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The disenchanted missionary: unraveling the colonial fantasies of Whitman College

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THE DISENCHANTED MISSIONARY

Unraveling the Colonial Fantasies of Whitman College

by

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Table of Contents

Introduction...........................................................................................................................................2
Encounters, Traditions, and Transformations of the Northwest Plateau.................................5
Whitman Campus: “A Sanctuary of Illusory Innocence”.................................................................14
Waiilatzoo (Whitman Ideology and Identity).................................................................................25
Conclusion...........................................................................................................................................45
Bibliography........................................................................................................................................47
Introduction

“We are all connected today to the history of this place,” Kathleen Murray proclaimed in her inaugural address, swearing in as the first female president of Whitman College.

Whitman College was founded in 1882 on the frontier of the Pacific Northwest, in an area that had long been home to the Native American people of the Walla Walla, Yakima, Cayuse, and Umatilla tribes, but remained relatively unexplored by the European settlers moving West. [...] I believe we will be well-served by continuing to think of ourselves as on the frontier, the frontier of liberal education.¹

She continued to draw on the image of the American frontier, suggesting that the intellectual “frontier of the liberal arts” beckons to Whitman students just as the Northwest Plateau beckoned to our namesake, missionary Dr. Marcus Whitman. In many ways, President Murray is right—we are all connected to the history of this place, in ways she quite possibly never considered. Various aspects of the Whitman education highlighted in her address reveal how the frontier has been internalized and re-imagined in our identity and ideology as students of Whitman College; it also reveals—unbeknownst to her, I suspect—that certain violent practices vital to pushing that frontier forward have also been internalized.

This thesis begins with the frontier and its role in the history of the Northwest Plateau—not as a physical or cultural boundary between the region’s indigenous people and American settler-colonial society, but as a colonial fantasy² that shaped the latter’s conception of self and

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¹ Murray, “Presidential Address: The Frontier of the Liberal Arts.”
² Historian Walter Hixson alludes to colonial fantasies as visions of a desired product or society that guided the actions of the colonizer. For the purpose of this thesis, I would like to explicitly define this concept and build on it. I understand colonial fantasies as conceptions of self used to rationalize and justify the colonial project, typically providing an ideal self-image wherein the colonizer is entitled, even destined, to dominate indigenous populations for the sake of “civilization” and its “progress.” In the 19th century and earlier, colonial fantasies often relied on religion for this rationalization; contemporary colonial fantasies rely on Western conceptions of economics, human rights, feminism, gender, education, and democracy, etc..
produced tangible, violent consequences for the former. From there, it takes similar colonial fantasies into consideration: their place in the Whitman community, the practices that make these fantasies so vivid, and the bodies whose scars bear witness to the manifestation of such fantasies.

I begin with a reflection on regional history, providing context for the history of Whitman College and demonstrating the institution’s profound relationship with American imperialism. Let it be noted that this is far from an in-depth look at Plateau history; rather, it is a condensed account of the American invasion which pays particular attention to those moments that have been mythicized by the Whitman community.

Next, I turn to the Whitman campus, where boundaries and conceptions of space so integral to settler-colonialism provide a framework through which the circumstances of recent Plateau history are distorted and at times, rendered invisible to those of us who inhabit the campus. I argue that the absences, juxtapositions, and aesthetic surrounding us play an important role in preserving memories and myths of the Whitman community; of equal significance, they also shield the Whitman community from viewing the violent and racist underpinnings of the institution’s existence. The campus thus provides a particular self-(mis)understanding, a tangible fantasy of sorts, which defines our daily practices and sustains the settler-colonial identity.

The final section considers how the physical boundaries and frames constructed by the campus also appear in the Whitman imaginary. By turning our attention toward human bodies and the colonial gaze, this section investigates how history, myth, and race have converged to form an ideology and identity specific to the Whitman community. Certain bodies and their images (as well as their absences, presences, and juxtapositions) take on the role—in some cases, quite literally—of producing and demonstrating the settler-colonial narrative. Central to this investigation are the mythicized roles of missionaries and pioneers, characters who lend
themselves to colonial fantasies like Manifest Destiny and other components of the Whitman ideology. In conjunction with these figures, I examine the human zoo, a global phenomenon which managed to emerge within a localized context here at Whitman College, most visibly in early editions of the Waiilatpu yearbooks and Walla Walla’s pioneer pageants. These sources demonstrate the fundamental role of race in Whitman’s identity and ideology, suggesting that ongoing affiliation with missionaries and pioneers reflects social anxieties beyond merely commemorating the past.

The following work is situated within the larger context of theories regarding settler/colonialism and indigenous politics; to these, it contributes a unique, detailed case study of one of the nation’s “elite” liberal arts schools. Perhaps of greater significance, these pages are also an addition to the canonical literature and documentation of Whitman College itself; drawing on records, memoirs, speeches, and promotional material as well as criticisms and resistance from within the institution, I hope to add to our library yet another interpretation of Whitman’s history and identity. By reframing my reader’s understanding of Whitman College, I hope to demonstrate this institution’s inherent connections to settler-colonialism and white supremacy. Perhaps future students will find it useful in their own interrogations of Whitman’s history and potential efforts to decolonize the campus.
Encounters, Traditions, and Transformations of the Northwest Plateau

“The frontier that I imagine is explored and developed by people deeply rooted in the settled territory of the liberal arts.”

—Kathleen M. Murray
President, Whitman College
2015

Plateau Indians came into contact with Euro-American culture long before the Whitmans intruded on Weyiiletpu (the people of the waving grass). Historian Elliott West contends that this contact stretched back an entire century before missionaries arrived, when the Nez Perce acquired horses around the year 1730—the single most revolutionary alteration to Plateau life before American settler-colonialism. Plateau Indians also came across traces of white society via an extensive trading network with other tribes—not only in the Pacific Northwest, but across the continent—exchanging foreign metals, textiles, leather saddle cinches, and at times, diseases. In this regard, Plateau Indians encountered European and American societies before Europeans and Americans encountered the Plateau.

The Louis and Clark Expedition reached the Pacific Northwest in 1805, followed by a more substantial foreign presence once British and French Canadian trading companies began establishing posts. French Canadian fur trappers developed a unique relationship with local tribes, characterized by mutual interest in trade, friendly relations, and commonly, intermarriage.

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3 The Northwest Plateau is home to multiple tribes, such as the Cayuse, the Umatilla and Walla Walla, and seasonally visited by the Wanapum, Palouse, Nez Perce, and Yakima. For the purpose of brevity, I generally rely on the term “Plateau Indians” to encompass all of the above. Plateau Tribes are bound by intermarriage, culture, and in some cases, language. They did not partition the space they shared before invasion, nor did they permanently occupy one place year-round. Many historical accounts refer to the population that interacted with the Whitmans most immediately as “Cayuse Indians,” but each of these tribes has been affected by the course of events set in motion by the events at Whitman’s mission.

4 Hereafter referred to as Waiilatpu, as it appears in the records and rhetoric of Whitman College

5 West, The Last Indian War, xxvii.

6 Ibid., 5.

7 “Frenchtown Collection, WCMss252 Whitman College and Northwest Archives.”
Drawing from Homi Bhaba, Walter Hixson describes this social dynamic as colonial “ambivalence,” which inadvertently emerged as the product of some colonial encounters when control over space remained unstable and contested. Colonial ambivalence was an open-ended mode of existence, with the potential for “cultural interaction, hybridity, and negotiation as well as conflict.”

Marcus and Narcissa Whitman disrupted this pre-existing social order. In terms of foreign contact, Presbyterian missionaries were hardly a novelty to Plateau Tribes. Rather, their agenda and their attitudes (both characterized by the racist underpinnings of Manifest Destiny) defined a new relationship with whites—one that would override all others and come to define the current circumstances of American society: settler-colonialism. It is this process of “ambivalent relationships giving way to indiscriminate violence and Indian removal” across North America that defines the history of “settlement” in the United States.9

Settler-colonialism is a model of statehood intimately tied to land and the attempted domination over its native populations. In this mode of existence, invasion and dispossession are lasting, fundamental structures, not events.10 Indigenous political theorist Glen Sean Coulthard notes that native communities, their identities, cultures, and resistance to settler-colonialism are also intimately tied to the land.11 Thus, questions surrounding the occupation, division, and control of space are central to the relationship between indigenous peoples and settler-colonists. The occupying power—in this case, white American society—is intent on dominating colonial space, “a process that entail[s] demarcation and control, boundaries, maps, surveys, treaties,

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9 Ibid., ix.
10 Ibid., 5; Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 7.
seizures, and the commodification of land.”12 Hixson distinguishes settler-colonialism from “conventional” colonialism by explaining that in the latter situation the colonizer eventually departs, while in the former the colonizer “means to occupy the land permanently.”13 Settler-colonialism also entails “cleansing” the land by uprooting indigenous populations in order to construct ethnically, culturally, and religiously “pure” communities.14 In a settler-colonial society, the occupation and division of space is therefore highly politicized, racialized, and violent.

Marcus Whitman established his Waiilatpu Mission in 1836, directly on top of a Cayuse winter village site.15 Around it, he built a fence. Indian horses were not to graze within the fence, and Indians themselves were not to enter Whitman’s house without due permission—and even then, only through the kitchen door.16 Historian Julie Roy Jeffrey notes how Narcissa “longed to have a room that would keep them from the main part of the house, a clear physical boundary between her space and theirs”17 (and a harbinger of the treaty system to follow decades later). Having welcomed the Whitmans upon their arrival, local people were distressed by the way these missionaries treated the land, how they controlled and exploited it.18 Some of them took up the hoe, as Marcus was determined for them to do, but abandoned white farming practices when it came time to seasonally gather food as their tribes had always done.19 The white mentality of using land, of treating it as a commodity and manipulating it, starkly contrasted with the relationship Plateau Indians have with their land. Tribal historian Jennifer Karson refers to this relationship as a “covenant,” also called “Indian law” or tamánwit in the Cayuse Nez Perce

12 Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, viii.
13 Ibid., 5.
14 Ibid., 4.
15 Eugene S. Hunn, Čáw Pawá Láakni = They Are Not Forgotten, 125.
16 Jeffrey, Converting the West, 167.
17 Ibid., 123.
18 Ibid., 165.
19 Ibid., 124.
language. Tamánwit is central to indigenous Plateau spirituality, as well as culture, identity, and sovereignty; Whitman’s determination to alter this relationship with the land was a far greater offense than the basic principle of converting Plateau Indians to Christianity.

Unlike the French Canadian fur traders and their lifestyle, the missionaries had an agenda incompatible with colonial ambivalence; they came to transform Plateau Indians, and for such an agenda, cultural fluidity and hybridity were too complicated. Many writings on Plateau history fail to emphasize that 19th Century missionary service was not exclusively religious, but rather, went hand-in-hand with colonization. In a striking letter from April 1838, Marcus Whitman and his fellow missionary Henry Spalding declared,

[…], while we point them with one hand to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, we believe it to be equally our duty to point with the other to the hoe, as a means of saving their famishing bodies from an untimely grave & furnishing the means of subsistence to future generations.

West remarks that “religious conversion and cultural transformation were parts of one process, fully entangled. They fed off each other. In the missionaries’ minds, they together made civilization.” The Whitmans and Spaldings were part of a world-wide imperial endeavor conducted by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which “represented a significant test of the effectiveness of American efforts to export culture.”

Though Marcus Whitman saw his own missionary service as an effort to protect Plateau Indians

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20 Karson, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, and Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, Wiyáhayxt/Wiyádakádawn = As Days Go by, 3.
21 Plateau Tribes had in fact already encountered Christianity by the time the Whitmans intruded, and some of them had even sent people north and east to learn more about it. (West, 37) Sources tell us that at least one man in the Nez Perce nation attended an Anglican boarding school during the early 19th Century and learned fluent English; (West, 36) there were also Indians from tribes further east—some of them driven westward by genocidal policies in the States—who informed the Plateau Tribes about American religion, diseases and imperialism. (West, 45)
22 Jeffrey, Converting the West, 117.
23 Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 3.
25 West, The Last Indian War, 44.
26 Jeffrey, Converting the West, 36.
from American expansion by helping them to assimilate into white society,\textsuperscript{27} he was in fact the spearhead of American cultural imperialism.

When Whitman failed to convert any Plateau Indians, the ABCFM advised him to close his mission at \textit{Waialatpu}. This was the catalyst for Whitman’s famous “ride East” in 1843, in which he raced to meet the board of the ABCFM to convince them that \textit{Waialatpu} was a worthy investment. To maintain American interest in Oregon Territory, Whitman guided roughly a thousand white emigrants to the Northwest when he returned.\textsuperscript{28} Many dominant historical narratives praise Marcus Whitman for “saving” this portion of the continent for the United States at a time when it was rumored that the U.S. government might cede the territory to Great Britain. More significantly, this change in Whitman’s agenda marked a crucial turning point in Plateau history: the American invasion was now in full swing. Hixson explains, “…settler states would not stop short of establishing their authority over colonial space through mass migration, sanctioned under their laws, backed by violence.”\textsuperscript{29} When he returned to \textit{Waialatpu}, Whitman’s attention shifted away from the Indians; aiding the white occupation of Oregon Territory was now his main concern.\textsuperscript{30}

To refer to the subsequent chapter in Plateau history as white “settlement” would be misleading; “settling” implies that a space was previously empty, whereas imposing oneself on land that is already inhabited can only be called “invasion.”\textsuperscript{31} The whites who invaded Oregon Territory would indeed make an effort to empty that space of Plateau Indians, but at this particular moment, the task was only beginning. The slew of emigrants that followed Whitman

\textsuperscript{27} “The Letters of Dr. Marcus Whitman, 1834-1847,” 16 May 1844.
\textsuperscript{28} Karson, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, and Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, \textit{Wiyáxayt/Wiyáakaaawn = As Days Go by}, 63.
\textsuperscript{29} Hixson, \textit{American Settler Colonialism}, 7.
\textsuperscript{30} “The Letters of Dr. Marcus Whitman, 1834-1847,” 28 May 1843.
\textsuperscript{31} Hixson, \textit{American Settler Colonialism}, 12.
back to his mission brought lethal diseases, crime, pollution, and intensely palpable cultural differences based on economy, land use, gender roles, and spirituality. White Americans mistreated the land and devastated local animal populations, disrupting the ecosystem and food sources central to Plateau life. The Whitmans looked after many white emigrants as they passed through the Plateau on their way to “settle” throughout the Northwest, even going out of their way to provide “secure” passage through Indian land; their hospitality toward other whites was noticeably different from their attitude toward Indians, who were now receiving threats from Marcus Whitman. As they observed the role Marcus played in the invasion of Oregon Territory, some members of the tribes became more persistent and openly aggressive in their expressions of disapproval. At times, they relied on armed resistance to demonstrate how strongly they objected to his actions and eventually, his very presence at Waiilatpu. When confronted, Marcus “made the right of the travelers and the might of the white government very clear,” even threatening to shoot an Indian chief “like a dog,” according to a witness account.

In 1847, as many as five thousand emigrants entered the Northwest, followed by a measles outbreak. Both the settler-colonists and Plateau Indians suffered from the disease, yet Whitman managed to cure many of his white patients while hundreds of his Indian patients died, including a large number of children. Many accounts of history rely on this outbreak in disease to explain motivations behind the “Whitman Massacre” that ensued when Marcus, Narcissa, and a dozen other settlers at the mission were killed that November. White historians explain this incident as “revenge” for the doctor’s failure, some of them pointing to an indigenous custom.

32 Ibid., viii.
33 Jeffrey, Converting the West, 210.
34 Ibid., 212.
35 Ibid., 168.
36 Ibid., 212.
37 Ibid., 213.
that involved killing religious healers when their patients died (a custom that existed, but its prevalence at the time is doubted). Given the years of intensifying opposition between Marcus Whitman and local tribes, however, the measles outbreak was but one event in a destructive pattern indicative of settler-colonialism. Five Cayuse men were taken hostage years later, accused for the “Whitman Massacre,” and hanged after a brief (mock) trial. Whether members of the Cayuse Tribe are solely responsible for the Whitmans’ death is undetermined, and witness accounts indicate that at least one French Canadian (and/or a man of mixed heritage) also took part in this rebellion (an example, perhaps, of colonial ambivalence actively resisting American settler-colonialism).

Thirty years of conflict ensued, including armed resistance from Plateau Tribes, a series of atrocities committed by white militias determined to steal their land, and a number of treaties which aimed to assert American law and negotiation over the Tribes and their land. The U.S. government temporarily closed Oregon Territory to any further “settlement,” waiting for volunteer militias to cleanse the region of indigenous populations. Here we see colonial ambivalence giving way to indiscriminate violence; we see the gruesome underpinnings of white American nation building as an imaginary, “pure” identity is forged through the ethnic cleansing of entire regions. Hixson notes that colonial fantasies such as “American exceptionalism” and “Manifest Destiny” were integral to this “evolution of settler societies and the genocidal violence that accompanied them.”

38 Karson, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, and Tamástlikt Cultural Institute, Wiyáxayt/Wiyáawkadawn = As Days Go by, 64.
39 “Deposition of Mary Saunders”; Jeffrey, Converting the West, 218.
40 Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 10.
41 Ibid., 21.
Equally central to the evolution of white American society (and continuously central to that society’s identity) was the binary “us” and “them,” a frontier existing in the white imagination as a static division of space that is unchanging and undeniable. On one side of the frontier was “civilization;” on the other side were “the Indians,” a multitude of peoples lumped together in a single coherent identity for the sake of the colonial binary. Yet in reality, distinctions in space and identity did not, do not, conform to this colonial fantasy— and neither do “the Indians.”

The Walla Walla Treaty of 1855 was a legal manifestation of the white-Indian binary, in which the U.S. government sought to assert a physical boundary between “civilization” and “savages.” Initially, this treaty called for two Indian reservations, but leaders of the Walla Walla, Umatilla, and Cayuse Tribes pushed for a third reservation, to be located on the land they inhabited, rather than relocating as the U.S. government dictated. With future generations in mind, these leaders signed the Treaty so that their descendants could continue living on the land that was a vital part of their culture and identity. It was a moment in which they approached a document designed to conquer them and used it instead to demand and preserve Indian sovereignty, as well as their covenant with the land. This third reservation, known today as the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), exists in stark contrast to the Whitman College campus.

The Treaty signing, which some narratives oddly describe as “friendly,” was attended by warriors and militia men, with the potential to turn into another battle at any time. Though his men were vastly outnumbered by thousands of Indians gathered at the signing, U.S.

42 Ibid., 26.
43 Karson, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, and Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, Wiyóxayxt/Wiyóakaadow = As Days Go by, 86–89.
44 Ibid., 77.
45 Ibid., 74.
representative Gov. Isaac Stevens relied on threat of force until the very end, saying: “Tell the chiefs that if they don’t sign this treaty, they will walk in blood knee-deep.”

Numerous atrocities followed the signing of the 1855 Treaty; perhaps most prominent among them is the killing and mutilation of Walla Walla headman and treaty signer Peopeomoxmox, at the hands of the Oregon Volunteer militia while meeting them under a white flag of truce during the Battle of Walla Walla. Doubtless, there were also atrocities preceding the Whitman Incident, but these have remained nameless and unacknowledged in dominant American history.

On one hand, extended conflict demonstrates the sheer brutality of American settler-colonialism; yet on the other, it demonstrates the unwavering perseverance—and power—of the Plateau Indians. Hixson explains,

> The persistent violence of the colonial encounter [...] stemmed from the repeated disruption of the settler colonial fantasies and projects on the part of the indigenous populations. Not merely the ambivalence and resistance of the indigenous people but ultimately their very presence ruptured the settler colonial fantasy.

Settler-colonial fantasies persist to this day. Tending to those fantasies, asserting the white American identity, is an ongoing project as fundamental to settler-colonial society as invasion and dispossession. Resistance also persists, as does the violence of the colonial encounter, less through armed conflict than through other means to be explored in the following pages.

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Whitman Campus: “A Sanctuary of Illusory Innocence”

I wonder if the ground has anything to say? I wonder if the ground is listening to what is said? I wonder if the ground would come alive and what is on it?

—Weatenatemany (Young Chief)
Walla Walla Treaty signatory, Cayuse
1855

“Culturally imagined and legally enshrined conceptions of space and place fueled settler colonialism,” Hixson tells us. “Spatiality thus plays a central role in the production of knowledge and power. The way space is conceived, imagined, and framed has political consequences…” 48

Legend contends that Reverend Cushing Eells, a personal friend and fellow missionary of the Whitmans, visited the mass grave at Waiilatpu Mission in 1859, whereupon he was inspired to build a “living monument” 49 in their memory. This monument, a seminary that would one day develop into Whitman College, served a purpose beyond merely remembering a man: 50 it also aimed to institutionalize and develop the nation building project that Marcus and Narcissa Whitman had brought to the Northwest Plateau—a project now immersed in the region’s ethnic cleansing. Rev. Eells and leaders of the institution after him were determined to bring Christian values to the Northwest, but their aspirations were also saturated with conceptions of American identity and patriotism. By branding this “martyred missionary” a national hero and developing a white origin story in his name, early leaders of Whitman College managed to solicit funding for the college at a time when it faced permanent closure, from donors who were neither

48 Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 6.
50 On occasion, homage is paid explicitly to both Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, however it seems that only Marcus was dubbed a “national hero” at the time.
Presbyterian nor necessarily religious.\textsuperscript{51} This origin story is central to the Whitman identity, etched into the structure of the campus.\textsuperscript{52}

More than a monument to “martyred missionaries,” Whitman campus is defined by its boundaries—physical, racial, and cultural fragments of “the frontier,” which frame the campus and its history in such a way as to produce (and exclude) a particular version of Whitman’s history. This frame bolsters the identity of settler-colonial society and shields the Whitman community from recognizing the violence inherent to the very foundation and continued existence of the college.

Boundaries, from fences to reservations to national borders, are the mark of settler-colonialism in the Pacific Northwest. Before signing treaties with the U.S. government, Plateau Tribes did not assert their right to this land by imagining or constructing boundaries; they did not draw maps to represent the space they inhabited, or at least, certainly not to demonstrate ownership over it or to exclude other people from entering. Place names also had a different significance to Plateau Tribes before Euro-Americans imposed their own names as a manner of “claiming” space. Rather than serving to leave one’s mark on a place, naming is a living relationship between the Plateau and its indigenous peoples.\textsuperscript{53} Unlike settler-colonists, who are inclined to name places after the white men who “discover” them, Plateau Indians learned place names from other creatures who inhabit them, from their experiences on the land, and from the

\textsuperscript{51} Edwards, \textit{The Triumph of Tradition}, 136.
\textsuperscript{52} Considering the institution’s origins and its ties to American patriotism (whether these were applied retroactively through the Whitman Myth or inherited through the legacy of missionaries and pioneers), the identity and ideology of Whitman College are intimately tied to those of American settler-colonialism at large. At times, I reference the identities and ideologies of Whitman College and settler-colonial society interchangeably; while this may not be a cautious decision, it does reflect the complex relationship between the two, and is a result of my intention to (re)frame the Whitman community as a part of settler-colonial society.
\textsuperscript{53} Eugene S. Hunn, \textit{Čáw Pawá Láakní = They Are Not Forgotten}, xvii.
land itself. As Weatenatemany remarked at the 1855 Treaty signing: “The Earth and water and grass says God has given our names and we are told those names—neither the Indians nor the Whites have a right to change those names.”

Hundreds of these names (in multiple Plateau languages) have been passed down for generations, recently recorded in the place names atlas Čâw pawá láakni=They are not Forgotten. The place names included are mostly those used by the Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Cayuse Tribes; many belong to places that have been (re)named, recorded, and mapped according to the settler-colonists’ perspective, threatening to “sanitize” the historical record of Plateau Indian culture just as invaders sought to purge the land of their presence. Publishing Čâw pawá láakni is an act of resistance, but also an example of Plateau Indians adapting to the circumstances of settler-colonial society. For indigenous Plateau communities, which historically preserved their memories and heritage through oral tradition, publishing maps and place names in languages that have only recently appeared in writing marks a significant shift in the way people express their culture, identity, and connection to the land. This public, written documentation is an urgent response to contemporary circumstances. One of the opening statements to the atlas explains, “It would be unfortunate to respond to history by not publishing this atlas. Choosing not to publish would be like silencing our voices and our languages.”

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54 Ibid., xv.
55 Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 11.
56 It is worth noting that no boundaries are outlined in the maps included in the atlas (though state lines are represented as a contemporary reference point); rather, splotches of color emanating outwards and arrows indicating directions of seasonal migration indicate which spaces were/are frequented by Plateau Tribes.
57 Several contributors to the atlas acknowledge that this shift is a point of disagreement among members of the Tribes: while some have kept these names written down in private sources for decades, others insist that these names should never appear in writing—and according to some, they should certainly never be shared beyond the Native community or even beyond the families who know certain places by unique names. (xiii)
58 Eugene S. Hunn, Čâw Pawá Lââkni = They Are Not Forgotten, xvii.
If Čáw pawá láakni demonstrates a new approach to conceptualizing Plateau space and its relation(s) to indigenous people, the Whitman campus could not provide a more contrasting case study. The former is dedicated to remembering indigenous histories, identities, and politics of the Plateau, and the latter is principally committed to forgetting these. Scholar Rob Nixon refers to this “environmental dynamic between seeing and not seeing, between remembering and forgetting,” in colonial society as “racialized ecologies of looking.” His analysis of this phenomenon in regard to the South African game reserve is a useful point of comparison for the Whitman campus, as both spaces are situated on lands bearing deep scars “of enclosure and expulsion.” Nixon notes,

The noun ‘reserve’ may refer to either a sanctuary or a place of involuntary confinement—a refuge or a cage. … Because South Africa’s ecologies of enclosure are ghosted by traumas of forced removal, the destiny of the game reserve…remains inextricably bound to the racial dynamics of sanctuary and trespass, memory and amnesia, visibility and invisibility, looking and looking away.

These opposing definitions of “reserve” are embodied in the “game reserve” and the “native reserve.” For Plateau Tribes, the “native reserve” (Indian reservations) is a constant reminder of recent history and its traumas; contemporary Indian life and politics ceaselessly confront settler-colonialism, whether this involves fighting for rights outlined in treaties with the U.S. government or fighting to protect other indigenous inhabitants of the Plateau, such as salmon and

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59 This is not to say that the image of Plateau Indians is erased entirely (as the following section aims to demonstrate, maintaining this is in fact crucial to the Whitman identity); rather, Plateau Indians are depoliticized, presented as mystical ghost-like figures of the past with no connection to the present and no political relevance to the college.

60 Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, 176.

61 Ibid., 178.

62 Ibid., 176.

63 For the purpose of this study, I mostly refer to CTUIR, the reservation designated for the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla Tribes, because it is closest to Whitman campus and these tribes had direct, sustained contact with the Whitmans and their legacy. In total, the Plateau Tribes were scattered apart into three different reservations, with the exception of the Wanapum, who never signed any treaty ceding land to the U.S. government and remain on their traditional homeland at Priest Rapids (Eugene S. Hunn, Čáw Pawá Láakni = They Are Not Forgotten, p.17).
lamprey eels, from the destructive habits of Euro-Americans now living on Indian land.\textsuperscript{64} For the Whitman community, however, the “game reserve” (Whitman campus) is a sanctuary from that very same history. Nixon explains how those who inhabit the game reserve are blind to the forces of time and race surrounding its creation and preservation, tucked away in a “racio-temporal island.”\textsuperscript{65} In this way, the reserve protects itself from its own violent and political circumstance,\textsuperscript{66} acting as “a sanctuary of illusory innocence.”\textsuperscript{67}

Whereas the game reserve is designed to mimic the natural landscape of South Africa, the Whitman campus boasts the air of a generalized, manicured beauty of “breadth and simplicity”\textsuperscript{68} that does not represent the landscape of the Columbia Plateau. Unnaturally selected, carefully planted shrubbery produces the effect of a haven enmeshed in romantic nature—a quality that regularly earns Whitman College a place on the list of “most beautiful college campuses.” Non-native plants such as English Ivy and Japanese honeysuckle\textsuperscript{69} emulate the aesthetic of well-to-do New England society, suggesting that a very particular aspect of white American “civilization” has been planted in the Plateau. (Can we call such a space in the middle of Indian land anything other than a colony?) The campus is therefore a space artificially (if not violently) created, disjointed from the environment and politics in which it is situated. Its façade actively works to conceal this, transporting visitors to another time and another place, but not necessarily any time or place that has ever existed. Nixon writes, “[…] the tourist is guaranteed full immersion in the

\textsuperscript{64} CTUIR Department of Natural Resources, “CTUIR DNR Umatilla River Vision V2 051811.”
\textsuperscript{65} Nixon, \textit{Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor}, 179.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 178.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 187.
\textsuperscript{68} Olmsted, “Report of Mr. John C. Olmsted, Landscape Architect,” 8.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 10.
eco-archaic, which is not to be confused with the historical. To enter this refuge is to enter a charmed space that is segregated, among other things, from the history of its own segregation.”

Many structures on campus work to construct a version of Plateau history that is indeed segregated from the history of its own segregation. Mainly, these structures draw attention to influential figures and events in Whitman’s history: Memorial Hall, built to memorialize Marcus and Narcissa Whitman with funds solicited by the “Whitman Myth;” Prentiss Hall, named for Narcissa, who is hailed in a nearby marker as the first white woman to cross the Rocky Mountains; two buildings named for Whitman President Stephen B.L. Penrose (Penrose Library and Penrose House), demonstrating the fact that he is the single most prominent figure in the early history of the college, also responsible for resurrecting Marcus Whitman as a “national hero;” and Treaty Rock, which pays tribute to the Nez Perce Chief Lawyer, revered in white accounts as the most loyal and “civilized” of the Plateau chiefs. By commemorating these names as dominant actors in Plateau history, the campus is a physical reinforcement of the white origin story that early leaders of the college fabricated more than one-hundred-and-fifty years ago.

Equally crucial to constructing this origin story and the racio-temporal island is the capacity for exclusion. Just as the campus commemorates those actors in history responsible for the progression of settler-colonialism, it neglects other actors responsible for defying it in any manner. Numerous leaders from the Plateau Tribes whom we know by name (Peopeomoxmox, Chief Joseph, and Tiloukaikt to name but a few) find no mention or commemoration, and Indian women are denied recognition all together. Traces of colonial ambivalence—aside from Chief

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72 Ibid., 154.
73 “In Honor of Hol-Lol-Sote-Tote Chief Lawyer,” 2, 5, 8.
Lawyer, arguably—are also missing. In fact, French Canadian fur traders and anyone of mixed heritage escapes attention entirely, giving way to the colonial binary of “white man” (Marcus Whitman) and “the Indian” (also presumably male), and even this representation is skewed, with numerous monuments paying homage to the former and only one to the latter. Hixson comments,

Constructions, hierarchies, and inclusions and exclusions pertaining to race, class, gender, religion and nation enable settler communities to cohere. Often these constructions are comingled and mutually reinforcing. The settler community and nation define themselves, expand and police their borders, and project their power into colonial space on the basis of these constructed hierarchies and exclusions.74

Whitman campus, therefore, is defined not only by its borders and structures, but by absences and juxtapositions, a pattern which both reflects and reinforces cultural expectations and anomalies. Native American scholar and activist Philip J. Deloria notes that cultural expectations act as “both products and tools of domination,”75 which only become further normalized when our attention is drawn toward perceived anomalies. The two are mutually constitutive, he explains: “To assert that a person or an event is anomalous cannot help but serve to create and to reinforce other expectations.”76 Treaty Rock, the only explicit tribute to ethnic cleansing visible on the Whitman campus, provides a striking example of this relationship between expectation and anomaly. If not for the plaques commemorating the Treaty of 1855 and Chief Lawyer, perhaps this boulder would attract no more attention than any of the other large rocks aesthetically placed around campus; but the image of Chief Lawyer’s profile and the large print “PE-WA-OO-YIT” quickly convey to passersby that this is no ordinary rock.77 Students

74 Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 10.
75 Deloria, Indians in Unexpected Places, 4.
76 Ibid., 5.
77 Though Treaty Rock pays tribute to the land and people who inhabited this space before Whitman College, the rock itself, ironically, is not originally from the campus grounds; donated by the Potlach Lumber Company, it was transported from traditional Nez Perce hunting grounds in northern Idaho (“In Honor of Hol-Lol-Sote-Tote Chief Lawyer,” 2).
often notice Treaty Rock, but few are able to express its significance, suggesting that it is conspicuous enough to draw attention as an anomaly, but not specific enough to bring its surroundings into question.

Recognition granted to Plateau Tribes in this fashion is by no means an attempt to counter the authority or existence of settler-colonial society; to the contrary, insists Coulthard, formal recognition often serves the interests of the colonizer.\textsuperscript{78} Treaty Rock, a gift from the Whitman class of 1930, represents a “profoundly asymmetrical and nonreciprocal” form of recognition.\textsuperscript{79} Drawing on Franz Fanon’s critique of colonial recognition, Coulthard notes that this acknowledgement is according to the terms of settler-colonial society,\textsuperscript{80} not the terms of those tribes being addressed, thereby maintaining the hierarchical social relations of colonialism that continue to “facilitate the dispossession of indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority.”\textsuperscript{81} These terms are demonstrated by the first plaque (also gifted by the class of 1930),\textsuperscript{82} which explicitly pays tribute to Chief Lawyer—recorded in the Whitman community and settler-

\textsuperscript{78} Coulthard, \textit{Red Skin, White Masks}, 25.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{82} The second plaque was gifted by the Tribes in the Treaty Centennial Observance of 1955. It does not “celebrate” the treaty, but rather, acknowledges that June 1855 is indeed the date when Plateau Tribes ceded this land to American forces.
colonial narrative as “The wise, magnanimous and brave leader of a noble people,” due largely to the fact that he embraced white culture and the terms of the 1855 Treaty more readily than any other tribal leaders. By specifically paying tribute to Chief Lawyer, Treaty Rock decidedly excludes those leaders of Plateau Tribes who challenged the authority and propositions of the settler-colonial state. Beyond recognition, Treaty Rock also represents a gesture toward reconciliation with the Tribes, which can be understood as an effort to confine “the abuses of settler colonization firmly in the past.” Notes Coulthard, “In these situations, reconciliation itself becomes temporally framed as the process of individually and collectively overcoming the harmful “legacy” left in the wake of this past abuse, while leaving the present structure of colonial rule largely unscathed.”

Directly to the north, south, and west of Treaty Rock stand three buildings named after prominent figures in the Whitman community, responsible for framing and recording Plateau history according to the settler-colonist perspective: Lyman Hall (named for history professor William D. Lyman), Penrose House, and Maxey Hall (named for political science professor and college President Chester C. Maxey, who also served as Mayor of Walla Walla in the 1960s). Tucked between them as an anomaly, Treaty Rock contributes to their “shape, meaning, and power,” reassuring the Whitman community that these three men are indeed the dominant voice

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84 Karson, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, and Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, Wiyáxayxt/Wiyáakáawn = As Days Go by, 74.
85 Coulthard, Red Skin, White Masks, 22.
86 Ibid.
87 Lyman wrote several large volumes on Northwest history; Penrose was responsible for committing the “Whitman Myth” to paper in both his pamphlet the Romance of a College and in a fictionalized account of the Whitmans’ lives in Whitman, an Unfinished Story; Maxey put together a brief publication titled Whitman 1802-1847: his courage, his deeds, and his college. All of these writings can be found in the Whitman College Library and the Whitman College and Northwest Archives.
88 Deloria, Indians in Unexpected Places, 5.
of history, the voice we expect to associate with this land, this institution, and more generally, with higher knowledge.

Just as these historical figures and the buildings named for them form a physical frame surrounding Treaty Rock, their written work forms an intellectual frame around the history of the Plateau and its indigenous people. Thus the publication of Čáw pawá láakni=They are not Forgotten appears as another anomaly in juxtaposition with these dominant voices of history. From the Tribes’ perspective, committing familiar places to maps and text is a momentous occasion⁸⁹—one that Deloria might call “unexpected.”⁹⁰ From white society’s perspective, it is an anomaly for indigenous voices to join white voices on paper, to see “claimed” spaces called by names that were not attributed by Euro-Americans. This latter view is problematic in that it reasserts the normalcy of the white frame surrounding Plateau history. Deloria notes, “Native actions have all too often been interpreted through the lens of Euro-American expectation formed, in many cases, in ways that furthered the colonial project.”⁹¹

Čáw pawá láakni=They are not Forgotten, and more generally, the concept of mapping Plateau space and history, is significant for two reasons. First, it confronts the raw, fundamental component of settler-colonialism: physical space, its division and occupation. Of equal significance, it demonstrates how the borders etched on maps have also emerged in intellectual space, forging frames around history that both include and exclude various actors responsible for its course. Deloria urges us to ask, “What kinds of frames have been placed around a shared past?”⁹² They are frames that mirror some of the physical boundaries—the “frontier,” the

⁸⁹ Eugene S. Hunn, Čáw Pawá Láakni = They Are Not Forgotten, xvii.
⁹⁰ Deloria, Indians in Unexpected Places, 11.
⁹¹ Ibid., 7.
⁹² Ibid.
reservation, the campus—that came to define our shared history; they are frames constructed out of cultural expectations “that have consistently placed whites over Indians, men over women, capital over labor, and the normative over the exceptional;”93 they are frames that both reflect and inform the settler-colonial gaze, fantasies, and consequently, the settler-colonial identity.

93 Ibid., 5.
Kathleen Murray’s installation as the fourteenth president of Whitman College marked the beginning of an academic year that would see the institution’s identity called into question on several occasions, by students as well as faculty. Paramount among these efforts was a committee dedicated to re-examining Whitman’s mascot (*The Missionaries*), an announcement from the student newspaper’s editorial board that they were no longer in favor of the paper’s name (*The Pioneer*), and a petition drafted by faculty and students that demanded to have local history incorporated into Whitman orientation and the year-long General Studies course required of all first-year students. While a significant portion of the Whitman community supported these changes, particularly the change of mascot, there was dissent—swift and zealous dissent. Declarations in defense of missionaries and pioneers were quick to appear on the student

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94 Kathleen Murray put this committee together in response to a student survey conducted by ASWC (which was in response to a mock mascot competition organized by the Indigenous Peoples Education and Culture Club); of the students who responded to the survey, most were in favor of changing the mascot. President Murray announced that this committee unanimously voted to change Whitman’s mascot in April 2016.

95 Christopherson, “Mascot Survey Executive Summary.”
newspaper’s website, where anyone in the public can comment with the option to remain anonymous. While such statements do not reflect the majority opinion held by the Whitman community, they do draw considerable attention from readers and send discussions hurtling down Whitman memory lane—a path riddled with myths, exaggerations, and opposing perspectives. As a collective unit, the Whitman community only embarks on this walk through history when there is a perceived threat of someone “erasing” that history.\footnote{Multiple courses at Whitman include this historical reflection in their syllabi to facilitate more awareness of local history, but the campus at large remains uneducated about the Whitmans, their mission, and Plateau Tribes.} In other words, the general attitude toward missionaries and pioneers is one of indifference, until there is an attempt to change those names, at which point a portion of students, alumni, faculty, and staff (who may have never given much thought to these names before) suddenly voice zealous support for them. Statements in defense of Whitman’s history typically consist of broad, sweeping statements about respecting the past, accepting the past, but oddly, never studying the past. Some people defend missionaries and pioneers as visionaries who should not be judged too harshly, given that they acted according to the ethics and principles “of their own time;” others argue that regardless of history’s atrocities, colonialism happened, we are a society descended from missionaries and pioneers, “whether we like it or not.”

Especially troubling for the Whitman community is the claim that disowning the titles Missionaries and Pioneer is a wrongful attempt to “erase,” “revise,” or “undo” recent chapters in “our history.” (Which begs the question: whose history? And in whose memory? Will Plateau Indians forget recent history if white society stops referring to itself as “missionaries” and “pioneers?”) This claim is often tinged with a condescending tone; as one alumnus wrote on The Pioneer website: “Many folks may continue referring to the paper as ‘The Pio’ and the editorial board may earnestly feel that they have contributed ‘meaningful change’ to Whitman. The
vexing fact about history is that it lacks an ‘undo’ button.” 97 Aside from explicitly (and bitterly) reminding us that history cannot be undone, this argument suggests that it is immoral to try and hide or forget our collective role in history by disowning the titles of Missionaries and Pioneer—but have these names actually done much to remind us of local history over the past century? Have they prompted critical self-reflection? Have they contributed to an accurate memory of Plateau history and the Whitman legacy?

I argue that changing these names is not an assault on our history, but on our fantasies, our ideology, and our identity as a community. Embedded in the fabric of the Whitman identity are conceptions of missionaries, pioneers, exploration, discovery, and of course, the frontier. Hixson contends that terms such as “frontier,” “Manifest Destiny,” and “homeland” bear “powerful symbolic meaning” in settler-colonial society, “creating emotional attachments” and “cultural ties to colonial space.” 98 These cultural ties remain relevant—prevalent—in contemporary society, as they hold a fragile identity in place. The settler-colonial identity is, after all, constructed and unstable, requiring “constant repetition and affirmation” in order to assert its reality.99 This is exemplified by Kathleen Murray’s installation address The Frontier of the Liberal Arts and in the administration’s tendency to market our education as an endeavor of “exploration” and “discovery,”100 even almost one-hundred-and-eighty years since the Whitmans arrived in the region. But beyond these official practices, how do frontiers, missionaries, and pioneers remain culturally significant in the Whitman imaginary? Why do they conjure emotional attachments and aggressive debate when some members of the Whitman community demand not to be associated with these terms?

98 Hixson, American Settler Colonialism, 6.
99 Ibid., 3.
100 https://www.whitman.edu/admission-and-aid/why-whitman
When we visited Deloria in the previous section, he explained how expectations and anomaly work in tandem to solidify the settler-colonial identity and its perceived normalcy. To delve more deeply into “the world of expectation,” he tells us, we must turn our attention to “the more complex terms discourse and ideology.” He explains discourse as practices composed of thoughts, representations, knowledges, and actions; whereas ideology is a means of understanding the content of discourse. Deloria notes how these concepts are intimately linked:

Even as we see ideology (content) functioning within discourse (practice), we might at the same time see discourse (action) functioning within ideology (consciousness)! Both concepts, in other words, connect—to one another, to social acts, to individual consciousness, and to changes in practice and circumstances occurring over time. 

Ideology in particular is intriguing—and hazardous—because of its relation to truth. On one hand, “ideologies appear somehow untrue,” but on the other hand, they involve people, places, and events that may be deeply rooted in reality. Deloria writes, “Ideologies offer both truthful pictures of the world as it exists and falsely prescriptive understandings of the world as it might (or should) be.” It is here at the heart of this concept that we can begin to understand why the images of frontier, missionaries, and pioneers continue to fester in the Whitman imaginary—not as reminders of the Plateau’s recent atrocity, but as a framework through which to view (and distort) the circumstances of Whitman College and its existence. This ideology provides us with something similar to the framework constructed by the campus, and forges an intellectual counterpart to the sanctuary of illusory innocence, a state-of-mind wherein we think we are familiar enough with history to understand ourselves, but neglect the racialized, violent circumstances of settler-colonial society and the founding of Whitman College. Thus, like the

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101 Deloria, Indians in Unexpected Places, 9.  
102 Ibid., 10.  
103 Ibid.  
104 Ibid., 9.
campus, the Whitman ideology informs our collective identity, not by presenting us with facts about our history but by celebrating the frames and fantasies of the settler-colonial narrative.

This ideology is documented quite clearly in the Whitman College yearbooks, *Waiilatpu* (dating from 1906 until present day). As a student-run tradition, *Waiilatpu* offers a unique representation of the Whitman identity from the perspective of the student body, with visible traces of the Whitman ideology and its evolution. The name *Waiilatpu* and caricatures in various editions of the yearbook indicate that Plateau Indians occupy a very particular and peculiar role in the Whitman identity, as well. They appear somehow as reminders of local history, but cannot be too present, lest they threaten our certainty regarding who inhabits this space now; on the one hand, they are of course a very real part of the Plateau (both past and present), yet these yearbooks suggest that they are not *as real* as the people on Whitman campus—demonstrated by the fact that Whitman students appear in photographs, while Indians almost always appear as illustrations lurking in the margins of the pages (the 1924 edition is a notable exception, in which photographs of unnamed Indians adorn section title pages [figure 2]). In *Waiilatpu*, these illustrations combine familiar people and places—the heroic male missionary, the wagon trail, the Northwest Plateau and reference to local tribes—with myths and stereotypes about American Indians and interactions on the frontier. Deloria notes that as outright lies, “ideologies would hardly be compelling, so untruth is tightly twinned together with pictures of the world as it is.”

Images of the mission, tepees, and key words such as *Waiilatpu* are elements extracted from local history and rewritten on the page, indicating and influencing where they are situated in the Whitman imaginary. The very first edition of *Waiilatpu* features a tepee on its cover, with three stars floating from its top in a plume of smoke (representing the three American states “saved” by Marcus Whitman) [figure 1.1]. The cover of the 1911 edition features the head of an Indian.
SAMPLES FROM *WAILATPU* YEARBOOKS
ORIGINALS AVAILABLE IN THE WHITMAN COLLEGE AND NORTHWEST ARCHIVES

[1.1] *Wailatpu* 1906 (premiere edition)

[1.2] *Wailatpu* 1911

[1.3] *Wailatpu* 1958

[2] *Wailatpu* 1924
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CONTENTS OF THE RECORD

I THE TRIBE

Chiefs
Braves
Music Makers

II FAMILY FIRES

Tribal Councils
At Work
Bonds of the Heart
The Whitman Foundation

III INTERTRIBAL WARFARE

Tawahamas Men
Warriors

IV THE WHITMAN HISTORY

V THE MEDICINE MAN


Indian chief, and the 1958 cover is decorated in the style of a mock cave-painting, featuring an Indian warrior on horseback [figures 1.2 and 1.3]. Tucked between these editions are numerous yearbooks featuring Indians and pioneers, typically as the overall “theme” of a book but sometimes casually tossed into editions here-and-there, as if they are expected to appear.\textsuperscript{106} Their role in these pages is roughly divided into two categories: first, Indians commonly appear in juxtaposition to pioneers, not only when tucked in the corners and margins as artistic details but at times, when they are explicitly depicted in opposition to white figures. Images from the 1943 edition, for example, make it very clear that the pioneer and the Indian stand against one another [figure 3]. In this particular edition, the prevalence of the pioneer’s rifle suggests that a hunt is taking place, as though seeking out the Indian and obliterating him is indeed a part of the pioneer’s nature. This pioneer and others in various editions presumably represent Marcus Whitman;\textsuperscript{107} as he is the college’s namesake, it is perhaps implied that the Whitman community has inherited something (indeed, benefitted) from this role we see him playing in \textit{Waiilatpu}.

The second function of these illustrations is more complex. When Indians appear without pioneers by their side, it is because their image has been appropriated for the purpose of aesthetic, to create a certain mythic atmosphere that is presented as a representation of Whitman’s history. In addition to illustrations, Whitman students make use of key terms and stereotypes associated with Native Americans, such as \textit{chief}, \textit{tribe}, \textit{warfare}, and \textit{braves}; however, they do not use these terms in reference to Plateau Indians, but in reference to themselves. For example, the edition from 1916 is divided into categories: \textit{The Tribe}, \textit{Family Fires}, \textit{Intertribal Warfare}, Whitman \textit{History}, and \textit{The Medicine Man} [figure 4]. Most of these categories are stand-ins for the more

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{106} Is it possible to expect anomalies if we are conditioned to expect them in certain places?
\item \textsuperscript{107} While historical anecdotes in various editions praise Marcus for his missionary service, illustrations of him do not depict intellectual or religious duties; rather they emphasize a rugged, heroic quality more readily associated with pioneers and cowboys. Modifications over the years to \textit{The Missionaries} mascot suggest that he is depicted this way because the image of a missionary is not aggressive enough to conjure strong (fighting) emotions.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
traditional categories Activities, Clubs, etc., with the curious exception of Whitman History. (What does it suggest when this category appears in the midst of those other titles, such as *Intertribal Warfare* and *Medicine Man*? It is a blatantly explicit example of myth and (purported) history being woven together, just as Deloria warns us.) This is not to say that Whitman students intend to identify as Indians; to the contrary, it suggests that Plateau Indians are somehow deeply intertwined with early conceptions of the Whitman identity. Possibly, they appear because their images conjure exhilarating emotions that the image of Marcus Whitman cannot; if a missionary represents “civilization” (logic, refinement, etc.) in the settler-colonial imaginary, this is more readily demonstrated when depicted in contrast to its antithesis, “savagery.” Whitman’s mascot *The Missionaries* does not conjure very powerful imagery or an emotional response; however, the more exotic, aggressive, “savage” side of the institution’s mythology does (this, of course, is the role of the Indian).

Another possibility is that these images of Indians are also included as a means of identifying their place in Whitman’s history—which is to say, they supposedly belong in the past along with the abuses that settler-colonial society has tried to bury there.\(^{108}\) Similar to the recognition afforded to the Tribes by Treaty Rock, these images are the Whitman community’s way of simultaneously acknowledging the existence of Plateau Indians while asserting that their presence is restricted to certain roles in history (presumably, roles which correspond with the placement of their images on the page, such as in the margins, while settler-colonial society takes center-stage).

Of course, the illustrations in *Waiiltpu* are no longer deemed culturally appropriate and current Whitman students would hardly be fooled into mistaking such images as accurate representations and memories of local history. But similar traces of our ideology remain and

continue to vex the Whitman community, not least among them the various titles used on campus such as missionaries, pioneers, and the name of the yearbook itself, Waiilatpu. (In addition to Whitman’s yearbook, there is also an honors society, Order of Waiilatpu, which bears this name, giving it a special place in Whitman culture.) Unlike its ideological counterparts, The Missionaries and the Pioneer—and as of yet, un-“revised” as they have been—Waiilatpu appears to emerge from indigenous Plateau culture, not from settler-colonial society. It is peculiar that the Whitman community chooses to celebrate missionaries and pioneers (characters typically dedicated to annihilating indigenous populations and cultures) while simultaneously appropriating elements of Plateau Indian culture. Members of the CTUIR cultural and natural resource programs comment, “Since the first non-Indians arrived on our territory, there has been a continual misappropriation of our traditional knowledge and the land that has shaped it.”

The word Waiilatpu is but one example of this misappropriation.

The Whitman community historically translates Waiilatpu as “place of the rye grass,” but the spelling, definition, and usage of this word are all incorrect. First, recent publications with written Cayuse Nez Perce spell this word as Weyiiletpu, representing its pronunciation more accurately. Second, this word in fact refers to people (indicated by the suffix –pu), not place; “place of the rye grass” would instead be Weyiilet. Third, it is noted that the word for rye grass is not related to the word Weyiilet(pu), rather, the term refers to waving grass. So, whereas the Cayuse Nez Perce word Weyiiletpu refers to people of the waving grass, the English appropriation of it as “place of the rye grass” corresponds to a particular memory in settler-colonial society—a memory concerned with the land of the Plateau, but not its people, (since of course, settler-colonial society is dedicated to forgetting the people who already lived here). This

109 Eugene S. Hunn, Čáw Pawá Láakni = They Are Not Forgotten, 67.
110 Ibid., 125.
111 Ibid.
complicated fusion of myth, memory, and history—at times encompassed in a single word—
defines many aspects of Whitman’s ideology. When members of the Whitman community write
in defense of missionaries, pioneers, and perhaps soon, in defense of Waiilatpu as well, it is in
defense of what these words mean to settler-colonial society, in defense of that society’s
ideology and identity.

If we are to totally unravel the Whitman ideology, then we must consider it in a broader,
global context. The images in Waiilatpu are merely one localized manifestation of colonial
fantasies and anxieties, which brings us to one of the most raw and gruesome developments in
world history, wherein the white, Western identity was physically and violently forged by
various means. This project was most starkly embodied in human zoos, a phenomenon reaching
back as far as the earliest European explorations in the 15th Century.112 Human zoos, displays of
“exotic” peoples who were conquered by Western powers and collected for inspection and
entertainment, impacted the colonial public at large from the early 19th century roughly until
World War II. Pascal Blanchard, a leading scholar on the topic, notes that about thirty-five
thousand “savages” were displayed in over forty countries between 1810 and 1940, marking an
“indispensable stepping-stone in comprehending the process of the racialization of the public eye
and of ideas in the West.”113 At times, human zoos were permanent installations in large cities; at
other times, they were traveling circus acts and shows that brought these zoos to audiences
across continents. For white society, it was the human zoo that took the myth of the savage and
turned him into a reality; it was the human zoo that distinguished all the inferior races from the
superior one. Pascal explains that human zoos “responded to the fantasies and anxieties of the
West concerning other places, and lent reality to the racial discourse being constructed at that

113 Ibid., 7.
time, all the while responding to the expectations and the curiosity of the visitors.”

Thus they quite literally embodied the expectations and ideology described by Deloria. “In this way,” explains Pascal, “an imported, exhibited, measured, mounted, dissected, spectacularized, stage-adapted Other would be exhibited in the West, according to the expectations of a West in search of certainty in its role as ‘guide of the world,’ of ‘superior civilization.’” The Western gaze was therefore turned toward the Other not in an effort to understand the Other, but to understand his/her relation to white society.

The Waiilatpu yearbooks demonstrate a number of Pascal’s characterizations of the human zoo. Countless pages depicting the Other of the Plateau (which were mostly published within the apogee of the human zoo, between 1810 and 1940) are not an effort to remember, respect, or understand Plateau Tribes; rather they are an attempt to fortify the Whitman identity and to search for certainty in its role in Plateau history. Those figures reduced to an animal-like role are available for viewing, but it is never suggested that they might scrutinize us in return; the pages, like the human zoo, form an “irreducible barrier [a frontier?] between he who sees and he who is seen.” While it is unlikely that the students creating, viewing, and inhabiting the pages of Waiilatpu hoped to engage in such a profoundly racist practice, their intentions are in fact irrelevant. One may argue that those illustrations are merely a matter of aesthetic pleasure, historical and cultural interest, or a bit of “fun.” Pascal argues that these sentiments are not in spite of the human zoo, but part of it. “Human zoos pander to curiosity, a sense of aesthetics, and mobilize the surprise of the visitor much more so than they explain the –racializing—reasons that allow for the spectacularization of the Other,” he explains. “Thus ‘racists’ and ‘colonialists’ are

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114 Ibid., 1.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid., 5.
created through the ‘spectacle’ and the fun, without it even needing to be articulated or affirmed.”\(^{117}\)

The images in *Waiilatpu* were likely inspired by Buffalo Bill Cody and the *Wild West* show, which Pascal identifies as one of the most emblematic promotions of the human zoo on the North American continent (which took the form of the traveling circus from 1883 to 1913).\(^{118}\) Deloria describes the *Wild West* as “the first institution to link Indians, cross-cultural performance, ideological expectations, and mass audiences in significant ways.”\(^{119}\) By the time the show was created, white Americans had already been dressing up as Indians and performing “Indian plays” since the early 19\(^{th}\) century, followed by performances that Indians themselves organized to perform in front of a white audience, usually incorporating traditional practices and attire. Buffalo Bill introduced yet another genre of performance, one in which Indian people were paid to “act out dramatic roles in *white* national narratives, familiar stories of the frontier asserted to be historically accurate.”\(^{120}\) This technique (involving Indian people and live bison) added an element of reality that ultimately sealed the bond between myth and history. Deloria writes,

> The show’s insistence on its educational value rested on a claim of accuracy that seemed to go beyond theatrical representation. […] Grafted atop the relentless reality of these props—human and otherwise—were stories, familiar generic narratives of Indian attack and rescue. Not nearly as true as the props themselves, these narratives nonetheless reflected expectations so commonsensical as to have their own natural realism.\(^{121}\)

The *Wild West* show marked a significant transition in 19\(^{th}\) century America, one which called for careful navigation of racial tensions. The white American identity was not supposed to

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 3.
\(^{118}\) Ibid.
\(^{120}\) Ibid., 58.
\(^{121}\) Ibid., 60.
"How the West Was Won" brochure (inside content)
“How the West Was Won” brochure (cover)

[6] “Trails West” program cover
Whitman College and Northwest Archives, "Trails West" Collection
shift at this time, but rather, the image of the American Indian was meant to be pacified. Deloria marks the Battle at Wounded Knee as this turning point, when outright warfare between white Americans and Indians gave way to assimilation. He suggests that “a relatively old set of expectations—focused on the likelihood, perhaps even the certainty, of Indian violence… gradually gave way to newer expectations. […] by the turn of the twentieth century, last stands [such as Wounded Knee] were pieces of nostalgia, and Indian pacification was the prevailing expectation.” He continues,

The Wild West proved one of the great transitional institutions of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth. It managed the ideological tensions involving violence and pacification. It introduced large numbers of Indian people to wage labor and to the representation of Indianness for non-Indian audiences....Not only did the show perform the end of the American frontier; it quite literally embodied it.

The Wild West show was thus an elaborate—and perhaps darkly ingenious—fabrication of national ideology, inspiring smaller, localized efforts across the continent.

In Walla Walla, this phenomenon manifested itself in a series of pioneer pageants. These collaborative events between Whitman College and the Walla Walla community not only celebrated the Whitmans and the settler-colonial narrative, but gathered funds for the college and the Whitman Mission National Park and Museum, where the community could be continually educated about the Whitmans and their service as “martyrs in the cause of humanity.” The first of these pageants, titled “How the West Was Won,” (performed in 1923 and ‘24) was written by none other than Whitman President Stephen Penrose, to be followed by “Wagons West” in 1936 (performed in conjunction with the Whitman Centennial celebration of 1936, marking one hundred years since their arrival) and later, by the “Trails West” production of 1976 and ‘77.

123 Deloria, Indians in Unexpected Places, 20–21.
124 Ibid., 71–72.
125 Penrose, “‘How the West Was Won’ Script for Performance, (c) 1923.”
126 “‘Centennial Fulfills Promises,’ Walla Walla Union Bulletin, 30 September 1936.”
127 “‘Centennial Program, Whitman College Archives, Whitman Centennial Collection, 1.”
Though elements of artistic license changed throughout the years, several fundamental components remained consistent throughout these pageants: The Whitmans were depicted as nothing short of noble and brave, the “Whitman Massacre” was always a culminating point in the plot, and this defining part of the story was never interpreted as anything other than barbaric or evil.\(^{128}\) As we may anticipate by now, these productions mixed history with myth while positing themselves as educational opportunities. In his introduction to the script for “How the West Was Won,” Stephen Penrose explained that the theatrical performances included in the pioneer pageants were meant to convey history’s dramatic events “with accuracy;”\(^{129}\) meanwhile this assertion was accompanied by images, symbols, and statements which of course glorified the missionaries and pioneers responsible for “winning” the Plateau for settler-colonial society [figures 5.1 and 5.2].

More than just performances, the pioneer pageants called for thorough participation from the community. The pageants engaged up to thousands of locals, who partook in the festivities by dressing in bonnets and other colonial attire and by recreating the entire downtown area to resemble a pioneer town.\(^{130}\) Local news articles described the pioneer pageants as particularly powerful community-building enterprises, noted not only for the pride they instilled in Walla Walla but in the American identity as well. A Walla Walla Union Bulletin Report titled “United,” remarked: “long-time residents of Walla Walla say that citizens are more of one thought in connection with the Whitman Centennial than they have been before any other community

\(^{128}\) In the program for “Trails West,” some qualifying statements are added to the Whitman myth, suggesting that despite a growing acknowledgement of crimes against indigenous peoples, the writers were intent on maintaining the purity of the Whitmans’ image. For instance, one sentence in the historical background reads: “In an age careless of the rights of aborigines, the Whitmans were among the noblest of the western pioneers.” (“Trails West” program for performance, 7 July-10 September 1977, Whitman College Archives, “Trails West” Collection.)

\(^{129}\) Penrose, “‘How the West Was Won’ Script for Performance, (c) 1923.”

\(^{130}\) “‘Hi, Seattle! Comin’ Over? Walla Wallans in Spurs and Bonnetts.’ Seattle Post Intelligence, 8 August 1936.”
The Pioneer Pageant in 1923 was reported to provide a “better understanding of what it means to be an American Citizen.”

Similar to their role in the Waiilatpu yearbooks, Plateau Indians held a very specific function in these pageants. In the earliest productions, native women and children were absent; their male counterparts, however, made an appearance as the ultimate antithesis to the protagonists, Marcus and Narcissa. Flyers promoting the Whitman Centennial made this juxtaposition very clear, proclaiming:

Man . . .
SEE! The Native Red Man in full color of primitive romance
Horror
Of White Man's privation in a land of creeping redskins
Massacre
Or the REDMAN'S REVENGE
Civilization
of the last frontier

Again, however, we are also confronted with the Indian who is not explicitly represented as an enemy, but whose image has somehow (briefly) become the face of this community- and identity-building enterprise. The program cover for “Trails West” (1977) presents us with such an image, wherein the head of a chief looms in the background, while the head of a white man greets us in front of him [figure 6]. This juxtaposition suggests that it is the white man’s story we are about to witness, but it would not be as culturally significant without that figure lurking behind him. This juxtaposition also suggests that the Plateau Indians are quite literally behind settler-colonial society, situated firmly in the past. Yet again, we see how recognition functions as a means of limiting the Indian’s presence and upholding the settler-colonial

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131 “‘United,’ Walla Walla Union Bulletin, 3 August 1936.”
132 “‘The Pioneer Pageant “How the West Was Won” and What It Means to the Walla Walla Valley,’ Centershots, May 1923 Vol. 3 No. 5.”
133 “‘Wheel to Walla Walla’ Whitman College Archives, Whitman College Archives Whitman Centennial Collection.”
134 Gulick, “‘Trails West,’ Program for Performance.”
135 Coulthard, Red Skin, White Masks, 22.
narrative, whether this narrative is tailored to a specific location like Walla Walla or a broader, national ideology.

The historical narrative performed in the pageants, the illustrations in *Waiilatpu*, and the Whitman community’s frequent reference to missionaries, pioneers, and the frontier keep us connected to the settler-colonial ideology, which appears to be a very “real” representation of history based on the fact that narratives across the continent bear similar traits. Those who argue that the Whitman community is irrevocably bound to the legacy of missionaries and pioneers (“whether we like it or not”) make an accurate assertion; those who warn us against whitewashing the past raise a valid concern. But do *The Missionaries* and *the Pioneer* guard our history from obliteration, as these arguments suggest? If we understand these terms as ideological symbols rather than representations of history, then it becomes quite clear that remembering the past and chanting “Missionaries, missionaries, we’re on top!” do not go hand-in-hand. In fact, identifying as *Missionaries* and *Pioneers* is a hindrance to critical reflection, as we are hesitant to call our own identities into question, hesitant to reconsider what it means to be molded in the image of these figures.

I do not think it is the past itself that troubles us; rather, I think it is the realization that the past is present. Julie Roy Jeffrey notes that many modern endeavors are descended from the work of missionaries and pioneers, and though we call ourselves by different titles, our motives and consequences remain the same: “Today the mission is more likely to be economic than religious, and the workers more likely to be Peace Corps volunteers than missionaries. But the imperative to transform the other culture is the same, and so, too, frequently is the response.”

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136 Ibid., 17.
137 Jeffrey, *Converting the West*, xiii.
The assault on the Whitman identity and ideology therefore has profound implications in the present day, which many members of the Whitman community are not ready to confront. By defending missionaries and pioneers as figures of our history (and confining their abuses to the past), they protect themselves from recognizing how many of us have in fact inherited these roles directly through our education at Whitman College.

Finally, we must acknowledge the greatest flaw in their argument: what about the students here whose ancestors did not assume the roles of missionaries and pioneers in history? What of those whose ancestors possibly died at the hands of such figures? As it happens, these are many of the students who propose or actively support disassociating from missionaries and pioneers. If they refuse to identify with the icons and fantasies of settler-colonial society, do they belong here any less? Pascal’s analysis of the human zoo reveals that the historical Other—the “savage”—is just as integral to white, Western identity as missionaries and pioneers. It is the Other who suffers the violent consequences of colonial fantasies, who witnesses the gruesome forging of the settler-colonial identity. It is the Other who defines that identity. Students who have inherited this role (whether they are students of color, indigenous students, students from the Plateau Tribes) therefore have an equal—if not greater—claim to the Whitman identity. Having witnessed the violence of colonial identity and ideology first-hand, it is doubtful that these students encourage “erasing” history; to the contrary, their effort to dismantle Whitman’s fantasies is a call to recognize the history excluded by the frames in this community.
Conclusion

The colonial fantasies examined here are expressions of white supremacy, a force that not only served as justification for the American invasion of the Northwest Plateau, but as motivation for genocidal practices and policies. The roles of race and difference have thus been integral to the Whitman history, from Marcus and Narcissa’s effort to colonize the Plateau Tribes, to invasion, native dispossession, and the local establishment of settler-colonial society and identity. As a memorial to the Whitmans and a direct beneficiary of this history, Whitman College is not inclined to recognize the moral consequences of its existence; rather, in the interest of its own dignity, the institution remains deeply entrenched in the mythicization and glorification of American settler-colonialism on the Plateau. In a word, this is denial. And to be clear, what Whitman College continues to deny is its own inherent racism. It is especially troublesome that an institution of higher education manages to keep so many of its students and faculty from critically reflecting on its origin and identity; as this thesis has attempted to show, the perpetuation and preservation of colonial fantasies is fundamental to that process.

We have seen how these fantasies take a variety of forms, from the physical composition of the campus to the icons and historical figures that we uphold as part of the Whitman community’s collective identity. The fantasies of settler-colonial society are largely shaped by mechanisms of inclusion, exclusion, expectation, and anomaly—the tools necessary to build frames and narratives, which preserve specific, depoliticized interpretations of the past and subsequently protect settler-colonial society from viewing the politics (the race, the violence) which in fact define that history. Even as these frames and fantasies distance settler-colonial society from much of its own history, they remain tightly intertwined with it, thus producing an ideology that is riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions. In turn, the settler-colonial
ideology and discourse produce very tangible and often violent consequences, complicating their relationship with reality even further.

Colonial fantasies and frames are not concerned strictly with encompassing history; in many ways, they guide the future and uphold the colonial project.\textsuperscript{138} By including contemporary events such as President Murray’s installation address and the struggle to reject \textit{The Missionaries} mascot, this thesis challenges settler-colonial society’s frequent, structural attempts to contain the topic of colonialism and its abuses to the past.\textsuperscript{139} To consider this thesis a study of history would be shortsighted, as it in fact provides some crucial insights into the contemporary colonial fantasies of Whitman College, perhaps paramount among them “diversity.” Like the other fantasies examined here, diversity provides the settler-colonial society with a certain self-image and self-conception that tends to the colonial anxieties of our time (mainly, the desire to deny that this society and its identity are built upon a white supremacist ideology, which continues to reveal itself in contemporary law and policy). It provides a framework for recognizing the Other, interpreting the role of the Other, and even lends guidance to the white subject who is not sure how to engage with that Other. In this way, diversity is merely a continuation of the colonial project; as yet another fantasy, it is not the means to atoning for the racist legacy of Whitman College. Having emphasized the prominent role of settler-colonialism, this thesis encourages decolonization, not diversification (I topic I hope this thesis may prompt other students to explore). In brief, if the Whitman community wants to confront the violence of this institution—both past and present—we must first decolonize our understanding of ourselves.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{139} Coulthard, \textit{Red Skin, White Masks}, 22.
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