Rethinking the postcolonial for precarious times

In mid-September the Institute will host a two day conference designed to respond to the contemporary pressures being navigated by all of us who work and live with postcolonial interests. We take as our initial provocation recent writings by Cultural Studies scholar Simon During, who observes that the precarious times of the present carry a distinctive challenge for postcolonial studies. In short, During argues that the distinctive circumstances once identified with the subaltern can no longer be take for granted or assured. Analytic categories once deployed to identify the specific inequalities and oppressions of colonised peoples, communities, and sub-cultures, have been destabilised and dispersed to larger populations. In one tangible example of this process, Aboriginal academic Philip Morrissey wryly told those assembled at a meeting to discuss the perilous conditions facing humanities scholars in the contemporary university, ‘you are all Aboriginal now’.

Our conference invites academics, artists and activists to respond to this provocation and to ask, how might earlier ideas of a postcolonial project be creatively and critically enlarged or rethought for the destabilised times of the present?

We are delighted to have Simon During opening the conference to elaborate his argument, along with an exciting line-up of other speakers, including Katerina Teaiwa, Tony Birch, Libby Porter, and Stephen Muecke.

Precarity has been identified as a double condition—at once a socioeconomic condition of insecurity and poverty, as well as an existential or anthropological condition, ‘one in which human beings are constitutionally unable to fully ground themselves in the world and for that reason are open both to anxiety and to openness and risk’, as During writes in his 2015 essay, ‘From the Subaltern to the precariat’. Other scholars, such as Anne Allison, in her book Precarious Japan, draw attention to volatile seepages and slippages such as in the way terms such as ‘refugee’ shift from noun to verb to describe pervasive experiences of disenfranchisement and placelessness.

The idea that there might be such a thing as a shared condition of precarity ultimately lies in the fragile possibilities of any human encounter, writes Paul Carter in Meeting Place: The Human Encounter and the Challenge of Coexistence. Yet it is brought especially sharply into focus at a time when we recognise our collective inhabitation of environments and a world at catastrophic risk, as Dipesh Chakrabarty observed in his essay, ‘The Climate of History’. (Continues p.2)
Here is humanity’s ultimate challenge: first, to recognise the cultured forms of human activity and desire that have brought us to this perilous situation; and second, to find new creative means to work together in pursuit of a differently ordered, mutually hopeful, future.

To this end, our conference foregrounds collegiality, creativity and conversational style discussions as it looks to respond to precariousness’s challenges. What might a postcolonial critique refigured for precarious times look like? What insights can postcolonial scholarship bring to bear upon the dispersed inequalities and oppressions of the present? What does precarity feel like on the ground in indigenous communities today? How do asylum seekers navigate the existential crisis of exile? What might be the core elements of climate justice? What kind of transformations could follow a treaty between the Victorian government and Aboriginal nations? What kinds of allegiances and collaborative relationships offer new vantages and new energies for responding to the challenges of the present?

The Institute of Postcolonial Studies has always been envisaged as a centre for the exchange of ideas, stories, performances, between scholars and wider publics. We renew this commitment at a time when many of us working within the university feel an increasing urge to address our work to new communities in new ways.

The suite of activities convened for the second half of 2018 is designed with these aspirations in mind. The format of the September conference will intersperse formal research presentations with more conversational style panels, in order to foster the kinds of discussions we feel are urgently required but are increasingly marginalised by the core business of universities.

Beyond the conference our program for the second half of 2018 comprises five panel-style discussions that are designed similarly to bring together larger communities of interest. Please join us in what promises to be an exciting program of events.


Melinda Hinkson, Associate Director

Two of the confirmed speakers are:

Simon During has taught at the University of Melbourne, Johns Hopkins, Auckland, Queensland, the FreieUniversität, Berlin and elsewhere. He is currently a professorial fellow at Melbourne. He has written about a variety of topics, stretching from postcolonial theory to entertainment history. His books include *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* and *Against Democracy: Literary Experience in the Era of Emancipations*.

Katerina Teaiwa is an associate professor of Anthropology and Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. Her book *Consuming Ocean Island* traces the history of phosphate mining in the Central Pacific, following the movement of Banaban rock and the complex relations created by the mining, shipping, production and consumption of superphosphate and ensuing commodities. She also studies the ways in which Indigenous Banabans make sense of this history of double displacement in their new home of Rabi Island in Fiji. Her research has inspired a permanent exhibition at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa as well as her own multimedia production *Project Banaba*, which was curated by Yuki Kihara and exhibited at Carriageworks in Sydney in November-December 2017.
REFIGURING THE POSTCOLONIAL FOR PRECARIOUS TIMES

A two day colloquium presented by
the Institute of Postcolonial Studies and Deakin University

REGISTER NOW:

Thursday 13 and Friday 14 September 2018
78 Curzon Street, North Melbourne

COLONIALITY AND PRECARITY • DISPLACEMENT AND PLACEMAKING
GENOCIDE • TREATY • EXILE AND BEYOND • URBAN FUTURES
ARTISTIC COLLABORATIONS • SETTLER COLONIAL POWER AND JUSTICE
CREATIVE COEXISTENCE

Confirmed Speakers
Mammad Aidani  Jack Latimore  Tarneen Onus-Williams  Alison Ravenscroft
Jon Altman  Brian Martin  Libby Porter  Katerina Teaiwa
Tony Birch  Nikki Moodie
Paul Carter  Stephen Muecke
Simon During  Gary Murray
Seminar Series  
**New Caledonia’s independence referendum and the future of French colonialism in the Pacific**  
7.30-9.00PM, Wednesday 1 August

In November 2018, the French Pacific dependency of New Caledonia will hold a referendum on self-determination. The vote in New Caledonia comes as the government led by President Emmanuel Macron aims to benefit from the region’s emerging “blue economy”, exploiting maritime resources in the vast Exclusive Economic Zone. How will New Caledonia’s referendum affect the indigenous Kanak people, who have been made a minority in their own country after generations of colonial settlement? And how will the looming referendum affect the French Republic’s broader strategic agenda in the Indo-Pacific region, at a time of Western concern over rising Chinese power? Helen Gardner will chair a panel discussion between two experts on French policy in the Pacific, who will outline the colonial project in New Caledonia and the implications for Australia and the wider Pacific region.  
**Charles Wea** is the Australian representative for the independence coalition Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS). He has studied at universities in Australia and Samoa, and represented the FLNKS at meetings of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG).  
**Nic Maclellan** is a correspondent with Islands Business magazine (Fiji). He is co-author of *British Nuclear Testing in the Pacific* (ANU Press).

Indigenous Youth Incarceration and Education - Public Forum  
6:30pm, Wednesday 8 August

Indigenous young people make up 53% of Australia’s incarcerated youth population, yet less than 6% of 10 to 17-year-olds in Australia are Indigenous. In Victoria, Indigenous young people make up only 1.6% of the population aged 10-19, but still represent 16% of those incarcerated or serving a community service order. On average, they are 12 times more likely to be locked up than their non-Indigenous counterparts. What role does education play in the lives of young Indigenous people before, during and after their time in detention? Is a school-to-prison pipeline operating here in Victoria? What needs to change within the education and criminal justice systems to keep Indigenous young people out of detention? A panel of Indigenous educators, including Brendan Murray, Corallanne Pohlman and Seth Nolan, will consider the connections between Indigenous youth incarceration and education.  
**Brendan Murray** is the Director of Article 26 Education Consultants. He is the former Executive Principal of Parkville College, the Victorian Indigenous Youth Incarceration and Education - Public Forum  
6:30pm, Wednesday 8 August

Co-hosted with Melbourne Educators for Social and Environmental Justice and Arena  
Venue: Arena Project Space, 2 Kerr Street Fitzroy

All seminars, except the one on Indigenous Youth Incarceration and Education, will be held at the Institute: 78-80 Curzon Street, North Melbourne, 3051.  
Charges: Waged: $5, Unwaged: $3, Members free
Government School for all young people detained in custody within Victoria. Brendan is of Yuin and Irish descent. **Corallanne Pohlman** is a proud Murri woman from Far North Queensland. Her experiences studying education at university, working as a Youth Justice Worker in a custodial setting and receiving a late ADHD diagnosis as a young adult have led her to question the effectiveness of the current education system for Aboriginal children. **Seth Nolan** is a Gunditjmara man raised on Jarra Country with an ongoing connection to the Kulin Nation. He’s the Aboriginal Program Coordinator at Parkville College, facilitating cultural programs for Aboriginal young people in custody and comes from a background of education and family therapy.

**Space, Law, Coloniality: Ruptures and Continuities**  
7:30pm, Thursday 30 August

There is an intimacy to the relationship between space, law and coloniality. It is an intimacy that enables continuity under conditions of rupture and returns disguised with a rhetoric of advancement. Struggles for and over land, recognition, citizenship, and the conditions fundamental for a human existence have prompted the re-coordination of colonial-capitalist regimes of power through property, governance, law and land. This seminar and panel discussion brings together scholars, activists and thinkers who are practicing critique at the intersection of this intimate relationship for an engaged discussion about the ruptures and continuities in diverse colonial presents.  
**Oren Yiftachel** teaches urban studies and planning, and political geography at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beersheba. His work generates critical and comparative understandings of the relations between space, power and conflict, with special focus on Israel/Palestine. In recent years he has focused on the legal geography of neo-colonial relations, on the rights of indigenous peoples, and on migration, planning and urban citizenship. His most recent book is *Emptied Lands: Legal Geography of Bedouin Rights in the Negev* (co-author 2018).  
**Libby Porter** is Vice Chancellor’s Principal Research Fellow at the Centre for Urban Research, RMIT University. Her work is about the relationship between urban development and dispossession, with a recent focus on the possessory politics of urban property rights. Her most recent book *Planning in Indigenous Australia: From imperial foundations to postcolonial futures* (Routledge 2018) co-authored with Sue Jackson and Louise Johnson rewrites the history and future of Australian urban planning and its relationship with Indigenous peoples.  
*This seminar is jointly sponsored by RMIT University and Institute of Postcolonial Studies*

**Cosmopolitan possibilities: Reanimating diasporic narratives in the Transpacific**  
7:30pm, Tuesday 4 September

Prompted by their recent discovery of a migrant literature archive at Deakin University, Daniella, Michelle and Safdar come together to explore how art and ‘the digital’ can be used to find new points of connection between diasporic narratives. With reference to various forms of ‘autographics’ (webcomics, social media stories, and zines), the panel will discuss how contemporary forms of storytelling might enable archival migrant
experiences to be reactivated in the present moment, considering: What does an Australian migrant collection like this reveal about forms of belonging that go beyond national origins or even diasporic communities? How can the disruptive possibilities of the digital be utilised in affirmative ways, for example, by drawing attention to gaps in the archive and/or the dominant story of ‘Australia’ and its place in the Transpacific? What new understandings emerge if contemporary stories of diaspora are brought into conversation with archival diasporic stories—both of which continue to be marginalised?

Safdar Ahmed is an artist and academic, and co-founder of the Refugee Art Project, Sydney
Michelle O’Brien teaches postcolonial literature at Central Washington University and is a visiting scholar at the Institute for Transpacific Cultural Research, Vancouver
Daniella Trimboli is a postdoctoral fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University

Faultlines to belonging, the ground of cooperation
7:30pm, Wednesday October 3

Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation & Cultural Heritage Council and Merri Creek Management Committee have built partnerships and cooperation on Wurundjeri Country through a range of projects together, especially in the last ten years. The outcomes that connect us to our waterways aren’t the whole story. In this evening we will share what has happened along the way to build cross-cultural cooperation, discover new connections and what it means to us to be careful together on Wurundjeri Country.

Crafting co-existence
7:30pm, Thursday, 8 November

What, if anything, do craft, development and international law have in common? Can the grounded, tactile forms of making and cultural creativity embedded in craft offer fresh ethical and methodological insights to future-focused practices such as development and international law? What prospects for a differently figured future, for new solidarities and differently geared relations are brought into focus when we bring craft, development and international law into conversation with each other?

This lively panel invites speakers to speak briefly in challenging, provocative and ultimately idealistic terms to the medium through which they work.

Samantha Balaton-Chrimes is a lecturer in International Studies at Deakin University. Her research is concerned with enduring political questions about how difference is negotiated in contexts of power asymmetries.
Kevin Murray is a curator, writer and advocate of the value of studio craft. He is author of Craft Unbound: Make to Common Precious, and co-author with Damien Skinner of Place and Adornment: A History of Australasian Contemporary Jewellery. He is currently Senior Vice-President of the World Crafts Council—Asia Pacific and Managing Editor of Garland Magazine.
Sundhya Pahuja is Professor of International Law at the Melbourne Law School and Director of the Institute for International law and the Humanities at the University of Melbourne.
We are delighted that Rob Sorsby, the commissioning editor at Routledge for Postcolonial Politics and its subset Writing Past Colonialism, has fast-tracked Paul Carter’s book Decolonizing Governance. It is now scheduled to be published in the subset in September.

The contention of the book is that Westphalian notions of sovereignty continue to determine political and legal arrangements domestically and internationally. Global issues that are the legacy of colonialism expressed in continuing human displacement and environmental destruction are thus treated “parochially” and ineffectually. Not designed for dealing with situations of interdependence, democratic institutions find themselves in crisis. The problem is not simply operational but conceptual: political relationships need to be drawn differently. The key to the book is archipelagic thinking. This refers to neglected dimensions of the earth’s human geography but also to a geo-politics of relationality, where governance is understood performatively as the continuous establishment of exchange rates. Insisting on the poetic literacy that must inform a decolonising politics, Paul suggests a way out of the incommensurability impasse that dogs assertions of indigenous sovereignty. Discussing bicultural areal management strategies located in south-west Victoria, Maluco (Indonesia) and inter-regionally across the Arafura and Timor seas, he argues for the existence of creative regions constituted archipelagically that can intervene to rewrite the theory and practice of decolonisation. A book of stylistic elegance and deftness of analysis, Decolonising Governance is an important intervention in the related fields of ecological, ecocritical and environmental humanities. Methodologically innovative in its foregrounding of relationality as the nexus between poetics and politics, it will be of great interest to scholars in a range of areas, including communicational praxis, land/sea biodiversity design, bicultural resource management, and the constitution of post-Westphalian regional jurisdictions.

Paul’s book will be launched later in the year. We will send out a notice closer to the date, and the details will also be posted on our website.

Senses of the Postcolonial series

This series is designed to publish books that do not fit with the marketing strategies of major global publishers and is a collaboration between the IPCS and the independent publisher Palaver, founded by Paul Komesaroff in connection with the Global Reconciliation Project.

As previously announced, two manuscripts have been submitted for consideration and we are now in discussion with the authors. We have enlarged the membership of our book committee and made significant progress in setting up two small working groups to advise whether revisions might be needed that would enable each manuscript to reach its maximum readership as well as to help with design, sources of funding, promotion and distribution needs. As both manuscripts are of a poetic nature and include visuals, we envisage that quality production would be appropriate.

We would be very pleased to receive proposals for both the Routledge and Senses of the Postcolonial series with IPCS/Palaver. We would also welcome expressions of interest from members of the IPCS who might wish to be involved in the enterprise.
Postcolonial Studies

The second issue for 2018 is a miscellany issue with articles on widely divergent topics and concerns, including: decolonial encounters in the film by Ciro Guerr, *The Embrace of the Serpent*; Singapore’s ‘national self’, read in the popular cultural figure of *The Little Nyonya*; and a comparative piece on Ashis Nandy’s *The Intimate Enemy* and Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Condition*.

A new occasional section also makes an appearance: a Comment section where authors are invited to essay shorter, more immediately political and likely provocative arguments on contentious issues and debates in the field. In this issue of *Postcolonial Studies* Amarodo Rodriguez responds to Bruce Gilley’s now famous ‘case for colonialism’ in *Third World Quarterly* (2017).

Issue 21.3 – The Multiple Identities of the Postcolonial – will also be out soon. Edited by Phillip Darby, it tracks the project of IPCS’s 2016 symposium, with comment on the history and mission of the Institute since its inception 25 years ago. This special issue’s various contributions engage multiple approaches to the postcolonial, all ‘focused on the political and possibilities for change’. Carrying articles from a variety of approaches on poetry, song, architecture and performance, on dance, on cities and on protest, we are reminded that it is ‘intrinsic to our project’ that we ‘expand the conventional sources relied upon in the Western knowledge tradition to the everyday’: to take affect and everyday life seriously and ‘to be open to the anecdotal and the oral’.

To support this special issue, Routledge is organizing a vodcast featuring an interview with Phillip, as a timely reminder of the original aspirations of the Institute and the Journal’s founding editors, whilst firmly reiterating the Journal’s commitment to challenging contemporary thought on the meaning of the postcolonial. The recording will be undertaken within the next few weeks and will be loaded online as a supplement to the September issue.

Alison Caddick (Managing Editor)

Critical Dialogues

Look out for the next forum on *Duress* by Ann Laura Stoler. Critical Dialogues is a section of *Postcolonial Studies* that engages scholars/authors in interdisciplinary global conversations on seminal books that theoretically advance thinking on the (post)colonial. The focus of the next forum is *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (2016, Duke University Press). Ann Laura Stoler will respond to Sara Roy, Juanita Sundberg, Catherine Fennell, Jennifer Anne Boittin, and Warwick Anderson. Critical Dialogues emerged in 2015 through conversations with then managing editor David Martin.

Michele Lobo (Reviews Editor)

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The first 200 members of the Institute now receive a free subscription to our journal *Postcolonial Studies*.

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