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On the Difficulty of Reckoning with Settler Colonialisms: Transnational and Comparative Perspectives

Settler Colonialism and (Re)Conciliation: Frontier Violence, Affective Performances, and Imaginative Refoundings
By Penelope Edmonds. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land, and Settler Decolonization
By Eva Mackey. Halifax; Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2016.

The Limits of Settler Colonial Reconciliation: Non-Indigenous People and the Responsibility to Engage
Edited by Sarah Maddison, Tom Clark and Ravi de Costa. New York: Springer, 2016.

Truth will not make us free, but taking control of the production of truth will.
Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri¹

In settler societies, coming to grips with historical wrongs continues to pose an enduring dilemma. Powerful scripts and events of redress, forgiveness and reconciliation are used to petition for and engage with narratives of the “post” settler nation state. The scope, substance, and politics of reckoning with settler colonial wrongs have garnered an intense controversy, and by turns, precipitated vibrant and creative scholarship. In Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada, and to a lesser extent, the United States, scholars have recognized the distinctive roles of reconciliatory efforts in settler societies, and attempted to untangle the repertoire of “moving on” and beyond the historical continuity of settler colonialism. They look at what it means to be “post” colonial and decolonized in nations that still lack a clear decolonizing moment. This essay engages with these competing perspectives as explored in the work of three recent volumes: Penelope Edmonds’ *Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation*, Eva Mackey’s *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land and Settler Decolonization*, and Sarah Maddison et al., *The Limits of Settler Colonial Reconciliation*. Taking specific case studies across Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, these comprehensive and transnational comparative studies offer rigorous evaluation of the ideas and symbolic practices of reconciliation and their interlocking relationships with

settler colonial histories. Without treating the processes of “decolonization” and “reconciliation” as self-contained, isolated, or discrete units of meaningful change, these scholars address the ways in which the practices of these concepts attempt to reanimate and mobilize the past for a “post” settler condition and emancipatory moral order. The prefix “post,” as Jean Francois Lyotard has articulated, conjures the conviction “that it is both possible and necessary to break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living and thinking.”² But in settler societies, the “post” may not mean a clearly defined moment or a “rupture” with the colonial past; instead, it may well repeat it and reinforce its diurnal residues. In different ways, these volumes interrogate these “new” realities and their chameleon-like abilities, by offering multifaceted approaches to deter what seems to be an alarming reproduction of coloniality and normative authority of the settler state. They use different and understudied analytical lenses and frameworks such as performance, ethnography of conflicts about land rights, and structural and attitudinal engagement to explore the complex and difficult conundrums and aporias of decolonization in settler societies.

In *Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation*, Penelope Edmonds draws on text-based histories and Indigenous oral traditions to disentangle present politics of reconciliation, historical reenactments and performative acts in the nascent settler formations of the postcolonial state. She uses theatrical events and performances, as analytical lenses, to juxtapose state-led aspirational calls for unity with Indigenous dispute and refusal of the idea that history was done, and a “new” postcolonial order is ripe for development and settlement. Edmonds takes direct aim at the problematic nature of the so-called “post” settler state and its reconciliatory narrative, which she argues lies within a growing production of knowledge premised on a mythic past of conciliation and peaceful covenants between Indigenous peoples and settlers. To that end, she traces the emergence and trajectory of “conciliatory” historical narratives in the United States, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand to explain that (re)conciliation has been funneled as a new hope for a postcolonial moral order, masking the vulnerability that many Indigenous communities still endure. To better illustrate her argument, Edmonds contrasts state-sponsored choreographed gestures, which often reenact the past through a settler colonial prism, with Indigenous truth-telling ceremonies that account for past

ghastliest episodes, established stories of nationhood, and government policies that had long trampled on their rights.

Throughout her painstaking analysis, she looks at performative acts in different registers and lexicons, and interprets different significance and negotiation of the past. On one level, settler societies use “top-down” performative events to recuperate a sense of nationhood; draw a thematic magnet of togetherness; and attempt to offer new social relationships. On another, Indigenous peoples and their allies use commemorative service and ceremonies of memorialization to call on the silenced past; acknowledge the hidden trauma inflicted upon their nations; and renegotiate a postcolonial order along their ontological and epistemological lines. Focusing on the experiences of the Haudenosaunee and the Lakota Nations in the United States; the Weraerai peoples of New South Wales and Tasmanian Aboriginal, or Palawa, in Australia; and the Tūhoe’ in Te Urewera region in North Aotearoa New Zealand, Edmonds unpacks the settler colonial stories, practices and reenactments of early conciliatory performances, and places Indigenous views, agency and interpretations at the center. She begins each chapter with a vignette of a contemporary performance, and then unravels its historical meanings, moving recursively between the historical archives and the repertoire of performance. At its heart, Edmonds reveals the way the past shapes and, in some cases, erupts in the present as a “truth event,” and then exposes how these communities make use, revise, and renegotiate the past in light of what had occurred.

In the United States, she retraces different politics of performance and approaches to historical reenactments and how they are played out among the Haudenosaunee and the Yankton Sioux (Lakota). In the first case, the Haudenosaunee and their allies organized a thirteen-day canoe journey in 2013, known as The Two Row Campaign, to commemorate what is understood as the Two Row Wampum Treaty of 1613 between the Dutch and the Haudenosaunees (or the Iroquois confederacy of the Six Nations—the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Tuscaroras and Senecas). The Haudenosaunees had maintained relationships of peaceful coexistence with their non-Indian neighbors and cultivated considerable diplomatic clout. Descendants of these Six Nations communities paddled around the Hudson River in Mohawk territory, from Albany to New York City, to honor their ancestors, help fortify communal bonds, and

draw public attention to their demands for historical rights and the dilapidation of environmental ills. Rituals like paddling are considered to be an act of defiance to colonial imagination, and a declaration of Indigenous heritage that survived longstanding waves of assimilation. It also cultivates reciprocal bonds of allegiance and relatedness between equals—settlers of European descent and the members of the Haudenosaunee or “People of the Longhouse.” This relational transformation emanates from the Haudenosaunee’s original belief in the “Deganawida Epic,” which portrays the time of warfare and feuds with one another. Amidst such tumult, the epic tells that Deganawida, who would be the leader of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, spread the Great Law, in which cultural principles of peaceful coexistence and protection were extended to newcomers.³ Drawn on the five tenets of “dry weeping eyes,” “open the ears,” “unstop the throat,” “relieve sorrow” and “restore reason,” the Two Row Wampum canoe journey has brought together different peoples around these Indigenous protocols of cross-cultural diplomacy, argues Edmonds. The journey has offered new political relations between peoples of different Indigenous communities and settlers within a postcolonial blueprint (31).

On the Lakota, she looks at the historical motives that forced members of the Yankton Sioux to thwart a reenactment of the Lewis and Clark “expedition” on Lakota land—an event that brought wanton violence and loss on Lakota peoples and other Indigenous nations west of the Mississippi River. Based on extensive published literature on the implications of Lewis and Clark and Thomas Jefferson’s acclaimed imperial quest, Edmonds explains that despite the Fort Laramie treaty promises of 1851 and 1868, U.S. policies precipitated the theft of the Black Hills, or *He Sopa* or *Cante Ognaka* in Lakota (the Heart of Everything That Is), and the disastrous killing of 300 Lakota men, women and children during the heinous Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. These traumatic events remain deeply etched in Lakota memory, and work against hallowed conciliatory events. Against this backdrop, much of the region today holds an annual commemorative horse ride, known as the Future Generations Ride/Oomaka Tokatakiya. With participants traversing 300 miles on horseback, the collective ride reflects opposition to settler imperial narratives and politics of (re)conciliation more than to the people who were dressed as Lewis and Clark. These riders seek to endure the attempted erasure of their history; honor Lakota ancestors; uplift the local people;

and call the settler state into account (87). Through these acts and practices, they continue to demonstrate a form of historical authority, consciousness and sovereignty through which they decolonize settlers' perspectives and participations in these events.

In Australia, Edmonds offers more powerful illustrations of ongoing Aboriginal protests against the substance of state-led (re)conciliatory efforts and specious post-racial future. During the 2000 decade of reconciliation, over 300,000 Australians walked together over Sydney Harbor Bridge, in major indignation against the then Australian Prime Minister John Howard, who had refused to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for the "Stolen Generations." The walk served as both a performative signal to account for the horrors of settler colonialism inflicted upon Aboriginal peoples, and a genuine effort to nurture feeling of hope and a sense of togetherness. While there was little doubt about the good intentions of these people, to Edmonds the sense of relief, hope and pride that came out of these walks became entangled with a mask of shame's release. Drawn on Sara Ahmed's analysis of the recognition of cathartic performances, she looks at the implications of this feeling of shame, as a way to rid the self of any historical guilt or wrongs, where settlers become reconciled with their historical memories and preferred idea of the nation. The feeling of shame "becomes not only a mode of recognition of injustices committed against others," as Ahmed explains, but "also a form of nation building." "If you feel shame, then you mean well." And since settlers "mean well" they can "work to reproduce the nation as an ideal" (98). In releasing shame and rallying behind feel-good sentiments, Australia's walks for reconciliation concealed the harsh reality of deficient reparations or meaningful structural change, contends Edmonds.

Two weeks after the Bridge Walk, near the small town of Bingara, New South Wales, the local community organized a ceremony to commemorate the Myall Creek massacre, one of the infamous acts of violence committed against the Aboriginal peoples of Kamilaroi, Weraera (Wirrayaraay) and Kwiambal in Australia. Every year, for fifteen years now, several hundred descendants of victims and perpetrators gather at the very site where the massacre had occurred to honor those who were murdered, account for past wrongs, and provide grounds for healing. Although this performance arises out of "a reconciliation paradigm," writes Edmonds, "it is a community ceremony that is

structured largely by Indigenous epistemology, combined with some elements of European and Christian ritualism” (117). In a similar platform, a commemorative ceremony took place on 26 May 2001, where 150 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants walked hands together in a circular form to memorialize another historical cruelty that had occurred on the hillside at Risdon Cove in Hobart, Tasmania. Known as the Risdon Cove massacre, the event is an “indelible stain” on Australian history, emanating from British colonial violence against a number of Moomairremener Aboriginal people in Tasmania. Edmonds elaborates that in an act of historical accountability, both Aboriginal communities and their allies used rituals to offer new frameworks for understanding what is missing in state-sponsored events and their regenerative eudemonic feelings.

Within the same time and national polity, Aboriginal peoples in the Three Thumbs Reserve held a memorial service for the Black Line massacre, where the British military and settlers had waged a fifteen-month military-style campaign in 1830–31 against Aboriginal peoples at Orford, on the east coast of Tasmania. The event organizer, Aunt Ida West, combined European and Aboriginal ritual performances and symbolic means to address not only stories of historical trauma, but also of the peoples’ resilience and empowerment. Edmonds depicts the Three Thumbs performance as an example of “recuperative grassroots activism that is decolonizing in its effort to privilege Aboriginal knowledge and memory” (157). The event also served as a truth-telling moment about past violence and its implications, while reimagining new possibilities for societal transformation. Like the Myall Creek Massacre memorial service and the Risdon Cove event, she argues that the Black Line ceremony did far more radical and decolonizing work than the Sorry Day and walking for reconciliation events. To this end, Aboriginal peoples use their memorial ceremonies to remind the settler state that their “history is not the last word” (158).

In her final compelling case study, Edmonds exposes more competing postcolonial consensus narratives and Indigenous–non-Indigenous struggles for historical authority in Aotearoa New Zealand. She focuses on Tame Iti’s incendiary 2005 reenactment of the *raupatu*, or the confiscation of Māori land in Te Urewera region on North Island. Part martial reenactment, part political theatre and subversive carnival, Iti stood before

six members of the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal (who were both Māori and Pakeha, or of European descent), and shot New Zealand's flag on the floor three times. He then spat on the floor in front of the governor general of Aotearoa New Zealand. As the scene ended, explains Edmonds, Iti delivered a defiant message to the television cameras: "We wanted them to feel the heat and smoke, and Tūhoe outrage and disgust at the way we have been treated for 200 years" (160). Facing the Waitangi Tribunal members, Iti reminded them that his people, the Ngāi Tūhoe led by Te Whero of Waikato, did not sign a treaty with the Crown (163). Instead, they became a "tribal enclave," in which Māori *rangatirantanga* or sovereignty was recognized by the Crown, though quickly dishonored through the East Coast Land Titles Investigation Act of 1866. The latter authorized the British settler political body and then New Zealand government to appropriate Māori lands, especially of those portrayed as "rebels" (166).

Iti's carefully choreographed contestation was a direct response to the centenary reenactment of the Waitangi Treaty Day in 1940, in which the settler state narrative was draped in notions of unity and peaceful coexistence. Edmonds offers an alternative Māori account of the 1840 Treaty and its subsequent effects on Māori nations. As with other Indigenous performative acts, mentioned above, she foregrounds the *iwi* (or tribe) experience, history and sovereignty, and uses Iti's public and bodily performance of *raupatu* to disrupt the 1940 commemorative politics of bicultural national consensus and imaginative unity of two races. In his performance, Iti had transported the tribunal members back in time and place to the scene of the injustice—the frontier wars and land seizure in the 1860s and 1870s. As such, he renegotiated the past and its teleological narratives under a Māori proscenium arch, which contributed to the signing of a deed of settlement with the New Zealand government. On 4 June 2013, Edmonds reports, Tūhoe received a redress package worth NZ \$170 million, and the return of more than 200,000 hectares of Te Urewera. A year later, during a parliamentary ceremony, the government and the Crown made a formal apology for the historical injustices caused to Ngāi Tūhoe. This "settlement," writes Edmonds, "was not achieved by consensually 'filling the gaps,' or denying or eliding past events, but by acknowledging the contestations of a bihistorical past and its difficult and different authorities" (182).

While Indigenous demands for historical rights might bring about legal settlements in one settler society, though not without controversy, in others, these demands may further the lines of dramatic disputes. In *Unsettled Expectations*, Eva Mackey examines the relationships of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through the prism of ethnography of conflicts about Indigenous land rights and ongoing claims settlements in the United States and Canada. More specifically, she contrasts the material structures of settler colonialism with the “structures of feelings” that underpin non-Natives’ hostility and irritation toward Indigenous demands for land rights. She looks at what happens when non-Natives’ entitlement to land becomes questionable, and how conflicts about land rights inform Indigenous-settler relations and the possibilities of decolonization. These questions form the lynchpins of Mackey’s three-pronged analysis in *Unsettled Expectations*. In Part One, she delves into the logics and epistemologies of “settled expectations,” as they inform the “post” colonial settler efforts of “fixing” Indigenous claims. In Part Two, she traces the ontological “certainty” and “uncertainty” of settlers about land rights, and delineates the multi-sited practices of settler colonialism and assumptions of settled expectations. In Part Three, she examines the possibilities of decolonization through settler-Indigenous alliances and the imaginative process of rebuilding.

Taking the dialectic relationship between the continuity of settler colonialism and ongoing Indigenous demands for land rights as departure points, Mackey uses two powerful ethnographic cases—Caldwell First Nation in Southwestern Ontario, Canada; and the Cayuga Indian Nation and the Onondaga Nation in Union Springs and Seneca Falls, upstate New York. Through these cases, she explains how historical conflicts over land are reproduced in different ways in the present, and the challenges they pose to decolonization in settler societies. In the first case, the Caldwell First Nation, also known as the Chippewas of Point Pelee, were to receive \$23.4 million for the loss of their historical land, and would be required to purchase 4,500 acres of land over 25 years for their future Indian Reserve near Blenheim, Ontario. Local residents, however, formed an anti-land claim organization called the Chatham-Kent Community Network (CKCN) to contest the land purchase. Anger around the Caldwell land settlement became embodied in intimidating actions. For example, the CKCN tried to mobilize

local settler residents to refuse to sell their land by distributing “Not for Sale” and “Don’t sell your soul for a buck” signs; petitioned politicians, government officials, and the Department of Indian Affairs; and hired lawyers to prevent land sales to the Caldwell First Nation. Other actions consisted of forms of psychological and physical violence against members of the Caldwell Nation, including graffiti and other vandalism to their buildings, threats and recurring phone disturbances, and occasional nightly surveillance. Members of CKCN also reiterated stories of settler families, their labor in and cultural attachment to the claimed land, which created a sense of belonging that settlers had a legitimate and rightful possession of the land. As a result, those who had intended to sell land to the Caldwell First Nation were treated as “disloyal traitors,” and were forced to withdraw their initial offers. Jackie Gladstone, for instance, the owner of a piece of land, issued an apology to fellow farmers and members of the CKCN for not knowing that she was selling the land to “Natives” (75).

Within the same time and borderland, a federal court jury in New York State recommended in 2000 that the Cayuga Nation receive \$36.9 million in historical damages for the taking of 64,027 acres of their land. In 2011, U.S. District Judge Neal P. McCurn added \$211 million of interest. On the receiving end, the Cayuga would use the financial settlement to purchase lands within their traditional territory on the northern edge of Lake Cayuga. However, throughout the process of their land clearance in the late 1990s and 2000s, they fell prey to a similar fierce opposition and skeptical rejection. An anti-land rights group called United Citizens for Equality (UCE) protested through car rallies and circulated handmade signs that read, “No Sovereign Nation—No Reservation,” and “We are native Americans.” They mobilized to put pressure on commercial farmers, business owners and politicians to thwart the Cayuga demands for land rights. As a result, both the Supreme Court and the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, rejected the Cayuga case in 2006 and 2013, respectively. Their decisions were based on the *Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation* decision, applying the doctrine of “laches,” implying that the Oneida had waited too long to file their claim; and that the court was unwilling to disrupt the reasonable “settled expectations” of the other residents and current landowners in the area (151). In allowing settlers to supersede the Oneida efforts to reclaim land rights and recognition, Mackey argues that the court decision is embedded in a longstanding and powerful Western legal, political

and institutional tradition—from the Hobbesian (1651) and Lockean (1690) theories of the state, property and freedom to the Doctrine of Discovery and *Terra Nullius* to more recent versions of settler sovereignty and land claims policy. They have all sought, in distinct and flexible ways, to engrave this certainty in “settler expectations” of certainty and ongoing settler colonial foundations. These expectations may be funneled through a polysemic ability of certainty geared toward uncontested settler sovereignty and rights to entitlement. She terms this certainty “Fantasies of Possession,” which mobilize social, ideological and institutional processes to enact, legitimate and defend the authority of the settler state.

Evaluating responses to land claims and feelings of dissent expressed by CKCN and UCE members, Mackey interrogates why many non-Indigenous peoples perceive Indigenous assertions of historical land claims as a threat to their “rights.” What makes anti-land rights activists so “certain” about their land sovereignty, territorial entitlement, and putative natural rights to own property/land? Taking an interdisciplinary approach of anthropology and critical feminist theory, settler colonial studies, queer theory, Indigenous literary theories, and oral history interviews with members of Indigenous communities in North America, Mackey unpacks the silenced and normalizing logics of the settler colonial structures through which the authority of the settler state is constructed, enacted, and maintained over time. She delves into the narratives, practices and institutions that non-Indigenous peoples deploy to counter ongoing Indigenous demands for land rights. She contends that these ideas and structures cannot be contained or quarantined in an historical past; rather, they are integral parts of a much broader settler ontology, and continue to function in distinct, yet complementary forms in state laws and government neoliberal policies. For instance, in trying to settle Indigenous claims and prevent “threats” to their sovereignty, the “post” settler states attempt to arbitrate between Indigenous demands for historical land rights and undeterred global capitalism. In their decisions on the Cayuga and the Caldwell cases, the courts reinforced “settled expectations” over land and control of Indigenous peoples through various structures and mechanisms. Mackey found state laws, frameworks, and feelings of anti-land rights groups powerfully familiar in the United States, Canada and Australia, where settlers and the settler-nation state feel so “certain” about entitlement to the land, and alarmingly readied for future “threats” from

ongoing Indigenous demands for land rights. These institutional forces play a crucial role in normalizing settlers' feelings of entitlement, management and control over Indigenous land.

Understanding how these processes of possession and entitlement to land came to be seen as "certain" and "self-evident truths" helps disentangle the complex possibilities of decolonization in settler societies. These processes are often tense and ambivalent, and trigger more controversy, especially if they are wrapped into existing power structures of neoliberal programs and government-sponsored commissions. State laws and legislations help create what Mackey calls an "ontological certainty" and "ontological uncertainty," which allow people to develop a sense of security against "abrupt" land claims. Both ontologies are central to the continuity of settler colonialism, and contribute in different ways to creating and maintaining settler fantasies of entitlement and certainty about property rights. The legal protection of settler property rights has "allowed expectations that originated in injustice to be naturalized and legitimated," as legal scholar Cheryl I. Harris argues (35). The material advantages that came from this injustice became "institutionalized privileges," and an essential ideological segment of the settlers' original bargain, which is thought to be an unalterable "contract." Therefore, for Mackey, it is crucial for decolonization to recognize and challenge these central assumptions about "certainty" and "uncertainty."

In this sense, a form of discourse that denaturalizes settler beliefs and authoritative practices over Indigenous lands and peoples may well aid in the creation of a future in which Indigenous sovereignty is possible. She suggests an "epistemological shift" in settler perspectives, expectations, and scaffolds of Indigenous sovereignty within shared spaces (126). Like Penelope Edmonds, Mackey draws on the Onondaga's notion of sovereignty, as symbolized by the lines of the Two Row Wampum belts and premised on simultaneously distinct and interdependent relationships. She argues both that sovereignty here is separate and that it brings individuals together around autonomy and interdependence. Indigenous sovereignty must be the starting point for better relationships between Indigenous peoples and other citizens in settler nations. Nevertheless, a serious engagement with diverse Indigenous perspectives does not mean that you need to "think like an Indian," as Susan Hill indicates, but "to find out

what your responsibilities are” to Indigenous peoples and with respect to treaty rights (130). Arranging and practicing such responsibility require not only a radical rethinking beyond the cages of the settler colonial thinking and living, but also reimagining new realities that offer serious structural, economic and political changes.

At the end, Mackey advocates for alliance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as another crucial possibility for decolonizing relationships. She looks at how members of the organization SHARE and their allies, the Cayuga Nation of New York, work together to find connections; as well as how the Onondaga Nation and their allies, NOON (Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation), work in tandem to foster “epistemological shifts” and potentially decolonize relational ontologies. Although these alliances of reciprocity, equality and respect may not restore loss, they can nonetheless constitute powerful forms of resistance, recomposition, and reflection that traverse the settler coloniality and its enduring hierarchical relationships. Drawing on Robin Wall Kimmerer’s engaging image of “becoming indigenous to place,” Mackey utilizes the concept of “settler responsibilities of reciprocity” to underline treaty relationships vis-à-vis Indigenous peoples. In Kimmerer’s words, this means “to live as if we’ll be here for the *long haul*, to take care of the land as if our lives, both spiritual and material, depended on it” (166). Against appropriating Indigenous cultures, and what is theirs, Kimmerer’s sense of “becoming indigenous” transcends parochial epistemologies, colonial patterns and nationalist narratives. To enunciate this key point further, Mackey uses the work of two scholars from Aotearoa New Zealand—Kuni Jenkins (Māori) and Allison Jones (Pakeha)—who developed this concept of “working the hyphen,” or working together without becoming the other or the same. Jones explains that working the hyphen “ideally demands a posture of alert vulnerability to or recognition of difference, rather than a pose of empathetic understanding that tends to reduce difference to the same.... It is openness to difference that can provoke meaning beyond our own culture’s prescriptions—and lead to new thought” (167-68). Crudely put, learning new ways to develop relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is crucial to repair the deficiencies of a post settler colonial project premised upon an erasure of the difference of the other, and thus motivate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to be self-critical about the potentially deleterious effects of decolonization and politics of reconciliation.

Other scholars have further explored the dangers of these deficiencies, by looking at the conceptual, attitudinal and political limits to policies and practices of reconciliation that do not deliver on the promise of improved conditions for indigenous peoples. In *The Limits of Settler Colonial Reconciliation*, scholars investigate the politics of acknowledgement, non-Indigenous' attitudes/feelings, settler institutions and other patterns of decolonization as they relate to the problems of responsibility and (dis)engagement with reconciliation. Like Mackey, Elizabeth Strakosch calls for an epistemological shift in settlers' political imagination from "helping," or "fixing the problem" that Indigenous peoples may pose, into fostering a more productive coexistence (15). Drawing on Richard White's "middle ground," she uses the concept of "middle thing" to create a conversational zone, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can engage beyond the existing power structures of settler sovereignty and Indigenous-settler duality, and pull each other into their orbits beyond the colonial past. Strakosch reiterates that decolonization requires two pivotal components: 1) truth-telling (which speaks directly to Edmonds' methodology of placing Indigenous history at the center) that acknowledges wrongs of the past and its devastating implications on Indigenous nations; and 2) the dismantling of the structures, stories and principles of settler colonialism (which relates strongly to Mackey's analytical framework). Within the same paradigm, Joanna R. Quinn argues that acknowledgement of the past and its colonial legacies is the primary stage through which positive relational transformation with Indigenous communities can occur. To that end, non-Indigenous peoples should embrace what she calls a "thick" sympathy toward the experiences of Indigenous individuals and communities. Unlike a "thin" sympathy, which develops a superfluous understanding of the past, argues Quinn, a "thick" sympathy or "empathy" translates all emotional capacities into action and a push for things to change. Differently put, developing an accurate Indigenous-related content at every grade level in public school curricula would help non-Indigenous bystanders and outsiders see and feel through other-oriented lenses, and engage in the process of unsettling the settler from within.

Instead of feeling distanced, oblivious and separated by time and space from the perpetrators who committed historical wrongs, non-Indigenous peoples have an

obligation to enter into the feelings of Indigenous peoples and come to grips with events that have taken place. Quinn explains that unless these historical injustices are acknowledged privately—through deep introspection and understanding of the past—and publicly—through truth-telling commissions, open hearings, and public apologies—a society cannot “move forward on the continuum of social rebuilding” (123). Following suit, Angelique Stastny, Sasha Henriss-Anderssen, Tom Clark, and Yin Paradies urge non-Indigenous peoples to “embody,” “assume,” and “engage” with Indigenous peoples and cultures, rather than “delegating” their responsibilities and acts of decolonization towards various levels of government (106; 175). Grounded in the seven years’ work of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Ry Moran’s chapter calls for similar societal actions and the needs to create a momentum for reconciliation, where non-Indigenous peoples must “hear” and “feel” in order to understand the injustices that have taken place. Like Quinn, Moran contends that learning from historical injuries would help bring around the deep societal change (179).

Adam J. Barker and Emma B. Lowman draw on Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred’s approaches of “the clearing” and “the space of dangerous freedom” to delineate the boundaries of settlers’ engagement and relationships with Indigenous peoples (197). Arguably, through the process of “clearing,” non-Indigenous peoples would create an imaginary space that helps bring about a powerful transformation in their hearts and minds toward Indigenous peoples and cultures. To do so, the “clearing” process would engulf the disassembling of a triangular colonial gridlock in place: structures, systems and stories of settler colonialism. These three interlocking sets are so “pervasive” and foreclose the “radical imagination” of settler peoples, they argue (198). To do away with such palimpsestic systems, Barker and Lowman, like Lorenzo Veracini⁴, invite settlers to “imagine,” “dream” and “embody” new relationships beyond the constrictions of those colonial systems, and enter into a “space of dangerous freedom.” In such a space, they explain, settlers “must be confronted with their own foreignness, and with a resurgent Indigenous sovereignty with the power to recognize, admit, deny, or erase the Settler belonging in that space” (207). They contend that non-Indigenous peoples must engage individually and collectively with the “inconceivable,” that is

beyond the space that reproduces historically determined relationships of dominance and subordination.

Within these dyads of calls to action and recognition of the 'Other', Ravi De Costa suggests that these efforts are forms of 'self-recognition'. In recognizing the various Indigenous identities and traditions, non-Indigenous peoples are contiguously enmeshed in an act of "self-recognition." In other words, "a focus on self-recognition," he writes, "may actually prove more productive for Indigenous interests." (64) Most assuredly, it calls on a substantial transformation of their own established order, security, prosperity, and identities. Instead of an abstracted reform imagined by the state, De Costa repositions the roles of non-state actors, civil society and community from "below" to develop an inclusive institutional change. This, however, does not espouse "economic sameness," "closing the gap" or the "eradication of difference," as Jon Altman explains. It requires instead, a broader acceptance of "the plurality of Indigenous aspirations and the diversity of Indigenous circumstances" (213).

On another critical level of the disentanglement of the settler colonial power gridlock, Alissa Macoun warns us that decolonization and reconciliatory projects in academe may well serve those in positions of power an evasion of responsibility. Macoun invites researchers to reconsider their academic work with full awareness that their belonging and appreciation of their academic positions are entangled in either historical or contemporary domination over Indigenous communities (85). Building on Sara Ahmed and James Baldwin's interchangeability and sacredness of White "innocence" and "ignorance," she explains that being critical of a racist colonial past cannot make you a "good person," "less implicated" or "innocent." In their academic studies of Indigenous history, Macoun argues that scholars may trigger a sense of "innocence" and "suspension" of their own complicity in the settler colonial world they appraise. In order for decolonization to exist, academics have both "a political responsibility and an intellectual imperative" to engage with Indigenous communities and understand their "experiences, knowledges, and forms of authority that we do not and cannot possess" (85). To decolonize "white innocence," contends Macoun, is to engage in concerted "white attempts to erase, suppress or even transcend settler colonial injustices" (87). This is particularly visible using a range of data—health, education, employment and lifestyle indicators— to write or tell stories about the "problematic nature" of

Indigenous people and White settler benevolence to help “fix” the origins of Indigenous “wrongs.” These efforts are mere reenactments of colonial tropes and help “settler moves to innocence,” in the parlance of Tuck and Yang,⁵ which is an attempt to relieve feelings of guilt, shame, responsibility “without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all” (95). Scholars in settler societies may even gain professional accolades, kudos and institutional support for “their reputations for being so sensitive or self-aware about Indigenous ‘problems’”—a privilege not extended to Indigenous people working on similar issues (95). Therefore, while it is critically important to engage with Indigenous history in academe, by no means should these efforts be uncritically taken as authoritative and guiding parameters on questions of decolonization and postcolonial reparation.

What scholarly efforts should underscore is the urgent need to resist any reconciliatory enterprise that repeats and sanitizes the continuity of the settler colonial past. Investing in “white innocence” or “merely filling the silence with cultural and educational ‘noise,’” argue Sarah Maddison and Angelique Stastny, academic institutions, media and work-space should invest in “changing attitudes” (245). These transformational changes include non-Indigenous responsibility to engage not “*for or over* Indigenous people,” but “*to* Indigenous people.” This means “relat[ing] differently, not through exploitation or domination, but with humility—yielding space, voice, and power to Indigenous peoples” (232). It merely urges non-Indigenous peoples to go beyond their vernacular and diurnal narratives; and build awareness of and value for the distinctive culture, epistemology and worldviews of Native communities. It means that “settlers must demonstrate ‘respect for what we share—the land and its resources—and make things right by offering us the dignity and freedom we are due and returning enough of our power and land for us to be self-sufficient,’ as Taiaiake Alfred explains”⁶ (142).

Another major aim of the process of decolonization is to intervene in the unmaking of the existing law and its inherited norms. In her chapter, Thalia Anthony takes on the settler judicial system, especially the criminal law system, where Indigenous peoples remain subject to systemic incarceration, criminogenic processes, and prejudicial postcolonial circumstances. Anthony proposes new legal measures and perspectives that not only honor Indigenous knowledges, values and modes of social control, but

also that work with “Indigenous sentencing courts and Indigenous community pre-sentence reports.” The newfangled measures would help deconstruct the colonizing nature of the criminal law system, including legislatures and courts, as they lack Indigenous perspectives in solving the Indigenous criminalizing “problem.” To Anthony, this is evident and compulsory in Australia where Aboriginal peoples are 28 times more likely than non-Aboriginal peoples to be incarcerated for crimes relating to public disorder. Against this range of legal problems, she calls on the system to hold “a mirror up to its own criminogenic role rather than pointing the mirror at Indigenous people” (250).

Other historians and political theorists have drawn on surrogate experiences of reconciliation, especially at the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), that may well aid in the process of decolonization. This special TRC has been widely seen as the mountain that scholars of reconciliation and transitional justice must scale in order to measure the possibilities and limits of decolonization in other settler societies. Along with South Africa, Adrian Little examined Ireland’s institutionalized modes of conflict transformation. Using both cases, he develops a conceptual-contextual approach to argue that a constitutional recognition for Aboriginal peoples in Australia should be a “process,” from which a series of choices and clear decisions emanate. Arguably, Australia’s recent failure has been preempted by its rushed timeline and single debate; therefore, legislators should draw useful lessons from other countries that underwent similar experiences, notably South Africa and Northern Ireland. In both nations, transformational change of “living together” has been a conversational process, and may offer a “sense of momentum” for Australia. The enduring nature of conflicts, including settler colonial violence, articulates Little, serves as a constant reminder that the move toward less violent forms requires substantial political change and a willingness from all participants in the process to move beyond arbitrary deadlines, forced decisions, and the exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples. Of particular significance here, open dialogue and more inclusive discussion are embryonic foundations to developing a process of engagement between competing perspectives. In the absence of such “an engagement between conflicting parties,” Little writes, “it is difficult to see how such

a disorganized approach to the process of constitutional recognition could deliver outcomes that would satisfy key stakeholders” (282).

Just as the above accounts provide assiduous approaches that are helpful to disinter and decompose the overwhelming and lingering residues of settler colonialism, another major step along the way is to know: with whom do the settlers reconcile. The answer to this question may lapse into essentialist colonial imageries; however, to Peter Read in Australia, it rests on a multifaceted explanation of who Aboriginal Australians are. Are they those early European settlers encountered? Are they those “Stolen Generations,” unsure of their place and descent? Or those with more “secure identity” whose family rural or urban identity “has remained unchallenged” (67)? The lack of understanding the complexities of Indigenous peoples, experiences, and identities promotes non-Indigenous’ disinterest, disengagement, and racial thinking to live on. To unlearn the little-do-they-know-or-care-to-know-attitude, Read invites non-Indigenous peoples to move beyond narratives of the enduring colonial past, and explore a much deeper comprehension of why Aboriginal Australia is as divided as it is. Looking at the intricacies of Indigenous histories and cultures help non-Aborigines look for a role in decolonization, and in turn, the disruption of the structural continuity of the settler present.

In examining the multidimensional scope, substance, multifaceted stories, and politics of reconciliation in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand, scholars reviewed in this essay have offered contrasting approaches, analytical lenses, and competing methods to tease out the complex work of decolonization. Their provocative analysis and highly original juxtaposition, yet closely aligned, readings of postcolonial reconciliatory acts and events have not only disinterred its “premature celebratory” moments and conditions, but also recognized and challenged the substantial and significant work that is being performed in a wide range of local, national, and international contexts. Whether the use of theatrical events and performances, ethnography of Indigenous land disputes, or the conceptual, attitudinal and political limits to policies and practices of reconciliation in settler societies, the different takes in these volumes propose a greater balance between three pivotal principles: 1) truth-telling of historical wrongdoing; 2) disentanglement of structural

and institutional colonial legacies; and 3) recognizing and engaging with the creative means by which Indigenous communities hold their worlds together. While each volume offers unique perspectives and approaches—often complementary to the others—the three volumes are most effective together in creating this triangular balance and recentralization of Indigenous history, experiences, and visions of the post-racial future. After acknowledging the conciliatory myths upon which the nascent settler state attempted to create a postcolonial unity and nationhood, Edmonds repositions Indigenous history, acts, and perspectives, as essential components in the very process of decolonization. On the disentanglement of the logics, epistemologies, and structures of settler colonialism, Eva Mackey in *Unsettled Expectations* and the seventeen scholars in *The Limits of Settler Colonial Reconciliation* offer in-depth analyses and remedial approaches to the complexity of moving beyond the settler colonial order. Whether through Indigenous-non-Indigenous alliances, substantive shift in the state institutions, mentalities, attitudes, or societal transformations, the process of decolonization in settler nations is beyond a “metaphor” or a mere gesture of “take my hand and walk with me.” As important as the goals of decolonization in settler societies may be—social justice, historical healing, and the possibility of postcolonialism—its critical methodologies and approaches must be premised on hearing from, engaging with, committing to, and incorporating Indigenous perspectives on their own terms. Beyond that, the interpretive practices of decolonization and the advancement toward new postcolonial settler state may remain solipsistic, delusional, and difficult to treat.

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Notes

¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 156.

² Jean Francois Lyotard, et al. *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982-1985*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 76.

³ Suzan Shown Harjo, *Nation to Nation: Treaties between the United States & American Indian Nations*, (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian, 2014), 41–44.

⁴ L. Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 108.

⁵ E. Tuck and K.W. Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1/1 (2012).

⁶ T. Alfred, *Wasàse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 153.