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The Ethical Demands of Settler Colonial Theory

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This article explores the strengths and limitations of settler colonial theory (SCT) as a tool for non-Indigenous scholars seeking to disturb rather than re-enact colonial privilege. Based on an examination of recent Australian academic debates on settler colonialism and the Northern Territory intervention, we argue that SCT is useful in dehistoricizing colonialism, usually presented as an unfortunate but already transcended national past, and in revealing the intimate connections between settler emotions, knowledges, institutions and policies. Most importantly, it makes settler investments visible to settlers, in terms we understand and find hard to escape. However, as others have noted, SCT seems unable to transcend itself, in the sense that it posits a structural inevitability to the settler colonial relationship. We suggest that this structuralism can be mobilized by settler scholars in ways that delegitimize Indigenous resistance and reinforce violent colonial relationships. But while settlers come to stay and to erase Indigenous political existence, this does not mean that these intentions will be realized or must remain fixed. Non-Indigenous scholars should challenge the politically convenient conflation of settler desires and reality, and of the political present and the future. This article highlights these issues in order to begin to unlock the transformative potential of SCT, engaging settler scholars as political actors and arguing that this approach has the potential to facilitate conversations and alliances with Indigenous people. It is precisely by using the strengths of SCT that we can challenge its limitations; the theory itself places ethical demands on us as settlers, including the demand that we actively refuse its potential to re-empower our own academic voices and to marginalize Indigenous resistance.

For many decades, postcolonial theory has shaped global scholarship of colonialism, and this has tended to obscure the ongoing hierarchies of settler states.¹ However, building on the theoretical contributions of Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini, increasing numbers of scholars are beginning to think about settler colonialism as a specific political formation. Importantly, this work draws a distinction between settler states and formally decolonized societies, and acknowledges that postcolonial does not 'mean the same thing as post-settler colonial'.² While this movement may be animated by and in sympathy with major developments in critical Indigenous theory and global Indigenous activism,³ settler colonial theory (SCT) remains a largely White attempt to think through contemporary colonial relationships. Like us, most settlers who use the theoretical framework are concerned to disturb rather than re-enact colonial hierarchies, and seek to contribute to Indigenous political struggles. However, Indigenous scholars have not always embraced the theory and it has been met with scepticism by some engaged in challenging colonialism.⁴ This article seeks to make explicit SCT's current location as a primarily settler framework, and to explore its strengths and limitations in this context. While we do not suggest that SCT can only ever be used by settlers, we frame our discussion in relation to the current political and theoretical dynamics of its use.

In the Australian context, SCT is an appealing interpretive framework for academics seeking to understand the state's increasingly coercive approach to Indigenous people. It has had a particularly significant presence in Australian academic debates over the Commonwealth government's Northern Territory (NT) Emergency Response (widely known as 'the

intervention'). Adopted with bipartisan support in 2007 following allegations of widespread abuse of children in remote Aboriginal communities, the intervention involves the imposition of controversial and coercive measures such as racially based welfare quarantining, alcohol and pornography bans, and the imposition of compulsory leases over Aboriginal land. The policy essentially understands Aboriginal communities as 'insufficiently colonised zones',⁵ and its introduction required the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. This pathologizing of Aboriginal communities links Aboriginality to child abuse, prescribes additional interaction with the state and mainstream economy, and establishes a political debate about the nature and future of Aboriginality in which Indigenous perspectives are problematized.⁶ Given the policy's articulation through language of 'stabilizing' and 'normalizing' Aboriginal communities,⁷ as well as obvious resonances with previous policies of segregation and assimilation, it is not surprising that a range of scholars have found settler colonialism to be a compelling framework for analysis.⁸ The intervention has also sparked debate about the role of non-Indigenous academics, and the ethical and political implications of contributions by 'outsiders' to questions concerning the experiences and futures of Aboriginal people.⁹

In this paper, we draw on recent Australian academic debates surrounding the NT intervention to assess the contributions of SCT and to investigate some of the ethical and political implications of its use.

We contend that SCT makes major contributions to current mainstream scholarship, but that its analytic and explanatory power also presents a range of political and ethical risks. Exposing colonization as 'a structure not an event'¹⁰ confronts settlers with an account of contemporary colonialism that is difficult to avoid, exposing underlying similarities between conservative and progressive approaches to contemporary Indigenous policy and revealing intimate connections between settler emotions, practices, knowledges and institutions. However, emphasizing continuities in colonial relationships between the past and the present can tend to construct existing political relationships as inevitable and unchanging. When deployed with a neutral descriptive authority, SCT can also re-inscribe settler academics' political authority and re-enact the foundational settler fantasy that we constitute, comprehend and control the whole political space of our relationships with Indigenous people. In order to counter this potential, we suggest that while settler ways of thinking structure and dominate much of our contemporary reality, they are not equivalent to it. SCT makes visible our own frames of reference, thus revealing possibilities and political visions that lie outside them. From this standpoint, the fact that settler colonialism struggles to narrate its own ending does not mean that it cannot end. Ultimately, we contend that this approach has the potential to facilitate new conversations and relationships with Indigenous people but, in order to unlock this transformative potential, settler scholars must remain attentive to our own positions within colonial relationships.

The strengths of SCT

Australian debates about the NT intervention demonstrate the strength and potential of SCT. Highlighting the contemporary nature of colonialism disrupts familiar temporal political narratives and emphasizes the partisan nature of settler institutions, and this is a crucial contribution in the context of the NT intervention. The intervention policy framework depends for its coherence on framings of the settler state as innocent, benign and neutral,

with Indigenous peoples' perspectives constructed as overtly politicized and illegitimate.¹¹ Scholars have used SCT to critically unravel this discourse and raise broader questions about sovereignty and Indigenous– settler relations.¹²

In this section we argue that SCT evidences a range of other important analytical and political strengths in the contemporary Australian context. It reveals the state to be part of a broader settler performance of sovereign legitimacy, and this insight has the potential to problematize both conservative and progressive policy approaches. In foregrounding the partiality of the state, SCT supplements other critical approaches to race by analytically integrating the structural and personal nature of settler domination. Ultimately, in identifying the underlying logics of settler colonial ventures – and the way that these are expressed at all levels of settler societies – SCT reveals the entwinement of settler institutions, knowledges, emotions and selves.

Colonialism as contemporary

SCT has made a crucial contribution to non-Indigenous scholarship by providing a theoretical language to speak about colonial continuity in the Australian state. Australian settler scholarship – both progressive and conservative – has tended to deploy temporal narratives which repress colonialism into an absent or intruding past. Progressive scholars have traced colonialism in mid-twentieth century assimilation and integration phases, but frame the self-determination policies of 1970s to 2000s as a period of internal decolonization that mirrors the structural decolonization of Africa and Asia.¹³ Conservatives have framed colonialism as ending with frontier violence or protectionism, and some have sought to erase it altogether by denying the meaningful existence of Aboriginal society.¹⁴ Narratives about the movement from colonialism to postcolonial legitimacy are deeply embedded in Australian Indigenous policy frameworks.¹⁵ Even critical scholars exposing ongoing racial and political hierarchies have often presented these forms of domination as the heritage, legacy or 'reverberative aftermath' of colonization.¹⁶ This has not generally been reflected in the analysis of Indigenous scholars, many of whom present colonialism as an ongoing reality for Indigenous people and communities.¹⁷

In the current Australian political environment, maintaining a temporal narrative of slow progress away from colonization is becoming more and more theoretically complex and unsustainable. The Howard government's announcement of the NT intervention in 2007 marked a bipartisan rejection of the self-determination paradigm, and the legitimation of a coercive and overtly assimilationist approach.¹⁸ There was a palpable sense of the past intruding into the present, and our understandings of that present, in highly disruptive ways. Critical scholars have grappled with a range of strategies for naming and locating this experience, labelling this policy turn variously as neocolonialism,¹⁹ neo-paternalism,²⁰ or a rehabilitation of past policies.²¹

SCT offers an incisive account of ongoing colonialism that cuts through many of the conceptual knots that settler scholars have struggled with since the NT intervention by providing a language that speaks to continuity in the Australian political experience. It shows that the settler colonial narrative of gradual decolonization is layered over and obscures a central structural continuity; as Patrick Wolfe famously put it, settlers 'come to stay' and this makes 'colonisation a structure not an event'.²² This distinction between

postcolonial and settler colonial realities reveals the label 'postcolonial' to be altogether inaccurate in this context, and an instance of conceptual slippage which serves Australian settler interests.²³

This important insight is part of a new wave of theorizing about political temporalities, and their implication in projects of domination.²⁴ SCT shows how settlers mobilize various 'technologies of temporality' (to adopt Povinelli's useful term)²⁵ to tell a story of the immanent and inevitable ending of both Indigenous existence and their own colonial activity. At an abstract level, the settler project imagines the beginning of settler society to coincide exactly with the end of Aboriginal society. On the ground, however, settlers have always acknowledged a more or less violent overlap. In fact, it is this period of simultaneous occupation of a single territory by both Indigenous and settler political societies that can be thought of as 'colonization' or 'colonialism'.

Simultaneous occupation is an inherently problematic state for settler polities, given that settlers assert a complete jurisdiction over the territory and the presence of Indigenous political societies prevents this claim from being actualized. Because of this disruption, colonialism is always framed as an inherently temporary state which will soon end and give way to completed settler sovereignty. In this way settler colonialism entrenches and sustains itself 'on the basis of its own eventual demise'.²⁶ If colonialism involves the simultaneous occupation of one space by two political societies, colonial logic holds that only the resolution of Aboriginal political difference and the end of Aboriginal people as a political society will bring about the end of settler colonialism.²⁷ This is the animating energy of the settler 'logic of elimination', and the reason for continual pre-emptive declarations of the end of Aboriginal life. As Veracini²⁸ points out: 'a triumphant settler colonial circumstance, having ceased to be a dependency of a colonizing metropole, having tamed the surrounding "wilderness", having extinguished Indigenous autonomies, and having successfully integrated various migratory waves, has also ceased being settler colonial.'

This insight reveals a further contribution of SCT, in its challenges to the established progressive– conservative distinction in settler policy-making. If moves to resolve Indigenous claims through reconciliation/recognition also serve the settler colonial attainment of sovereign legitimacy and the extinguishment of Aboriginal political challenges to the state, this greatly complicates the progressive settler goal of decolonization. Here SCT echoes some critical Indigenous scholarship in revealing the ways that both progressive and conservative policy approaches seek to bring settler colonial conflict to a close by dissolving the persistent political independence of Aboriginal societies.²⁹ Exclusion and inclusion have operated as twin strategies of settler colonialism throughout the Australian experience, although we tend to understand them in as being in temporal relationship of progress from the first to the second. However, they operate together all the more powerfully for this perceived tension, trapping political resistance and energy in the continual movement between them.³⁰ This is not to say that these colonial strategies are morally or politically equivalent – the means do matter – but rather to emphasize that they are directed to achieving similar ends, by eliminating, absorbing or containing Indigenous challenges to the settler sovereign order. In demonstrating that progressive settler actions have often served colonial interests as effectively as conservative ones, SCT delegitimizes existing settler anti-colonial passages.

This in turn must fundamentally challenge the political self-understandings of many non-Indigenous critical scholars. If colonialism exists as a structure in the present, then we are all still settlers and still part of the political hegemonies that we describe. This discomforting position may explain why many who use SCT move ambiguously between postcolonial and settler colonial descriptors, framing our situation both settler colonial and postcolonial.³¹ Many retain a postcolonial framing of the present. Maddison,³² for example, uses SCT to explain Australia's political past but describes the present as simultaneously settler and postcolonial, arguing that 'the roots of collective guilt were established in the structures of settler colonialism and in the bonds of solidarity among, and later with, the settlers that remain a part of contemporary Australian national identity.' Through the phrase 'and later with', Maddison distances contemporary Australians from the settlers who actually undertook colonization. The political problem facing us becomes not ongoing colonization but instead our subjective identification with earlier colonizers and our refusal to enact a psychological 'substantive break with the past'.³³ Yet, as she notes in the same sentence, settler colonialism is structural which means we are all still settlers in a colonial space and it can serve no interests but our own to erase this. Even those using SCT to understand the political present have tended to mobilize the temporal ambiguity described above, for example in presenting the intervention programme as a 'reversion to settler colonial tactics'.³⁴ Howard- Wagner, for example, identifies the NT intervention as particularly 'underpinned by a settler-colonial logic of replacement',³⁵ while describing moves towards inclusion of Indigenous people in the broader Australian polity in the 1960s as 'moments of unease and disruption' which are 'ambivalently teetering on the border of post-settler colonialism' and 'evidence Australia's attempts to reconcile its settler-colonial past'.³⁶

This apparent reluctance to identify as colonizers, and tendency to see ourselves instead as either 'colonized subject: settler indigene' or inheritor of a painful past constitutes a 'strategic disavowal of the colonizing act'.³⁷ As settlers, we retain a profound interest in being and making ourselves postcolonial without leaving or relinquishing control; this state represents settler triumph where expulsion represents settler failure (settler colonialism countenances only these two endings to its story, an issue discussed below).³⁸ SCT, as it becomes more widely used, tangles up settler scholars in their attempts to maintain a postcolonial identity in the context of an ongoing and unbroken colonial relationship. Many accounts imply that settler policy strategies which are exclusionary or obviously coercive are more colonizing than those which operate through inclusion. They maintain this normative distinction even though SCT shows that both strategies ultimately seek the same goal of settler sovereignty untrammelled by Indigenous political difference.

This tendency is also reflected in the fact that SCT is more often used to analyse exclusionary, conservative settler policies than inclusionary approaches. The theory has been used elegantly and persuasively to identify the settler colonial dynamics animating the NT intervention. However, it has been much less widely used to analyse the preceding decade of neoliberal governance, or the current 'Close the Gap' policy which operates through a language of Indigenous deficit (this approach enabled a welfarist framing of the second phase of the NT intervention despite the retention and occasional extension of coercive and explicitly racialized measures).³⁹ While a critical analysis of the colonizing function of the intervention is vital, existing progressive frameworks already identify the

intervention as racist, exclusionary and colonizing. SCT has the potential to also make visible the complex and subtle colonizing movements of progressive inclusion – and to demonstrate the continuities between these strategies and more overt exclusionary tactics.

Even with the rise of SCT, current academic debates therefore retain a distinction between good and bad settler colonial strategies, and a strong investment in progressive teleologies.

The story of the journey away from settlerness is powerful:

Settler colonial narrative orders often display a special narrative form emphasizing the decline from settler colonial to inordinately non-settler, a narrative order opposed to the traditional “from rough frontier to civilized settled life” paradigm...whether they envisage a progressive movement or identify a degenerative tendency.⁴⁰

Many of us continue to tell this story in our academic work. In doing this, we hold onto and reinforce the narrative of temporal change which SCT exposes as a political technology. While settler colonialism is presented as a structuring force which underlies history, the focus on conservative policies suggests that it can be suppressed and overcome through particular benevolent settler actions (although it always threatens to reappear). As Nicoll notes,⁴¹ deep investments in progressive anti-racist identities can make it difficult for non-Indigenous scholars to hear and accept critical feedback from Indigenous people. By dissolving the distinction between good colonists and bad colonists, SCT can help us to fully acknowledge our implication within settler structures. This problematizes the progressive retreat to unilateral virtuous settler action, and emphasizes the centrality of our political engagements with Indigenous people.

Settler investments

This leads us directly to the second major strength of SCT. While it is uncomfortable, the approach gives us a clear picture of ourselves as sites of settler identity, and as located within the relationships we seek to describe. It shows that settler colonial investments operate at the level of the state, society and the individual self. In their current forms, none of these are neutral and truly able to sit above and mediate colonial conflict. Instead, they each form key sites of and partisan actors within that conflict. This is a crucial critical insight in the context of the NT intervention, and one that works to unravel both the logic of the policy programme and the Australian state’s sovereign claims.

The contemporary Australian state is heavily invested in naturalizing its authority by presenting itself as governing for both settler and Indigenous people. As discussed above, becoming this neutral authority is the goal of the settler project. If the state can achieve this status, it has attained legitimate sovereignty, absorbed independent Indigenous political life and successfully completed the settler colonial project. Clearly, however, the settler state has not actualized this claim to be decolonized; Indigenous resistance and political organization beyond state authority continue. Yet by presenting itself as an objective arbiter rather than a partisan agent, the state mobilizes powerful liberal narratives and advances the settler cause. In settler colonial contexts, it is precisely the jurisdiction of the state that is in question and that forms the basis of conflict, but this contestation is frequently erased. SCT provides a convincing theoretical analysis which exposes the settler state as partisan. Making this partiality visible has the potential to disrupt the performance of settler state authority and thus to interrupt this colonial process.

This is a significant contribution in the political context of the NT intervention. As Stringer notes,⁴² in initiating the intervention the Commonwealth adopted the role of ‘heroic protector’ of Aboriginal children. The state and its agents positioned themselves as standing with abused Aboriginal children, framing abuse as inherently Indigenous in character and perpetuated through Aboriginal silence. Macoun argues this ‘casts Aboriginal adults as (at minimum and by default) inadequate protectors, fellow victims, or complicit with abuse’.⁴³ This construction relies for its coherence upon the erasure of violence occurring throughout the settler order and as part of the colonial relationship, with the settler state instead framed as an authoritative neutral arbiter of policy solutions.

In using SCT to challenge these claims to neutrality, scholars highlight both the state’s role as a political actor in ongoing colonial conflict and the performative nature of settler sovereign assertions. Given that claims to neutrality and sovereign authority were central to the articulation of the NT intervention programme, this is a significant contribution. This shift in attention to the state, colonization and dominating structures is also an important corrective to the problematization of Indigenous people and cultures outlined above. These assessments of the intervention are not unique to SCT – a number of Indigenous scholars use critical Indigenous theory to make similar points.⁴⁴ Furthermore, it is possible that the coercive intervention programme itself has gone some way to disturbing perceived settler state neutrality. Previous progressive narratives framed the state as the only appropriate institution able to oversee reconciliation and guarantee Indigenous self-determination.⁴⁵ In the intervention, by contrast, the state has moved out of this role of arbiter and guarantor, and is engaged in explicitly performing its authority over Indigenous lives; its jurisdiction is premised on its ability to save, redeem or control Aboriginal people rather than to represent and enfold them. SCT-based analyses, as we suggest above, can usefully identify and explain the political and conceptual links between the intervention and preceding progressive approaches.

Some challenge the emphasis that critical approaches like SCT place on the ‘overbearing colonial pressure’ of the state, arguing that this erases Indigenous agency and closes pathways for political change.⁴⁶ However, we suggest that revealing the state as partisan also reveals its vulnerability. Highlighting the performative nature of state declarations of authority and legitimacy emphasizes the incompleteness of the settler project. The Australian state is a partisan state precisely because it has been unable to erase Indigenous political existence; it is from this position of insecurity that it launches explicit demonstrations of its authority in policies such as the NT intervention. Exposing the settler colonial project as fundamentally incomplete – and unable to be completed in the face of Indigenous resistance – has the potential to be a profoundly liberating and destabilizing move. While scholars concerned with oppression and domination can tend to frame the state as a unified institution, SCT can be used to expose ways that it is fragmented, incomplete, and challenged by ongoing Indigenous political existence and resistance.

SCT, like critical Indigenous theory, whiteness studies and other critical approaches to race, can be used to make visible a range of frequently denied or obscured connections between political structures, broader social contexts, and the lived experiences of individuals. It seems to us that much could be gained through exploring connections and disconnections among these critical perspectives. While SCT is often considered to focus particularly on

structures (a point addressed further below), critical whiteness approaches are thought to emphasize processes of lived experience and identity – decentring the role of the state and other formal institutions.⁴⁷ However, from our perspective, the strengths of both approaches lie in the connections that they reveal between political processes and the experiences of individuals. Critical whiteness approaches identify the role that race privilege plays in shaping White subjectivity, and demonstrate that this racialization operates as a crucial set of political and epistemological structures.⁴⁸ SCT has the potential to contribute to these critical conversations by identifying the explicit political interests and motivations that drive processes of racialization and colonization. It seems to us more than possible that the logic of elimination is a crucial motivation driving settlers’ continuing prosecution of what Moreton-Robinson persuasively identifies as an ongoing race war evident in measures like the intervention.⁴⁹ SCT also has the potential to identify ways that the political interests infusing structures of settler colonialism are perpetuated through broader social narratives.

SCT shows that the settler colonial project is a social project, and that settler societies are powerfully politicized. Settler colonialism involves the transplantation of an entire culture and way of living. As Veracini notes: ‘settlers do not discover: they carry their sovereignty and lifestyles with them. As they move towards what amounts to a representation of the world, as they transform the land into their image, they settle another place without really moving.’⁵⁰ Our lifestyles, as much as our sovereignties or commitments to particular institutions of government, are part of the settler project. Our cultural, academic and leisure spaces are animated by settler colonial narratives⁵¹ (even if it is only to the extent that they refuse to transform themselves or their self-perceptions through interaction with a new people and place) and they work together with settler political institutions. Wolfe and Moreton-Robinson both show how the settler colonial project involves all of settler society: men, women, children, soldiers, farmers, scholars, policymakers, ‘protectors’, police, judges, missionaries, progressives, conservatives and so on.⁵² Settler colonialism unfolds through these complex interactions. ‘Settleness’ therefore constitutes a pervasive identity that informs all spaces of our society, and manifests powerfully in our collective desires, fantasies and needs.⁵³

This is an important insight into the way that settler colonialism as a political process extends beyond explicitly political spaces. Settler investments in the logic of elimination extend into multiple fields and are manifested as collective desires, fantasies and needs. These are evident in a range of social and cultural narratives, which emphasize:

- That Aboriginal society is ‘the past’, and is unable to survive
- That Aboriginal society is inferior, in deficit and in need of help
- That Aboriginal society is non-existent or destroyed
- That the settler state is universal and inclusive
- That the settler state is beneficial/benevolent
- That we are alone in space, and that Australian landscape is empty
- That we are alone in time, and that we are historyless⁵⁴
- That colonialism is in the interests of Aboriginal people
- That colonialism does not exist or has ended: with continual varied repetitions of ‘it’s over’
- Progressive regret for past actions, premised on ending of these actions
- Regret for the passing of Aboriginal society when we believe it is over or ending

- Denigration of Aboriginal society when we believe it is continuing or growing
- The inevitability of the settler colonial future and the need for acceptance of this future

Many of these narratives are powerfully present in discourse about the NT intervention.⁵⁵ They legitimize and advance settler colonialism, and need to be challenged in their diverse forms and locations.

These settler colonial narratives also circulate in universities. As Australian anthropologists have acknowledged, academic knowledge production has played a direct role in colonial processes by claiming authoritative knowledge of Aboriginal selves and translating this for use in settler legal and policy systems.⁵⁶ Like the state, most Western academic work claims an objective authority that can mediate conflicts and create bridges between differences.⁵⁷ This approach dominates academic scholarship, despite the fact that ‘our ability to know and our experiences are limited, therefore standpoints are partial and so are the knowledges we produce.’⁵⁸ While academic spaces can be used in creative and subversive ways, they are not exempt from the kinds of political narratives and forces described above. Settler scholars seeking to challenge colonial power relations should be doubly attentive to the operation of such narratives, and the way that we as individual scholars perform and deploy academic authority. For us, this has involved the need to interrogate our work – along with other settler cultural productions – for assertions that:

- We already legitimately control the entire space
- We have clear access to knowledge of Indigenous people
- We are the only sites of political activity and action for change
- Aboriginal people are receptive and passive
- Aboriginal people are violent in uncivilized rather than political ways
- Aboriginal people are a monolithic minority interest that can be easily incorporated into our tolerant multicultural frameworks
- We are disinterested or acting in Aboriginal interests if we seek to change their lives
- We are generally benevolent and tolerant
- There may come a time when we have to ‘draw the line’ regarding acceptable Indigenous difference, and it is our job to draw this line

Inevitably, settler colonial political forces come to be embodied and enacted by individuals. Settler colonialism operates as a fantasy, in the sense that it endlessly merges together its desires and reality.⁵⁹ For example, settlers simultaneously assert colonialism to be finished while seeking to finish it, and proclaim the land to be empty in the same moment they confront an Aboriginal person. Such fantasies are animated by the intensity of our political desires and emotions, and these desires belong to individuals even as they circulate throughout society. The logical extension of the political narratives and processes outlined above is that common practices and emotions among settlers may be:

- A feeling of authority over definitions of Aboriginal identity and a suspicion that Aboriginal people do not really exist
- A repeated questioning of Aboriginal authenticity
- Fear of Indigenous people, and of being exposed in a settler identity or as illegitimate

- A simultaneous desire to identify with Aboriginal people, and to deploy relationships with them to authorize ourselves/present ourselves as virtuous and accepted
- Anger if we feel that there are spaces to which we are being denied access, including intellectual spaces
- Frustration at the intractability of conflict, and especially with continued claims by Aboriginal people who will not 'get over it'
- Underlying fear of displacement and dispossession, stemming from fear of failure of the colonial project
- Reluctance to admit to contemporary settler problems or weaknesses, based on the all or nothing narrative of settler colonial success or failure⁶⁰
- A tendency to see and act against external 'intrusions' which will allow for a demonstration of our authority over and belonging to this place⁶¹

These may not be our only emotions – all subjects exist in a complicated web of personal and political relations – but they are powerful and exist alongside our outrage at injustice and our sadness over Indigenous suffering. In a way, such points seem obvious, yet it can be liberating for White settler scholars to name ourselves as such and be free of what Nicoll describes as the complex epistemologies of the anti-racist closet.⁶² It is possible that non-White settler scholars may also find something is gained in identifying the particular investments attached to non-Indigeneity in a settler colonial context. While it is unusual for scholars to consider emotions and subjectivities in the same lens as the state and policy, we suggest this is a logical extension of the major contribution that SCT makes in identifying the animating narratives and diverse political locations of settler colonialism. Through critically and carefully attending to the implications of our own positioning within the colonial relationship, we can begin to clear the way for meaningful engagement with Indigenous people and anti-colonial struggles.

Challenges of SCT

Thus far we have outlined what we consider to be significant contributions of SCT. We have argued that SCT's emphasis on the continuous and contemporary nature of colonialism has the capacity to productively disrupt settler temporalities and to illustrate important commonalities in progressive and conservative approaches to Indigenous people. Furthermore, SCT exposes the partiality of the settler state, and highlights a range of important (but often obscured) political investments that connect settler institutions, knowledges, emotions and selves.

Despite these powerful contributions, we also identify some important issues associated with SCT in Australian academic debates about the NT intervention. The first is a direct consequence of one of SCT's vital contributions, arising from the theory's present tense iteration of settler colonialism. By emphasizing continuities in colonial relationships between the past and the present, SCT can depict colonization as structurally inevitable, and can be deployed in ways that re-inscribe settler colonialism. We suggest that SCT's struggle to narrate its own ending can be countered by approaching the theory as an account of settler desires which makes visible our own frames of reference. This in turn exposes a range of possibilities and political visions outside these frames. Such an approach is significant in countering potentially problematic misuses of SCT that erase its location as a

settler discourse. Such erasures problematically empower academics to speak with neutral descriptive authority over both settler and Indigenous realities.

Firstly, by disturbing settler colonialism's narratives of progress, SCT attributes a peculiar suspended temporality to the settler project. This can portray settler colonialism as an inevitable structure likely to exist across time – the fact that the past persists in the present implies that this past will also persist in the future. Foundational scholar Patrick Wolfe has been labelled 'very much a structuralist stuck in a poststructuralist world'.⁶³ As we have outlined, this structuralism is particularly useful in identifying the operation of political hierarchies. However, it can also excuse us from human political action in the present by presenting this action as futile or already determined.⁶⁴ The role of political activists is to wait for the structurally determined future, and at most to prepare others for its arrival.

The particular challenge of SCT's analysis is that it does not give an account of such a transformed future, or of the conditions for settler colonialism's demise. This can lead to a theoretical and political impasse and result in a kind of colonial fatalism. Such fatalism can be deployed to imply a moral equivalence between different forms of settler political interaction with Indigenous people, and, at its worst, to deny the legitimacy of Indigenous resistances. Structuralist narratives are able to posit radical change, but only if this change is built into the structures they describe – for example because these structures are subject to internal contradictions or are inherently unstable. Settler colonial structures, however, appear as highly stable and 'relatively impervious to regime change'.⁶⁵ Therefore, at the same moment settler scholars finally see the depth and reach of settler colonialism in the present they feel unable to find 'postsettler colonial passages'.⁶⁶

This tendency is reinforced by SCT's capacity to identify significant commonalities in the objectives of conservative and progressive policy approaches, as discussed above. It shows that traditional 'decolonizing' pathways such as treaty making, reconciliation and formal apologies may also serve colonial ends by absorbing and extinguishing Aboriginal political difference without disturbing the foundational structures of settler dominance. As Australian anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose notes, this makes it 'difficult to offer a critique of the colonizing features without calling into question the whole decolonizing project'.⁶⁷ If every settler action is framed as always already colonizing, then individuals are excused from anti-colonial action in the present and Indigenous people are destined to be victims of an unstoppable colonizing state.⁶⁸ As bell hooks argues in relation to US race relations, this is useful to those in a position of dominance: 'so many White people are eager to believe racism cannot be changed because internalizing that assumption downplays the issue of accountability. No responsibility need be taken for not changing something if it is perceived as immutable.'⁶⁹ Is it possible that settlers are particularly attracted to SCT precisely because it gives us a sense of being intellectually committed to the end of colonialism while simultaneously unable to act against our own privilege? As a recent article concluded about the prospects for decolonization:

I can only assess this with a degree of gloom. I am yet to be convinced that we can prevent indigenous disadvantage remaining structurally embedded in society and through the state even after any kind of 'transition' or 'transformation'. At the same time, I fear decolonization. I am myself a settler, like several of my ancestors before me, and I have nowhere else to belong.⁷⁰

SCT's structuralism may serve these conflicted interests, in allowing us to feel we have done all we can while facing the 'reality' of an inevitable settler colonial future.

This structuralism gives many within settler colonial studies a particular orientation towards Indigenous resistance and scholarship. Australian scholar Tim Rowse argues that critical settler perspectives on colonialism can 'reproduce that sorrowing form of attention in which defeat and marginality are highlighted at the expense of understanding the nature and limits of the Indigenous agency that circumstances afforded'.⁷¹ He and others suggest that this sort of analysis caricatures Indigenous responses, presenting a false binary between resistance/sovereignty and co-optation in the colonizing process.⁷² This, they suggest, leads scholars to position one sort of Indigenous response as more valid and authentic than others, re-performing the authority settlers have always claimed over definitions of Indigenous reality. Joanne Barker identifies a 'troubled focus within settler colonial studies on structure to the erasure of Indigenous experiences and perspectives about colonialism even within analyses of the "logic of elimination" that fuels colonial processes of social formation.'⁷³ SCT may be revelatory to many settler scholars, but Indigenous people have been speaking for a long time about colonial continuities based on their lived experiences.⁷⁴ Some SCTs have sought to connect with these discussions and to foreground Indigenous resistance, survival and agency.⁷⁵ Others, however, seem to use SCT as a pathway to explain the colonial encounter without engaging with Indigenous people and experiences – either on the grounds that this structural analysis already conceptually explains Indigenous experience, or because Indigenous resistance is rendered invisible.

In these cases, the structuralism of SCT theory can be mobilized to actively reinforce settler colonial authority and to participate in the attempted erasure of Indigenous independence. We argue that Australian scholar Dirk Moses⁷⁶ deploys SCT in his analysis of the NT intervention in ways that clearly demonstrate this potential re-inscription of colonial authority.⁷⁷ Moses, perhaps more than some others, recognizes the radical implications of settler colonial analysis. He acknowledges that because 'Australia remains a settler colonial entity,' the Indigenous 'experience of disintegration is intense ... in the face of a White settler colony determined to assimilate the "Native" other. Cultural survival is, then, a pressing issue for Indigenous leaders and intellectuals'.⁷⁸ In his recent pieces on contemporary Australian Indigenous policy, Moses deploys postcolonial and SCT to evaluate the responses of Indigenous intellectuals and political leaders, leveraging theory and his status as a settler intellectual to provide an account of Indigeneity. He seeks to both encompass Indigenous experiences of colonization and offer an assessment of appropriate Indigenous survival strategies. Ultimately, Moses uses SCT to argue that, for their own good, Indigenous people must give up the struggle for survival in order to release themselves from violence and find freedom and policy agency.

In what Moreton-Robinson has labelled a form of 'racial ventriloquism',⁷⁹ Moses uses the work of African postcolonial theorist Achille Mbembe to suggest that Aboriginal people should 'inculcate an ethics of responsibility by recalling, mourning, accepting and transcending the trauma of colonialism'.⁸⁰ Moses acknowledges Mbembe is speaking in a formally decolonized context while Australian Indigenous people are subject to ongoing colonialism, yet argues that the 'much discussed crisis of remote communities has led some Indigenous leaders to abandon the liberation narrative' and therefore the Indigenous

experience in Australia should be considered postcolonial.⁸¹ He suggests that Aboriginal people need to move on psychologically and politically from colonialism, in effect creating a rupture with the colonial past and expelling this past from the present. There is a complex slippage here between the ongoing settler colonial temporality and Indigenous perceptions of that ongoing temporality. For Moses, political narratives of liberation presume the past and the present are the same, and changing these narratives will in itself create a break between the past and the present:

this defensive perspective is indentured to a particular relationship to time. The traumatic past is the traumatic present. The colonialism that began in 1788 persists today. Indigenous people were victims then and they are now ... But if Hart's contention that the past affects the present is undeniable, Mbembe would ask whether freedom is thereby compromised.⁸²

Moses argues Aboriginal people should move on from colonialism precisely because it is structurally inevitable and there is no clear pathway forward, asking 'what does shaking core institutions, indeed "struggles for liberation", actually entail? It is unclear.'⁸³ Here, he leverages the structuralism of SCT to argue there is no pathway out of the current settler colonial circumstances, and that those seeking one are creating unnecessary violence and conflict. In the absence of structural change, Indigenous people need to make a radical psychological break with the past.⁸⁴ Settlers other than 'oppositional intellectuals' are excused from changing even their attitudes.⁸⁵

Clearly we must acknowledge the problems of this kind of structural settler colonial analysis. Moses deploys SCT to enable him to speak about Indigenous peoples' experience of colonization without acknowledging the ontological authority of Indigenous people over this terrain. His account of settler colonialism is essentially a more sophisticated iteration of the settler narrative that Indigenous people must accept the inevitability of colonization for their own good. He elides the fact that this move would be profoundly in the interests of settlers – who are implicitly absolved from enacting any such break in either a substantive or psychological sense. Moses invokes the insights of SCT into systems of power and domination to position himself as an objective authority speaking from outside these structures. He avoids acknowledging his own interests and involvement in this colonial encounter, even as the political implications of his argument reinforce these undeclared political interests and investments. This manoeuvre re-enacts the discursive politics of the intervention programme outlined above, positioning settler authority as neutral, disinterested, and impartial while constructing any Indigenous perspectives that contest this authority as illegitimate, irresponsible and irrationally politicized. SCT in some ways facilitates this positioning, offering a retreat to theoretical authority that both emphasizes the partiality of knowledges and puts itself beyond the reach of this analysis. When deployed with a neutral descriptive authority, and used by settler scholars to explain not just our own political drives but the entire field of our relationships with Indigenous people, this can serve to re-enact the central settler fantasy that we constitute and have authority over this space. However, SCT also enables us to identify these interests and rhetorical moves, and provides tools that enable us to deconstruct and criticize them – as we have done in our own commentary on Moses' work.

While it is true that SCT and those who employ it are often positioned as outside colonial structures, we suggest the theory does not need to be used in this way. Instead, SCT can be

productively understood as a framework that improves on previous theoretical narratives by explaining settlers to ourselves. When used in a politically reflexive way, SCT can reveal settler colonialism as only one way of understanding and framing a complex reality. The settler colonial project presents itself in a range of ways (as completed, as inevitable, as non-existent and so on). SCT allows us a more sophisticated understanding of these self-representations and of this project – showing it to be a set of practices as well as an ideology, and an ongoing present as well as a past.

An analogy can be drawn here with the contributions of governmentality scholarship such as Barry Hindess' account of 'actually existing liberalism'.⁸⁶ This work seeks to transcend liberalism's account of itself as preoccupied with universal freedom and to explore the ways liberalism also operates to categorize and coerce. While this more nuanced account of liberalism tells us more about our political selves and our reality, it remains a useful but partial analytical lens. There are many spaces which are not determined by liberalism or where it does not fully saturate reality. This improved account also does not tell us anything about the possibility of transforming or rejecting liberalism, although it does tell us about the challenges of doing so. Governmentality is largely concerned with the utopian logics of the governors, rather than with the ways these logics are manifested, challenged and resisted. Critics have pointed out that this means that in much governmentality literature, little space is given to the vital role subjects play in activating, transforming or deposing governmental programmes. This failure to take resistance seriously, or to see subjects as sites of freedom and innovation, is part of the 'critical ambivalence' that scholars have noted in governmentality studies.⁸⁷

There is a clear parallel here with the criticisms made of SCT above. SCT also focuses on the logic of the dominant and tends to erase the presence and agency of those subject to this dominance. There can be a slippage between political actualities and 'the systematized self-representation of rule' which can therefore present this rule as inescapable.⁸⁸ It seems to close the pathways to freedom and decolonization by positioning these as forms of participation in colonial rule. We argue that, like the best governmentality scholarship, SCT can overcome these challenges by emphasizing the limited nature of its analysis and supplementing this analysis through continuing engagement with other approaches.

Conclusion: the transformative potential of SCT

SCT is most usefully understood as providing non-Indigenous people in settler states with a better account of ourselves – rather than as an account of the entire settler–Indigenous relationship. It explains more of who we are than previous approaches, but it is not coincident with all that we are, and is not able to explain the entire encounter between Indigenous and settler peoples. Most clearly of all, it does not account for Indigenous lives – the assertion that it could do so is itself allied to the settler colonial impulse to erase Indigenous life and assert settler control of this discursive space.

Settler logics, political priorities and processes have structured much of the settler–Indigenous relationship in the past and present. For this reason, settler colonialism must be studied as an historical and empirical phenomenon as well as a conceptual framework. However, settler processes do not constitute these relationships in their entirety, and more importantly, they do not necessarily determine the range of possibilities available in our

futures. It is crucial that we continue to challenge the politically convenient conflation of settler desires and reality and of the political present and the future, asking always whose interests are served by this new and more sophisticated settler colonial fantasy.

Veracini rightly observes that ‘the decolonization of settler colonialism needs to be imagined before it is practised, and this has proved especially challenging.’⁸⁹ However, we do not need to imagine this process on our own. SCT can show us our own frames of reference – and this by implication assists us to understand and engage with what lies outside them. Settler colonialism posits that two political societies cannot exist in one place through time, and that one must necessarily replace the other – either by settlers extinguishing Aboriginal difference or by Aboriginal people expelling settlers (an option rarely countenanced). It imagines that two societies remaining together must always be an inherently problematic state, leading those within it to seek an end. Settler colonialism assumes the inevitability of its own colonizing actions in such a circumstance. But even within Western traditions, it is possible to imagine other ways that two societies might behave and be in one place. If we decide to look outside our own frameworks, and engage with Indigenous people and ideas, we might find even richer political possibilities.

SCT provides us with a number of insights and resources that enable us to use it well. It reveals our own partiality and investments, and traces connections between our individual identities as scholars and broader colonial processes. SCT cannot substitute for an engagement with Indigenous people or for an awareness of our own complicities, but it can help us towards these goals. It explains and exposes the operation of colonial dynamics and processes where these are routinely obscured or denied. In identifying and naming these systems, SCT provides us with a range of important opportunities – including the capacity to name and contest settler interests, challenge the problematization of Indigenous peoples, and identify prospects for different kinds of resistance. The moment that SCT reveals colonization as ongoing is not necessarily the moment we must give up hope of change. It could, in fact, be the moment that settler colonialism is revealed as one, very limited, way of understanding and organizing our reality.

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Notes

¹ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (London: Cassell, 1999), 1.

² Edward Cavanagh, ‘History, Time and the Indigenist Critique’, *Arena Journal* 37/38 (2012): 16–39.

³ Elizabeth Strakosch and Alissa Macoun, ‘The Vanishing Endpoint of Settler Colonialism’, *Arena Journal* 37/38 (2012): 40–62; Cavanagh, ‘History, Time and the Indigenist Critique’.

⁴ See, for example, Joanne Barker, ‘Why “Settler Colonialism” Isn’t Exactly Right’, *Tequila Sovereign Blog*, March 13, 2011, <http://tequilasovereign.blogspot.com.au/2011/03/why-settler-colonialism-isntexactly.html>; ‘“Settler” What?’, *Tequila Sovereign Blog*, April 11, 2011, <http://tequilasovereign.blogspot.com.au/2011/04/settler-what.html>; ‘Settled Contradictions, Necessary Boycotts: A Report from NAISA’, *Tequila Sovereign Blog*, May 21, 2011, <http://tequilasovereign.blogspot.com.au/2011/05/settled-contradictions-necessary.html>.

⁵ Rebecca Stringer, ‘A Nightmare of the Neocolonial Kind: Politics of Suffering in John Howard’s Northern Territory Intervention’, *Borderlands E-Journal* 6, no. 2 (2007).

⁶ Alissa Macoun, 'Aboriginality and the Northern Territory Intervention', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 3 (2011): 519–34.

⁷ Hon Mal Brough MP, 'National Emergency Response to Protect Aboriginal Children in the NT', media release, June 21, 2007, Office of the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), Northern Territory Emergency Response, Publication Reference: FaCSIA 0635, July 5, 2007, Australian Government.

⁸ See Dirk Moses, 'Time, Indigeneity, and Peoplehood: The Postcolony in Australia', *Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 1 (2010): 31–54; Deidre Howard-Wagner and Ben Kelly, 'Containing Aboriginal Mobility in the Northern Territory: From "Protectionism" to "Interventionism"', *Law Text Culture* 15, no. 1 (2011): 102–34; Dan Tout, 'Stabilise, Normalise, Eliminate: The Intervention as Settler Colonialism', *Arena Magazine* 118 (June 2012): 40–3; John Hinkson, 'Why Settler Colonialism?', *Arena Journal* 37/38 (2012): 1–15; Deidre Howard-Wagner, 'Reclaiming the Northern Territory as a Settler-Colonial Space', *Arena Journal* 37/38 (2012): 220–40; Melissa Lovell, 'A Settler-Colonial Consensus on the Northern Territory Intervention', *Arena Journal* 37/38 (2012): 199–219; Macoun, 'Aboriginality and the Northern Territory Intervention'; Strakosch and Macoun, 'Vanishing Endpoint',

⁹ Marcia Langton, 'Trapped in the Aboriginal Reality Show', *Griffith Review* 19: Reimagining Australia (2008): 143–62; Adrian Howe, 'Addressing Child Sexual Assault in Australian Aboriginal Communities – the Politics of White Voice', *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 30 (2009): 41–61; Jon Altman and Melinda Hinkson, eds., *Culture Crisis: Anthropology and Politics in Aboriginal Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010); Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'The White Man's Burden: Patriarchal White Epistemic Violence and Aboriginal Women's Knowledges Within the Academy', *Australian Feminist Studies* 26, no. 70 (2011): 413–31; Rebecca Stringer, 'Impractical Reconciliation: Reading the Intervention Through the Huggins-Bell Debate', *Australian Feminist Studies* 27, no. 71 (2012): 19–36.

¹⁰ Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*.

¹¹ Macoun, 'Aboriginality and the Northern Territory Intervention'; see also related discussion in Andrew Lattas, 'Consultancy, Neo-Liberal Conservatism and the Politics of Anti-Politics', *Oceania* 82, no. 1 (2012): 113–18.

¹² See Moses, 'Time, Indigeneity, and Peoplehood'; Howard-Wagner and Kelly, 'Containing Aboriginal Mobility in the Northern Territory'; Tout, 'Stabilise, Normalise, Eliminate'; Howard-Wagner, 'Reclaiming the Northern Territory as a Settler-Colonial Space'; Lovell, 'Settler Colonial Consensus'; Strakosch and Macoun, 'Vanishing Endpoint'.

¹³ Will Sanders, 'Indigenous Affairs after the Howard Decade: Administrative Reform and Practical Reconciliation or Defying Decolonization?', in *History, Politics and Knowledge: Essays in Australian Indigenous Studies*, ed. Andrew Gunstone (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), 300–14.

¹⁴ Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume One: Van Diemen's Land 1803–1847* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2002); *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume Three: The Stolen Generations 1881–2008* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2009).

¹⁵ See discussion in Strakosch and Macoun, 'Vanishing Endpoint'.

¹⁶ See discussion in Stringer, 'Nightmare of the Neocolonial Kind'; also Rebecca Lawrence and Chris Gibson, 'Obliging Indigenous Citizens?', *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 4 (2007): 650–71; Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989).

¹⁷ For example, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talking up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (St Lucia: University of Qld Press, 2000); 'The Possessive Logic of Patriarchal White Sovereignty: The High Court and the Yorta Yorta Decision', *Borderlands E-Journal* 3, no. 2 (2004); 'The House That Jack Built: Britishness and White Possession', *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Journal* 1 (2005): 21–9; 'Imagining the Good Indigenous Citizen: RaceWar and the Pathology of Patriarchal White Sovereignty', *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 61–79; Lyndon Murphy, 'Who's Afraid of the Dark?: Australia's Administration in Aboriginal Affairs' (master's thesis, Centre for Public Administration, University of Queensland, 2000), <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:11013>; Maggie Walter, 'An Economy of Poverty: Power and the Domain of Aboriginality', *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 2–14; 'Market Forces and Indigenous Resistance Paradigms', *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 2 (2010): 121–37; Irene Watson, 'Illusionists and Hunters: Being Aboriginal in This Occupied Space', *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 22 (2005): 15–28; 'The Aboriginal State of Emergency Arrived with Cook and the First Fleet', *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 26 (2007): 3–8; 'In the Northern Territory Intervention: What Is Saved or Rescued and At What Cost?', *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 45–60; 'Aboriginality and the Violence of Colonialism', *Borderlands E-Journal* 8, no. 1 (2009): 1–8.

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- ¹⁹ Stringer, 'Nightmare of the Neocolonial Kind'.
- ²⁰ Jon Altman, 'The Howard Government's Northern Territory Intervention: Are Neo-Paternalism and Indigenous Development Compatible?', *CAEPR Topical Issues Paper no. 16* (2007), Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research ANU; 'Neo-Paternalism and the Destruction of CDEP', *CAEPR Topical Issues Paper no. 14* (2007), Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research ANU.
- ²¹ Lester Thompson and David Wadley, "'Practical Reconciliation": 21st Century Rehabilitation of Indigenous Paternalism?', *Australian Planner* 44, no. 2 (2007): 34–41.
- ²² Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*.
- ²³ Strakosch and Macoun, 'Vanishing Endpoint'.
- ²⁴ Cavanagh, 'History, Time and the Indigenist Critique'; Sarah Maddison, 'Seven Generations Behind: Representing Native Nations', *Arena Journal* 37/38 (2012): 63–87; Christine Helliwell and Barry Hindess, 'The Temporalizing of Difference', *Ethnicities* 5, no. 3 (2005): 414–18; 'The Past in the Present', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 57, no. 3 (2011): 377–88.
- ²⁵ Elizabeth Povinelli, 'Indigenous Politics in Late Liberalism', in *Culture Crisis*, ed. John Altman and Melinda Hinkson (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), 17–31.
- ²⁶ Strakosch and Macoun, 'Vanishing Endpoint', 53.
- ²⁷ Although this is of course not the only possible end – rather it is a particular ending constructed by and serving settler interests and understandings of sovereign legitimacy.
- ²⁸ Lorenzo Veracini, 'Isopolitics, Deep Colonizing, Settler Colonialism', *Interventions* 13, no. 2 (2011): 171–89.
- ²⁹ Moreton-Robinson, 'Imagining the Good Indigenous Citizen'; Watson, 'Illusionists and Hunters'; Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- ³⁰ We are indebted to Lyndon Murphy for this insight.
- ³¹ See, for example, Howard-Wagner and Kelly, 'Containing Aboriginal Mobility'.
- ³² Sarah Maddison, 'Postcolonial Guilt and National Identity: Historical Injustice and the Australian Settler State', *Social Identities* 18, no. 6 (2012): 695–709.
- ³³ Maddison, 'Postcolonial Guilt and National Identity', 703.
- ³⁴ Lorenzo Veracini and Edward Cavanagh, 'Afterword: On the Rights of the Settlers of Australia', *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 196–201.
- ³⁵ Howard-Wagner, 'Reclaiming the Northern Territory as a Settler-Colonial Space', 231.
- ³⁶ Howard-Wagner, 'Reclaiming the Northern Territory as a Settler-Colonial Space', 227.
- ³⁷ Alan Lawson, 'Postcolonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject', in *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism*, ed. C. Sugars (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 151–64.
- ³⁸ See also Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- ³⁹ See Kerryn Pholi, Dan Black, and Craig Richards, 'Is "Close the Gap" a Useful Approach to Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Indigenous Australians?', *Australian Review of Public Affairs* 9, no. 2 (April 2009): 1–13; see also Jon Altman, 'NT Prescribed Communities: Not Normalised, Exited, Eliminated', *Crikey*, June 12, 2012, <http://www.crikey.com.au/2012/06/12/nt-prescribed-communities-notnormalised-exited-eliminated/>
- ⁴⁰ Lorenzo Veracini, 'Telling the End of the Settler Colonial Story', in *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture*, ed. Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington (London: Palgrave, 2011), 204–18.
- ⁴¹ Fiona Nicoll, 'Indigenous Sovereignty and the Violence of Perspective: A White Woman's Coming Out Story', *Australian Feminist Studies* 15, no. 33 (2000): 369–86.
- ⁴² Stringer, 'Nightmare of the Neocolonial Kind', 4.
- ⁴³ Macoun, 'Aboriginality and the NT Intervention', 521.
- ⁴⁴ Moreton-Robinson, 'Imagining the Good Indigenous Citizen'; Watson, 'In the Northern Territory Intervention: What Is Saved or Rescued and At What Cost?'.
- ⁴⁵ Elizabeth Strakosch, 'Colonial Risk Management', *Borderlands E-Journal* 11, no. 1 (2012).
- ⁴⁶ Rowse, Tim. 'The Reforming State, the Concerned Public, and Indigenous Political Actors', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 56, no. 1 (2010): 66–81; Moses, A. Dirk. 'Official Apologies, Reconciliation, and Settler Colonialism: Australian Indigenous Alterity and Political Agency', *Citizenship Studies* 15, no. 2 (2011): 145–59.
- ⁴⁷ See discussion in Anne Brewster, 'Writing Whiteness: The Personal Turn', *Australian Humanities Review* no. 35 (June 2005), <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-June-2005/brewster.html>.

- ⁴⁸ See Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (London: Routledge, 1993); Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'Unmasking Whiteness: A Goori Jondal's Look at Some Duggal Business', *Queensland Review* 6, no. 1 (1999): 1–7; 'Troubling Business: Difference and Whiteness Within Feminism', *Australian Feminist Studies* 15, no. 33 (2000): 343–52; *Talking Up to the White Woman*.
- ⁴⁹ Moreton-Robinson, 'Imagining the Good Indigenous Citizen'.
- ⁵⁰ Veracini, 'Telling the End of the Settler Colonial Story', 206.
- ⁵¹ Lorenzo Veracini, 'District 9 and Avatar: Science Fiction and Settler Colonialism', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 32, no. 4 (Aug 2011): 355–67.
- ⁵² Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native'; Moreton-Robinson, *Talking Up to the White Woman*.
- ⁵³ This is not to imply that this identity is homogenous or that all non-Indigenous subjects share an undifferentiated experience of or unmediated access to this identity; non-White migrants, involuntary migrants such as refugees, and temporary residents may navigate settler identities in ways that differ from those non-Indigenous people with strong investments in White Australia. Nonetheless, they share what Aileen Moreton-Robinson identifies as the particular epistemological and political investments of non-Indigenous people in settler contexts; 'I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a White Postcolonising Society', in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, and Anne-Marie Fortie (Oxford: Berg Publishing, 2003), 23–40.
- ⁵⁴ Lorenzo Veracini, 'Historylessness: Australia as a Settler Colonial Collective', *Postcolonial Studies* 10, no. 3 (2007): 271–85.
- ⁵⁵ See Alissa Macoun, 'Aboriginality and the Northern Territory Intervention' (PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2012), <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:276025>; Lovell, 'Settler-Colonial Consensus'.
- ⁵⁶ Altman and Hinkson, *Culture Crisis*.
- ⁵⁷ Dirk Moses, 'The Public Relevance of Historical Studies: A Rejoinder to Hayden White', *History and Theory* 44, no. 3 (2005): 339–47.
- ⁵⁸ Moreton-Robinson, 'Troubling Business', 351.
- ⁵⁹ Gerald Sider, 'When Parrots Learn to Talk, and Why They Can't: Domination, Deception, and Self-Deception in Indian-White Relations', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 1 (January 1987): 3–23.
- ⁶⁰ The possibility of multiple middle passages allows a flexibility that settlers do not have: defeat and relapse do not necessarily imply the failure of a colonial ideology. On the contrary, the settler colonial story locate the consolidating settler collective in history's latter days, hence a stubborn, recurring and inherent anxiety at the prospect of defeat or compromise...That settler polities are perceived as inhabiting a narrative space that cannot be followed by an ulterior passage crucially contributes to block out indigenous peoples' struggles for a post settler colonial future. (Veracini, 'Telling the End of the Settler Colonial Story', 207)
- ⁶¹ Lorenzo Veracini, 'Review: On Settler Colonialism and Science Fiction (Again)', *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no.1 (2012): 268–72.
- ⁶² Nicoll, 'Indigenous Sovereignty and the Violence of Perspective', 382.
- ⁶³ Cavanagh, 'History, Time and the Indigenist Critique', 19.
- ⁶⁴ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001[1985]).
- ⁶⁵ Patrick Wolfe, 'Race and the Trace of History: For Henry Reynolds', in *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture*, ed. Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington (London: Palgrave, 2011), 272–96.
- ⁶⁶ Veracini, 'Telling the End of the Settler Colonial Story', 212.
- ⁶⁷ Veracini, 'Isopolitics, Deep Colonizing, Settler Colonialism', 179.
- ⁶⁸ Rowse, 'Reforming State'; Moses, 'Official Apologies, Reconciliation, and Settler Colonialism'.
- ⁶⁹ bell hooks, 'Beloved Community: A World Without Racism', in *Violence and Its Alternatives: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. Manfred Steger and Nancy Lind (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), 308–12.
- ⁷⁰ Cavanagh, 'History, Time and the Indigenist Critique', 39.
- ⁷¹ Rowse, 'Reforming State', 69.
- ⁷² Moses, 'Official Apologies, Reconciliation, and Settler Colonialism'.
- ⁷³ Barker, 'Settled Contradictions, Necessary Boycotts'.
- ⁷⁴ Watson, 'In the Northern Territory Intervention: What Is Saved or Rescued and At What Cost?'; Moreton-Robinson, 'Imagining the Good Indigenous Citizen'; see discussion in Strakosch and Macoun, 'Vanishing Endpoint'.
- ⁷⁵ For example, Wolfe, 'A Note from Patrick Wolfe (Reprinted With Permission)', *Tequila Sovereign Blog*, April 26, 2011, <http://tequilasovereign.blogspot.com.au/2011/04/note-from-patrick-wolferprinted-with.html>; and this special edition.

- ⁷⁶ Moses, 'Time, Indigeneity, and Peoplehood'; 'Official Apologies, Reconciliation, and Settler Colonialism'.
- ⁷⁷ Moreton-Robinson (in 'Whiteman's Burden') has provided a significant critique of Moses' account of the politics of Indigeneity surrounding the NT intervention, arguing that his approach is an example of White patriarchal epistemic violence which involves the assertion of power through racialized knowledges.
- ⁷⁸ Moses, 'Time, Indigeneity, and Peoplehood', 11, 15.
- ⁷⁹ Moreton-Robinson, 'Whiteman's Burden'.
- ⁸⁰ Moses, 'Time, Indigeneity, and Peoplehood', 13.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., 15.
- ⁸² Ibid., 21.
- ⁸³ Moses, 'Official Apologies, Reconciliation, and Settler Colonialism', 151.
- ⁸⁴ This is different to Maddison's approach in 'Postcolonial Guilt and National Identity' discussed above, which holds that it is non-Indigenous people who must achieve this psychological break with the past.
- ⁸⁵ Moses, 'Time, Indigeneity, and Peoplehood', 9.
- ⁸⁶ Barry Hindess, 'Political Theory and "Actually Existing Liberalism"', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 11, no. 3 (2008): 347–52.
- ⁸⁷ Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose 'Introduction', in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, ed. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1–18; Sam Binkley, 'The Work of Neoliberal Governmentality: Temporality and Ethical Substance in the Tale of Two Dads', *Foucault Studies* 6 (2009): 60–78.
- ⁸⁸ Pat O'Malley, Lorna Weir, and Clifford Shearing, 'Governmentality, Criticism, Politics', *Economy and Society* 26, no. 4 (1997): 501–17.
- ⁸⁹ Veracini, 'Telling the End of the Settler Colonial Story', 211.