

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

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ABSTRACT

This essay traces key areas of scholarship constituting the domain of 'everyday postcolonial politics' in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, and the local terms and debates that inform, contextualise and animate them. We discuss how postcolonial studies in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia has been shaped by questions of its appropriateness or otherwise to analysis of local cultural politics, and the particular emphases it has developed to address that context. We then bring postcolonial studies together with the field of cultural studies more broadly, and its foundations in analyses of the 'everyday.' We argue that the proximity of postcolonial studies to cultural studies characterising the essays presented in this issue points to a specific conception of 'politics' that finds the priorities, concerns, and relations of power and resources, as integrally – even intimately – bound up with life at the everyday level; as inseparable from the social and semiotic regimes of representation, and as insisting on the necessary implication of the scholar and scholarship in its object of analysis.

The essays collected in this special issue were first presented at the *Postcolonial Politics Symposium*, organised and hosted by the University of Otago Postcolonial Studies Research Network in 2006.¹ They have been selected from the full programme of presentations on the basis of their focus on both the 'everyday' politics of postcoloniality – or the politics of 'everyday' postcoloniality – and on Aotearoa New Zealand and Australian contexts. To situate and introduce the essays that follow, we wish to trace some of the areas of scholarship constituting this 'everyday postcolonial politics', and the local terms and debates that inform, contextualise and animate them. Principal among these areas is, of course, postcolonial studies itself, shaped by questions of its appropriateness or otherwise to analysis of local cultural politics, and the particular emphases it has developed here. There is also the field of 'everyday life' studies,

which invokes a relation to cultural studies more broadly, and its foundations in analyses of the 'everyday.' The proximity of postcolonial studies to cultural studies characterising the essays presented here points to a specific conception of 'politics' that finds the priorities, concerns, stakes, and relations of power and resources, as integrally – even intimately – bound up with life at the everyday level; as inseparable from the regimes of representation that constitute our social and semiotic landscapes; and as insisting on the necessary implication of the scholar and scholarship in its object of analysis.

To invoke the 'postcolonial' in relation to Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia is already to enter a debate about its appropriateness and its timeliness. Practised in this region as a field that emerged out of the independence struggles of former British colonies in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean – those newly independent states from which the colonial powers by and large 'went home' – postcolonial studies has had more difficulty in encompassing the likes of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa within its terms. Scholarship concerning the 'decolonised' regions has focused on resistance struggles and the often difficult aftermath of the colonial departure; or on movement from the colonies to the metropolitan centres of empire and the ramifications of diasporic life. Until recently, there was little scholarship on the decolonising and post-independence political and cultural conditions of those states in which the descendants of the colonial power (the 'settlers') remained, and (excluding South Africa) constituted the majority of the population.

'Settler postcolonialism', as it is often termed, eventually developed its own scholarship in an effort to theorise the specificities of settler subjectivity, indigenous-settler encounters and exchanges, and the nature and histories of state- and social formations in which these relations are framed. The process of working out Aotearoa New Zealand's relation to the field of the postcolonial was well underway by the mid-1980s. In 1985, New Zealand literary scholar Michael Neill argued that if imperialism formed the substance of Pakeha or European history in Aotearoa, it would not be to Empire that we would look to make our own, but to other ex-colonies, 'set adrift with the ambiguous gift of freedom' (1985: 39). Neill proposed that such a view 'sideways' would replace the exilic structure of displacement – poet Allen Curnow's 'land of settlers/With never a soul at home' – with the uncanny encounter with the 'double' (1985: 39), signifying the undecidability of home and the unhomey as intrinsic to the formation of settler subjectivity. In the same year, Simon During posited the binary of 'postcoloniser' and 'postcolonised' as structuring subject-positions in this country, and argued a balance of discursive power, if not conventional political and economic power, such that the postcolonisers' crisis of legitimacy

was as forceful a contemporary cultural condition as the postcolonised's loss of land and language (1985: 370). He foresaw that New Zealand would be known as 'Aotearoa' in the near future, a mark of this country 'inevitably coming to know itself in Maori terms' (1985: 370). Nevertheless, the price of too early a reconciliation of postcolonising and postcolonised discourses would be the erasure of the otherness it sought to celebrate (1985: 373-4). Jonathan Lamb's 'Problems of Originality: Beware of Pakeha Baring Guilts' focused on the doubt that attaches to origins like 'home' (Lamb, 1986: 352), and argued that colonial history will not resolve into unity. He concluded that 'Aotearoans' should be 'grateful for the fragments they behold' and admonished them to set aside 'the project of self-collection' (1986: 358).

Australian scholar Alan Lawson was among the first to appropriate the term 'second world' for the particular cultural condition of settler societies, characterised by a sense of the 'second-ness' and 'secondariness' of their worlds (1991: 67), and by their ambiguous status as 'both imperialised and colonising' – not only encountering 'the other', but *being* 'the other' as well (1991: 68). By 1995, he had developed a broader account of settler subjectivity, pointing out that:

To overlook the particularity of the settler site, to collapse it into some larger and unspecified narrative of empire or metropolis, or even to exclude it from the field of the postcolonial altogether, is to engage in a strategic disavowal of the actual processes of colonization, a self-serving forgetting of the entangled agency of one's history as a subject with that of the displaced Native/colonized subject. (1995: 20)

Canadian literary scholar Stephen Slemon develops the implications, for textual practice, of recognition of the specificity of postcolonialism in 'settler societies,' arguing that:

the *illusion* of a stable self/other, here/there binary division has *never* been available to Second-World writers, and ... as a result the sites of figural contestation between oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized, have been taken *inward* and *internalized* in Second-World post-colonial textual practice. By this I mean that the *ambivalence* of literary resistance itself is the 'always already' condition of Second-World settler and post-colonial literary writing, for in the white literatures of Australia, or New Zealand, or Canada, or southern Africa, anti-colonial resistance has *never* been directed

at an object or a discursive structure which can be seen as purely external to the self. (1990: 38)

However, Canadian theorist Linda Hutcheon suggests that ‘when Canadian culture is called post-colonial today the reference is very rarely to the Native culture, which might be the more accurate historical use of the term.... theirs should be considered the resisting post-colonial voice of Canada’ (1991: 172). Yet the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and Canada (and the United States, whose relation to postcoloniality and postcolonial studies is further complicated by its neo-imperialising role in the contemporary world) often explicitly reject the term ‘postcolonial’ precisely on the grounds that they are not postcolonial but still colonised, now less by Britain than by the settler majority and the state developed to serve its interests. Thomas King, a writer of Cherokee and Greek descent, argues that ‘postcolonial’ is a term that remains ‘hostage to nationalism’ (1990: 12), cutting indigenous writers off from their own traditions by implicitly identifying (literary) history with the advent of Europeans in Canada. He concludes that however limited or flawed alternative terms for the condition of indigenous culture and cultural production may be, ‘I cannot let post-colonial stand – particularly as a term – for, at its heart, it is an act of imagination and an act of imperialism that demands that I imagine myself as something I did not choose to be, as something I would not choose to become’ (1990: 16). Referring to the specifically postcolonial theorisation of colonial mimicry and hybridity, primarily associated with the work of theorist Homi K. Bhabha (see Bhabha 1994), Chadwick Allen suggests that, ‘While useful in a general sense, this theory of postcolonial hybridity offers no terms by which to account for the ways indigenous minorities ... might not deconstruct but rather *re-recognize* the authority of particular colonial discourses, such as treaties, for their own gain’ (2000: 61). Indigenous Australian scholar, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, also takes issue with particular emphases in postcolonial theory, arguing that its utility ‘lies in its ability to reveal the operations of counter-hegemonic discourses’ but that ‘it does so through the metaphor of migrancy that ... can say very little about the effects, or the positionalities, multiplicities and specificities of Indigenous subjects’ (2003: 28). When she refers to ‘migrants’ differing implications in a colonizing relationship between themselves and the Indigenous people’ (2003: 29), she alludes to the persistence of colonialism as a basis for the indigenous rejection of the notion of *postcolonialism*. Danish scholar Eva Rask Knudsen embraces this distancing from the postcolonial when she maintains that attempts to read literary texts in a way that understands an indigenous perspective:

reveal[s] that postcolonial theory – despite the fact that it has liberated non-European literature written in English from an outdated universalizing form of criticism – is by no means always emancipating; its attempt to homogenize the postcolonial world vis-à-vis Europe may seem inadequate and perhaps even unfortunate to the indigenous writer or reader. (2004:3)

Nevertheless, acknowledging the validity of these arguments, we maintain that ‘postcolonial’ analysis of ‘settler-indigenous’ societies was never founded on a conviction that colonialism was ‘over’ with, but rather on the premise that analysis of social, political and cultural questions – of relations among indigenous and non-indigenous peoples (‘settler’ or newer immigrant), of the possibilities for dismantling persistent legacies of colonial power relations, of forging a decolonised society – requires explicit critical attention to colonialism and our colonial past itself, and to its continuities in contemporary political, social and cultural life. We suggest that indigenous studies often explicitly, and inevitably at least implicitly, deal with historical and contemporary questions of indigeneity in the context of colonial legacies; whether or not this context is the focus of inquiry, it is the context of the field itself, its questions and its practices. In short, what makes the scholarship ‘postcolonial’ is its theoretical and critical commitment to a politics of decolonisation in all spheres, and much of the contention within the field concerns quite what this would mean.

Our argument for postcolonial scholarship’s theoretical and critical commitment to a politics of decolonisation is informed by, and works through, the debate around the relationship between theory and politics. The likes of Aijaz Ahmad (1995) and Neil Lazarus (1999), for instance, argue that the postcolonial is apolitical (Ahmad) and indulges in ‘idealist’ (read ‘theoretical’) scholarship (Lazarus). However, our position refuses to recognise a clear ‘theory’/‘politics’ split, a refusal that leans on Homi Bhabha’s point that the founding polemicisation of such a split is ‘a sign of political [im]maturity’ (1994: 21), and a conceptual naivety because it does not recognise that ‘theory’ and ‘politics’ are ‘both forms of discourse and to that extent they produce rather than reflect their objects of reference’ (1994: 21).

Postcolonial studies is founded on a long tradition of political engagement, scholarship, and cultural activity in the broadest sense; essentially its foundations lie in the responses of colonised peoples around the world to the policies and practices of imperialism and its colonial translations. A more recent history identifies it with the work of political and cultural activists and analysts engaging with the mid-twentieth-century independence struggles of South

Asian, African, and Caribbean states. However, postcolonial studies, in the form in which it is familiar within the contemporary western academy, developed through the 1980s as a field within the larger context of the 'new humanities' – fields both productive of and accommodated by the emergence of new '[institutional] spaces in which to pioneer new kinds of knowledge which in some cases occur at the interstices of the old taxonomies, and in other cases outside them altogether' (Ruthven, 1992: vii). Along with areas such as women's studies, cultural studies, and multicultural studies, postcolonial studies sought to 'foreground the exclusions and elisions which confirm the privileges and authority of canonical knowledge systems', and to recover 'those marginalised knowledges which have been occluded and silenced by the entrenched humanist curriculum' (Gandhi, 1998: 42). However, by the early 1990s postcolonial studies was increasingly regarded as having been eclipsed by the more pressing and comprehensive concerns of globalisation – though ironically also as having been raised to the level of the global itself. On the one hand, Simon During has posited that 'the proliferation of terms dividing the globe occurs at a moment when it is also possible to describe the world by a single term – as "postcolonial"' (1992: 39), and on the other, scholars such as Arif Dirlik (1994) and Graham Huggan (2001) critique the complicity of postcolonial studies and postcoloniality, respectively, with the political and semiotic economies of globalisation itself. Arif Dirlik, for instance, is critical of postcolonial studies' failure to recognise 'its own status as a possible ideological effect of a new world situation after colonialism' (1994: 331) while Huggan distinguishes (anti-colonial) postcolonialism from postcoloniality, which he identifies as 'closely tied to the global market' and as capitalising on 'the worldwide trafficking of culturally "othered" artefacts and goods' (2001: 28). Nevertheless, he echoes Dirlik when he warns that 'postcolonialism is *bound up with* postcoloniality; that in the overwhelmingly commercial context of late twentieth-century commodity culture, postcolonialism and its rhetoric of resistance have themselves become consumer products' (2001: 6). These challenges, we argue, must be confronted in contemporary postcolonial studies, and the problematic they invoke directly underlies essays by Craw, Pistacchi and Maxwell in this issue.

Much debate around the implications of globalisation for the continuing political viability of postcolonial critique has been provoked by Hardt and Negri's argument in *Empire* (2000). They suggest that in the times of imperial sovereignty marking the current global order postcolonial critique has no purchase; it is ineffective because the structure, form and flow of power has been reconstituted. What marks the time and space of 'today' is a shift away from the older arrangement of power invested in the nation-state to a new form that

is much more diffused, that 'establishes no territorial centre of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentered and deterritorialising apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers' (2000: xii). Given this shift, they continue, the radicality of postcolonial critique comes under question because it continues to focus upon 'the world of modern sovereignty ... a Manichean world, divided by a series of binary oppositions that define Self and Other, white and black, inside and outside, ruler and ruled' (2000: 139). In short, for Hardt and Negri, postcolonial critique 'fail[s] to recognize adequately the contemporary object of critique, that is, they mistake today's real enemy' (2000: 137). In this new paradigm of power, a politics of difference which threatens modern sovereignty, and which is affirmed in both the anti-colonial and postcolonial critique that we see in the works of Fanon and Bhabha, for instance, is seen as ineffective because difference is now the norm, part of the new sovereign power.

While we agree that the constitution of sovereign power now takes on a new form, structure and flow, and that difference is the norm within postmodernity's economy of signification, Hardt and Negri overlook the ability of postcolonial critique to respond to this shifting constitution of power. The work of Achille Mbembe (2001) for instance testifies to the productivity of postcolonial critique for addressing the new sovereign constitution of power. Further, we argue, because 'difference' is now appropriated and enmeshed into the global circuits of power, the political motivation to critique 'difference', indeed the appropriation of difference, becomes more urgent and pressing. This is all the more the case because inasmuch as difference has become part of the global order, there are differences that continue to be rejected, marginalised and oppressed: the various forms of violence and violation experienced by asylum-seekers, refugees, indigenous communities, and migrants (legal or otherwise) that we witness as part of the new sovereign form of power reveal that there are some differences whose appropriation is to the 'other' side of the divide. Thus Hardt and Negri's universalist conception of the relationship between difference and imperial sovereignty is problematic; more crucially it reminds us that these 'unappropriated' differences are foundational to the legitimacy of contemporary sovereign power. The use of the lives of asylum-seekers and migrants to consolidate the territorial, political, social and cultural sovereignty of the nation-state shores up the centrality and necessity of these 'unappropriated' differences to the legitimacy of the nation-state. The self/other, inside/outside, citizen/foreigner binary – that Manichean dialectic, which Hardt and Negri suggest is not a feature of contemporary sovereign power and which was the focus of postcolonial critique – has not completely disappeared, and

as such the proposition that postcolonial critique has no currency to challenge the constitution of power today is suspect. We affirm the value of postcolonial critique as committed to a politics of decolonisation, whose focus, energy and force must address precisely the concerns that animate the global present.

While the relationship between postcolonialism and globalisation remains a contentious question – one strongly engaged within as well as outside postcolonial studies – the postcolonial has more recently been challenged not only by the growth of interdisciplinary indigenous studies in both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, but also by ‘settlement studies’ in Aotearoa New Zealand, and ‘whiteness studies’ in Australia, perhaps in a kind of ‘rebranding’ abreaction to its supposed eclipse by globalisation. Settlement studies is defined by Alex Calder and Stephen Turner as investigating ‘the ways in which foundational problems of settlement are enacted, repeated, modified and continued in literature, art, and other cultural forms’ (2002: 9). They privilege a local focus and reject postcolonialism’s alleged binary of ‘active coloniser’ and ‘passive colonised’ in favour of settlement studies’ account of coloniser and colonised ‘mutually transformed in the complexities of encounter and exchange’ (2002: 8). However, their project of differentiating settlement studies from postcolonial studies is debatable to the extent that it is founded on a reductive representation of the local sophistication that postcolonialism has developed, attentive to the very need to theorise local conditions, and to what philosophical and comparative perspectives can bring to this project. Both settlement studies and whiteness studies constitute critiques of ‘settler’ and ‘white’ subjectivities in encounter and engagement with, on the one hand, colonial power, and on the other, indigenous peoples. Indeed, Young’s essay in this issue explicitly affirms ‘critical whiteness theory’ in scrutinizing Australian social work practices of Indigenous child protection as a contribution to the topic of postcolonial politics.

Although the symposium’s rubric of ‘Postcolonial Politics’ was deliberately left open to interpretation, the vast majority of those focusing on Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand were concerned with the politics of indigeneity, the politics of settler subjectivity, or the kinds of questions that emerge across these subject positions and interests, and the political and social formations that bring them into relation with one another. Of course there are innumerable diversities and contradictions in the constitution of these very subjectivities and interests. However, the bi-cultural (if not explicitly ‘bicultural’) emphasis of a number of papers is consistent with the strong tradition of New Zealand scholarship on questions around biculturalism published in *Sites* over the years, with issues such as *Sites* 18 (Winter 1989), *Sites* 30 (Autumn 1995),

and *Sites* (New Series) 2:1 (2005) being only samples among those over the last three decades containing influential essays on the subject. *Sites* has also published work on the particular New Zealand meanings and politics of multiculturalism, and we regret that papers presented at the symposium on this topic were unavailable for publication. On the other hand, we were interested to see Australian papers suggesting a turn to questions of indigenous-settler relations and politics, given its own stronger tradition of scholarship on multiculturalism. Lawn's and Young's essays speak directly into this intensification of concern with indigenous-non-indigenous Australian relations, and Craw's essay investigates one way in which the dangers of a commodified and commodifying 'reconciliation' haunt such social relations.

While a broadly 'bi-cultural' emphasis characterises these essays, they also reflect the interdisciplinarity of both the symposium, and of the broader field of postcolonial studies. The symposium drew papers from academics in the arts and humanities disciplines, as well as social sciences, physical education, commerce and even life sciences. Once again, aiming for coherence within this particular collection, the essays here tend to come from the arts and humanities, from the fields of literary studies, media studies, cultural studies, but also indigenous studies and social work studies. Within most of those, however, the authors at least trouble the boundaries that define the disciplines in traditional terms, entering into dialogue with objects, events, theoretical concerns, and practices that cannot be so clearly delimited as 'proper' objects of particular disciplines. Thus they can be situated within the broad field of cultural studies, and in focus and method they are consistent with some more precise accounts of what constitutes cultural studies in this region.

Definitions of, and claims to, cultural studies are of course somewhat contested ground both locally and internationally, for both scholarly and institutional reasons. Cultural studies within, or deriving from, the British tradition differs significantly from that in the United States, or in Europe. In Australasia, a selective combination of these influences, along with the specificities of the local conditions and traditions, has shaped its regional 'base' with the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia. Even here, 'cultural studies' has been taken up to name academic programmes, departments, and schools – just as Alex Calder observed in the growth of schools of 'This, That and Cultural Studies' in Australia (2004:102) – over the last decade. It has been used to name work done in many different, and sometimes even incompatible ways. At the same time, Australia has forged its 'cultural studies' out of its own institutional, intellectual and political conditions, and the rather different political, cultural and academic history of Aotearoa New Zealand has seen a further 'indigenisation' of the global field here.

Originally named *Sites: A Journal for Radical Perspectives on Culture*, the journal of the New Zealand Cultural Studies Working Group, Massey University, Palmerston North, *Sites* was among the first journals to publish work that represented cultural studies in this country. Produced by the Department of Social Anthropology and Maori Studies, the journal's commitment to the study of cultural questions was located within Left scholarship and a perspective on culture as inherently political, and as well as the traditional academic readership, the journal sought to represent professionals in the broadly cultural sphere as well as 'activists engaged in specific struggles' (Journal Policy Statement). Indeed, Steve Matthewman states in the introduction to *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand*, that the book was in part a response to the lack of a suitable teaching text for a cultural studies course, one that would locate cultural studies in Aotearoa-New Zealand, a situation 'compounded by the demise of the [first series of the] journal *SITES*' (2004: ix).

However, Alex Calder writes from a position within New Zealand literary-cultural studies when he points to the importance of the 1980s journal *AND* as heralding a cultural studies scholarship that, while endorsing the left-oriented work concerned with political struggles, or the 'race and gender themes' that characterise other international journals, adds the definitive element of "sustained critical engagement with the regimes of representation that have become a characteristic and peculiarly pervasive feature of the way power is exercised in contemporary societies" (2004: 103). He argues that this definition 'excludes many academics who think they do cultural studies because they study culture; an understandable assumption, but poor brand recognition.... An interest in popular culture doesn't always go hand in hand with an interest in reading its representations closely or well' (2004: 104). The essays in this issue of *Sites* all demonstrate this emphasis on the politics – the stakes, the problems and limitations, as well as possibilities – of representation(s) as fundamental to their articulation of the contemporary postcolonial condition in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Representation – *representing* in both political and image-making and -circulation senses – is central to the question of state and/or personal apologies to indigenous peoples, discussed in Lawn's essay, and to media accounts of the so-called 'terror raids' carried out in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2007, discussed by Devadas. Pistacchi's reading of the dynamics of cultural appropriation in Paula Morris's fiction, and Young's discussion of social work practices around the 'protection' of indigenous children in Australia also bring questions of 'who speaks for whom' together with 'what kinds of images are produced and circulated' to bear on their topics. Craw's examination of 'representations of' nature and the indigenous in food packaging, and Maxwell's exploration of the contribution that postcolonial

literary studies might make to negotiating the effects of global warming similarly combine the stakes in particular subject positions and the implications of image-production and consumption.

The present essays are further consistent with this cultural studies tradition in their attention to ‘everyday’ objects and practices, and indeed to the very constitution of the hegemonic ‘everyday’. At the same time, they indicate that its shadow – that which presents as the exception, the event – may only alibi another – the other’s – experience of the everyday. The ‘everyday’ or ‘everyday life’ has been one of the defining characteristics of cultural studies as a field, its stock-in-trade, its object of analysis. Influential scholarship on everyday life reaches back in the British tradition to the work of such figures as Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams; and in the European tradition to the work of Henri Lefebvre, Roland Barthes and Michel de Certeau; while Stuart Hall, John Fiske, Ben Highmore, Judith Williamson, and Rita Felski are among important figures in more contemporary cultural studies attention to everyday life. Cultural studies accounts of everyday life are generally undertaken in the effort, if not to valorise it – risking specious discoveries of ‘subversion’ in “every piece of pop culture from Street Style to Soap Opera” (Williamson, 14–15, cited in Morris, 1988: 3) – then at least to avoid bracketing it as unworthy of serious concern, in favour of the heroic, the catastrophic, the exception.

Local cultural studies engagements with the everyday has seen conferences, books and journals devoted to examining the subject in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. As Matthewman argues in the introduction to *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ‘Cultural Studies takes objects and practices of the everyday, of the popular, and elevates them above the dross, to – in Perec’s phrase – “give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what is, of what we are” (2004: ix). In 2004, the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia hosted its annual conference on the subject of ‘Everyday Transformations: the Twenty-First Century Quotidian’, and in the Introduction to an issue of *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* publishing papers from this conference, Mark Gibson and Debbie Rodan refer to transformations in both social, technological, political, economic, environmental dimensions of contemporary everyday life, and in the motivations for and significance of attention to the everyday in cultural studies. They invoke the tension between the usual association of the everyday with notions of ‘pattern, order, routine’, and the ‘rapid and unsettling change’ that has characterised everyday life contemporarily (2005: 439). However, they point to work that complicates the contrast between the routine or mundane everyday and the exceptional, the strange, the event, in a focus on certain uncanny moments of the unfamiliar

inhabiting the familiar (2005: 441–2). Indeed, while image saturation threatens to foster indifference by assimilating the event back into the routine, figures of the uncanny offer an implicit critique of the presumptive notion of ‘the’ everyday. On the other hand, they draw attention to another contribution that suggests the value of ‘dissolving the aura of Aboriginal “difference”, paving the way for an acceptance of relations between white and black as ordinary, unexceptional’ (2005: 442).

In a related vein, a conference entitled ‘Everyday Multiculturalisms’ was hosted in 2006 by the Centre for Research in Social Inclusion at Macquarie University. Following the Cronulla riots of 2005, it sought to focus on the quotidian aspects of living in multicultural Australia, rather than on policy and promotional claims *about* multiculturalism as such. Work in this area would complement that of Ghassan Hage on ‘everyday racism’ as represented in his *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (1998). Hage deconstructs the presumed opposition between (good) multiculturalism and (evil) racism in the Australian context, revealing a racist underpinning to ‘benign’ multicultural ‘tolerance’, predicated on affective dimensions of a sense of belonging to, and ‘ownership of’ the nation, including ‘tolerance’ or ‘worry’ (10). Hage’s concern is, again, with how multiculturalism is lived, rather than statements about what it is or is not (cf. Hage, 1998: 18).

The essays presented in this issue of *Sites* deal with such ‘everyday’ topics as shopping and eating (Craw), reading and storytelling (Pistacchi, Maxwell), media (Lawn, Devadas), and raising families (Young), to examine some of the general and more specific frameworks in which we live our lives, and some of the more specific – if also quotidian – practices in which we engage in postcolonial Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. In that sense, although they are theoretically informed, theory itself is less the focus of attention than critical analysis of specific cultural sites and practices. Yet perhaps of most significance in the relationship between cultural studies’ constitutive attention to the everyday, and the invocation of the ‘everyday postcolonial’ or ‘postcolonial everyday’, is the Gibson and Rodan’s reference to various ‘others’ of the everyday, such as ‘the heroic’, ‘the event’, and ‘leisure’ (2005: 441). This is certainly consistent with the centrality of postcolonialism’s concern with otherness, with others, or ‘the other’. Yet we would affirm the further step of displacement of the very opposition between such terms as exception and routine that many of the essays in the present issue of *Sites* reveal. Some of us are more subject than others to official intervention in raising our children; routine grocery shopping confronts us with lure of the exotic, of difference, and excitement in the marketing strategies surrounding daily consumer items; and although newspapers,

television and on-line media are part of our everyday information landscape, some of us find ourselves represented within them as routine exceptions to the rule of law and state sovereignty, to social order – indeed to ‘national identity.’ Apologies to indigenous peoples for colonial injustices and their legacies do not happen every day, and indeed could be seen as constitutively belated. On the other hand, such an event has the potential to exceed its confinement to a specific act and to facilitate a reorientation of on-going everyday indigenous/non-indigenous relations at state, civic and even community levels. Similarly, state-sanctioned military or police raids on indigenous communities appear as exceptional moments that perhaps deflect attention from the ‘ordinary’ presence of state, police or other agencies of control in, or on the horizon of, indigenous daily life.

Against the notion of ‘the everyday’, then, emerges the vital question: whose everyday? This is one of the pivotal points in James Procter’s account of ‘the postcolonial everyday’. Procter explores the proposition, on the one hand, that ‘the everyday is that which postcolonial studies leave behind’ in its attention to catastrophe, war, pivotal or heroic moments, and ‘exceptional’ states such as exile or migrancy, indeed difference itself. On the other hand, he considers the problem of postcolonial scholarship becoming mundane, routine or quotidian, a matter of citing the same names in formulaic vocabulary to repeat theoretical and critical insights detached from the conditions that produced them (2006: 62). The notion of the ‘everyday postcolonial’ is thus both tautological and something of a departure from much postcolonial scholarship. Nevertheless, Procter affirms Ato Quayson’s conviction that ‘a critical analysis of the everyday must be central to any ethical “postcolonializing practice”’ (2006: 63; citing Quayson, 46). The question of ‘whose everyday?’, cognisant of the radical diversity and contingency of everyday life at a planetary level, is thus also attentive to Keya Ganguly’s point that it can be, for some, “‘routinely catastrophic”’ (2006: 65; citing Ganguly, 2).

The papers in this issue explore the terrain of everyday cultural politics of post-coloniality, refusing the ‘distance’ of elite knowledges in favour of emphases on the involvement and implication of the authors in their areas, practices and objects of study. They offer instances of knowledge production at the interstices of traditional disciplinary areas, and they affirm the ‘necessary coalition between thought and everyday life’ (Gandhi 1998: 62). Further, they contribute to the questions of what a postcolonial perspective brings to the study of the culture of everyday life, and what a focus on everyday cultural politics brings to the field of postcolonial studies.

Jenny Lawn's essay, 'Settler Society and Postcolonial Apologies in Australia and New Zealand' takes up the question of apologies delivered to the indigenous peoples of these nation-states for injustices emerging out of colonial policies and practices, but with a twist; instead of focusing on what these mean for the recipients of the apologies, as most scholarship on this topic understandably does, she asks what they mean for 'settler' subjectivity. She contrasts the 'groundswell of organic community support' that led eventually to Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology with the 'carefully managed, confidential, and heavily bureaucratised machinery of Treaty negotiations' in Aotearoa-New Zealand, suggesting that Australian Sorry Day rituals indicated a desire to 'build relations of empathy between non-indigenous settler society and indigenous Australians', thus 'testing the boundaries between the moral responsibility of settler society and that of the State.'

In 'The Flavours of the Indigenous' Charlotte Crow examines the packaging and marketing of Australian foods in ways that draw on notions of the 'natural' and the 'native'. She shows through a selection of specific examples of food packaging how these values are attached to the national branding to authenticate products as 'genuinely Australian' while eliding the complexities involved in such territorialisation. Her essay offers a critique of the contemporary production of difference, predicated on what Rey Chow calls 'the surplus value of the oppressed'. Revealing that foods marketed in these terms do not necessarily have any actual association with Indigenous culture or commercial enterprise, Crow is particularly concerned with the process whereby the indigenous is naturalised and neutralised, reduced to a marker of 'palatable and profitable' difference.

Ann Pistacchi's essay, "Any dead bodies we can exhume?" Story-Blood and the Politics of Cultural Appropriation in Paula Morris's *Queen of Beauty*, *Hibiscus Coast*, and "Rangatira" discusses fictional works that take cultural appropriation as theme, and storytelling itself as subject to such processes. Combining her own readings of the literary works with Paula Morris's reflections on the subject, Pistacchi suggests that beyond – and to some extent unaccounted for in – legal breaches of copyright lie ethical issues complicated by the power differential that disadvantages indigenous stories in a literate culture. However, while registering the vulnerability of stories to decontextualisation, commodification, and loss of status in this context, she also acknowledges the possibility of preservation and tribute effected by their recording and circulation. Similarly ambivalent is the question of the role of the 'family historian', who from an 'insider' point of view, can open stories to international publication. Pistacchi argues that the questions raised by such practices necessarily remain

open and to be grappled with by readers of the works.

In ‘Postcolonial Literary Criticism and Global Warming’, Anne Maxwell also focuses on literary questions, situating her analysis of George Turner’s short story, ‘The Fittest’ (1985) within the broader question of the role of literary criticism in postcolonial studies, and the role of postcolonial studies in a world grappling with the social, political, economic and environmental issues facing the world under globalisation. Referring to postcolonialism’s so-called ‘crisis of relevancy’ in this latter context, she argues there has been a resurgence of postcolonialism’s traditional concerns with the legacies of empire and the sovereignty of the nation-state in the wake of such events as the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, and in postcolonial literary studies with the emergence of the field of eco-criticism. Maxwell follows her account of important founding works in this area with a reading of Turner’s story, set in Melbourne after a catastrophic rise in sea levels that has produced not only a changed landscape but new kinds of social injustice. She argues that with its characteristic concern with ‘comportment toward the “other”’ postcolonial literary criticism has a vital role to play in showing how such works can encourage the reader to engage critically with possible futures.

Susan Young’s essay, ‘Indigenous Child Protection Policy in Australia: Using Whiteness Theory for Social Work’, invokes critical Whiteness theory, paying attention to the ‘practices of power that emerge from the unacknowledged privilege of Whiteness’, to argue that an epistemological, policy and practical race privilege is accorded to whiteness in the social work profession, derived from that profession’s colonial heritage. Young points to social work’s presumed rights of definition of care and abuse, its selective emphasis on some problems while neglecting other, often more pervasive ones, and the unexamined recourse to certain interventions and strategies for dealing with them, as examples of such privilege. She points out, for instance, that Indigenous children are removed from their families at a far higher rate than non-Indigenous children – a situation with clear colonial resonance. Young challenges social work agencies and practitioners to develop new and decolonising processes that address child protection in Indigenous communities in partnership with those communities, recognising the knowledges, skills and strategies that already exist within them.

In ‘15 October 2007, Aotearoa: Race, Terror and Sovereignty’, Vijay Devadas’s discussion of what became known as the ‘anti-terror raids’ conducted in a range of sites around Aotearoa New Zealand, argues that both policing strategies and media coverage combined to produce ‘a racialised moral panic

around terrorism.’ Devadas focuses on the online print media coverage of the raids, which he reads with reference to the works of Mbembe, Agamben, and Foucault, to suggest that through processes of racialisation, and the conflation of demands for indigenous sovereignty with threats to nation-state sovereignty, the coverage instantiated ‘media necropower’. Arguing that despite the invocation of a ‘state of exception’, the raids reveal the sovereignty of the nation-state as predicated upon persistent racism. What took place that day, Devadas maintains, casts an entirely different light on Aotearoa New Zealand’s self-image as a successfully bicultural postcolonial nation. If the apology issued to Indigenous Australians pointed to the will to bring about justice and a relation of reconciliation with non-Indigenous Australians, this final essay throws such optimistic historical moments back into question in disturbing ways.

Between them, these essays mark the urgency of inquiring how everyday life in postcolonial states connects with larger circulations of power and capital, and larger questions concerning identity, ethics and rights. We would like to thank the editorial board at *Sites* for providing us a space for a discussion on the postcolonial everyday to take place, and the anonymous referees for all their work in helping us to bring this issue together. We would also like to thank Ruth Fitzgerald, general editor of *Sites*, for managing the review process for this introductory article.

NOTES

- 1 It should be noted that the essay by Vijay Devadas was not presented at the conference, but has been subsequently included here for its contribution to the issue of the postcolonial everyday. We would like to thank Ruth Fitzgerald, general editor of *Sites*, for managing the review process for this essay.

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