Plotting Counter Tactics to Erasive Strategies of Manifest Destiny within US Landscapes and National Parks

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For *Plotting Counter Tactics*, I propose to build a database that relates attributes of illustrations of US national parks—starting with a focus on Yosemite National Park—to government policies that affected the Indigenous populations living both in and around those same parks, and that tracks Indigenous communities' own engagement with these spaces. By tracking intersecting visual and political histories, I hope to provide quantitatively grounded answers to questions like: How are Indigenous communities represented by or within the narrative and visualization of Yosemite National Park? What is the story that images of US national parks tell? And how does it compare to the history and belief systems of Indigenous communities? Answering these questions also has implications for understanding how imperial practices and nation-building defined who an American citizen could be and who could be an inhabitant or custodian of the land in the United States.

Fig. 1. Aricka Wedlaw, word map representation of text related to Indigenous communities, from the essay "The Yo-ha-mite Valley and Its Waterfalls," *Hutchings' California Magazine*, no. 1 (July 1856): 2–8

Through a series of meetings that took place between the summer of 2020 and the summer of 2021 with *Panorama* editor Diana Seave Greenwald and project manager Johnathan Hardy, I began to re-envision my project and transform my approach in terms of the type of data I collect and the methods of visualization I seek to engage. From Greenwald, I gained models for applications of data to examine traditionally marginalized peoples and to grapple with questions about the dominance of particular canonical subjects in art history. Hardy supported my development and investigation of data organization and interpretation as well as the use of various software suites that are designed for geospatial, statistical, and network analysis.

My focus has turned to Yosemite National Park, as the first site to be nationally protected for public use in the United States. Reading the history of massacre and dispossession of Indigenous communities as part of the development of California's national parks prior to

Fig. 2. Aricka Wedlaw, word map representation of text related to national parks, from the essay "The Yo-ha-mite Valley and Its Waterfalls," *Hutchings' California Magazine*, no. 1 (July 1856): 2–8

my first trip to Yosemite in June made the visit surreal. Many of the popular spots to pose for photos are sites of violence, forced removal, and destruction of Indigenous villages. Teasing out and visualizing the simultaneous history of Indigenous and Anglo communities at Yosemite within a digital space is now a primary objective for this project.

During the summer of 2021, I led undergraduate students Erica Guenthner, Yvette Hernandez, and Aricka Wedlaw to collect data for the project as part of the CSU Channel Islands Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship. Among the types of data collected, we conducted word scrapes of significant texts to produce word maps focused on language about Indigenous communities and national parks to highlight the nature of thought related to both (figs. 1, 2). As my team began our data collection, stories began to emerge in newscasts and on social media about the uncovering of hundreds of bodies of Native American children who had been students at Anglo faith-based boarding schools where they were forced to live. The horror and sadness of this news made real the extent and magnitude of anti-Indigenous bigotry in the United States and ignited a fire in our data-collection efforts. I continue to build my collection of data on Yosemite National Park, working toward engaging StoryMaps and/or Omeka to visualize what has been collected thus far. This project is an effort to revise OUR histories to be inclusive of the meaningful lives Manifest Destiny and Anglo settler colonialism have otherwise buried and erased.