settler colonial studies

Aotearoa/New Zealand: An Unsettled State in a Sea of Islands

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This paper considers how ways of talking about New Zealand national identity still privilege a settler-centric perspective. The paper begins from the premise that settler colonialism is an ongoing project that must continually code, decode and recode social norms and social spaces so as to secure a meaningful (read proprietary) relationship to the territories and resources at stake. Somewhat akin to an obsessive-compulsive disorder, settler colonialism is deeply vexed by its own precarious identity, a precariousness that at the same time extends its powers throughout the social matrix that is the nation. Drawing on work in the field of Pacific Studies and Pacific arts, the paper considers how a form of Oceanic consciousness might act as an antidote to settler colonialism's obsessive-compulsive disorder. The paper argues that the imaginative, aesthetic and inventive dimensions of Pacific and Indigenous art and media contribute to an expanded vocabulary for thinking settler-native-migrant encounters within a contemporary settler nation such as Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Uneasy, unsettled, uncomfortable: these are the words often used to describe the psychosocial dimensions of nations that inherit the discursive and material entanglements of settler colonialism. The colonial settler subject is typically depicted as set adrift from the Mother Country, while nonetheless a bearer of a fatal form of 'Civilisation' that has produced ambivalent effects. For settler ships not only transported people, produce and cargo from one place to another, these ships carried with them the norms of Western property law, religion, and gendered and classed relations. When these ships and peoples fetched up on distant shores, they encountered Indigenous forms of sociality. Both ship peoples and shore peoples were irrevocably transformed in these encounters.

These histories of violent and charged exchanges condition the contemporary settler nation. These histories call into question efforts to naturalise a settler presence in another's landscape. This

uncertain settler identity must also shore up its symbolic and economic boundaries in the face of more contemporary forms of globalisation. Accordingly, the settler nation must continually code, decode and recode social norms and social spaces so as to secure a meaningful (read: *proprietary*) relationship to the territories and resources at stake. Somewhat akin to an obsessive-compulsive disorder, the settler nation is deeply vexed by its own precarious identity, a precariousness that at the same time extends its powers throughout the social matrix that is the nation. Like a technique of power or a mode of thought, a recurring obsession with national identity as well as an accompanying affect of unease are two symptoms of what we could call a settler colonial disorder: a form of governmentality (as a mode of conduct) that constantly diverts attention and energy away from building or expressing more affirmative affinities and transformative modes of social organisation.

THE TYRANNY OF 'THE TYRANNY OF DISTANCE'

In the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand we can see these forms of governance at work in a variety of social spaces, most clearly, in the fields of the arts and communication (literature, fine art, film and television). These fields help build up, disseminate and contribute to, meaningful conversations about belonging and community. These conversations take place in the colonising language of English; they assume a shared investment in notions of nationhood and they change over time. They are expressive of social and economic contradictions and they help express group and self-identity. In the field of New Zealand film and literature studies a key topic of discussion concerns problems to do with how texts reflect what and who 'we' are. The ground, however, shifts in terms of defining this elusive national identity, as Roger Horrocks reminds us when he writes, in relation to film:

> a culture can be conceived not as a permanent essence waiting to be bottled and marketed in films but as a changing field of forces involving many conflicts and local differences. National identity then becomes a question rather than an answer – or a question with (at

> any given time) a particular range of competing answers.[1]

This question or problem of national identity is dispersed across a range of academic and creative areas, and is met with a variety of answers. The same obsessions with identity and belonging that are found in the institutions surrounding New Zealand cinema can also be found in New Zealand fine arts and literature. Poet and fiction writer Bill Manhire figures New Zealand identity as existing 'at the edge of the universe'. Actor Sam Neill's personal history of New Zealand cinema frames New Zealand identity as harbouring a dark 'unease'. An earlier poet, Charles Brasch, conjured up a watchful but remote metropole when he wrote the phrase 'distance that looks our way'. More recently, academic Nick Perry punningly rewrites New Zealand nationhood as experiencing a 'distance that weighs our look'. Current models of national identity acknowledge the artificial and fundamentally displaced nature of this identity, a notion of the antipodean 'national' characterised by Perry as involving 'makeovers, mutations and Maoriness'. Yet, is there not something in these repetitions of uncertainty and un-placeability (*How To Be Nowhere* in author Ian Wedde's terms) that reveals national identity as a problem peculiar to the settler subject?[2] This is a problem that positions other possible subjectivities (Maori[*], migrant, female), and other modes of enquiry, as the shadowy other to the prevailing norm. Indeed, circulate the question 'how to be nowhere' within a Maori context and it would perhaps not be recognised as a problem as such. For Maori are tangata whenua (people of the land), a name that describes how waters, mountains and bush contribute to the making of a people. By occupying the landscape prior to colonisation, Maori may well have *generated* the problem of ontological uncertainty for the settler subject, and while colonisation enacted displacements of another kind for Maori, the problem of 'how to be nowhere' is *not* a central problem for tangata whenua as such. Yet in academic and creative areas, the repetitive and recurring motifs of unsettling remoteness

[*] Editors' note: 'Maori' (and 'Pakeha', below) should have macrons above the 'a' but are here published without them. The typeface we have elected for the Open Journal System does not accommodate the macrons used in New Zealand English. We apologise. In any case, we should point out that returning macrons is a poor substitute for returning land.

(and attendant affects of unease) persists and, indeed, increasingly extends itself to include Indigenous and Pacific Island cultural producers.

Metaphors and tropes that place New Zealand at a distance from European or North American metropoles reinscribe other elsewheres as the hidden centres of settler culture. These imaginary centres function as cloaking devices that obscure more productive affinities and affiliations that settler being in place – and taking up of space – inaugurates. This is not to say that the reigning norms of a settler colonial disorder do not take into account the trauma of settler-native encounters. The thrownness of settler being in relation to Indigenous sociality produces affects of unease that have a long history. Indeed, the trope of unease relates to a reigning norm in New Zealand cultural production, that of the postcolonial gothic. According to art critic Robert Leonard, the postcolonial gothic references the unfinished business of colonisation and the spectral traces of this traumatic past that haunt the everyday.[3] Leonard identifies a gothic turn in New Zealand cultural production in 1992, with Ronnie van Hout's photographic satire on the idea of the New Zealand landscape as a haunted and *unheimlich* terrain – a treatment of landscape made orthodox by Pakeha (settler descendants) painters such as Colin McCahon. Leonard shores up this notion of a significant gothic turn by citing Sam Neill's 1995 documentary on New Zealand film (*The Cinema of Unease*), the 2003 *Antipodean Gothic* conference held in Auckland and the subsequent anthology *Gothic New Zealand* (2006) edited by Misha Kavka and Jenny Lawn. The 2009 *Unnerved: The New Zealand Project* exhibit hosted by the Queensland Art Gallery is also included in this list. The South Island town of Christchurch is the alleged heartland of this trope, style and sensibility. Leonard understands the gothic as a tendency in art practices that emerged as a response to the bicultural themes of early 1990s art. While Leonard suggests that some Maori artists have played on this theme, (in particular, Shane Cotton's 2006 show 'Maori Gothic'), he admits that the gothic is 'principally a Pakeha thing'. Noting the ambivalence of a term that nonetheless holds some social force, Leonard notes how '[t]he Gothic is at risk of becoming a reigning truism in New Zealand art'. Leonard finally asks: 'is it a telling term or a convenient market device; zeitgeist or constricting cliché?'[4]

While principally a 'Pakeha thing', the theme of unease that underpins the gothic has increasingly expanded to include art made by Indigenous and Pacific Island cultural producers. The *Unnerved: The New Zealand Project* exhibit is a case in point. Careful to situate New Zealand art in a wider Asia-Pacific matrix, the Queensland Art Gallery exhibit nonetheless revisits a trope that revolves around the state of the New Zealand nation as such. Outlining the intent of the exhibit, curator Maud Page links the title ('Unnerved') to the theme of unease, stating that to be unnerved means to be 'perturbed, to experience disquiet, to be aware that something is not quite right, to feel apprehension to a greater or lesser extent'.[5] She swiftly moves from the notion of being unnerved to 'unease' when she notes that '[u]neasy content is often linked to a colonial experience, whether from a Maori, Pacific Islander or Pakeha perspective'.[6]

Maori artist Michael Parekowhai's giant inflatable rabbits *Cosmo McMurty* and *Jim McMurty* (2006) are used as evidence of this unease. His 'disturbingly Disney-like' inflatables provide a rich metaphor for a settler colonial context where introduced species tend to multiply with devastating effects. Niuean-born John Pule's *Tukulagi Tukumuitea/Forever and Ever* (2005) – a work featuring 'porous red stains' – is framed as expressive of dispossessed land and Pule's experiences as a migrant freezing worker in South Auckland. In their essay for the catalogue essay 'New Zealand Noir', Rosie Hays and Amanda Slack Smith discuss films such as *The Strength of Water* (2009) and *Eagle vs. Shark* (2007) as works that 'delve beneath a glossy and unspoilt exterior to uncover raw, awkward and at times disturbing truths'.[7]

The summative illustration used as cover art for the *Unnerved: The New Zealand Project* exhibition catalogue is Lisa Reihana's portrait, *Dandy*, a work from her *Digital Marae* series (2001-ongoing). This work features a mid-length portrait of a Maori man in colonial clothing with a full moko (facial tattoo). Reihana's piece is a reenactment of colonial portraiture photography, a repetition of othering that reworks stereotypical discourse to produce uneasy affects. Presumably this sense of disquiet comes from the unlikely coming together of signs of Western modernity (the finely detailed costuming of a colonial gentleman) and Indigenous tradition (the full moko of a Maori warrior or rangatira). While Reihana's work certainly

does actively appropriate entrenched colonial stereotypes in order to 'speak back' to a colonial legacy and its aftermath, her works also assert a form of Indigenous agency unshackled from the concerns of the settler subject. That is to say, while colonial photography objectified Indigenous peoples, these technologies also preserved the past and enable that past to be re-activated with a palpable force in the here and now – for Indigenous peoples.[8] Accordingly, *Dandy* may be unnerving to some, but to others this portrait activates affirmative and powerful affects. The excessive meaningfulness of *Dandy*, or Parekowhai's giant inflatable rabbits *can* be read as unnerving, uneasy and gothic. But to say that one is unnerved, *in the first instance*, by such works, presumes a particular viewing subject. It is to take as given, a shared viewing platform – in this instance, a kind of platform or foundation that has the traumas of colonisation, and the settler subject, at its centre.

To answer Leonard's question about the gothic, one could say 'yes' to all five options. The gothic *is* a reigning truism in New Zealand cultural production; it *is* a telling term, a market device, a zeitgeist and cliché. It is also a useful framing device for investigating settler colonial cultural production and the ways in which migrant or Maori cultural producers might rewrite histories of settlement. However, in the context of the *Unnerved* exhibit in particular, the gothic is also a mode of organisation that helps to govern what is seeable and sayable about Indigenous and migrant cultural production. It is a problem that is expressive of a particular formation of power that privileges a land-locked and settler-centric perspective. How, then, can we wrench another point of view from this prevailing norm? How can we reframe the problem of New Zealand cultural production in ways that uncouple the naturalised linkage between unease, national identity and the settler subject? How can we generate concepts that might reveal more precisely the contested nature of such claims to New Zealand identity?

Francis Pound's outstandingly detailed *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970* (2009) sets out to map the artistic, literary and critical discourses that worked to consciously create a national identity and a specifically New Zealand high culture during that period. The significance of this work is the way in which Pound outlines the dominant lines of force in the nationalist

movement's cultural discourses. Take, for example his discussion of the myth of New Zealand as an island, remote and isolated from Europe. Noting the publication of *Distance Looks Our Way: The Effects of Remoteness on New Zealand* (1961) Pound marvels: 'that there should now be a whole book devoted to the proclaimed remoteness of New Zealand attests to the mythopoetic power the island topos had attained in New Zealand high culture'.[9] Yet, in a footnote Pound notes that in *Distance Looks Our Way* 'the first cracks in the long-maintained Island Mentality' can also be found. For instance, Robert Chapman's essay title 'No Land is an Island' distinctly refutes the island topos, while McCormick highlights the relativity of notions of distance and centrality when he wonders if 'the migrant newly arrived from Rarotonga might think of Queen Street, Auckland, as the middle of the world'.[10] What then, would contemporary cultural criticism look like if it explored the cracks in such nationalist discourses, rather than following established lines of force?

To be fair, the notion of the postcolonial gothic has its uses. In many ways it functions as a form of postcolonial exoticism that, as Graham Huggan has argued, operates at the intersection of two regimes of value.[11] On the one hand, exoticism is an aestheticising process that translates the cultural other (and the language of resistance or struggle) into a form of domesticated difference that can be easily consumed by mainstream (and most often) Western markets. In the case of New Zealand, the cultural otherness presented by the majority of postcolonial gothic forms involves the settler subject. On the other hand, exoticism is also a critical strategy that can be repoliticised and redeployed 'both to unsettle metropolitan expectations of cultural otherness and to effect a grounded critique of differential relations of power'.[12] The New Zealand gothic is a pliable mass of materials, easily amenable as both a critique and a commodity. But what other concepts are possible that do not make colonisation the only story told about Indigenous lives and the settler subject?

The question of competing claims returns us to Roger Horrocks' important reminder that national identity is a question with 'a particular range of competing answers'.[13] In 1997 Mark Williams offered a range of New Zealand nationalisms that reflect this heterogeneous view. Taking issue with Ernest Gellner's 1983

contention that New Zealand national identity is homogenous and *British*, Williams identifies three distinct nationalisms, post-settler Pakeha, Maori and bicultural, each of these categories disclosing 'its own separate phases of development, revisionary tendencies and internal differences'.[14] Arguing for site specific and historically nuanced critiques, Williams calls these categories 'micro-nationalisms', and this attention to micro-level narratives of belonging chimes with Horrocks' notion of national identity as a 'changing field of forces involving many conflicts and local differences'.[15] But, as the *Unnerved* exhibit reminds us, these internal differences, revisionary tendencies and local articulations often get lost in the rush to grasp easily consumable cultural narratives to frame current cultural practices. Williams ends his range of 'micro-nationalisms' in the late 1990s, at a time when biculturalism was a dominant discourse.[16] In his 2004 anthology entitled *Writing at the Edge of the Universe* Williams describes the cultural climate between the late 1990s to 2004 as one in which 'at last distance truly "looks our way"'.[17] This is the post-*Lord of the Rings* era in New Zealand cultural production, one boosted by the Helen Clarke-led Labour Government's investment in the creative industries. The anthology addresses the rise in popularity of New Zealand writing, as well as the government's support for the arts. According to Williams, this is an era where 'New Zealand is now known for more than scenery, sheep, dour All Blacks and quaintly archaic Maori customs'.[18]

Six years after the publication of Williams' anthology one could say that the national consciousness has expanded further and now incorporates, more overtly, the artistic and sporting successes of Pacific Island New Zealanders, as well as the programming content of the Indigenous broadcaster, Maori Television. The image of 'dour' All Blacks may still persist in some corners, but the number of All Blacks with Pacific Island connections has increased consistently over the years. The trappings of Maori *mise-en-scène* that accompany the All Blacks brand have also been a consistent feature.[19] With the advent of Maori Television in 2004, and the national and international success of The Naked Samoans' television series *bro' Town*, as well as the high profile of many Pacific Island actors on national television, settler-centric paradigms for the study of New Zealand cultural production are increasingly untenable.[20] Two key characteristics define the contemporary moment: the rise in profile

of Pacific Island cultural production, and the emergence of a post-settlement era in terms of Maori claims against the New Zealand State.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF DISTANCE: REVERSE-SHOTS FROM OCEANIA

The problem with the *Unnerved* project is that it tries to think the increasingly Pacific dimensions of contemporary New Zealand alongside a rather jaded island topos that emphasises isolation from a European metropole. How then, can we wrench another point of view from this prevailing norm? What would such an exhibition look like if seen from the viewpoint of the Pacific, a viewpoint that reflects the increasingly multicultural present of Aotearoa/New Zealand? To answer these questions, one needs to turn to discussions in the field of Pacific Studies and to a seminal essay written by Tongan artist and intellectual, Epeli Hau'ofa. Hau'ofa upturned orthodox (that is to say, land-locked) thinking about the Pacific as a space of isolated islands dotted throughout the Pacific when he argued that it is the ocean itself that must be understood as the conduit connecting, communicating and interacting across these distances. As Hau'ofa writes:

> There is a world of difference between viewing the Pacific as 'islands in a far sea' and as 'a sea of islands'. The first emphasizes dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from the centers of power. Focusing in this way stresses the smallness and remoteness of the islands. The second is a more holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships.[21]

Replacing emptiness and distance with plenitude and connection is a powerful and affirmative intellectual move and the liquid logic that runs through Hau'ofa's essay is a feature of contemporary writers, thinkers and artists belonging to Oceania. Situating New Zealand cultural production in relation to this larger sense of the Pacific decentres a settler-centric logic of New Zealand nationalism

obsessed with remoteness and isolation in relation to European and North American metropoles.

An alternate vision of New Zealand cultural production is invoked in the round table conversation entitled 'Thinking Through Oceania Now' conducted by key cultural critics and practitioners based in New Zealand and working in Pacific Studies, fine arts, and the field of architecture.[22] The discussion takes up two formulations of the idea of Oceania drawn from Albert Wendt's 1976 'Towards a New Oceania' and another of Hau'ofa's essays, 'The Ocean In Us' (1997). Wendt wrote his essay at the height of the political decolonisation of the Pacific and addresses the powerful contributions that art can make to processes of decolonisation. Hau'ofa's essays accentuate unity and connectedness in the face of ethnic and national differences made more agonistic by neoliberal and globalising forces. The tenor of the round table discussion reflected an awareness of speaking from a range of specific locations, both geographical and institutional, cultural and epistemological. At the start of the discussion, Teresia Teaiwa and Albert Refiti noted the difficulty of thinking the Oceanic from the space of Aotearoa/New Zealand, a context where processes of decolonisation are rooted in a land-based logic. Before returning to the questions raised by the differences between the liquid logic of Oceania and the decolonising politics of Aotearoa/New Zealand, we need a clearer sense of how the Oceanic is understood in this discussion.

The round table figured Oceania in many different ways. Most discussants began from the basis that there is an open-endedness to the concept that must be sustained if the metaphoric and poetic dimensions of Wendt's and Hau'ofa's concepts are to prevail. Teaiwa sums it up best when she states that, 'For me, "Oceania" represents an intellectual space, an imaginary [...]. It's not a geographical space of dwelling, although it is inspired by such a "real"'.[23] Ron Brownson's memory of a visit to Rarotonga literalises Teaiwa's point when he recalls being taken down to the sea and told to look at the sky, which was reflected in the ocean. As his host Ron Crocombe noted, the waters that encompass the Cook Islands are 'bigger than the area of France'. It is this emphasis on connections – on transforming figure/ground relations – that are hallmarks of the

Oceanic. Albert Refiti puts it succinctly when he invites us to think Oceania 'as a concept that draws us into a relation and which shows our relationships are fundamentally different from that of the West, Orientalism, etc.'.[24]

How might this concept of Oceania refigure the terms for understanding New Zealand cultural production? Commenting on the oft-cited New Zealand notion of a 'distance that looks our way', Refiti recalls growing up in Samoa and his village minister treating such distance as a provocation to imagine what paradise might be. As Refiti notes, 'this was not the tyranny that New Zealand artists were trapped in but a privileged point of view of our imaginings'.[25] It is also a form of consciousness that 'eradicates a single view point'.[26] By affirming distance as an enabling condition, Refiti frees his imagination to rethink centre/periphery relations. These are then some recurring dimensions of the Oceanic: it is an intellectual and imaginary space, inspired by 'the real' and embedded in specific locations, a concept that stresses connectedness across space and time, and a concept that draws one into a relationship with others, without privileging a single view point. Following Wendt and Hau'ofa, the power of art to enable, inspire and inaugurate such a consciousness is crucial.

We can see this consciousness at work in the art of Niuean-born and New Zealand-based John Pule. While curator Maud Page's entry in the *Unnerved* catalogue acknowledges the semiotic richness of Pules's 'porous red stains' in *Tukulagi Tukumuitea/Forever and Ever* (2005), her introduction to the *Unnerved* exhibit frames Pule's work as a metaphor of dispossessed land and Pule's experiences as a migrant freezing worker in South Auckland. This selective reading helps to demonstrate the 'unnerving' dimensions of the work, but from the viewpoint of the Oceanic, Pule's work (both painting and poetry) also builds up worlds that do not conform to existing models of belonging. Gregory O'Brien describes Pule's art in the following manner:

> Whether painting or writing, Pule is a gatherer and a horder of materials, a layer-out of blankets, a listener-to and relayer of many stories, a creator of inventories, a traffic conductor and a conduit; he is also a town-

> planner, road-layer and student of cloud forms and ocean currents. Straddling individual experience and collective realities (social and political, as well as mythical), his works are both grounded in identifiable reality ('the nurturing soil' he writes of) and the byproduct of dazzling invention.[27]

Certainly, the 'porous red stains' of *Tukulagi Tukumuitea/Forever and Ever* might invoke the bloody work of an abattoir or, more poetically, the migrant trauma of the loss of land. But these readings are very biographical and do not account for the ways in which Pule's artworks 'straddle' individual *and* collective realities. These readings limit and constrain the imaginative and inventive dimensions of 'porous red stains' that might also invoke a perverse form of cloud formation or a particular notion of 'soil' that both stains and contaminates as much as it serves as a basis for belonging. Further into the *Unnerved* catalogue Page titles her essay 'Making Soil to Stand In', which gestures to this more complex trafficking across place and space via aesthetic practices. While her earlier framing of the exhibit places Pule's work within the tradition of gothic unease, Page's subsequent discussion of Pule's work exposes a crack in this gothic discourse by emphasising the productive and affirmative dimensions of Pule's art practices. Page also notes how Pule anchors his imagery in both Niue and New Zealand.[28] The idea of aesthetic practice as producing different soils to stand (or *be*) in is a crucial reminder of the productive and political dimensions of art's role in processes of decolonisation. Art and imagination as the basis for belonging frees us from the notion of nation, centres and peripheries. As O'Brien notes:

> These works – with their myriad meanings, currents and undertows, eddies, millponds, storms and isolated moments of calm – remind us that, as inhabitants of the Pacific, whether we live in Niue or New Zealand, our shared address is not a continent or even an island but a vast ocean beneath an expanse of sky.[29]

Yet, this kind of liquid logic does not fit well with the norms of New Zealand culture as Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira argue in their introduction to *Pacific Art Niu Sila: The Pacific Dimension of Contemporary New Zealand Arts* (2002). Noting the very few mentions of Pacific artists in exhibitions and books on New Zealand art at that time, Mallon and Pereira suggest that some New Zealanders still view Pacific forms as somehow ungrounded or 'out there' in relation to New Zealand's socio-cultural milieu.[30]

Mallon and Pereira argue that rather than an overtly racist logic this mindset reflects a certain difficulty in 'extricating ourselves from long-established ways of seeing and categorising the world; getting past the stereotypes and ethnic/cultural boxes'.[31] These difficulties in freeing set minds reflect the crucial role played by the arts in processes of decolonisation. Yet, decolonising politics from the viewpoint of the Pacific looks very different from the politics of decolonisation that has taken place, so far, in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As Teresia Teaiwa notes, 'being native in an ocean is altogether different from the claim of being native to an island'.[32] This is why, as Refiti also remarks, 'Wendt and Hau'ofa's proposals are not universally accepted in Aotearoa because of a certain refusal to let go of the stability that "land" procures'.[33] This land-based logic reflects not only the island mentality of the settler subject exemplified in *Distance Looks Our Way* but also the cultural politics of tangata whenua, and common approaches that emphasise the idea of autochthony (spontaneous generation) and the rights of 'the first' or of original occupation.

ENTANGLEMENTS-ALLIANCES-AFFINITIES

This section explores the possibilities of a liquid Oceanic approach to tangata whenua politics, one that takes seriously Teaiwa's question, 'If we go to the ocean, what might decolonisation look like?'. In many ways, the notion of Oceania is a form of cosmopolitan consciousness involving an expanded set of alliances and affinities that reach across territorial, political and ethnic boundaries.[34] Rooted in the everyday, but with transnational 'routes', this form of Oceanic cosmopolitanism generates 'a heightened sense of the relativity of one's own social

position and culture in a global setting' and the many possible 'interconnections between actors in diverse locations'.[35] The idea of interconnections and entanglements with diverse locations is well-known territory for the settler subject whose rootedness in the contemporary context carries the transnational shadows of routes from other metropoles. But the awareness of 'relativity' of the settler's social position has been dulled by the comforts of these contemporary roots.

Many Pakeha argue that through the fact of long-term occupation, Pakeha are now indigenous to Aotearoa/New Zealand.[36] A decolonising politics then, in the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, is very much based upon staking a claim to the landscape, a logic that sits uncomfortably alongside an Oceanic consciousness. Indigenous expressions of rights based upon being tangata whenua challenge attempts to naturalise a settler presence in the New Zealand landscape. Orthodox uses of the term tangata whenua are based upon genealogical relations that ultimately tie contemporary Maori with tribal ancestors derived from landscapes, flora and fauna. The Treaty Claims process is underpinned by an ethical imperative to recognise Maori rights of 'primogeniture'.[37] For some Maori, attempts to frame the settler subject as tangata whenua means to 'undermine Maori efforts to resist continuing colonisation'.[38] Yet, how settlement – and by extension, notions of New Zealand national identity – gets talked about is a crucial locus for investigating who gets to set the terms for the debate about the meaning of settlement, and under what conditions. Economic compensation to Maori only partially addresses the historical grievances of colonisation. In unison with the shifts in the material realities of Indigenous lives, we must also work to construct epistemological and discursive shifts in ways of talking about New Zealand histories and the political language used to describe cultural belonging and contemporary cultural politics. This is a form of decolonising politics that expands, investigates and challenges the constantly changing 'we' of New Zealand identity. If the decolonising politics of Aotearoa/New Zealand are entangled in a logic of national identity that has become pathologically land-based, framing New Zealand as part of a sea of islands might help to decentre the settler-centric logic that underpins New Zealand's decolonising agenda.

The stakes for expanding existing paradigms of political thought in a settler colonial context are high. New Zealand is now entering what some call a post-settlement era where many tribes have successfully negotiated compensation for historical wrongs.[39] In the 1990s iwi (tribal groups) such as Tainui, in the North Island, and Ngai Tahu, in the South Island, achieved significant Treaty settlements. In 2004, after many years of political activism, the State agreed to fund and support Maori Television. While addressing those Treaty grievances yet to be settled, a decolonising politics of Aotearoa/New Zealand must also address the ways in which successful Treaty settlements shift common understandings of Indigenous political struggles. This brings us back to the role of art and imagination in contributing to the conditions necessary for social and political change.

By claiming to be indigenous to Aotearoa/New Zealand, contemporary settler subjects forget the fluid logic that underpinned colonial encounters. As Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis remind us, the charged encounters between settler and native forms of sociality involved peculiar forms of alchemy.

> The paradox of settler societies is that they simultaneously resisted and accommodated the authority of an imperialist Europe, where 'colonial rule was the founding within which [non-European institutions and culture] were melted down and recast into new political alloys [...] compatible with European requirements'.[40]

The Treaty of Waitangi Claims process is one such example of the ways in which settler rule transformed the social norms of tangata whenua.[41] While the Claims process has offered Maori communities the chance to retrieve lost tribal histories and to rebuild mana (prestige), the Claims process has also tied communities into an existing economic logic that transforms customary resources into commodities and assets.[42] But there is always an excess to this recasting of Indigenous sociality into 'new political alloys'. For example, indigenous oral histories form part of the Waitangi Claims

processes and bring contesting ontological and epistemological presuppositions into the public realm.[43] In her example of the 'evidentiary weight' that oral narratives can carry in secular courts and tribunals, Miranda Johnson reminds us that these oral histories are bound by kinship networks and community protocols that do not sit easily with the demands of secular state practices. That is to say, the transformative dimensions of settler/native exchanges occur *both* ways. These discursive entanglements, while regulatory and restrictive of Indigenous sovereignty, also produce new kinds of thinking subjects and new alliances and affinities that echo the logic of an Oceanic consciousness. Maori filmmaker and philosopher Barry Barclay called these kinds of formations 'sites of exuberance'.[44]

The work of Indigenous film pioneer, writer and activist Barry Barclay reflects a form of Oceanic cosmopolitanism in his commitment to embedded filmmaking practices that reach across raced and ethnic differences. One of the many possible answers to Teaiwa's provocation to think decolonisation from the viewpoint of the ocean can be found in Barclay's cinema, in particular in his documentary about a harbour and its community. *The Kaipara Affair* (2005) tells the story of the small North Island town of Tinopai, and its fight to stop commercial fishing interests from devastating the fish stocks in the Kaipara Harbour. Barclay lived in Tinopai for three years while he gathered together material to document the shared struggle by both Maori and Pakeha residents to protect its waters. This film perhaps best embodies Barclay's philosophical and political approach to cinema. For Barclay, filmmaking is a form of hui where people gather to discuss issues of import. The filmmaker enters into relationship with the community and bears the responsibility of conveying the ethos, spirit and character of this community. This kind of filmmaking requires extensive pre-production and consultation time (Barclay first established this practice with the seminal 1974 television series *Tangata Whenua*) and results in an unusual cinematic style. For example, one of the central events of *The Kaipara Affair* concerns local residents placing a rahui (ban) on a section of the Kaipara harbour so that fish stocks could be protected. This agreement, by both Maori and non-Maori, demonstrates the crucial role that Indigenous practices can play in the life of the nation for the benefit of all New Zealanders. While a politically provocative

idea, the film makes this argument in a nuanced and poetic manner. Stuart Murray describes this approach in the following way:

> the placing of the rahui is arguably the single most significant narrative 'event' covered by the film. It is the rahui that stands as a marker both of the community's defiance and of its organization and mobilization of the traditions of customary law; in many way it exemplifies the issues the film depicts. Yet there is no introduction to the processes by which the ban was laid down, no description of the immediate contexts through which it came to be used, and no initial sense of its importance. Rather the first mention of the rahui itself actually comes in some reflections from Raewyn McDonald about the hangi (meal) called to celebrate the event. It emerges as a tangential reflection during a conversation about something else, before then moving to become more obviously central to the issues of the film itself. This kind of narrative flexibility is typical of the production.[45]

This kind of oblique narrative style, with multiple perspectives, is a key aspect Barclay's commitment to providing the conditions necessary though which a community might express itself. This kind of oblique cinema unravels the various roots and routes that bring a small New Zealand community together. Unconventional, often difficult to follow, this is a style of filmmaking that has come into conflict with funding agencies, broadcasters and members of the New Zealand film industry. While the theatrical release of *The Kaipara Affair* depicted the concerns of local residents in ways that reached across ethnic boundaries, the broadcast release of the film on national television (edited down to seventy minutes without Barclay's agreement) reinscribed racial stereotypes of militant Maori activism and racist Pakeha attitudes at odds with each other. In the orthodox style of 'issues-based' documentary cut to fit the demands of television advertisers, TVNZ's (the State broadcaster) treatment of *The Kaipara Affair* echoed the same kinds of abuses of sovereignty and law that the film depicted. More than this, the TVNZ recut reminds

us of the ongoing nature of the struggle to develop and invent ways of naming ourselves as part of a community, a region, a nation, an ocean. The theatrical release, and the copies of the full-length version Barclay distributed to a variety of grass-roots communities as a way of sustaining the voice of the Tinopai community should be seen as the original text. In his final film Barry Barclay's decolonising politics speak: focusing on the waters that sustain a community, and the struggles by both Maori and non-Maori to assert sovereignty over these waters, *The Kaipara Affair* tells us what decolonisation might look like from the viewpoint of the ocean.

CONCLUSION

The work of settler colonialism is an ongoing and persistent project that seeks to normalise the settler subject as the most significant agent of history. The emerging field of settler colonial studies might hope to address these repetitive and resilient systems of organisation, but to do so, the field must maintain a steady vigilance in relation to the tools and terms deployed. To aid this endeavour, settler colonial studies needs to draw from the work of Indigenous and Pacific Studies in ways that might disrupt the obsessive and compulsive dimensions of settler colonialism, which seeks to reinscribe the settler subject as the unexamined centre of any event. Like a technique of power or a mode of thought, a recurring obsession with national identity as well as an accompanying affect of unease are two such symptoms of what I have called a settler colonial disorder: a form of governmentality (as a mode of conduct) that constantly diverts attention and energy away from building or expressing more affirmative affinities and transformative modes of social organisation. These alternate modes of organisation are present in the mediascapes and art worlds we encounter everyday and require diverse forms of critical engagement that can draw out, articulate and illuminate, their social and political significance.

In the case of Aotearoa/New Zealand, the increased visibility of Pacific and Maori New Zealanders in film, television, literature and the fine arts increasingly places pressure on settler-centric ways of discussing the state of the New Zealand nation. Settler claims to Indigeneity seek to put the colonial past behind the contemporary

nation. Staking such a claim to a landscape blinds us to other ways of seeing. From the viewpoint of the Oceanic, one can see how the land and its surrounding waters connect people in diverse, mobile and contingent ways. While orthodox narratives of the nation reinscribe affects of perpetual unease, Pacific and Indigenous creative producers envisage other ways of being, seeing and relating. Uneasy and unsettling these cultural products may be to some, but these are also communication landscapes that offer the materials to build community and affiliation across differences and distances that have been relentlessly (repetitively, obsessively) inscribed as the norm.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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NOTES

[1] Roger Horrocks, 'New Zealand Cinema', in Deb Verhoeven (ed.), *Twin Peeks: Australian and New Zealand Feature Films* (Melbourne: Damned Publishing, 1999), p.134.
[2] Bill Manhire, *Milky Way Bar* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1991). See also Sam Neill, *Cinema of Unease* (1995); Charles Brasch, *Disputed Ground: Poems, 1939-45* (Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1948); Nick Perry, 'Virtual Spectator and the Antipodal' in Claudia Bell and Steve Matthewman (eds), *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 19-35.
[3] Robert Leonard, 'Hello Darkness: New Zealand Gothic', *Art and Australia* 46, 1 (2008), pp. 81-95.
[4] Leonard, 'Hello Darkness: New Zealand Gothic', p. 93.
[5] Maud Page, 'Unnerved: an introduction', in Maud Page (ed.), *Unnerved: the New Zealand Project* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2010), p. 14.
[6] Page, 'Unnerved: An Introduction', p. 17.
[7] Page, 'Unnerved: An Introduction', p. 37.
[8] Jo Smith, 'Native Reenactments/Living Iterability: Lisa Reihana's *Native Portraits N.19897*', in Jonathan Lamb and Vanessa Agnew (eds), *Settler and Creole Re-Enactment* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), pp. 273-93.
[9] Francis Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand Art & National Identity, 1930-1970* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009), p. 49.
[10] Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand Art & National Identity*, p. 50.
[11] Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
[12] Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, pp. ix-x.
[13] Horrocks, 'New Zealand Cinema', p. 134.

[14] Mark Williams, 'Crippled by Geography: New Zealand Nationalisms', in Stuart Murray (ed.), *Not on Any Map: Essays on Postcoloniality and Cultural Nationalism* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997), p. 21.
[15] Horrocks, 'New Zealand Cinema', p. 134.
[16] Born out of Maori political activism during the 1970s and 1980s, biculturalism seeks to honour the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi signed between the British Crown and (some) Maori representatives. Based on an ethos of partnership, biculturalism recognises the importance of the Maori language within the nation and seeks to incorporate elements of Maori culture into public institutions. At its heights in the 1980s and early 1990s, Paul Spoonley suggests that active biculturalism 'has been largely confined to particular sectors of the State'. While construed as a path to social justice for Maori, many critics regard biculturalism as a management technique for controlling other forms of political resistance and suggest that biculturalism is characterised by an explicitly assimilatory intent. See Paul Spoonley's book review of *Beyond Biculturalism*, in *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* 3 (2008), pp. 77-9.
[17] Mark Williams, 'Introduction', in Mark Williams (ed.), *Writing at the Edge of the Universe* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2004), p. 10.
[18] Williams, 'Introduction', p. 10.
[19] Steve J. Jackson and Brendan Hokowhitu, 'Sport, Tribes, and Technology: The New Zealand All Blacks Haka and the Politics of Identity', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 26, 2 (2002), pp. 125-39.
[20] While statistic show that there are more Asian than Pacific peoples in New Zealand, the media presence of Pacific personalities outweigh those of Asian subjects. In the 2006 census the category of 'European' was the largest recorded ethnic group (67.6 percent), with Maori at 14.6 percent. Asian peoples make up 9.2 percent and Pacific peoples 6.9 percent. The category 'New Zealander' was available as an option for the first time in 2006. Of those who choose this category, 12.9 percent also identified with one or more ethnic group. See the *Special Report on the 2006 Census of New Zealand's Population and Dwellings* (Research New Zealand, 2007).
[21] Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', in Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, (eds), *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999). p. 31.
[22] This round table discussion was coordinated by art historian Peter Brunt and featured Teresia Teaiwa and April Henderson from the programme in Pacific Studies at Victoria University of Wellington; Jim Vivieaere, artist and curator; Albert Refiti, from Spatial Design at Auckland University of Technology; Ema Tavola, director of Fresh Gallery, Otara; and Ron Brownson, senior curator New Zealand and Pacific Art at Auckland Art Gallery.
[23] Peter Brunt et al., 'Roundtable: Thinking through Oceania Now', *Reading Room* 4 (2010), p. 103.
[24] Brunt et al., 'Roundtable', p.104.
[25] Brunt et al., 'Roundtable', p. 87.
[26] Brunt et al., 'Roundtable', p. 88.
[27] Nicholas Thomas (ed.), *Hauaga: The Art of John Pule* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2010).
[28] Page, 'Unnerved: An Introduction', p.124.
[29] Gregory O'Brien, 'A Portrait of the Artist as Many People', in Thomas (ed.), *Hauaga*, p. 20.
[30] Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira (eds), *Pacific Art Niu Sila: The Pacific Dimensions of Contemporary New Zealand Arts* (Wellington: Te Papa, 2002), p. 17.
[31] Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira, 'Introduction', in Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira (eds), *Pacific Art Niu Sila* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2002), pp. 17-18.

[32] Brunt et al., 'Roundtable', p. 84.
[33] Brunt et al., 'Roundtable', p. 85.
[34] Teresia Teaiwa makes this point. See Brunt et al., 'Roundtable', p. 93.
[35] Maximilian C. Forte (ed.), *Indigenous Cosmopolitans: Transnational and Transcultural Indigeneity in the Twentieth Century* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010).
[36] Michael King, *Pakeha: The Quest for Identity in New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin, 1991); Trevor Mallard, 'We Are All New Zealanders Now', Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies (Wellington: Victoria University, 2004). Available online at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/we-are-all-new-zealanders-now>, accessed 22 Jan 2011.
[37] Erich Kolig, 'Deconstructing the Waitangi Treaty Narrative: Democracy, Cultural Pluralism, and Political Myth Making in New Zealand/Aotearoa', *Sites* 1, 2 (2004), pp. 84-118.
[38] Nepia Mahuika, 'Refusing to Come Quietly', *New Zealand Books Quarterly Review* 19, 2, 86 (2009), pp. 12-3.
[39] Charles Te Ahukaramu Royal, 'Some Speculations on Māori Identity in the New Zealand of Tomorrow', in *Concepts of Nationhood: Marking 100 Years Since the Proclamation of Dominion Status for New Zealand* (Legislative Council Chamber: Parliament Buildings, Wellington, 2007).
[40] Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis (eds), *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 4.
[41] In 1975 the New Zealand Crown established the Waitangi Tribunal designed to make recommendations on Maori claims regarding breaches of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (Tiriti o Waitangi). While a politically progressive act of reconciliation on the face of things, the Treaty process still entails limitations, the most important aspect being that the Crown continues to set the agenda for addressing historical injustices.
[42] Shane Jones, 'Development and Maori Society: Building from the Centre or the Edge?' in Anthony Hooper (ed.), *Culture and Sustainable Development in the Pacific* (Canberra: ANU E Press and Asia Pacific Press, 2005), pp. 159-73. See also Maria Bargh, 'Maori Development and Neoliberalism', in Maria Bargh (ed.), *Resistance: An Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2007), pp. 25-44.
[43] Miranda Johnson, 'Honest Acts and Dangerous Supplements: Indigenous Oral History and Historical Practice in Settler Societies', *Postcolonial Studies* 8, 3 (2005), pp. 261-76.
[44] Barry Barclay, 'Exploring Fourth Cinema: A Talk Given in Hawaii as Part of Summer School Lectures', in *Re-imaging Indigenous Cultures: the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu, HI: National Endowment for the Humanities, 2003).
[45] Stuart Murray, 'Activism, Community and Governance: Barry Barclay's *The Kaipara Affair* (2005)', *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 1, 2 (2007), pp. 147-59.