetts here depends on the production of Native peoples and their lands as a kind of alegal limbo within the jurisdiction of the state/nation. Such a description of *Indian* spatiality resembles almost exactly the contours and function of “Nature” in *Walden*, suggesting that the latter (especially in its repeated connection to Indianness in the text)³⁴ gestures toward and draws on the prior translation of Native sovereignty as a space of apolitical *anomaly*.

In Thoreau’s observations about the basket-maker, they occupy parallel positions (“I too had woven a kind of basket”) in which he can learn a lesson of independence lost on the unnamed

“Indian”. What would it mean for him to see the act of writing/weaving not as an opportunity to sublimate the Indian, but as a chance to understand his relation to this person (and the “us” who are “starv[ing]”) as the condition for an investigation into the contours of settler selfhood? Thoreau notes in the “Conclusion”, “I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there... It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves,” adding, “How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity” (215–6). Introducing a similar idea earlier, he observes in “The Village,”

if we go beyond our usual course we still carry in our minds the bearing of some neighboring cape ... till we are completely lost, or turned round... Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations. (115)

Getting “lost”, losing one’s bearings and becoming “turned round” within an otherwise well-known space, opens the potential for a new sense not only of the place but also of one’s position within it – “where we are”. In “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For,” Thoreau insists that

we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that *is* which *appears* to be. If a man should walk through this town ... [and] give us an account of the realities he beheld there, we should not recognize the place in his description. (65)

The text suggests the need to alter bodily dispositions in ways that break one out of one’s entrenched experience of place such that it can be made strange, allowing for a resurveying of “relations” to the world around you.

As opposed to the sense of withdrawal into a space divorced from contemporary political economy, the text also proposes a reframing of perspective, altering the physical sense of relation to one’s surroundings via a suspension of their givenness. In this vein, Ahmed suggests, “If orientation is about making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space, then disorientation occurs when that extension fails” (11). These moments in the text suggest how the self can become the site for an imaginative break with routine that produces a sensuous reorientation (getting “turned round”). The critical project of the text appears here less as locating a space apart in which to discover the fullness of the self than as the making alien of an already occupied place, such that “we should not recognize” it. The act of *turning round*, of shifting one’s orientation and redirecting the momentum by which one previously was impelled, offers possibilities for perceiving differently, for seeing and engaging in ways that less take for granted the jurisdictional matrix of the state and in which contemporary Native peoples can be acknowledged as themselves important “inhabitants of New England” whose indigeneity compels a reconceptualization of the terms of occupancy for everyone.

Becoming conscious of the everyday enactment of settlement involves relinquishing the notion of an autonomous, extra-political selfhood existing in a place apart, instead opening onto a recognition not only of enduring Native presence within contemporary political economy but of the effaced history of imperial superintendence and displacement that provides the continuing condition of possibility for the sense of settler escape into the wilderness. To be clear, the absence of a declared set of imperial commitments does not suggest non-Natives’ exoneration from continuing histories of violence perpetrated and perpetuated by the settler-state. Returning from a different direction to Nicoll’s critique discussed earlier, there may be an absence of sentiments hostile to Native peoples in non-Natives’ speech or writing, or non-Natives may adopt a particular viewpoint supportive of Indigenous sovereignty on delimited plots of land when considering Native peoples as such. However, that absence of malice or

declaration of support does not address the ways quotidian experiences of space (with respect to jurisdiction, occupancy, and ownership) and subjectivity (as modular, self-identical, and extralegal) affectively register and iterate settler sovereignty in ways that shape the generation of, for example, ethics, ideals, and political projects that do not take Native nations, voices, and lands as their direct object. While arguments about the structural quality of settler colonialism – its scale, density, duration, and centrality to US life – remain important, their very insistence on its pervasive and systemic operation can create the impression of an integrated whole. However, as Latour observes, if “the body politic” is taken “to be *virtual, total, and always already there*”, then “the practical means to *compose* it are no longer traceable; if it’s total, the practical means to *totalize* it are no longer visible; if it’s virtual, the practical means to *realize, visualize, and collect* it have disappeared from view” (162–3). How is the settler body politic composed, collected, and realized in everyday ways through the experiences, perceptions, associations, emplacements, and trajectories of non-Native bodies? How do settler jurisdiction and governmentality shape the material possibilities available to non-Natives in scenes and sites apparently disconnected from Native peoples and Indian policy, and how do non-Natives in their quotidian feelings and interactions (and the cultural productions for which ordinary sensation serves as background) actualize the political and legal geographies of the settler-state? Attending to settler common sense in this way does not so much bracket Indigenous self-determination as draw on it as ethical inspiration to investigate the ways it is deferred through ordinary action whose aim is not such but whose effect is to reiterate the self-evidence of settler geopolitics. Reciprocally, such analysis also seeks to suggest how non-Natives might disorient and reorient themselves, how they might come to understand not only that Indigenous peoples remain part of the social landscape of life in the US but that the very terrain non-Natives inhabit as given has never ceased to be a site of political struggle.

Notes

1. Henry David Thoreau, ‘Walden (1854)’, in *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government*, 2nd ed. ed. William Rossi (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992), 1–223. Further citations will be parenthetical.
2. Fiona Nicoll, ‘Reconciliation in and out of Perspective: White Knowing, Seeing, Curating, and Being at Home in and against Indigenous Sovereignty’, in *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 19, 29.
3. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 110. Further citations will be parenthetical.
4. On the history and persistence of this trope, see Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1982); Jonathan Elmer, *On Lingering and Being Last: Race and Sovereignty in the New World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Bruce Granville Miller, *Invisible Indigenes: The Politics of Nonrecognition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003); Jean O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
5. Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (New York: Cassell, 1999), 2. Further citations will be parenthetical.
6. Patrick Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native’, *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388. Further citations will be parenthetical.
7. Both Wolfe and Moreton-Robinson address Australia in their earlier writings and extend their analyses to the US in later work. Although I primarily focus on the US, their formulations about both settler-states, and settler colonialism as a phenomenon, have been incredibly important in addressing Native peoples on lands claimed by the US, and as with their work, I hope that mine might also speak to other settler-state contexts.
8. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, ‘Writing Off Indigenous Sovereignty: The Discourse of Security and Patriarchal White Sovereignty’, in *Sovereign Selves: Indigenous Sovereignty Matters*, ed. Aileen

- Moreton-Robinson (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2007), 88; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'Writing Off Treaties: White Possession in the United States Critical Whiteness Literature', in *Transnational Whiteness Matters*, eds. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Mayrose Casey, and Fiona Nicoll (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2008), 83–4. Further citations from both these sources will be parenthetical.
9. Moreton-Robinson distinguishes “between a racialised subject position and the power and knowledge effects of racialised discourse”, positioning whiteness not simply as a particular embodied social location but as a means of naming the structure through which Indigenous territory comes to be understood as possessable by non-Natives and by which that logic of expropriation/ownership by the settler nation comes to be experienced as given [‘Whiteness, Epistemology, and Indigenous Representation’, in *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 84].
 10. Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xxiii. Further citations will be parenthetical.
 11. Moreover, the making “Indian” of various populations within and beyond US borders works as a means by which “American empire...replicate[s] itself” (27) – by casting them as needing to be civilized, removed, extinguished, regulated, protected, and/or saved – while also providing a “supplement” to oppositional imaginations of various sorts, such that the figure of the Indian “become[s] an undecidable core within critical theories” (10).
 12. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8. Further citations will be parenthetical. Thanks to Dana E. Powell for directing me to Latour as a way of thinking about the workings of Native-settler negotiations of sovereignty, and thanks to Matt Mullins, whose dissertation work prompted me to consider Latour’s writings in greater detail.
 13. For discussion of this tendency, see Ben Anderson, ‘Modulating the Excess of Affect: Morale in a State of ‘Total War’, in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 161–85. For examples, see Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Thomas L. Dumm, *A Politics of the Ordinary* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, ‘An Inventory of Shimmers’, in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–25; and Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). This dynamic also is present in Latour’s work, but I have chosen to emphasize less on ways mediation makes possible the unexpected than the ways it indicates the ongoing, active production of stability and regularity.
 14. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), trans. Colin Smith (1958) (New York: Routledge, 2010), 249, 277. Further citations will be parenthetical. Thanks to Zach Laminack, whose dissertation work prompted me to engage more fully with Merleau-Ponty.
 15. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 7, 11. Further citations will be parenthetical.
 16. In *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), John Protevi addresses the ways system-level dynamics exceed the interactions/tendencies of individual elements, describing the system-generating effects that maintain forms of regularity as “feedback”, and what I am characterizing as momentum functions similarly, although at the level of personal experience.
 17. Ahmed observes,

Depending on which way one turns, different worlds might even come into view. If such turns are repeated over time, then bodies acquire the very shape of such direction. It is not, then, that bodies simply have a direction, or that they follow directions, in moving this way or that. Rather, in moving this way, rather than that, and moving in this way again and again, the surfaces of bodies *in turn* acquire their shape. Bodies are ‘directed’ and they take the shape of this direction. (15–6)

The sense of repetition here implies the existence of something that drives it and gestures toward the inertia that results from this reiteration, and I want to foreground these dynamics.

18. See Jeremy Atack, Fred Bateman, and William N. Parker, ‘Northern Agriculture and the Western Movement’, in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, eds. Stanley L. Engerman

- and Robert E. Gallman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 285–328; James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Peter Coviello, *Intimacy in America: Dreams of Affiliation in Antebellum Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Paul Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968); Laura Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins of American Social Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Dorothy V. Jones, *License for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Dana Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Stephen J. Rockwell, *Indian Affairs and the Administrative State in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Ed White, *The Backcountry and the City: Colonization and Conflict in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); and Craig Yirush, *Settlers, Liberty, and Empire: The Roots of Early American Political Theory, 1675–1775* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
19. Although already at play to some extent in the east, these dynamics in the west help propel further alterations in policy and political economy in the east. Eliminating property requirements for voting helps inspire such change in the older states and extends the sense of self-owning political subjectivity previously limited to landholders (making it more tied to whiteness and maleness as kinds of bodily dispositions), and the expansion of commercial and transportation networks that accompanies the greater scope of non-Native settlement actually facilitates the exponential concentration of population in larger cities (such as New York), due to the increased geographic range of importable foodstuffs as well as the extension of potential markets for products principally made in or distributed from a single centralized location. Greater non-Native presence on the “frontier”, and incursions into Native space, then, helps make possible the density and anonymity of city life, both producing distinct yet complementary forms of ostensibly agovernmental subjectivity and relations to place.
 20. Thanks to Audra Simpson for pushing me to clarify the role of vanishing/erasure in theorizing common-sense.
 21. Merleau-Ponty tends to emphasize the non-conscious, holistic dynamics of perception, as against notions of the cognitive aggregation/assessment of specific details/elements/relations, but moments like this one in his work do suggest fascinating questions, on which I want to build, about perceptual editing, what remains unintegrated, how those elements of the “field of possibility” persist, and what they affectively do in relation to perception.
 22. In “Writing Off Indigenous Sovereignty”, Moreton-Robinson argues that the sense of belonging to the settler nation “continues to be tormented by its pathological relationship to Indigenous sovereignty” (95), adding that “white colonial paranoia, injury and worrying are inextricably tied to an anxiety about dispossession” (102), and in “Writing Off Treaties”, she observes, “Repressing the history of Native American dispossession works to protect the possessive white self from ontological disturbance” (85). While drawing on this sense of a persistent possibility of destabilization engendered by the irresolvable normative crisis that is settler occupation, I want to reframe it less as “ontological” than as phenomenological/processual – less as a system than as part of everyday experience in ways that pluralize its potentials.
 23. See Mark Rifkin, ‘Indigenizing Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of the “Peculiar” Status of Native Peoples’, *Cultural Critique* 72 (Fall 2009): 88–124.
 24. The “us” to whom the basket-maker refers might be the descendants of those who lived at Nashoba, a praying town near Concord, many of whom left in the wake of King Philip’s War to live at Natick. However, some remained, others may have returned in the wake of the dissolution of Natick in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and Natick itself was less than fifteen miles from Concord. See Daniel R. Mandell, *Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth-Century Eastern Massachusetts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 17, 28–32. On the history of Natick in the eighteenth century, see Jean O’Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650–1790* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On the persistence of Native peoples in Massachusetts in the nineteenth century without a state-recognized landbase, see Thomas L. Doughton, ‘Unseen Neighbors: Native Americans of Central Massachusetts, A People Who Had “Vanished”’, in *After King Philip’s War: Presence and Persistence in Indian New England*, ed. Colin G. Calloway (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997), 207–30. For discussion of the political situation and popular representation of Native peoples in southern New England in the nineteenth century, see also Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native*

- Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 163–218; Daniel R. Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780–1880* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); O’Brien, *Firthing*; Barry O’Connell, ‘Introduction’, in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O’Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), xiii–lxxvii; David J. Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christianity, and Community among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha’s Vineyard, 1600–1871* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
25. On Thoreau’s use of “Nature” to figure his relation to US politics and political institutions, see Jane Bennett, *Thoreau’s Nature: Ethics, Politics, and the Wild* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994); Shannon L. Mariotti, *Thoreau’s Democratic Withdrawal: Alienation, Participation, and Modernity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010); Bob Pepperman Taylor, *America’s Bachelor Uncle: Thoreau and the American Polity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996). For ecocritical readings of Thoreau’s work that take the category of “nature” as given, see Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); John R. Knott, *Imagining Wild America: Wilderness and Wildness in the Writings of John James Audubon, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, and Mary Oliver* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); James C. McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000); David M. Robinson, *Natural Life: Thoreau’s Worldly Transcendentalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).
 26. In addition to the sources in note 18, see Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (rev. ed.) (New York: Basic Books, 2009); and Barbara Young Welke, *Law and the Borders of Belonging in the Long Nineteenth-Century United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
 27. In the 1810s, seven states entered the union with extremely democratic provisions in their constitutions for participation by White men, which along with increasingly liberal terms for the purchase of public lands would have proven quite attractive to those in the northeast (particularly southern New England) who continued to endure an escalating land crisis that made transfer of a workable amount of agricultural property to one’s children virtually impossible.
 28. Atack, Bateman, and Parker, “Northern”, 292. Over the first half of the nineteenth century, the cost of purchasing territory from the federal government and the scope of what one had to buy decreased greatly, and starting in 1803, Congress began sporadically passing statutes to extend a preemptive right to those who already had settled illegally on the public domain, a concession that began to balloon in the 1830s.
 29. Keyssar, *Right*, 24.
 30. The general land crisis in southern New England and the problems in transmitting farms of a workable size to one’s children extended to Concord. In addition, the Panic of 1837 had increased the difficulty of financing the acquisition of land and/or the running of a farm. See Robert A. Gross, ‘Culture and Cultivation: Agriculture and Society in Thoreau’s Concord’, *Journal of American History* 69, no. 1 (1982): 42–61; Philip R. Yanella, ‘Socio-Economic Disarray and Literary Response: Concord and Walden’, *Mosaic* 14, no. 1 (1981): 1–24. On the increasing invasion of Native lands, see note 24.
 31. F.W. Bird, Whiting Griswold, and Cyrus Weekes, *Report of the Commissioners Relating to the Conditions of the Indians in Massachusetts* (Boston: Massachusetts General Court, 1849). Further citations will be parenthetical.
 32. John Milton Earle, *Report to the Governor and Council, Concerning the Indians of the Commonwealth, Under the Act of April 6, 1859* (Boston, MA: William White, 1861), 33.
 33. The Bird report asserts, “The only remedy is to be found in annexing their territory to the adjoining towns and merging them in the general community. This must be done at once, or prospectively,” while it also indicates, “Almost without exception, they are opposed to being annexed to the adjoining towns” (54), and the Earle report observes,

Here are...communities within the State, but not of it, subject to its laws, but having no part in their enactment; within the limits of local municipalities, yet not subject to their jurisdiction; and holding real estate in their own right, yet not suffered to dispose of it, except to each other. (121)

34. For examples, see Thoreau, *Walden*, 19–20, 104–5, 123, 140–7, 178, 197.