

## Editorial Introduction:

### THE UTILITY AND FUTILITY OF 'THE NATION' IN HISTORIES OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND<sup>1</sup>



HOW MIGHT POSTCOLONIAL approaches to history help us to better understand the histories of the region we know as 'New Zealand'? And what are the limitations of postcolonial methodologies in this particular context? This Special Issue addresses these and related questions by examining a particular set of historical problems across a variety of contexts. Taken as a whole, this issue evaluates what might be called the 'usefulness' of postcolonial approaches in enhancing our critical understanding of past experiences in these islands. As a related matter, we also explore 'the utility and futility' of the concept of 'the nation', a key challenge for postcolonial theorists. The basic premise of postcolonialism — which we fully endorse — is that colonization is unfinished business. That is, the template of the nineteenth-century colonial project is with us still: it is inscribed on our political and cultural institutions, marked on our bodies and woven into the fabric of contemporary society. In early twenty-first-century New Zealand, the repercussions of colonialism continue to resonate through entrenched social, cultural, political and economic differences, signalled through publications and academic scholarship, and are deeply ingrained in 'real world' inequalities which reach far beyond the academy.

This Introduction has two objectives. First, it offers a definition of what comprises postcolonial approaches to history and, concurrently, argues for the validity and relevance of such methods in terms of better understanding and explaining local historical experiences. Here we do not intend to engage in any sort of special pleading for the term 'postcolonial'; rather, our intention is to demonstrate that New Zealand history and historiography have *always* embraced postcolonial characteristics, whether this has been explicit or implied. Indeed, our intention here is to suggest that, on the basis of bibliographic and historiographical analysis, New Zealand historical scholarship has been (and remains) characterized by strong postcolonial tendencies. The term 'postcolonial' therefore has real consequence and meaning for New Zealand historical literature; it is rooted in our historical scholarship and threaded through our historiographical assumptions. In this introductory discussion, we also critique the problematic status of the nation in New Zealand historiography and detect a number of key postcolonial trends in our responses to 'unpicking' dominant national narratives. We take as our key source materials a number of published texts which critique various aspects of colonization and interrogate their engagement with postcolonial scholarship and methods. We also take this opportunity to highlight new and emerging terms such as 'settler colonialism' and 'transnationalism' in order to sharpen our understanding of the past.

Second, this article introduces the scholarly pieces featured in this Special Issue. Taken as a whole, this issue maps the terrain of postcolonial historical scholarship in Aotearoa New Zealand. It showcases a range of scholarly articles which either adopt or critique a postcolonial methodology. We suggest that while scholarship on postcolonial theory and methodology (which itself had its origins in literary theory) and their application to historical analyses is fairly well-established elsewhere, there exists little critical published work in New Zealand which explicitly identifies and explores the field of ‘postcolonial history’. The articles in this issue attempt to address this lacuna and, in addition, demonstrate how postcolonial approaches might make positive interventions in understanding the continuing effects of colonial ambition.

In addition, this Special Issue honours the contribution made by Peter Gibbons to New Zealand historical scholarship. Peter taught history at the University of Waikato from 1973 through to his retirement in late 2005, and his teaching, research and intellectual leadership has been hugely influential for at least a generation of scholars and students. Perhaps more than any other historian of New Zealand, Peter’s work has precipitated a quiet but seismic shift in history-writing in New Zealand and in the ways in which we think about what comprises ‘history’ and what constitutes ‘New Zealand’. For those of us who were fortunate to work with Peter, as his students and colleagues, he has consistently encouraged us to think and write beyond our current frames of reference. This issue is therefore dedicated to Peter’s scholarship.

The term ‘postcolonial’ evokes discomfort among some historians. For some, it is the implication that postcolonial scholarship must always embody a political approach to the past, which in turn suggests that the project of ‘objective’ history must be abandoned. In response to such reactions, scholars have (rightly) asked whether objective history was ever really possible.<sup>2</sup> For other historians, the term suggests that we have somehow moved beyond the colonial moment; that we have left the past behind and can now progress into a ‘new’ future. For still others, the prefix ‘post’ presents the most anxiety; after all, how can colonialism have been so cleanly removed from the discussion of the past, particularly in places where colonizers were never sent home?<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it must be admitted, the term, like other similar academic descriptors, provokes extreme dislike among a number of historians who prefer their history to be free from what they see as complicating and unnecessary ‘jargon’.<sup>4</sup>

Misunderstanding pervades these various reactions to the term ‘postcolonial’. We argue here, after a number of other scholars, that the term does not signal an end-point to colonization; nor does it imply that the past no longer matters.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, a postcolonial approach involves a critical engagement *with* colonization, and taking a perspective that critiques and seeks to undermine the structures, ideologies and institutions that gave (and continue to give) colonization meaning. The use of this term indicates a critical awareness of the excesses of colonization and an acknowledgment of its enduring legacies.<sup>6</sup> It is true that in former settler colonies, claims to postcolonial status (or ‘postcoloniality’) are often motivated by the desire of the colonized — as well as the descendants of the white colonizers — to restore cultural and political integrity, granted not by

the colonial power but on their own terms. In this sense, 'being postcolonial' is an inescapably political condition. Robert Young usefully argues that postcolonialism 'names a theoretical and political position' which is both an epistemological and an activist framework for countering colonialism.<sup>7</sup> We therefore employ the term to describe the attempts by historians to both uncover and critique the colonial projects of the past. We should also point out that the end-point of a postcolonial approach is not to create a new methodology simply for the sake of it; rather, it is a means of learning more about the dynamics of colonization and its repercussions in the present. A postcolonial history might, for instance, question the silencing of indigenous narratives of dispossession in favour of a triumphalist story of settlement. 'Settlement' might be relabelled 'invasion', and the dominant version of history might be rewritten as an account of violence and aggression. A postcolonial approach, therefore, draws upon the work of social historians keen to locate and write the histories of the voiceless, those erased from the historical narrative. Most importantly, however, postcolonial history is the study of power and the interactions between the powerful and powerless.

A key assumption or premise of this Special Issue is that postcolonial histories exist in a range of forms, some of which remain relatively disguised, but which nonetheless rely upon aspects of postcolonial theorizing. For this reason, postcolonialism might be viewed as 'a heterogeneous set of subject positions, professional fields, and critical enterprises'.<sup>8</sup> For instance, historians have been working to identify ways in which national history in New Zealand, as in other national contexts, might be disturbed in favour of different and more complex articulations of the 'national' story. These include New Zealand's relationship to global patterns, to shared histories in the Australasia-Pacific context and to the histories of settler colonies more generally. Some of the most pronounced attempts to move beyond the national narrative tend to emphasize the shared trajectories of 'the nation'; for instance, transnational history as a comparative history project.<sup>9</sup> However, another form of history-writing has eschewed the concept of transnationalism altogether and prefers to pose questions of imperial and colonial cultural links across sites before the development of national identities. In his *Orientalism and Race*, for instance, Tony Ballantyne examines the 'web of empire' which brings New Zealand and India into one analytical space.<sup>10</sup> Catharine Coleborne similarly sets out a new approach using the term 'transcolonial' with regard to re-reading history, arguing that it opens up new possibilities for the discussion of settler societies, which, as postcolonial scholars argue, lend themselves to a new kind of interpretation because they offer up an 'entanglement of imperial and colonial experiences and identities' for analysis by historians.<sup>11</sup>

Postcolonial scholars have long harboured deep suspicions about 'the nation', and see its purported existence as a particular challenge facing historians concerned with disentangling colonial encounters. Scholars tend to agree that the nation's implicit emphasis on a singular homogeneous identity is politically unacceptable and increasingly out of date. Yet, despite this, the nation has been a central metaphor in the 'knowing' and writing of New Zealand history for well over a century.<sup>12</sup> This is not peculiar to New Zealand. Australian historian Ann Curthoys notes the dominance of the nation in Australian historiography and

published general histories, arguing that they ‘generally tend to focus on what is distinctive about the history of the nation, what seems to hold it together. . . . There is an implicit assumption, that this — the discovery of what makes a nation, a people distinctive — is the task of national history, rather than a focus on what is shared with histories and societies elsewhere.’<sup>13</sup> Marilyn Lake also observes that the writing of history is, and always has been, ‘complicit with, and constrained by, modern nation-building’.<sup>14</sup>

Historians beyond Australasia have argued too that the general history genre must shrug off the straitjacket of nation.<sup>15</sup> Indian scholars have in particular been at the forefront of this body of work.<sup>16</sup> In addition, scholarship that has blossomed in the wake of the ‘imperial turn’ has exposed the nation as a falsely homogeneous entity.<sup>17</sup> In the former British colonies, including Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, there have been calls to move beyond nationalist histories and to build ‘transnational’ bridges between the histories of those places. As Katie Pickles argues later in this issue, the revival of ‘British World’ scholarship attempts to bridge the divide between British imperial history — that written largely from and authored by the metropolis or the centre — and the histories from the former British colonies.<sup>18</sup> This is not to imply that these boundaries have been stable. As Angela Woollacott maintains, ‘the British Empire was always shifting and never a stable unit, its boundaries continually contested, its territorial control changing, and the colonial regimes that constituted it constantly responding to new challenges’.<sup>19</sup> In any case, the relationship between nation and history has been (and remains) a complex one. Stefan Berger has argued that history has, in turn, been central to the construction of the nation and national identity. ‘Nation-builders everywhere agreed: their nation had to have a history — the longer and prouder the better. Creating national historical consciousness was widely seen as the most powerful precondition for engendering true national feeling in the wider population.’<sup>20</sup> History-writing has, in sum, tended to reify the nation and entrench the nation-state.<sup>21</sup>

From a local perspective, too, the idea of the nation with regard to New Zealand history is problematic. Peter Gibbons argues that the construction by Pakeha of a New Zealand national identity was not a sign that the colonization phase of history was over, but was instead an important part of the ongoing (and still incomplete) processes of colonization.<sup>22</sup> He suggests that we interrogate the seemingly innocent terms ‘New Zealand’ and ‘New Zealand national identity’, and that the term ‘New Zealand’ is itself a discursive construction, a shorthand device for referring to a multiplicity of places, peoples, products, practices and histories.<sup>23</sup> As Nēpia Mahuika contends in this issue and elsewhere, those who have been adversely affected by colonizing processes and those who see history through other epistemological, interpretive and cultural lenses may see the nation as irrelevant.<sup>24</sup> But perhaps the greatest weakness of ‘the nation’ is that it assumes a singular shared identity within it and denies difference outside its borders. In twenty-first-century multicultural Aotearoa New Zealand, the reality is quite different: we all partake of multiple identities and none of these is necessarily fixed at any given time.

At best, then, the nation may be defined as an historical category and a matrix through which to view past actions, decisions and events; at worst, it is seen to

be complicit in continuing, rather than addressing, the excesses of the colonial project.<sup>25</sup> In the context of former British colonies, such as New Zealand, we see postcolonial positions being taken up and articulated by the descendants of the colonizers, those who, as Homi Bhabha observed in the early 1990s, worked to construct a form of identity which rejected a definition of them as being inferior to Britain, and by which they were not complicit in the colonization of indigenous peoples.<sup>26</sup> This, as Bhabha argues, leads to the formation of a ‘hybrid’ colonial identity.<sup>27</sup> In New Zealand, Bhabha’s description of the colonial condition aligns well with expressions of Pakeha self-identification.<sup>28</sup> This begs the question as to the relevance of a ‘British past’ in the postcolonial present.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, over the past 30 years narratives of New Zealand as a particular colonial space have become the subject of much criticism. These critiques have come from a variety of standpoints, including Māori, feminists and republicans, who have all pointed to New Zealand’s role as a colonizing state.<sup>30</sup>

Former settler colonies like New Zealand are complex sites in which to develop postcolonial arguments. This is partly because the impact of decolonization in these sites has been different, and partly because of the role played by historians in the academic cultures of these locations, whereby postcolonial history maintains a difficult relationship to the mainstream of academic life and also to the communities of indigenous peoples both inside and outside that world. New Zealand is one such site. The presence of white colonists at the time of ‘settlement’— or invasion, as some scholars prefer — was both an intrusion and a disruption; white bodies displaced those of indigenous peoples and continued to erase and reconstruct the meanings of land for the original inhabitants and owners. As Patrick Wolfe asserts in his *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, settler colonies were and are ‘premised on the elimination of native societies’.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, as Wolfe also points out, white academics espousing postcolonial views might be seen to be continuing the process of colonizing through the creation of ‘expert knowledge’ about past events.<sup>32</sup>

Because of these tensions and ambivalences, settler colonialism is constantly being reinterpreted in ways that offer potential to historians keen to explore its ramifications for postcolonial scholarship. This interrogation takes different forms. For instance, Fiona Hamilton shows that the process of representing New Zealand’s pioneering past is highly determined by the processes of cultural memory. Pioneer ‘foundation’ narratives, she argues, were part of the colonization process, and therefore local pioneer histories, with their similar narrative trajectories and tropes, can be read as ‘genealogies of communities striving for a sense of legitimacy in a recently settled land’.<sup>33</sup> Such memoirs, then, were not innocent; they are examples of highly constructed texts of colonization produced to persuade later settlers of the validity of colonization and settlement. While these might be read as regional texts they are also important in constructions of national identity, and they play a role in the formation of national histories. Hamilton’s argument draws upon international scholarship about collective social and cultural memory, including work by Australian Chris Healy and the British historian Peter Burke, to demonstrate that New Zealand’s processes of history-making are shared with other national sites and intellectual traditions.<sup>34</sup>

Like the settler colony, then, the ‘nation’ is another site for the development of postcolonial history. National history is a relatively new form of history which has arisen and developed in tandem with the growth in power of nations themselves.<sup>35</sup> It is here that postcolonial historians have sought to pull apart the ways in which the power relations of the past might also be represented in new forms of historical narrative. Postcolonial scholars, too, have been concerned to challenge the ‘natural’ authority of the genre of national history because of its recent invention, and because it signals the dominance of some people over others. This theme is explored in further depth below.

Our commentary is underpinned by a bibliography of 224 items — including sole and jointly-authored books, chapters in edited books, journal articles, book reviews and postgraduate theses produced between 1967 and 2008 — compiled for the purpose of examining the articulation of ‘postcolonial’ in New Zealand historical scholarship.<sup>36</sup> This archive assumes a wider geographical definition of what constitutes ‘New Zealand’, locating it in Pacific, Australasian and Oceania contexts. And while the vast majority of works included in our archive focuses on New Zealand, we have included some Australian scholarship exploring transnational themes in order to capture the dissemination of these ideas in a wider intellectual context.<sup>37</sup> Although some of the scholarly works we examine here have already gained a reputation as important texts, other works may have slipped below the radar of historians in this country — especially the significant body of unpublished scholarship contained in postgraduate history theses produced in New Zealand universities.

Has postcolonial history shaped New Zealand history-writing and, if so, to what extent? To assess the corpus of work we began by asking how far historians writing in and about New Zealand had utilized postcolonial models, theories or concepts of historical enquiry, and whether there have been deliberate and strategic engagements with postcolonialism over a period of time. We also wanted to carefully examine the ways in which historians might have shared concerns across the spectrum of postcolonial approaches to the past.

The bibliography of historical writing referred to above is surprisingly rich in exemplars of postcolonial scholarship, and engagement with postcolonial ideas appears explicit and implicit. We have scrutinized this body of bibliographic materials and evaluated its sense and direction by asking simple questions regarding its content.<sup>38</sup> For instance, a total of 51 of the works employ the term ‘postcolonial’ and explicitly engage with the theoretical constructs of postcolonialism; that is, they are clear in their intent to critique an aspect of the colonial project. A further group of 110 of the bibliographic items explicitly use postcolonial methodologies and/or ‘theories’, without necessarily using the term ‘postcolonial’. A further 44 entries we categorized as ‘discussing colonization’ in an analytical, discursive manner. These approaches, we argue, provide at least partial evidence that New Zealand history (and historiography) has been shaped by international and transnational intellectual debates about colonialism and its aftermath. To be ‘postcolonial’, as we suggest above, is to examine colonialism and its subjects in a critical light, and to ask questions about the colonizing project over time. Scholars in New Zealand and of New Zealand have indeed placed these problems at the centre of their historical enquiries.

While most of the works which make explicit use of the term postcolonial have been published from the 1990s through to the present, the imprint of postcolonial sensibilities can be detected much earlier. In an article published in the *New Zealand Journal of History* in 1971, Pacific scholar J.W. Davidson argued that historians had a responsibility to develop a methodological approach when discussing relationships between Europeans and Māori, in large part to avoid being caught out only describing Māori society in a post-contact context.<sup>39</sup> In the 1980s, Keith Sorrenson used the term in relation to the work of the Waitangi Tribunal. Sorrenson wrote about the ways in which international scholarship and legal-historical debates impacted upon local articulations of history.<sup>40</sup> He then predicted, with considerable accuracy, that the work of the Waitangi Tribunal would take New Zealand historical scholarship in 'radical' and exciting new directions.<sup>41</sup>

By the 1990s, historians in New Zealand were using the term 'postcolonial' as they explored the histories of missionaries, Māori in the colonizing period, the environment, land surveying, native schools, anti-racist organizations, Māori activism in the twentieth century, colonial culture, land rights and the Treaty of Waitangi, among other subjects. Other historians were exploring postcolonial methods in their histories of diverse topics without explicitly describing their approach as postcolonial. For instance, Angela Ballara traced the formation of an eighteenth-century community at Porangahau in the southern Hawke's Bay relying upon the oral accounts given to the Native Land Court. Ballara's reconstruction privileged 'Māori traditional accounts' and overtly criticized published European histories of the peoples of the region, showing how these often reflected 'untried assumptions about Māori tribal structures combined with a Eurocentric chronology which distort the Māori past'.<sup>42</sup> In her formidable oeuvre, including the meticulously researched *Redemption Songs* and the recently published *Encircled Lands*, Judith Binney also drew on what might be termed 'postcolonial voices', successfully blending oral narrative, personal testimony and documentary evidence.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, a number of postgraduate theses in history signalled the importance of postcolonial approaches to their chosen fields, among them hapu histories, studies of representations of Māori, Māori and Chinese market gardeners, the Māori insane and oral histories of Māori.<sup>44</sup>

Not all scholarship tinged with a postcolonial hue focused on Māori, or even on relations between Māori and Pakeha; other works which have embraced a critical postcolonial stance have investigated the history of Pakeha pioneer memoirists, histories of tramping and encounters with the natural world.<sup>45</sup> While colonization does loom large in the field, as the bibliography attests, it is a core aspect of New Zealand's history, a fact reflected in the production of scholarship dealing with it as a dynamic process, a continuing state of existence and a legacy.<sup>46</sup> Colonization's dynamism and its pervasive impact explain why postcolonial histories have been so powerful a tool in the new and challenging assignment of destabilizing national narratives. Over 100 entries in our archive grapple with the theme of unsettling the nation and explicitly critiquing the colonial project. Significantly, many of these works also traverse the ground already outlined above, suggesting that the aim of critiquing national stories might be realized in a range of ways — from examining local cultures and resistances of Māori to European encroachment, to discussions about broader patterns of settlement and the impact on both indigenous

and European populations. But this group of works contains a new emphasis: the construction of foundation narratives, and episodes in nation-making which are carefully unpacked and analysed for their symbolic meaning and their effects. Such works include Chris Hilliard's various examinations of colonial culture, and Peter Gibbons's explorations of cultural colonization, national identity and the writing of national histories.<sup>47</sup>

Our archive of postcolonial histories in New Zealand offers insight into the ways in which historians have incorporated the features of postcolonial writing that have shaped international historiography. We have detected four major themes running through this bibliographic archive: articulations of discourse and power; the rewriting of history from the perspective of the colonized; the theme of resistance, often articulated in terms of indigenous agency; and psychoanalytic critiques of colonial power. The latter theme has been particularly effective in the New Zealand context, especially through the work of Ranginui Walker and other Māori historians who, after Frantz Fanon, have called attention to what might be called 'colonialist disavowal', identifying how colonial power itself enables various forms of resistance to flourish.<sup>48</sup> In recent years — and especially through research conducted as part of the Treaty claims and settlement process, via the Waitangi Tribunal and other agencies — historians have been adept at turning colonialist discourses in on themselves and thus unpicking colonial texts and utterances to reveal their actual meanings.<sup>49</sup>

Given the scholarly and political contexts outlined above, the six articles in this issue are timely contributions to the debate around historical interpretation. In their breadth and depth, they are also indicative of the connectedness of local historical scholarship to international trends and intellectual debates. As noted earlier, in traversing their range of subjects — from re-conceptualizing the histories of Aotearoa from an iwi perspective, through to the challenges posed to the modern legal system by non-Western paradigms of historical knowledge — these articles demonstrate how postcolonial methods can be usefully and effectively applied. Each contributor was invited to reflect on how they employ postcolonial methodologies and perspectives in their area of expertise. In addition, they were each asked to address the question: 'What would a postcolonial history look like in your field of research?' Overall, then, this issue of the *New Zealand Journal of History* considers how postcolonial methods of re-reading the past can offer fresh 'angles of vision' on our historical experiences.<sup>50</sup>

In a provocative, self-described 'think piece', Nēpia Mahuika considers the need for historians in this country to 'close the gaps' between themselves and the Māori communities they and their research concern (and effect). Examining the relationships between Kaupapa Māori theory and postcolonial methodologies, he explores the limits of each, in theory and practice, and argues that New Zealand historians need to better understand iwi and hapū communities and their worldviews before they can truly reduce the distance between the colonized and the colonizers. Writing as an 'insider', Mahuika shows, through a Ngāti Porou perspective, how postcolonial and Kaupapa Māori approaches might also advance beyond their own conceptual boundaries and better connect to iwi.

Simon Dench takes up the theme of boundary-making in his spatial history analysis of the various discursive practices associated with the military invasion

and subsequent colonization of the Waikato. Using a discrete set of historical photographs and maps, Dench's close-grained study focuses on the imaging and imagining of the Waikato to offer an alternative reading of the history of the region. Drawing on what Gibbons called 'the literature of invasion',<sup>51</sup> he convincingly argues that, although fragmentary, the visual archive was used to place the Waikato within a particular European frame of reference. Situated within cartographic and photographic discourses, maps and photographs not only acted to justify colonization and to record the incremental progress towards this goal, but were themselves colonizing sites. Dench argues that as powerful ideological instruments, maps and photographs are never passive, but (as this case study shows) were deeply implicated in the politics and project of colonization.

Tony Ballantyne also addresses the need to engage more with spatial conceptualizations of historical experience. Casting a critical eye over our postcolonial historiographical impulses, Ballantyne argues that the recent turn towards transnationalism may only be a partial response to Gibbons's challenge to rethink New Zealand's histories. He suggests instead that historians need to grapple with questions of location, space and scale, and to think under and beyond as well as across the construct of the nation. Ballantyne makes a case against 'aggregated and naturalized national history' and maintains, with evidence in hand, that we need to pay much closer attention to the relationship between economics and the cultural domain to enhance our understandings of the past. Using a close study of intellectual life in Gore, he demonstrates that nations were given shape by communication and transportation networks, and were principally driven by what he calls 'thinking under the nation'. Ballantyne argues that we need to place greater emphasis on the role of transport and communications in determining the colonial economy, in shaping colonial cultural life and in sculpting the specific social formations that emerged in each community, town and district.

Some of those social formations and practices were less than benign, as Angela Wanhalla reveals in her article exploring interracial sexual violence in 1860s New Zealand. Wanhalla deliberately steps away from the interpretation of interracial relationships as 'tense and tender ties' to examine a subject rarely discussed in the history of cross-cultural encounters — rape and sexual violence.<sup>52</sup> Drawing on a range of legal cases, this critique focuses on periods of war between Māori and the Crown in Taranaki, Waikato and in the East Coast region. Wanhalla explores, in a postcolonial vein, the cultural meanings associated with rumours of interracial rape at a time of interracial conflict. Her work shows that in a politically fragile context, both alleged and actual encounters involving interracial sexual violence served to exacerbate and exaggerate fears about the limits of colonial governance and the rule of law in the colony. She also shows how racialized assumptions and the language of morality associated with instances of rape were used to justify repressive policies and acts of retribution — many of which have repercussions which have survived into the present.

Katie Pickles's article also explores relationships, but in the context of historiographical discourse. She takes up Gibbons's challenge to New Zealand historians to decentre 'New Zealand' as a subject and, in doing so, considers two alternative interpretive frameworks — British World scholarship and postcolonial methodology. Aptly titled 'The Obvious and the Awkward: Postcolonialism and

the British World', Pickles's article suggests that while the similarities between the two intellectual approaches are obvious and pervasive, there are nonetheless awkward and unsettling differences. She argues that the greatest anxiety (and therefore the maximum potential for future scholarship) is in the tension between transnational and nation-based enquiries. Following Gibbons, Pickles argues the time is now ripe for historians of empire (irrespective of their intellectual stripes) to regroup and move forward with more radical historical analyses. This involves avoiding the writing of 'success history' and, instead, composing narratives that celebrate difference and exceptionality. Pickles also points out that while de-centring the nation can be useful in broadening and deepening historical knowledge, in dissolving 'New Zealand' as a subject, there is no guarantee that it will reappear (in a new form) anywhere else.

Sense of place is a common thread running through all the articles in this issue, and especially so in Miranda Johnson's thoughtful examination of the relationship between the Whanganui River claim and contemporary notions of indigeneity and sovereignty. In her article, 'Burdens of Belonging: Indigeneity and the Re-Founding of Aotearoa New Zealand', Johnson considers the claim by Whanganui Māori for recognition of the unextinguished customary and common law rights and title to the waters of and the lands alongside the Whanganui River and, in particular, the assertion by the Waitangi Tribunal that this claim could have great significance for the nation-at-large. She argues that the interpretation presented by the Tribunal might well be considered postcolonial, although it is a form of postcoloniality particular to settler states where the settlers never leave and indigenous people do not realize sovereign independence. Echoing the sentiments of Gibbons, Johnson suggests that it may well be politically and methodologically accurate to understand this process of 're-founding' the nation as an ongoing process of colonization at work.

In Peter Gibbons's April 2002 article he recalls an experience when, during a class, a student asked exactly *when* New Zealand became postcolonial. Gibbons paused momentarily and then responded to the question by citing a Roberta ('Bobbi') Sykes poem, in which the poet declares 'Post colonial . . . Have I missed something? . . . Have they gone?'<sup>53</sup> Two observations might be made about this anecdote. First, it serves to illustrate the highly politicized discursive context in which reconsiderations of colonization still occur and, in particular, the relationship between 'colonization', 'decolonization' and the postcolonial present. Second, it amplifies the misnomer embedded in the term 'postcolonial'. As we note above, the term implies, by virtue of its etymology, that colonization is complete, finished and forever behind us; whereas, as we argue, 'postcolonial' signals the opposite — an ongoing critique of and vigilance towards colonization and its multiple legacies. Both individually and collectively, the articles in this issue aim to move us beyond either of these assumptions, to challenge historians in and of New Zealand to further explore postcolonial approaches and to give more cognizance to postcolonial sensibilities as we strive to better understand our past.

## NOTES

1 We acknowledge the support of the University of Waikato's contestable Summer Research Scholarship funding scheme and the work of our excellent researcher, Mark Smith. Our project, 'Text/Archive/Theory', was conducted over the summer of 2008–2009. Mark's extensive bibliographical research forms the basis of this introduction and our research for this Special Issue. We acknowledge his intellectual contribution to the project and to this publication. We also wish to acknowledge the editorial support of Dr Stephen Hamilton in the production of this Special Issue. The title of this introduction references Antoinette Burton's 'On the Inadequacy and Indispensability of the Nation', in Antoinette Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, Durham and London, 2003, pp.1–23.

2 On the impossibility of objective history, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession*, Cambridge, 1988. In their definitions of the key concepts of postcolonial scholarship, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin also note the way that this scholarship quickly became the site of contestation over interpretations of historical knowledge, given the influence of post-structuralist theories on the 'major exponents of colonial discourse theory'. See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London and New York, 1998, pp.186–7.

3 See Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory*, Manchester, 1999, p.278. Similarly, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out the continuing questions raised about the prefix 'post', including by practitioners of the approach. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, p.187.

4 See, for example, Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How a Discipline is being Murdered by Literary Critics and Social Theorists*, Sydney, 1994.

5 See, for instance, Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford and Massachusetts, 2001; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, p.187.

6 Giselle Byrnes has suggested that 'The value of a postcolonial approach to historical scholarship is that it offers a conscious political perspective; an attitude which assumes that colonization is not a relic of the past or a phenomenon of history, but an ongoing and continuing process'. Giselle Byrnes, 'Nation and Migration: Postcolonial Perspectives', *New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), 43, 2 (2009), p.123.

7 Young, *Postcolonialism*, p.57.

8 Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, p.188.

9 See, for instance, Ann Curthoys, 'Does Australian History have a Future?', *Australian Historical Studies* (AHS), 33, 118 (2002), pp.140–52; Philippa Mein-Smith, 'New Zealand Federation Commissioners in Australia: One Past, Two Historiographies', AHS, 34, 122 (2003), pp.305–25; Peter Gibbons, 'The Far Side of the Search for Identity: Reconsidering New Zealand History', NZJH, 37, 1 (2003), pp.38–49; Donald Denoon, with Philippa Mein-Smith and Marivic Wyndham, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, Oxford, 2000. See also Philippa Mein Smith, Peter Hemenstall and Shaun Goldfinch, *Remaking the Tasman World*, Christchurch, 2008.

10 Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire*, Hampshire and New York, 2002, p.3.

11 Catharine Coleborne, *'Madness' in the Family: Insanity and Institutions in the Australasian Colonial World 1860s–1914*, Basingstoke and New York, 2010, pp.7–10. See also Malini Johar Schueller and Edward Watts, eds, *Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2003, p.5. For the term 'transcolonial', see Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy, eds, *Decentring Empire: Britain, India and the Transcolonial World*, Hyderabad, India, 2006.

12 See further, 'Introduction—Reframing New Zealand History', in Giselle Byrnes, ed., *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, Melbourne, 2009, pp.1–18.

13 Ann Curthoys, 'Losing Our Way after the Imperial Turn: Charting Academic Uses of the Post-colonial', in Burton, *After the Imperial Turn*, pp.70–89.

14 Marilyn Lake, 'White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project', AHS, 34, 122 (2003), pp.346–63.

15 Jon Stratton and Ien Ang have called for scholars to problematize the nation in studies of 'national culture'. See Jon Stratton and Ien Ang, 'On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies:

“British” Cultural Studies in an “International” Frame’, in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, London, 1996, pp.361–91. The historian A.G. Hopkins has noted that ‘most history continues to be written within a national framework that derives its inspiration from nineteenth-century state-building and state-reforming movements in Europe . . . [and] preoccupation with the national epic has also endorsed a degree of insularity that has tended to marginalize international audiences’. A.G. Hopkins, ‘Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History’, *Past and Present*, 164 (1999), pp.202–3. See also Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America’s Place in World History*, New York, 2006, and Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, California, 2002.

16 See, for example, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, N.J., 2000; Kumkum Chatterjee, ‘The King of Controversy: History and Nation-making in Late Colonial India’, *American Historical Review*, 110, 5 (2005), pp.1474–5; Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, Chicago, 1995. National identity is also being questioned in relation to the law; see Nan Seuffert, *Jurisprudence of National Identity: Kaleidoscopes of Imperialism and Globalisation from Aotearoa New Zealand*, Aldershot, England, 2006.

17 See further, Burton, *After the Imperial Turn*, p.8.

18 Including C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, eds, *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, London, 2003; P. Buckner and R. D. Francis, eds, *Rediscovering the British World*, Calgary, 2005; P. Buckner, ed., *Canada and the End of Empire*, Vancouver and Toronto, 2005; and P. Buckner and R.D. Francis, eds, *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, Vancouver and Toronto, 2006.

19 A. Woollacott, *Gender and Empire*, Basingstoke and New York, 2006, p.1. See also C. Hall and S. Rose, eds, *At Home With the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, Cambridge, 2005.

20 Stefan Berger, ed., *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective*, Basingstoke, 2007, p.1.

21 See, for example, C.A. Breckenridge, S. Pollock, H.K. Bhabha and D. Chakrabarty, eds, *Cosmopolitanism*, Durham and London, 2002.

22 P.J. Gibbons, ‘A Note on Writing, Identity, and Colonisation in Aotearoa’, *Sites*, 13 (1986), p.35; Peter Gibbons, ‘Non-fiction’, in Terry Sturm, ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, 2nd ed., Auckland, 1998, pp.31–118; Peter Gibbons, ‘Cultural Colonization and National Identity’, *NZJH*, 36, 1 (2002), pp.5–17.

23 Gibbons, ‘The Far Side of the Search for Identity’.

24 See also Nēpia Mahuika, ‘Revitalizing Te Ika-a-Maui: Māori Migration and the Nation’, *NZJH*, 43, 2 (2009), pp.133–49.

25 Given that cultural diversity typifies our twenty-first-century communities, the concept of the nation is moving away from ideas of unity and more towards that of an ‘imagined community’ which interprets national feeling as a shared sense of ‘deep horizontal comradeship’. See further Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983. The nation may also be viewed as consisting of a ‘psychological bond’, where individuals embrace their own conceptions of being a part of the collective nation. See W. Connor, ‘Beyond Reason: The Nature of the Ethnonational Bond’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16, 3 (1993), pp.373–89.

26 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London, 1994. See also Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London, 1995. See also H. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, London and New York, 1990; Robert J.C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London and New York, 2nd ed., 2004. See also Paul Gilroy, ‘There ain’t no black in the Union Jack’: *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, London, 1987.

27 Stephen Slemon has termed the white settler societies of the former British Empire the ‘second world’. See S. Slemon, ‘Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World’, in P. Mongia, ed., *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, London and New York, 1996, pp.72–83.

28 See, for instance, Michael King, *Being Pakeha Now: Reflections and Recollections of a White Native*, Auckland, 1999, and James H. Liu, Tim McCreanor, Tracey McIntosh and Teresia Teaiwa, eds, *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations*, Wellington, 2005.

29 See further, K. Pickles, *Transnational Outrage: The Death and Commemoration of Edith Cavell*, Basingstoke and New York, 2007.

30 See further, D. Novitz and B. Willmott, *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1989.

31 Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and*

*Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*, London and New York, 1999, p.2. Robert Young also reminds readers that settler colonialism, like colonialism of intense violent occupation, involved ‘dispossession and landlessness’. See Young, *Postcolonialism*, p.49.

32 Wolfe, p.3.

33 Fiona Hamilton, ‘Pioneering History: Negotiating Pakeha Collective Memory in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries’, *NZJH*, 36, 1 (2002), p.77.

34 Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory*, Cambridge and Melbourne, 1997; Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, Cambridge, 2004.

35 We do not wish to rehearse the definitions here; these are outlined in several places, including in Byrnes, ‘Nation and Migration’.

36 Some additional materials were also listed but not incorporated into the final bibliography, making the total number closer to 250 works. We appreciate that to fully comprehend the implications of the numbers mentioned here we would need to place the archive within the larger context of all history published in New Zealand over the same period. Our intention, however, is not to quantify history in this manner, but rather to draw attention to the significant body of scholarship which we argue provides evidence of a trend or intellectual tradition among New Zealand historians.

37 In our bibliographic archive, scholarship about Australia includes work by Henry Reynolds; research on transnational histories is found in works by Peter Hemenway and other authors. International postcolonial scholarship includes work by Lilikala Kame‘eleihiwa, Paul Carter and Dipesh Chakrabarty. The main focus of this article is on the New Zealand works we have collected, but the integrity of our bibliographic archive and its construction is reflected in the total number of items it contains.

38 In evaluating the content we have considered the entries which focus on New Zealand, and not those which focus on other contexts.

39 J.W. Davidson, ‘History, Art or Game? A Comment on “The Purity of Historical Method”’, *NZJH*, 5, 2 (1971), pp.115–20.

40 M.P.K. Sorrenson, ‘Towards a Radical Reinterpretation in New Zealand History: The Role of the Waitangi Tribunal’, *NZJH*, 21, 2 (1987), pp.173–88. This was also published as M.P.K. Sorrenson, ‘Towards a Radical Reinterpretation of New Zealand History: The Role of the Treaty of Waitangi’, in I.H. Kawharu, ed., *Waitangi: Māori and Pakeha Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, Auckland, 1989, pp.158–71.

41 Sorrenson, ‘Towards a Radical Reinterpretation in New Zealand History’. See also: W.H. Oliver, ‘The Future Behind Us’, in Andrew Sharp and Paul McHugh, eds, *Histories, Power and Loss: Uses of the Past—A New Zealand Commentary*, Wellington, 2001, pp.9–29; Giselle Byrnes, *The Waitangi Tribunal and New Zealand History*, Melbourne, 2004.

42 Angela Ballara, ‘Porangahau: The Formation of an 18th-Century Community in Southern Hawke’s Bay’, *NZJH*, 29, 1 (1995), p.4.

43 Judith Binney, *Redemption Songs: A Life of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki*, Auckland, 1995, and Judith Binney, *Encircled Lands: Te Urewera, 1820–1921*, Wellington, 2009.

44 See, for example, Jessica Heine, ‘Colonial Anxieties and the Construction of Identities: The Employment of Maori Women in Chinese Market Gardens, Auckland, 1929’, MA thesis, University of Waikato, 2006; Lorelle Burke, ‘“The voices caused him to become porangi”: Maori Patients in the Auckland Lunatic Asylum, 1860–1900’, MA thesis, University of Waikato, 2006; Nēpia Mahuika, ‘Being Māori Tūturu: Māori Life Narratives and Contemporary Identities’, MA thesis, University of Waikato, 2006; M.J. Stevens, ‘Muttonbirds and Modernity in Murihiku: Continuity and Change in Kāi Tahu Knowledge’, PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2009.

45 See, for instance, recent research by Kirstie Ross about tramping and nature in New Zealand: Kirstie Ross, ‘“Schooled by Nature”: Pakeha Tramping Between the Wars’, *NZJH*, 36, 1 (2002), pp.51–65; Kirstie Ross, *Going Bush: New Zealanders and Nature in the Twentieth Century*, Auckland, 2008.

46 The substantial body of material in the bibliography which uses postcolonial theory and/or method implicitly, as our research has discovered, also supports this finding.

47 See Chris Hilliard, ‘Stories of Becoming: the Centennial Surveys and the Colonization of New Zealand’, *NZJH*, 33, 1 (1999), pp.3–19; and Gibbons, ‘Cultural Colonization and National Identity’.

48 Ranginui Walker’s now classic general history of Aotearoa is the best ‘counter-narrative’ of colonization we have. See Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou Struggle Without End*, rev. ed., Auckland, 2004. Walker’s work owes its inspiration to that of Frantz Fanon; see Frantz Fanon, *The*

*Wretched of the Earth*, London, 1965 and Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, London, 1968.

49 See Byrnes, *Waitangi Tribunal and New Zealand History*; Michael Belgrave, *Historical Frictions: Māori Claims and Reinvented Histories*, Auckland, 2005; and Richard S. Hill, *Māori and the State: Crown–Māori Relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa, 1950–2000*, Wellington, 2009.

50 This metaphor of sight and seeing new ‘angles of vision’ is explored in a recent edited collection of essays on New Zealand history: Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney, eds, *Disputed Histories: Imagining New Zealand’s Pasts*, Dunedin, 2006.

51 As Dench notes, this phrase is derived from Gibbons, ‘Non-Fiction’.

52 The phrase ‘tense and tender ties’ is taken from Ann Laura Stoler’s ‘Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies’, in Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Durham, 2006, pp.23–70.

53 The full poem can be found in Bobbi Sykes, *Eclipse*, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1996, p.16. Note that only the second ellipsis is in the original poem. See Gibbons, ‘Cultural Colonization and National Identity’. p.5.

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