

Postcolonial Justice and the ‘Fair Go’: An Introduction

On 6 December 1938, an elderly Aboriginal man led a deputation from the Australian Aborigines’ League down Collins Street in Melbourne towards the German Consulate. Less than a month after the so-called Kristallnacht, the nation-wide Nazi pogrom that marked a dramatic upsurge in the ongoing persecution of Germany’s Jewish population, William Cooper sought to protest against this violence by presenting a resolution condemning Germany’s actions to Consul-General Dr D. W. Dreschler. Cooper, a Yorta-Yorta man, was a founding member and leader of the Australian Aborigines’ League, established in 1932, arguably “the most important of the first crop of Aboriginal political organisations” (Attwood and Markus 1). Melbourne and the state of Victoria were not the only settings for Cooper’s interventions. After attaining literacy late in his life, he devoted considerable energies to writing letters and leading deputations to politicians, including the Prime Minister, demanding direct representation in parliament, enfranchisement and land rights (see Barwick; Attwood and Markus).

Earlier in 1938, Cooper had joined forces with William Ferguson and Margaret Tucker from the Aborigines Progressive Association in New South Wales to organise the first Day of Mourning in Sydney. Comprising a public protest and a one-day conference on Indigenous citizenship rights at Australian Hall in Elizabeth Street, its date – 26 January 1938 – was carefully chosen to coincide with the lavish celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the First Fleet’s landing at Sydney Cove. The day’s official festivities included a re-enactment of the landing, a festive gala night at the Sydney Showground, as well as a historical pageant celebrating “Australia’s March to Nationhood” with a procession of 120 floats through the streets of Sydney (Macintyre and Clark 96). The public protest staged by Cooper and his allies on the pavement outside the conference venue critically engaged with this celebration of settler-colonial history. Passing Australian Hall at one point along the parade route, the first of the 120 floats representing James Cook’s ‘discovery’ of the Australian east coast would probably have come face-to-face with representatives of the Day of Mourning protest at the side of the road. On top of the official float, half-naked Indigenous performers from Brewarrina and Menindee hid behind bushes as they fearfully ‘witnessed’ the arrival of civilisation on Australian soil, while the protesters, clad in decisively modern, urban dress, held up placards demanding citizenship rights for Aborigines (see Gilbert; Horner and Langton; White).

This volume’s cover displays the iconic photograph taken that day, possibly the very moment that the festive floats were going past. Cooper is not in this image, but we find him in another photograph documenting the proceedings of the conference that was taking place inside. Here Cooper sits prominently at a desk next to Jack Patten, President of the Aborigines Progressive Association, who is reading out the resolution to be passed at 5 pm that day:



Fig. 1: President Jack Patten (right) reads the resolution.
 Photograph by Russell Clark. Originally published in *Man* magazine, March 1938.
 Photograph from the collection of the State Library of NSW.

We, representing the Aborigines of Australia, assembled in Conference at the Australian Hall, Sydney, on the 26th day of January, 1938, this being the 150th anniversary of the whitemen's seizure of our country, hereby make protest against the callous treatment of our people by the whitemen in the past 150 years, and we appeal to the Australian Nation to make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, and for a new policy which will raise our people to full citizenship status and equality in the community.

The meeting at Australian Hall is commonly regarded as the first civil rights gathering in Australia. William Cooper's protest outside the German consulate remains lesser known, but is equally intriguing in its use of public space and its conscious recourse to the cosmopolitan vocabulary of international diplomacy. His resolution is of particular relevance to the readers of this volume, as it establishes an unlikely connection between Jewish/German and Indigenous/Australian history. Deliberately aligning the fate of his people with that of Germany's Jewish population, Cooper's protest was voiced in the name of a people who had borne the burden of the very process of settlement that the Australian nation state was celebrating in 1938. They had, in the words of Indigenous activist Kevin Foley,

themselves been subject to genocide, and in 1938 were (like Germany's Jewish people) denied citizenship. Furthermore, Aboriginal people had also been labelled by a white supremacist society

as 'subhuman' [... and] also had experience of the concentration camps that white Australia had created to contain them [.]

The protest deserves admiration not only because at this stage, in December 1938, only "some foreign governments and labour unions had protested against the pogrom" (Silberklang, in Lo 348) but also because Cooper and the League belonged to a disenfranchised minority community themselves. Cooper's activism has in recent years received growing recognition in Australia (see Attwood and Markus; De Costa; Foley and Anderson). Jacqueline Lo, to whose rendering of Cooper's story we are greatly indebted, conceives of it "as a form of vernacular cosmopolitanism" (348), and we take it to be a striking example of the long-ignored worldliness of Indigenous politics in the Pacific region in the early decades of the twentieth century. In the context of this volume, Cooper's protest alerts us to the complex ways in which the universal notion of justice is continuously renegotiated in postcolonial contexts such as Australia. Cooper's politics lets us see understandings of justice as emerging out of an engagement with distinctly local concerns at the same time as they take recourse to global norms and articulate cosmopolitan worldliness, of "thinking and feeling beyond the nation" (Cheah and Robbins). As such, they encourage us to engage anew with the schism between cultural relativism and humanist universalism that continues to characterise postcolonial debates on justice.

At the heart of these debates is an inbuilt tension: while the term 'justice' suggests the pursuit of a globally valid set of social, political or aesthetic norms ultimately of European origin, the 'postcolonial' is often associated with the Indigenous deconstruction of precisely such norms and values as hegemonic colonial or neocolonial concepts, variably in the interest of the coloniser, global capital, or a cosmopolitan elite. Work done under the rubric of the 'postcolonial' has thus long sought to address the unspoken entanglement of concepts of justice with the colonial civilizing mission and its present-day equivalents, while simultaneously drawing on the political potential of such universalist norms. We believe that it was this careful negotiation of a universal rights discourse with his particular Indigenous speaking position that gave Cooper's political programme the argumentative force attested to by historians Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus: a force that "presented a considerable challenge to governments in the past and continues to resonate strongly today" (5).

Postcolonial Justice

Let us now, by means of brief examples, indicate three major fields where, in the past, such postcolonial interventions have impacted on the understanding of justice in Australia, and with which many of the chapters of this volume engage. As in our opening example, the focus of this section is on the struggle for Indigenous rights, which constitute the most central site for the ongoing negotiation of postcolonial justice in Australia and hence inevitably constitute the point of departure for the manifold engagements with justice that are gathered in this volume.

Firstly, over the course of the twentieth century, activists have repeatedly pressured the nation state to ensure notional equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by means of the removal of racial discrimination from key state, territory and federal laws. William Cooper's sustained fight for direct representation in parliament, citizenship, and land rights, described above, formed part of these efforts. In a publication entitled *Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights*, published to coincide with the Day of Mourning conference, Jack Patten and William Ferguson expressed these demands as follows: "We ask for equal education, equal opportunity, equal wages, equal rights to possess property, or to be our own masters – in two words: equal citizenship. [...] Keep your charity! We only want justice" (9). Over the years, the moment that has come to symbolise the significant achievements of this movement is the 1967 referendum. This national vote erased the two references to Aboriginal people in the Australian Constitution, establishing legal equality in theory, and it ensured the inclusion of Indigenous people in official population figures. While of "relatively limited legal significance", the referendum is commonly seen as the "symbolic moment" when Australia finally removed racial discrimination from its constitution (Chappell, Chesterman and Hill 121). In this volume, Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll looks at an early instance of purported legal equality in the British colony of Tasmania and its contemporary reverberations, while Hannah Boettcher's essay examines how the work of the Aboriginal artist Daniel Boyd works to rewrite Australian national history.

However, not all rights issues facing Indigenous Australians can successfully be redressed through formal equality. Among other things, Indigenous activists and academics have repeatedly drawn attention to significantly lower standards of living that are a social reality for many Indigenous Australians despite a guaranteed equality before the law (see Chappell, Chesterman and Hill 117-118; Herche in this volume). Their criticism points to a second arena in which notions of postcolonial justice are being articulated: these voice a fundamental criticism of the nation-state's legitimation and insist on the ultimately unjust act of colonisation. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy, first erected outside Parliament House in 1972, is emblematic of this approach. Initially established in response to the McMahon Coalition Government's refusal to recognise Aboriginal land rights, it came to represent a fundamental critique of Australian legislation and serves to assert Aboriginal nationhood and sovereignty. In this role, the type of politics the Tent Embassy forms part of differs significantly from earlier activism in that it "challenges the settler society to reconstitute the terms of political association with Indigenous peoples as one between sovereign equals" (Muldoon and Schaap 219).

While much of William Cooper's work had aimed to position Indigenous Australians firmly within the Australian state, demanding equal rights from it, the Tent Embassy largely dispenses with this plaintive position and asserts the prior and continuing existence of an Aboriginal nation (see also Attwood 339-345). In particular, the use of the term 'embassy' both indicates Aboriginal people's sense that they are aliens within

the Australian state and asserts an independent Aboriginal sovereignty (see Attwood; Clark). This lends the demonstrators an ambiguous position “both within and without the constitutional order” (Muldoon and Schaap 219). As insiders, they embody the ongoing colonial dispossession on which the current constitutional order is built; as outsiders, they claim membership of a sovereign Aboriginal nation. In this role as a sovereign entity, the Tent Embassy not only demands recognition of its own sovereignty – it also makes apparent that the Australian state requires recognition from the Aboriginal nation in order to become legitimate (see Muldoon and Schaap). This is an on-going project: while some progress on Indigenous land rights has been made since the original establishment of the embassy, particularly with the Mabo decision in 1992, questions of Aboriginal sovereignty were carefully excluded from this judgement, so that “*terra nullius* [...] was retained when it came to the question of sovereignty” and thus “the retreat from injustice [was] halted halfway along the track” (Reynolds; see also Dodson and McNamee; Harris 165-195). Peter Kilroy’s contribution to this volume looks in detail at the material and legal consequences of the Mabo decision and its potential to – slowly – reconfigure Australian law towards postcolonial justice, while Lioba Schreyer’s essay on Mabo poetry considers Aboriginal writers’ reactions to the landmark decision and the unfinished business that remains. Victoria Herche’s analysis of two recent films indicates the difficult terrain of self-determination for marginalized subjects, who continuously have to negotiate their position within and without the domains described here.

A third major field of struggles for postcolonial justice in Australia is marked out by the repeated attempts by Indigenous Australians, acting from very distinct local circumstances, to appeal to global institutions such as various UN bodies – thereby moving directly from the local to the global as a frame of reference and bypassing the nation state as interlocutor (but nevertheless indirect addressee) of claims to justice. The politics of resistance to the 2007 Northern Territory National Emergency Response, commonly known as the Northern Territory Intervention, are a case in point. Following a complaint made to the UN by a collective of Aboriginal communities about this package of changes to welfare provision, law enforcement and land tenure that were introduced by the Australian federal government to address allegations of rampant sexual abuse of minors in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities (see Northern Territory Government), the UN commissioned a special report on the Intervention (see Anaya). And indeed, James Anaya, the United Nations Special Rapporteur, found the Emergency Response to be racially discriminating and to infringe on the human rights of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The importance of transnational activism and cooperation to postcolonial justice for Indigenous people is also seen in current debates over the repatriation of human remains from museums and other institutions around the world, discussed in this volume by both Michael Pickering and Yann Le Gall.

On closer examination it becomes apparent that this global frame of reference was also operating in the background of a number of struggles outlined in the previous fields.

The campaigns for equality through the removal of racial discrimination from legislation, for instance, were greatly helped by the UN Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by Australia in 1948. In lobbying for equality, activists persistently drew attention to how the laws in question constituted a breach of the rights asserted by the Universal Declaration. And the sovereignty movement, discussed as an example of the second field, not only employed the language of international relations by referring to its representational base in Canberra as an ‘embassy’, it was also buttressed by key international law treaties pertaining to self-determination. According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 1), “everyone is said to have ‘the right of self-determination’, meaning they are free to ‘determine their political status’ and ‘their economic, social and cultural development’” (in Chappell, Chesterman and Hill, 128). We might, finally, also be able to detect a similar entanglement of local context and global backdrop when we think about the implied addressees of the protest staged outside the German consulate in 1938. William Cooper’s attempt at delivering a resolution to the German National Socialist government clearly addressed an international audience and expressed the Australian Aborigines’ League’s solidarity with Germany’s persecuted Jews. At the same time, the protest must also be understood as an Indigenous act of citizenship, as conceived by political theorist Engin Isin. Acts of citizenship, according to Isin, describe practices at play prior to or beyond the rights granted to an individual through mere enfranchisement (see Isin). They are place-based public performances “through which individuals and groups formulate and claim new rights or struggle to expand or maintain existing rights” (Isin and Wood 4).

Extrapolating from this discussion of Indigenous rights, we can observe that the term ‘postcolonial justice’ in our volume’s title gives a name to a range of movements and projects that combine often transcultural visions of justice with an ethical commitment to difference and alterity. As an academic project, the complex articulations of postcolonial justice challenge scholars across various disciplines to rethink the problem of universality against the specific local and cultural particularities of the Australian context. It is in this spirit that the essays in this volume investigate practices as well as concepts of justice in Australia’s past and present that emerge with, against and beyond the concept’s universalist legacies. They conceive of Australia as a specific region of the world which, on the one hand, can look back on a long egalitarian tradition and which can pride itself to be one of the world’s oldest constitutional democracies as well as one of the first countries to grant the right of women to vote. On the other hand, they also see in Australia a country entangled in global as much as local histories of colonialism and neoimperial designs, of inequality and persecution. Often – though not exclusively – concerned with the legacy of Australia’s colonial past, the contributions to this volume address questions of access and redistribution, obligation and recognition, reparation and restitution, re-imagination, reconciliation and forgiveness.

Reassessing the 'Fair Go'

The concept of the 'fair go' that gives this volume part of its title promises a unique take on these issues. Graeme Davison's historical account describes the 'fair go' as "a distinctively Australian sense of justice or fair play", probably with its origins in the nineteenth century. In the early post-Federation period, the concept became primarily associated with the 1907 Harvester decision on the basic wage. It achieved wider recognition when, in 1930, W. K. Hancock defined the 'fair go' as "the popular refrain of Australian democracy, repeated incessantly in pleas and judicial decisions, in statutes, Parliamentary debates, trade union conferences and platform orations" (in Davison). Gradually, the concept's original emphasis on equal chances shifted towards one focused on the redress of social inequality: in 1968, Richard Blandy proclaimed that "the Australian 'fair go' embraces a good deal more egalitarianism" than simply equality of opportunity (72). According to Davison, by the 1980s the 'fair go' no longer had a significant impact on government policy: economic doctrines and labour laws influenced by an ethos of egalitarianism and social justice had given way to the market-oriented policies of global neoliberalism. Nevertheless, the 'fair go' lives on as a powerful national myth. It continues to be regularly invoked in public discourse, usually posited either as a key truth or fact of Australian identity and society (see Herscovitch; Sammut; Vanstone), an endangered value which must be reclaimed as "the starting point for our vision of the future" (Burnside 16; see also Bolton; Combet; Thistlewaite), or a lost utopia (see Morris; Pilger).

All of these cases, despite the often very different political motivations which underlie them, involve a mythological projection of the 'fair go' onto Australia's history since European settlement – as Sev Ozdowski's rather absurd claim that Governor Arthur Philip might be considered "the founder of the 'fair go' ethos in Australia" (2) makes especially clear. While Australian history does indeed offer examples of progressive laws – such as the Harvester decision's promulgation of the need for a "fair and reasonable" basic wage (*Ex parte* H.V. McKay), and the enfranchisement of women in 1902 – the concept of the 'fair go' is almost always built upon colonial injustice, including the invasion and theft of Aboriginal land, and it acts to mask this founding injustice, even when it is invoked to promote other forms of social or economic justice. As Daniel Ross suggests, it is the projection of a defensive image. When the 'fair go' is called upon to justify measures likely to *increase* inequality and injustice, such as the abolition of labour protection laws (see Howard) or the weakening of anti-discrimination laws (see Sammut), a similarly pernicious gap between rhetoric and reality, between the mythical promise of the 'fair go' and the injustice and inequality it masks – or even causes – can be discerned.

Yet at the same time, the 'fair go' has offered and continues to function as a tool for marginalised groups to lay claim to full citizenship, precisely because of its importance to Australian national identity. In the aforementioned pamphlet *Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights* from 1938, Jack Patten and William Ferguson demanded

“justice, decency and fair play” (4), and Peter Biskup points to similar uses of the notion of “fair play” in Indigenous protests against discrimination during World War I (450). In a documentary on the 1967 Referendum, Charles Perkins claimed that “the referendum was the only time the ‘fair go’ meant something in Australia” (in Laughren). More recently, the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd suggested that the *Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples* was necessary in order to uphold the value of the ‘fair go’ and secure it for all Australians. However cynical some invocations of the ‘fair go’, these examples indicate that its potential to advance the cause of postcolonial justice is not lost. In this volume, Michael Ackland points to an early critique of the ‘fair go’ as a false promise in the writing of Christina Stead, while the chapters by Amelie Bernzen and Paul Kristiansen, and by Boris Braun and Fabian Sonnenburg investigate how the concept might be put to fruitful use in reconfiguring Australian geography today.

Conference and the Present Volume

The present volume is a collection of selected and expanded papers of the joint conference of the Association for Australian Studies (GASt) and GAPS (Association for Anglophone Postcolonial Studies) in Potsdam and Berlin, from June 29 to June 1, 2014. Organised by members of the University of Potsdam’s Department of English and American Studies, the conference is testament to the sustained commitment to Australian Studies in Potsdam, which includes past and present DAAD research grants, summer schools, eLearning projects, cooperations with collections and museums, and a new DFG-funded Research Training Group with two Australian partner universities, starting in October 2016.

For the 2014 conference, we aimed to organise an event which would combine discussions of Australia with a distinct focus on local colonial entanglements in Potsdam and Berlin, and which would fuse academic analyses with artistic and activist inventions. About half of the roughly 100 academic speakers, from nearly 20 different countries, addressed Australian concerns. In addition to their contributions, writers such as Gail Jones read from their work, film directors Tom Murry and Frances Calvert presented and discussed their films, and artists Rosanna Raymond and Sumugan Sinavesan commented on their performances. In an artist’s keynote, the Australian artist, activist and academic Fiona Foley discussed how her sculptural interventions into Australian public space aim to counteract the erasure of Indigenous people. Further keynotes were held by Ann Curthoys, who investigated the changing governmentalities shaping the dispossession of Indigenous Australians across the past two centuries, and Russell West-Pavlov, who offered a comparative reading of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Australian *Bringing them Home* report, in a presentation specifically catering to local teachers. His Excellency David Ritchie, the Australia Ambassador to Germany, addressed the conference to mark the 25th anniversary of GASt’s founding in 1989. Finally, we hosted a public

round table on the topic of “Indigenous Ancestral Remains in German Museums and Scientific Collections”. Together with Andreas Winkelmann of the Charité’s Human Remains Project, Michael Pickering of the National Museum of Australia, Richard Lane, former director of science at the Natural History Museum in London, Larissa Förster, an ethnologist at Cologne University, and Indigenous Australian academic Fiona Foley, we debated the obligations arising from German colonialism, the continuing legacies of scientific racisms, and the challenges posed by concrete restitution policies and practices.

Apart from the papers presented in this volume, the conference’s fruitful discussions are also documented in our sister volume: *Postcolonial Justice*, edited by Anke Bartels, Lars Eckstein, Nicole Waller and Dirk Wiemann (Amsterdam: Brill, forthcoming) on behalf of GAPS. While that book’s geographical reach is global in scope rather than regionally focused, its contributions all pertain to the fields of literary and cultural studies. Its content is hence not as interdisciplinary as the terrain mapped by the papers presented here. After all, the concept of postcolonial justice is pertinent to a range of fields in Australia, requiring an interdisciplinary approach and perspective that combines contributions from literary and cultural studies, history and cultural geography, as well as law, media studies and museum studies and the history of science. At the same time, postcolonial justice is a concept that challenges the disciplinary foundations of these respective fields and prompts moments of disciplinary self-reflection. This befits GAST’s mission as a decisively interdisciplinary association.

Peter Kilroy’s opening article tackles the tension between the universal and singular that lies at the heart of the concept of postcolonial justice and this volume. Kilroy considers the 1992 Mabo decision in the light of the ethico-political writings of Jacques Derrida, Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth. The Mabo decision has had substantial representational influence in Australia, but its substantive redistributive effects are less clear. Kilroy argues that the ruling demonstrates not only the complex mutuality of calls for recognition and redistribution, but also the extent to which a politics of recognition or identity politics can be used as an alibi against redistribution and its political and economic demands.

Michael Pickering details the emergence, in the late twentieth century, of a widespread consensus among Australian museum practitioners that the collection of human remains was an act of injustice, and a commitment to the repatriation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remains. Pickering offers several “collection stories” which demonstrate the sometimes violent, always exploitative ways in which human remains typically entered museum collections. He describes how Indigenous advocacy on repatriation has forced Australian museums and governments to reflect on past and present policies and actions and to renegotiate their understanding of the colonial legacies inherent in their collections.

Yann Le Gall's chapter complements Pickering's work, considering how repatriation demands from Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have stimulated some change in European institutions that hold human remains. While British institutions, in particular, have begun to recognize the rights of Indigenous communities over these remains and made steps towards reconceptualizing the remains in their collections as ancestors rather than objects, Le Gall argues that French and German institutions, in contrast, still largely refuse to adequately address this legacy of colonial injustice. Next, Le Gall turns to the memory practices that have emerged in Australia and the wider Pacific region in the wake of successful claims for repatriation, arguing that these have contributed to new forms of postcolonial Indigenous subjectivity.

The chapter by Hannah Boettcher analyses the contributions of contemporary Aboriginal artist Daniel Boyd to present-day renegotiations of Australia's colonial past. Discussing Boyd's painting *We Call Them Pirates Out Here* (2006) and his installation *Up In Smoke Tour* (2011), Boettcher suggests that the interrogation of hegemonic historiography is central to the project of postcolonial justice. Boyd's depiction of Captain Cook as a pirate invading inhabited land criticizes the ongoing dominance of a Eurocentric perspective in Australian historiography and refutes the myth of *terra nullius*. The 2011 installation at the Natural History Museum in London both responded to the Eurocentric viewpoint of the museum's First Fleet collection and acknowledged the first steps towards postcolonial justice effected by the museum's repatriation programme.

Also commenting on contemporary artistic practices, Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll offers a detailed investigation of the past and present exhibition history of the Tasmanian proclamation boards. Commissioned by Governor George Arthur around 1830, the boards purportedly portray an ideal of equality and justice for all in the British colony – a claim starkly at odds with the realities of both the British legal code in Tasmania and the horrors of the then ongoing Black War. Carroll argues that the boards should be understood as propaganda directed at a British audience and that, ironically, they continue to fulfil this function at times today. In contrast, contemporary Indigenous artists have recently exhibited the boards in ways which draw attention to the hypocrisy of their egalitarian claims.

With Amelie Bernzen and Paul Kristiansen's analysis of the organic agricultural industry, we move away from strictly Indigenous interrogations of the concept of justice in contemporary Australia. Bernzen and Kristiansen's contribution argues that the organic sector may not have had a 'fair go' in recent years, for reasons including inconsistent government support, a lack of professional awareness, and industry disunity. This failure to encourage and support organic agriculture is particularly relevant in the context of Australia's serious environmental challenges and water shortages: sustainable agricultural practices are needed to mitigate existing problems

and balance food security and the environment. Thus, action on sustainable agriculture is necessary to ensure a 'fair go' for future generations and for environmental justice.

Boris Braun and Fabian Sonnenburg's analysis of disaggregate statistical data from the Australian Censuses of Population and Housing 2006 and 2011 demonstrates the existence of a distinct spatial mismatch between areas of job growth and areas of persistent unemployment in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. They argue that this mismatch seriously jeopardizes the Australian idea of a 'fair go' for everyone and casts doubt on the ability of planning policies to assure an equal distribution of resources.

Turning from cultural geography to literary studies, Michael Ackland reads Christina Stead's novel *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* and her fragmentary manuscript novel "The Young Man Will Go Far". Ackland argues that Stead's writing from the 1930s interrogates Australia's optimistic vision of its own potential, and especially the notion of Australia as a working-man's paradise which offers a 'fair go' for all. Instead, her portrayal of the harsh Australian landscape mirrors her unsparing description of impediments to economic justice such as class and labour exploitation and her condemnation of the failures of the organized Left to offer meaningful social alternatives.

With Lioba Schreyer's contribution our volume returns to Indigenous interrogation of justice, now in the literary field. Schreyer analyses three poems by Australian Indigenous writers on the struggle for land rights before and after the 1992 Mabo decision which engage with questions of justice, human rights and equality through an interweaving of political and aesthetic interventions. Observing an increasing formal complexity and semantic opaqueness of the poetic works, Schreyer argues that this strategy of linguistic displacement highlights a disjunction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous readings – not only of the poems themselves, but of the Mabo decision, its consequences and its contribution to postcolonial justice for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

Finally, Victoria Herche's article reads two recent films by Aboriginal filmmakers, *Samson and Delilah* (2009) and *Toomelah* (2011), against prominent theories of rites of passage and the popular genre of coming-of-age films. Herche argues that the specific concerns articulated by these films are inadequately addressed by anthropological and sociological theories as well as prevailing film theory. Both films portray Aboriginal youth in Australia suspended in, rather than passing through, a stage of liminality and social exclusion as they become adults. Nonetheless, she argues that the films suggest that this indeterminate, liminal position enables their protagonists to achieve a fragile and preliminary self-empowerment.

Outlook: The Open-ended Project of Postcolonial Justice

By means of conclusion, let us briefly return to Cooper's protest outside the German consulate in 1938. In recent years, Cooper's legacy has been recognised not only in Australia, but also in Israel where, in 2009, he was commemorated with the planting of five trees and the laying of a plaque at the Forest of the Martyrs. "In a moving ceremony," Jacqueline Lo writes, "water from the Murray River and soil from Yorta-Yorta country were used in the tree planting" (349). And yet, the event carried its own problematic history. On the one hand, the tree planting ceremony constituted a significant act of recognition by the state of Israel of William Cooper's protest against anti-Semitic violence. On the other hand, there is also a troubling side to this picture of transnational commemoration, particularly with respect to its symbolism. In Israel, symbolic tree planting has played an essential part in settling the land. The early pioneers regarded the 'greening of Israel' as a metaphor for Jewish people's return from exile and "early afforestation projects [...] paralleled the kibbutz movement's aim to make a seemingly inhospitable land inhabitable" (Lo 350). Regular ceremonial tree plantings, including on Israeli Independence Day, continue to reinforce this link between tree planting and the founding of Israel as a Jewish state.

This is a peculiar context, to say the least, for the commemoration of an Indigenous activist who spent the final decade of his life fighting the repercussions of Australian settler-colonialism on his people. As Lo writes with regards to the celebrations in Israel,

What role does Cooper [...] have in this nationalized scenario? [...] William Cooper's act of minor transnational critique of both German and Australian governments is now appropriated by another state as part of a discourse of political legitimation. [...] I am particularly unsettled by the way in which the discourse of Aboriginal indigeneity and its specific relationship to the land has been translated unproblematically into an Israeli context. (350)

Such entanglements of the struggles for Indigenous rights in Australia with present-day conflicts over the settlement of land drive home the ongoing relevance of postcolonial interrogations of justice to which this volume seeks to contribute. The work presented here thus necessarily forms part of an open-ended project that must continue to enquire into the possibility of a 'fair go' for all.

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