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## TELLING THE END OF THE SETTLER COLONIAL STORY

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Settler colonialism has been resistant to decolonization. Some settler polities decolonized later, some tentatively, some not at all (Veracini 2007a). And yet, as underscored, for example, by the 2007 UN declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and by its careful assertion of an indigenous right to self-determination respectful of the sovereignty of existing states, there is a need to focus on the possibility of postcolonial futures in a not-yet postcolonial world.<sup>1</sup> Considering the at times irresistible trajectory of decolonization processes during a number of crucial decades in the twentieth-century, settler colonialism's resilience requires explanation.

This chapter suggests that an appraisal of a narrative deficit (and, specifically, an exploration of the structural differences separating colonial and settler colonial narrative forms), can contribute to explaining particularly contested traditions of decolonization in settler polities. The first section deals with what is here defined as the settler 'narrative form': a particular way of understanding and organizing historical change in a number of settler colonial political traditions. The second section explores the specific difficulty of telling the end of the settler colonial story.

**a) Colonial narratives; settler colonial narratives**

Narratives and their availability matter. Narratives are a fundamental part of everyday life; their construction constitutes an act that allows nations, communities, and individuals to make sense of the world. As settler colonialism is immediately premised on a foundational and historically situated movement, there is a specific need to focus on the way different narratives and their availability inform political life in settler societies. A sustained scholarly activity on the literatures of colonialism (and, of course, postcolonialism) has not yet explored the specific differences separating colonial and settler colonial storytelling. This section makes a case for a systematic distinction between colonial and settler colonial narrative forms, and suggests that the stories we tell regarding these two phenomena are structurally different, even antithetical. It acknowledges that they interact, overlap, and interpenetrate, and yet, as they remain analytically distinct, it suggests that they should be seen as two structurally different types.

Colonial narratives normally have a circular form, they correspond to an *Odyssey* consisting of an outward movement followed by interaction with exotic and colonized ‘others’ in foreign surroundings, and by a final return to an original locale (interaction, of course, can take many different forms, from captivity at one end of the spectrum to wanton genocidal destruction at the other end [on colonial narratives, see, i.e., Haddour 2000; on captivity narratives, see Colley 2002]). We should attend to the ongoing relevance of a circular narrative structure: as Mary Beard recently put in a *Sunday Times*

review of Alberto Manguel's *Homer: Iliad and Odyssey* (she was quoting critic Harold Bloom), 'Everyone who reads and writes in the West is still a son or daughter of Homer' (Beard 2007).<sup>2</sup> This is particularly so in relation to colonialism. Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus and Markus Rediker, have recently noted that colonial narratives are foundationally shaped by a multiplicity of 'middle passages', an expression originally designating 'bottom line of a trading triangle, between the "outward passage" from Europe to Africa and the "homeward passage" from the Americas back to Europe' (Christopher, Pybus, Rediker 2007, pp. 1-2, see also Klein 1978).

These authors are specifically interested in retrieving the experience of enslaved colonized people and in the possibility of deploying this category to the understanding of other forced migrations. Coherently, they note this term's limiting Eurocentrism and develop the 'middle passage' as a foundational interpretative category – as 'not merely a maritime phrase to describe one part of an oceanic voyage', but as 'the structuring link between expropriation in one geographic setting and exploitation in another' (Christopher, Pybus, Rediker, 2007, p. 17, n.10, p. 2).

This is analytically groundbreaking. And yet I would argue that the 'middle passage' retains an exceptional constitutive cogency as it applies to colonizing Europeans as well. After all, in the context of the narrative structure of colonialism, 'colonialism' can be seen as a 'middle passage', as what happens in between an outward and a homeward journey. A Dutch proverb referred to in one of the essays of their collection, neatly confirms colonialism's narrative circularity (and a characteristically colonial binary encoding separating 'home' and 'colony', a separation that settler colonialism inevitably complicates by collapsing settler 'home' and colonial locale): 'He who does

not take Amsterdam with him to Batavia will not bring Batavia back with him to Amsterdam' (quoted in Penn, 2007, p. 87).

On the contrary, there is no middle passage for settler colonizing Europeans because no return is ever envisaged (indeed, far from being the bottom line of a triangular movement, in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the oceanic crossing can be seen as a Lethean passage over which settlers 'have had an opportunity to forget the Old World' [quoted in Bercovitch 1975, p. 162]). It is not an *Odyssey*. As settlers come to stay, the narrative generally associated with settler colonial enterprises rather resembles an *Aeneid*, where the settler colonizer moves forward along a story line that can't be turned back. We should attend to the ongoing consequence of this narrative structure as well, and if it is true that we are sons and daughters of Homer, it is also true that, as he did with Dante, Virgil is still taking us by the hand. Richard Waswo's *The Founding Legend of Western Civilization* (1997), for example, provides a compelling argument in this direction. Indeed, as persuasively demonstrated by Ben Kiernan in his study on the relationship between settler colonialism and genocide, the *Aeneid* provides a specific foundational reference for settler colonial endeavours (2007, pp 169-212).<sup>3</sup>

The structural difference between a line and a circle thus expresses one inherent dissimilarity between colonial and settler colonial narrative forms: settler migration remains an act of non-discovery. The archetypal voyage of discovery is Ulysses's – but discovery is necessarily about going *and* coming back. Discovery, by definition, requires a circular narrative structure. Ulysses returns: he engages with many peoples in a multiplicity of places but never thinks of settling as an option. His urge to return is also due to a need to avenge those who doubted his eventual homecoming: unlike the settler,

he slaughters at home. Aeneas – who has nothing left behind – also will not settle anywhere, focused as he is – with a force and an intensity that also resembles a ‘return’ – on his final destination. Settlers do not discover: they carry their sovereignty and lifestyles with them. At times, they even relocate with their neighbours. As they move towards what amounts to a representation of their world, as they transform the land into their image, they settle another place without really moving. Significantly, settlers often subvert normal travel narratives and construe their very movement forward as a ‘return’: a return to the land, but also a return to an Edenic condition (now, *this* is a return), and to a Golden Age of unsundered freedoms (or, in the case of Zionist settlers, a return to Palestine). In any case, settlers do not report back: Aeneas does not report back.

Moreover, whereas colonizers see themselves in a middle passage between home and home, between departure and return, settler collectives inhabit a third narrative phase, a segment that succeeds both the ‘Old World’ and a period in the wilderness, a ‘frontier’ phase made up in succession by entrance into a district, battling the land, community building, and, eventually, by the ‘closing in’ of the frontier. Quite naturally, inhabiting structurally different narrative spaces influences the way in which colonizers and settler colonizers interpret their respective enterprises. As a result, the possibility of multiple middle passages allows a flexibility that settlers do not have: defeat and relapse do not necessarily imply the failure of a colonial ideology. On the contrary, the settler colonial story locates the consolidating settler collective in history’s latter days, hence a stubborn, recurring and inherent anxiety at the prospect of defeat or compromise (see Akenson 1992). That settler polities are perceived as inhabiting a narrative space that

cannot be followed by an ulterior passage crucially contributes to block out indigenous peoples' struggles for a post settler colonial future.

Colonial and settler colonial narrative forms emerge as structurally distinct. Colonialism reproduces cycles of opposition between civility and barbarism; colonialism immobilizes relationships and establishes a pattern of repetition. In marked contrast, settler colonialism mobilizes peoples in the teleological expectation of irreversible transformation. Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose's perceptive understanding of a Western settler narrative form (as opposed to an Australian Aboriginal one) refers, for example, to a white Australian settler palindrome in which all time is seen as developing towards the birth of Christ and then towards his second coming. A palindrome, she concludes, "articulates the view that a plan of history exists, that history moves from an early (proto- or pre-) configuration through disjunction/transfiguration to the realised or fulfilled configuration [...]" (Bird Rose 2004, pp. 56–7). In another context but in a similar way, Arthur Bird's 1889 description of the United States efficiently expressed both a settler colonial project's unboundedness and a settler palindromic narrative structure:

the United States of America, – bounded on the north by the North Pole; on the South by the Antarctic Region; on the east by the first chapter of the Book of Genesis and on the west by the Day of Judgement (quoted in Bercovitch 1975, p. 148).

However, while a settler colonial narrative form should be seen as opposed to an indigenous one, as Rose demonstrates, a settler colonial palindrome is also structurally incompatible with colonial understandings of history. What is crucial in the context of an

exploration of colonial and settler colonial narrative structures is that whereas a settler sensibility envisages a particular set of narrative refrains and a specific understanding of history where ‘progress’ is typically understood as a measure of indigenous displacement and ultimate erasure, a colonial ideology would understand ‘progress’ as characterized by indigenous displacement and permanent subordination.

The fact that settler narratives are palindromic, however, does not necessarily mean that they are invariably seen as ‘progressing’. Settler colonial narrative orders often display a special narrative form emphasising decline from settler colonial to inordinately non-settler, a narrative order opposed to the traditional ‘from rough frontier to civilised settled life’ paradigm (after all, a palindrome is by definition a sequence that retains its meaning even if it is read backwards). In any case, whether they envisage a progressive movement or identify a degenerative tendency, settler narrative structures remain powerful, reproducible, and ‘mobilizable’, as confirmed recently by the remarkable success of TV series like *The Colony*, a well packaged reality TV product developing a ‘real’ version of Australian nineteenth-century settler colonial life (see Gibbon 2004).

Perhaps more importantly, the ongoing activation of settler narrative refrains and their impact in shaping perception and political action should be emphasised as it applies to other contexts as well. Elsewhere, for example, I have argued that, in the context of developing sensitivities regarding the conflict in the Middle East, a narrative convergence related to a settler colonial enterprise can contribute to explaining US support for Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories (Veracini 2007b). Indeed, the settler narrative form is especially foundational and powerful in a multiplicity of contexts because it responds, reproduces and engages with one of the fundamental Western stories: Exodus. The basic

narrative of journeying to the Promised Land involves promise, servitude, liberation, migration, and the establishment of a new homeland; all tropes that specifically inform settler colonial projects on a multiplicity of levels (see, i.e., Walzer 1985; O'Brien 1988; Boyarin 1992; Prior 1997).<sup>4</sup>

### **b) Telling the end of the settler colonial story**

This section discusses the decolonization of settler colonial forms. It contends that while the possibility of discontinuing a colonial regime remains within colonialism's cultural horizon, the discontinuation of a settler colonial circumstance remains unthinkable. In a recently published essay entitled 'The Settler Contract', political theorist Carole Pateman has noted the impossibility of settler decolonization unless what she describes as an original 'settler contract' is undone. She argues that the power of the settler contract, where the settlers are 'the natural figures of the thought experiment in the texts of political theory come to life', has meant that, even if the 'process of decolonization and national self-determination that began after the Second World War has swept away all but tiny remnants of the colonies of the European powers', the 'Native peoples of the two new Worlds [i.e., North America and Australia], living within the boundaries of the states constructed from the plantation of settlers, have never been seen as candidates for sovereignty' (Pateman 2007, pp. 55, 73). Similarly, Patrick Wolfe has also noted that 'settler colonialism is relatively impervious to regime change' (2006, p. 402). How can this resilience be explained? This section argues that in the case of *settler* colonial contexts, a specific narrative form produces a circumstance in which there is no intuitive

narrative of settler colonial decolonization, and that, as mentioned, a narrative gap contributes crucially to the invisibility of anti-colonial struggles in settler colonial contexts.

The scramble for colonies at the end of the nineteenth-century produced colonial polities that could be turned over to successor states in a symmetrical process of counter-scramble. As pointed out by Roger Louis (2006 pp. 1-31), the great imperial scramble of the late nineteenth-century was mirrored by the decolonizing counter-scramble of the 1960s. However, decolonization is generally understood as a transition whereby a colonial state is turned into a self-governing territorial successor polity. Problems inevitably arise when the (settler) colonizing state *is* the self-governing territorial successor polity.<sup>5</sup> Besides, a focus on external relations and sovereign independence, or autonomous self rule against a variety of colonizing metropolitan centres inevitably obscures the position of internally colonized indigenous constituencies. Moreover, as Alan Lawson noted, a focus on settler independence allows a ‘strategic disavowal of the colonising act’ and a concomitant transformation of ‘invaders’ into ‘peaceful settlers’. ‘In the foundations of [settler] cultural nationalism’ he noted,

we can identify one vector of difference (the difference between colonizing subject and colonized subject: settler-Indigene) being replaced by another (the difference between colonizing subject and imperial centre: settler-imperium) in a strategic disavowal of the colonizing act. The national is what replaces the indigenous and in doing so conceals its participation in colonization by nominating a new colonized subject – the colonizer or invader-settler (Lawson 1995).

Sovereignty in a settler colonial context needs to be negotiated *within* a polity rather than *between* polities; the decolonization of settler colonial formations was bound to be complicated.

Broadly speaking, one can detect three general experiences of settler decolonization: settler evacuation, the promotion of various processes of indigenous reconciliation, and denial associated with an explicit rejection of the possibility of reforming the settler body politic. These three possibilities, however, often overlap and intertwine in complex ways.

Even if they had come to stay, at times settlers depart. This is especially the case when their sovereignty has been subsumed within the operation of a metropolitan colonial endeavour. In these cases, as the settler project was premised on an enabling colonial order, the discontinuation of a colonial regime spells the discontinuation of the settler colonial one. As Fanon remarks, ‘the settler, from the moment the colonial context disappears, has no longer an interest in remaining or in co-existing’ (Fanon 1967, p. 35). The settlers do not necessarily leave together and at once. There are varied patterns of departure, and even examples of accommodations with nationalist movements taking over at the moment of decolonization. The reverse process is also possible, and at times it is the community of settlers that is eventually expelled by nationalist forces. Soon after taking control of Libya in the late 1960s, for example, Colonel Gaddafi threw out the remaining Italian community. In a dense commemorative calendar and in a split fashion that underlines an inherent distinction between colonial and settler colonial regimes, Libya celebrates ‘Independence Day’ to mark the end of colonial domination, and ‘Evacuation of Fascist Settlers Day’ to symbolise an ultimate break with a settler colonial

past (see Zerubavel 2003, p. 30). Radically different colonial regimes require a split celebration of their separate ending.

Quite significantly, however, where decolonization takes the form of a settler collective exodus, as happened in Algeria, Libya, Kenya, Angola, Mozambique, North and South Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, South West Africa/Namibia, and more recently, in the Gaza Strip (evacuated of Israeli settlers, but not yet of colonial control), the decolonization of territory is not matched, even symbolically, by an attempt to build decolonized relationships. Indeed, settler departure conceptually mirrors and reinforces settler colonialism's inherent exclusivism, and confirms a 'winner takes all' settler colonial frame of mind that demands that settler sovereignties entirely replace indigenous ones or vice versa. By denying the very possibility of a relation between colonizer and colonized after the discontinuation of a settler colonial regime, settler departure produces a circumstance where decolonization cannot be construed as a relationship between formally equal subjects.

Settler colonialism in locales where the population consisted of variously defined white minorities could not afford decolonization. On the other hand, in the white settler nations it was settler exodus that was never an option. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, however, many of these polities were facing contradictions arising from their encompassing a number of unreconciled 'nations within' (see Fleras, Elliott 1992). In response, as the possibility of the ultimate disappearance of indigenous peoples became a non-viable option, others strategies were developed. In white settler nations, a number of political processes, each envisaging a variously defined post-settler compact, were thus initiated. Projects of national or indigenous reconciliation developed in dramatically

different political circumstances and produced varied results; and yet, despite this diversity, these initiatives collectively represent a possible type of postcolonial institutional endeavour in settler societies (see, i.e., Havemann 1999; Ivison, Patton, Sanders 2000; Langton et al 2007). Nonetheless, even partially reforming the settler structures of the body politic, usually under the impulse of judicially-led reforms endorsing constitutional and legislative transformation, has proved painstakingly difficult, has encountered increasing opposition, and in some jurisdictions eventually came to a standstill or was even reversed.

Besides settler exodus and a variety of political processes aimed at establishing post-settler compacts, a third type of circumstance also developed, where a sustained denial of the very existence of the colonizing structures of the settler colonial polity, let alone the possibility of their discontinuation, was upheld: Israel and the US, for example. While in these polities the very invisibility of imperial and settler colonizing endeavours has remained conventional thinking, the prospect of enacting post-settler decolonizing passages *vis à vis* indigenous peoples remains unlikely.

Of course, the decolonization of settler colonialism needs to be imagined before it is practiced, and this has proved especially challenging, especially as, as Iris Marion Young has remarked, an ‘institutional imagination’ of an entirely new character needed to be developed (Young 2000, pp. 237-58, 280-1). If it is devised as an exercise in *settler* nation building, even well meaning processes of indigenous and national reconciliation, or the incorporation of indigenous governance structures within the settler polity, ultimately contribute to the erasure of variously defined indigenous sovereignties and therefore to the reproduction of settler colonizing practices.

And yet, if the positioning of indigenous sovereignty in the context of settler political orders is indeed a most challenging undertaking, it should be noted that not all settler stories are equally powerful and that there are alternative, very commanding, equally available and equally mobilizable narrative structures. Some settler regimes could be discontinued because, among other reasons, the story of the end of settler exclusive political ascendancy was easier to tell. The end of the settler colonial story could be told, for example, as the end of ethnic and racial discrimination and the attainment of civil and constitutional rights.

Recognizing the crucial importance of the demise of apartheid South Africa (in the context of an analysis that otherwise stresses the continuities between colonial and postcolonial political orders), Mahmood Mamdani, for example, remarks that for ‘the first time in the history of African decolonization, a settler minority has relinquished exclusive political power without an outright political defeat’ (Mamdani 1998). This process, he concluded,

has set the political trajectory of the African continent on a course radically different from that of the Americas. The Americas is the continent of settler independence. The South African transition means that nowhere on this continent has a settler minority succeeded in declaring and sustaining the independence of a settler colony (Mamdani 1998).

Beyond Africa, on the other hand, telling the story of an end to attacks on indigenous substantive autonomy, a move that demands abandoning a cluster of narrative refrains inherent in settler narrative structures, was a much more complicated matter especially if one considers that the powerful narrative of an extension of civic rights to indigenous

constituencies had already been deployed in the context of forced and less coerced assimilation campaigns.

And yet, even if the story of what a post-settler colonial passage to come, of what should happen next, has been impossible to tell, the story of what happened *in the past* could change. All processes of constitutional rearrangement involving indigenous constituencies in settler nations have necessitated a significant revision of traditional historical narratives and a comprehensive reinterpretation of national and/or regional pasts. Indeed, the role of historians in contributing to institutional and judicial readjustment has in some cases been decisive, and historians and other academics involved in the production of indigenous and national histories in settler societies have in some cases made history by literally (re)writing it (see, i.e., Reynolds 1987; Ward 1999).

Constitutional rearrangements typically promote historiographies where an evolving partnership *in the present* finds confirmation in specific representations of pre or non-settler colonial pasts. In a reforming Aotearoa/New Zealand during the 1980s and 1990s, a historiographical upgrading of ostensibly discontinued (or never really existing) traditions of partnership underpinned a general process aimed at establishing ‘treaty’ practices as a way to address historical grievances (see Veracini 2001). While, in the context of a discussion of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s attempts to judicially ‘rectify’ the past, W. H. Oliver has even talked about a ‘retrospective utopia’, a similar inscription of ‘treaty’ traditions was also initiated in an Australian historiographical context by Henry Reynolds in *The Law of The Land*, as pointed out in a recent article by Bain Attwood (Oliver 2001; Attwood, 2004). Attwood saw Reynolds’s intent as similar to what Eric Hobsbawm has referred to as the ‘invention’ of a tradition, specifically, a moral tradition

of colonial if not settler respect for indigenous title and rights. While the Australian government certainly legislated in the spirit of, and in accordance with, this ‘invented’ tradition in the early 1990s, this tradition could be forgotten subsequently, as demonstrated by Aboriginal policies which ensued under John Howard, or partially reinstated, as suggested by newly elected Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s February 2008 parliamentary apology.

Elsewhere, history and public debate surrounding indigenous politics decisively informed each other as well. South Africa’s transition to post-apartheid also produced a rapidly and dramatically changing historiographical landscape. In this case, the historiography of the northern frontier witnessed a remarkable acceleration, possibly because it provided a contemporary relevant example of an original multiethnic, hybrid frontier setting. Nigel Penn noted in a historiographical outline that ‘the widespread acceptance of the election results of 1994 has begun a process of the rolling back, or opening, of frontiers everywhere’. He then concluded that it ‘is possible that an “open” frontier situation, as existed in the northern frontier zone for so long, will be seen as being the more typical South African scenario after all’ (Penn 2001, p. 39). In North America a renewed historiographical tradition emphasizing frontier exchange and a long lasting ‘middle ground’ also revolutionized received understandings of colonial and Western history and underpinned evolving contemporary relations between Indian nations and settler polities at the same time (see, e.g., White 1991; Nelson Limerick 2000).

These trajectories confirm that narrative (and historical discourse) are crucial to all the processes of indigenous reconciliation in settler polities. However, as the

historiographical shifts that have underpinned these processes have generally produced a situation where non-settler colonial pasts were upgraded and retroactively mobilized to sustain renewed postcolonial compacts, the reforming settler polities of the 1980s and 1990s share debates where a settler colonial past is displaced rather than addressed. In the end, an emphasis on ‘invented’ traditions of settler-indigenous partnership has been easier than insisting on the need to decolonize settler colonial sovereignties and reform the settler colonial polities. Simultaneously, a widespread disinclination to enact substantive decolonizing ruptures resulted in a tendency to avoid disturbing foundational structures, including foundational narratives of origin and settlement and their linear form. Ultimately, the acknowledgment that ‘settlement’ establishes legitimacies without extinguishing indigenous ones, and that indigenous sovereignties need to be accommodated in a decolonizing, post-settler move, has remained elusive.

## **Conclusion**

If settler colonialism is an ambivalent circumstance where the settler is colonized and colonizing at once, decolonization necessarily requires at least *two* moments: the moment of settler independence and the moment of indigenous self-determination. The first moment is easily conceptualized – we instinctively *know* about the 4<sup>th</sup> of July - the second passage is yet to be formulated.<sup>6</sup>

The structural difference between colonial and settler colonial narrative forms does have an impact on the ways in which the decolonization of settler colonial

formations can be conceptualized. Indeed, *there is* an acceptable narrative of decolonization for the formerly colonized Third World, centred around nation-building and economic development, irrespective of whether this actually happens – it very rarely does. From this perspective, postcolonial histories can then be approached either as a progressive narrative of independence and nation-building (i.e., there is *some fit* between this narrative and reality), or as a more sobering denunciation of neo-colonialism and state failure (i.e., there is *no fit* between this narrative and reality). Either way, getting out of the colonies could be represented as a ‘forward’ movement (a circular narrative form allows one to proceed forward even when going back). Conversely, in settler colonial contexts, withdrawing from colonial practices of indigenous dispossession can only be perceived as a ‘backward’ movement signalling the demise of original settler claims and their legitimacies. Lacking the possibility of a clearly defined decolonizing moment, the settler colonial polities have retained the policy objectives, if not the methods, of their settler colonizing pasts, i.e., further extinction and/or assimilation of Indigenous law, tenure, autonomy, and identity.

There is still no intuitively acceptable narrative of settler colonial decolonization, and/or indigenous/national reconciliation. There are by now substantial histories of the various settler societies, and, for example, in the case of Australia, a recent apology for past injustice, but no compelling story about what should happen next. If decolonization implies by definition a degree of restoration/devolution of political sovereignty, taking responsibility for a painful history, as Rudd has proposed, is bound to be better than a denial of responsibility, but it certainly does not amount to a *relinquishment* of responsibility for a post-settler future (Rudd 2008; see also Thompson 2002).<sup>7</sup>

When and if indigenous communities are acknowledged, access native title, receive an apology, and possibly some compensation (all necessary elements of any genuinely post-settler/postcolonial compact), the widespread pattern of public perception is that of a sovereignty inherently subversive of settler/national foundations. In the context of a settler colonial mentality, the very presence of indigenous peoples is normally unsettling; but an acknowledgement of indigenous sovereignty is even more so. As long as there are no available narratives of settler decolonization, narratives identifying indigenous dispossession and loss of collective autonomy as ‘progress’ are bound to remain paradigmatic. If settler colonization is an ultimate colonizing act where settlers envisage no return, settler colonialism still tells a story of either total victory or total failure. Ultimately, discontinuing settler colonial forms requires conceptual frames and supporting narratives of reconciliation that have yet to be fully developed and narrated.

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<sup>1</sup> For an argument emphasising an unbroken continuity between 'colonising' and 'postcolonising' Australia, see Aileen Moreton Robinson (2003).

<sup>2</sup> She then adds: "There is at first sight something faintly depressing about the idea that, almost 3,000 years on, we are still enthralled – or, to put it more brutally, enslaved – to the works that first launched our literary tradition. And the notion that we are still busy reinventing Homer, from James Joyce to the Coen Brothers (in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*), is almost shaming".

<sup>3</sup> Kiernan highlights, for example, how a specific reading of Virgil's opus underpinned the formulation of English plans for the settler colonization of Ireland during the second half of the sixteenth-century.

<sup>4</sup> For a convincing response to Walzer's argument, see Said (1988).

<sup>5</sup> Ann Curthoys's intuition that Australia, for example, is colonial and postcolonial at once, and colonizing and decolonizing at the same time emphasizes the inherent ambiguity of postcolonial passages in settler contexts (see Curthoys 2000, pp. 21-36).

<sup>6</sup> 'Decolonization' in settler contexts is further complicated by the fact that one decolonization (i.e., settler independence) inevitably constitutes an effective acceleration of colonizing practices at the other end (i.e., further indigenous loss of autonomy).

<sup>7</sup> Rudd's apology was crucially framed in the comparative context of settler societies.