Counter Networks of Empires: Reading unexpected people in unexpected places

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Introduction

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Indigenous peoples from throughout the Australian mainland and islands; diverse cultural Maori groups, or Iwi, of Aoteorea New Zealand; and people from and in the Pacific occupied urban spaces in acts of political unity and assertion. In South Auckland, young Maori and Pasifika members of newly articulated political organizations—Nga Tamatoa and the Polynesian Panthers—defined by their militant independence defiantly inhabited public streets, spaces and dwellings in which they had been overwhelmingly criminalized as Brown thugs, gang members and truants. Armed with legal knowledge about their rights to dwell and move through settled streets and sites, they inhabited policed spaces under the protection of their own community's surveillance of city law enforcement. They fed and educated hungry children from their communities in breakfast and homework centres; and read decolonization and anti-racism literature to safely re-claim for themselves spaces within the settled grids of Auckland's urban centre. The same was happening throughout the Antipodean colonial world. In Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra, in study groups, breakfast clubs, gaols, pubs and public urban spaces, Aboriginal people from nations throughout Australia inhabited places long considered to have been "settled" by settler nations with their presence, their politics and their self-consciously Black, and Black Panther, identities. So, too, in the streets of the Pacific's colonial cities—Port Vila, Port Moresby and Suva—in the villages and plantations of New Britain, Fiji and the Solomons, existing church networks and new political ones were being utilized and formed around new and localised notions of independence, sovereignty and decolonization.[1]

Although the activist groups were numerically small, the turbulence caused by the surge of Indigenous and decolonising activity in the Antipodes was often literally spectacular, as in the case of the 1974 land rights march, or *hikoi,* in New Zealand, or the 1972 occupation of Canberra parklands by the Aboriginal tent embassy in Australia.[2] Such public activities attracted unprecedented press and international coverage, but also built on subterranean sources of strength and inspiration that were seen to pose a significant security threat to imperial and settler administrations. In private correspondence, these administrators labelled the Indigenous political activity in and around the Pacific during the 1960s and 1970s, as "centrifugal forces."[3] In doing so they deployed a terminology that captured the transgressive potential of Indigenous peoples and sovereignties, and their capacity to breach and shatter both physical and intellectual colonial borders. In these movements we can observe the tip of a much more extensive intergenerational and international mobilization of Indigenous and subaltern peoples that is so ingrained in imperial histories, it is often overlooked.

These movements, in some cases, effectively re-colonized settler and imperial spaces such as cities, where questions of sovereignty seem to have been "settled" simply by the overlay of impenetrable urban grids onto Indigenous landscapes.[4] But while grounded in the localness of Indigenous peoples' insistent and resistant presence in what Denis Byrne has termed the "landscape of their own dispossession," these movements were inherently linked to global movements, sometimes part of conscious solidarity networks, and more often, by more intangible connections of shared language and discourses such as that of Black Power.[5] The era saw ideas of Black and Brown power, inherently laced with core notions of Indigenous peoples' sovereignty, buzz along intricate webs that traced island and continental landscapes and cultural borders, and which rode the currents of the Tasman Sea and wider Pacific Ocean. As Australian, British, French and American intelligence agencies would find when they sought to track and understand the connections, the seams holding them together were knitted along older ones, whose complex and contingent threads had long entangled with imperial and colonial webs of power.[6]

In the last decade, scholars have illuminated the ways empires, particularly of the nineteenth century, were founded on and maintained by intricately networked

people, goods and ideas. This scholarship has given rise to new ways of talking about and conceiving colonial and imperial sites not just as islands in an imperial sea, but as interdependent points of contact in wider imperial webs, where power in the form of trade, capital and knowledge accumulated and intensified.[7] This networked flow of power lent to agents of empire the advantage over Indigenous nations, of what the late Patrick Wolfe has described as "preaccumulation" of the (material and immaterial) technologies of conquest.[8] As he elaborates, Indigenous peoples often experienced for the first time the established and rehearsed methodologies, trades and systems of European empires, one constantly reinforced by the networked transfer of imperial power and knowledge. Imperial systems, rituals and processes of law; accumulations of capital; discursive regimes; and technologies of violence often arrived in Indigenous sites of imperial desire, already primed in anticipation of colonisation.

The appeal of viewing historical empires in terms of the active and maintained networks of people, trade and ideas that empowered them is the ease with which we can then focus on contingencies. Rather than being a new way of imagining the omnipotence of empire, a fuller understanding of the ways imperial networks operated requires us to understand their constituent parts. Given that Indigenous peoples were entangled, or ensnared, as labourers, interlocutors, navigators, protectors, friends, lovers and prisoners in the networking activities of empires, a focus on networks invites a closer and fresh examination of Indigenous peoples' presence in the midst of empires.[9] As scholars including Tracey Banivanua Mar have explored elsewhere, the latticework of empires was frequently used as scaffolding for Indigenous peoples as they strived to understand, resist or exploit imperial networks.[10]

This issue picks up the understanding of imperial networks as processual, constantly (re)created and used by imperial powers as well as Indigenous and subaltern people, and asks scholars to think about how marginality, power and resistance have operated in imperial networks in new ways. It explores transoceanic, transborder or transcolonial alliances, lateral connections and solidarities, and diverse resistance movements, formed by Indigenous people and people of colour who were normally suppressed, ignored, or reviled in imperial archives. In a range of contexts, from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, the authors observe the upshots of the presence of unexpected people in unexpected places. As such, this issue seeks to question the

historical and contemporary assumptions that lay behind the apparent unexpectedness of moments of transgression. The authors map the impact of imperial networks over time, and direct our attention to moments of transgression, resistance, and the assertion of Indigenous and subaltern rights.

Imperial Networks: Views from the inside

The new imperial histories have been driven by desires to understand the connectivity of the contemporary world—a world not least connected through the ever thickening shipping routes and ideological paths of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imperial expansion.[11] Scholars have charted how the ocean not only bridged land masses but has been a space of connection unto itself, where people from disparate parts of the globe met and made plans for how to navigate a rapidly changing world, and where Indigenous people held conversations about sovereignty, land and its loss. These routes were transnational, and enduringly made through mobility. Indeed, it is by now barely worth disputing that one of the key techniques of colonial domination was to enable some people's mobility while limiting that of others. Such a focus on the variegated controls and sponsorship of physical movement across empire and the globe has shed clarity on the way that regimes of race have operated via controlling the physical and hence social mobility of colonized people, limiting the possibilities to travel to country, to work, to homes new and old, over land and country and seas. Free and forced travels across land and ocean made possible connections that Indigenous and subaltern people made and maintained, sometimes inviting Europeans as co-labourers and conspirators. At other times these connections were made out of European purview and earshot.[12]

This analytic focus on mobility has gone together with the transnational turn hand to glove, or "body to world," more aptly. If a focus on mobility enables a view of people's racialized and gendered access to move in local and global space, and thereby form connections and power, then a focus on networks enables historians to bring into focus the shapes and forms of such connections, including those that are not necessarily formal, enduring, or easily mapped in archives. As well as decentring nation-states, and moving us toward the power and liminal spaces of ocean worlds, this focus on transnational connections has accustomed us to two-dimensional spatial models—vitally imagined as interlocking lines of nets, webs and meshes, and centralized by nodes, knots and bodies themselves. Armed with these powerful

metaphors, historians have attempted to narrate the complex ways in which lives channelled, moved and removed imperial power. But of course "networks" are not in reality two-dimensional lines, and scholars are now moving to view networks as processes of contingent assemblages of three-dimensional objects, to narrate how power moves and is moved along passages and intensifications of desire and of mobility—of transport and capital, animals, paper and people. In more scientific terms, they consider how "human and nonhuman entities combine to form dynamic assemblages" relational and productive. Assemblages "establish territories as they emerge and hold together but also constantly mutate, transform and break up."[13] As this edition confirms, networks are not static entities—either in practice and experience—but transformational processes. They were, and are, binds and bonds, alignments and meeting, junctures and disjunctures of interests and routes and projects that operated via proximity and across distances. They were, and are, the accumulative product of acts of communication and expressions of affinity, of movements to meet as well as movements apart—movements variously forced, incidental and strategic. Accordingly, many scholars "seem to have arrived at the notion of empire as an inevitably multi-layered, porous and fractured space," observe Nandini Chatterjee and Lakshmi Subramanian, "a notion that does not discard the fact of colonial violence and the ideological aggression of imperialists" but "builds upon them to displace a view of empires as territorially and ideologically stable and bounded units entailing predictable, if oppressive control of colonized populations by colonizers."[14] This processual perspective has brought into clear focus that empires are neither discrete nor settled spaces, but have "borderlands and lumpy seascapes crisscrossed by corridors carved by trade, treaties and piracy."[15]

Oceanic frameworks have pulled historians' imaginations away from national boundaries to view oceans not as borders, but as cohesive sites of interaction and exchange. This in part stems from the way that Epeli Hau'ofa's articulation of the Pacific as a "sea of islands" dovetailed with the transnational turn in history.[16] Continuing to dispel tropes enforced through both colonialist and nationalist narratives, authors of the recently published collection *Indigenous Mobilities* shows ways in which "Indigenous mobility in imperial and colonial contexts" has not simply reflected the displacements and route disruptions wrought by colonialism, but is "an extension of pre-colonial travel."[17] Historical research on the Indian Ocean world similarly suggests

that imperial routes were laid on ancient trade routes, and formed through the pre- and proto-imperial "commercial traffic" of goods and South Asian traders.[18]

This special collection extends on the now geographically and theoretically extensive groundwork laid by oceanic frameworks, new imperial histories, and histories of Indigenous mobility. It embraces and continues the need to understand how networks have been formed by individuals, communities, empires and nations; by micro and macro mobility; by connections both loose and temporary, formal and hardwired.[19] Even if the network is an imperfect model to connote the messy and three-dimensional forms of empire, it is by no means imperative to throw the network away. As Crystal McKinnon has shown of the entwined urban and ideological spaces of Aboriginal music and resistance in Australia, when it comes to locating "the opportunities of marginality" the view from the inside can be "one of strength rather than simple or finished oppression."[20] Taking this perspective seriously, this edition calls not so much for a move beyond networks, but for a move further inside them, to consider the located and dynamic ways in which Indigenous and subaltern networks have been formed in relation to the interests of the dominant and more visible agents of empire. This in part happens through the authors' concentrations on the unexpected—on expressions of power that might seem to come from nowhere, but on closer inspection, are expressions of local and global subterranean connections. Counter networks, the articles explore, form in opposition and alignment to imperial ones, and operate through tensions and contradictions. As such counter networks can destabilise imperial power at the very same time as they may draw resources, technologies, energy, transport options, even inspiration from them. We thus would like to call for a shift in the expectations and assumptions underlying what it is that imperial networks have produced and can produce. The question is not so much whether Indigenous and subaltern people have moved in and across imperial pathways and settler colonial spaces. Histories show they did. But how, and for what prosaic and pragmatic, subversive and strategic reasons? How and where, we ask here, did Indigenous and subaltern people draw on, intervene in and place themselves in relation to imperial networks, for their own ends?

Counter Networks and Indigenous Networks

Scholars who have followed the turns of new imperial histories are by now trained to read archives for two different but fundamental and connected modes of exerting and firming power: moving, and staying. Both kinds of acts, scholars have shown, have been essential to the making and remaking of places as sites of sovereignty, containment, contestation, and resistance. "For the greater part of the twentieth century," historian John Maynard has told, "Aboriginal Australia was… widely depicted as a culture that had been fixed and unchanging across millennia. This entrenched misinformation was influential in dictating interactions with, and also policy direction over, Aboriginal people."[21] Hence, and as Alan Lester has pointed out we should not equate stasis with being stuck since "trying to remain in place, does not mean being static."[22]

The mobility of Indigenous and subaltern peoples, and more significantly, the sparking connections that happened as ideas and bodies moved across oceanic and imperial spaces, consciously and strategically dwelling in proscribed and contentious spaces, is a chronically under-emphasised dimension of the recent histories of Indigenous peoples.[23] As John Maynard, Shino Konishi, Lynette Russell and others have argued, the effect of this has been to affirm colonial-era constructions of Indigenous people as being in an inherent state of oceanic immobility, and terrestrial hyper-mobility, as "nomads" aimlessly wandering over land misconstrued as unbounded wasteland.[24] The effect has been that complex histories of diverse movement have been simplified and fragmented, undermining our understanding of Indigenous people's global sophistication. The enormous imperative to read against narrative tropes that immobilise Indigenous people is not to suggest that stasis and "staying in place" are not of themselves important modes of power. Much power potentially lives both in occupying particular spaces, and in forming and maintaining associations with them. As the articles show here while colonial power and bureaucracy was frenetically asserting and re-articulating its power, Indigenous people and people of colour looked back at the state and its strategies, and figured out how to place themselves in the way of its oppressive and exclusionary projects.

The collections of essays spans space and time, interspersed by acts and formations from the Pacific Antipodes that highlight the myriad ways in which

Indigenous peoples and peoples of colour have lived within the connected spaces and the ever moving networks of empire.[25] The collection of essays spans vast spaces— from France and England to the deep southern Antipodean islands of Bass Strait, to Punjab and South Africa, and Alice Springs. It also moves over centuries, from the times when empire had a tenuous foothold round the edges of Indigenous waterways and countries and was firmly placed in the British Raj, to the mid-twentieth century, when the subterranean networks of decolonisation were beginning to flower, if unevenly. The stretch of time and space allows us to see both the existence and presence of counter networks that flowed against and across the patterns of flow of imperial networks. It also allows us to measure their impact over time.

The first section focuses on mobility that span oceans and continents. Edmonds takes us to the windswept beaches and ports of the "unruly" Bass Strait, peopled intermittently by peoples from all over the world, as two white men sought out Aboriginal women, not for sex or labour, but for information and stories gathered as "evidence" to counter and challenge imperial violence. This article considers the Quaker visit to the Bass Strait and seeks to foreground the interconnectedness of both elite and subaltern, or marginalised, imperial networks, revealing the ways that Quakers both witnessed and intervened in new cross-cultural, social constellations parallel to and in the service of empire, and at others times contested established imperial networks. Edmonds argues that Quaker humanitarian travel to the Antipodes in the 1830s may be understood as a "particular form of 'counter travel,' or counter networking, occupying a complex position that was not wholly imperial nor anti-imperial, and which occurred both in plain view and on the periphery of empire."

In this story, we witness the convergence of paths, and the unexpected conversations and lexicons that arose between two emerging counter networks — that of the semi-elite Quaker networks, and of Aboriginal Tasmanians. Edmonds evokes the polyglot sites of beaches and ships that were both highways and meeting grounds— places in formation at the very intersection of colonisation, dispossession, and the Quakers' own antislavery positions. "Fresh off the boat," these Quakers were "newcomers… amid the dense, networked and multi-linguistic Indigenous and European relationships created by the sealing industry." Such journeys of "unexpected people in an unexpected place," she tells, invariably leave a fragmented but material

trail; "multiple, though highly fragmented signs in the form of objects such as the waddy, plant specimens, jewellery and language… are scattered in multiple texts across various museums and archives across the globe." Importantly, these offer evidence of what she terms "counter travel," forms of mobility that cause tension for the imperial project. She does not pit the Aboriginal Tasmanians and Quakers against each other, but holds in productive tension their different and sometimes converging interests in a moment when empire's violence was causing internal critique, and when Aboriginal people were figuring out how to most effectively use European shipping routes, humanitarian networks and curiosity for their own ends. Simultaneously, Edmonds charts the travel of Aboriginal women, whose journies sometimes shadowed and travelled through and across the circuitry of colonial, maritime and humanitarian networks, offering sometimes agentic readings. Nevertheless, such Quaker humanitarian "counter travel" was not always counter-colonial, and did not always lead to emancipatory outcomes for the Aboriginal women. Edmonds' conception of "counter networks" thus asks the reader to consider that, against the background of enormous imperial violence, the internal discontents of empire and the humanitarian collection of testimony and "eye witness" accounts of violence opened up spaces of contact between Europeans and Indigenous people that might not have been possible otherwise.

From the cold open spaces of the beach, Conor's article moves us to the urbane space of a balcony in the heart of the French Empire. From here, two Aboriginal boys overlook a Parisian street, and observe a process of French national sovereignty. Conor interrogates the production of the textual and print archives she draws on to show how the circuits of empire were made through prints, which served to spread and imprint racial impressions along expansive networks that stretched from Yued country in Western Australia to Europe. "The circuits completed by [the boys,] Dirimera and Conaci," she tells, "evince that Aboriginality was first and foremost a construct of print, mediated by print, and forged and inscribed by ethnographic discourse as one of the more worthy artifacts of print." Conor evokes the propensity of imperial systems to "cruelly and unwittingly" ensnare the vulnerable bodies of children, and in this case, to move the two boys far from country. But, shows Conor, mobility should not be mistaken for empowerment, since "nets have more than polynodal valency, they also enclose and entrap, they both restrict movement and enwrap freight." And still,

Dirimera and Conaci watched and listened in to the workings of European networks, and learnt on the move. "They had seen with their own eyes, at home and abroad, that they were everywhere tangled, unbalanced, heterogenous, unstable," and this enabled them to engage in conversations about sovereignty with the missionary Salvado. The boys had apparently seen enough to have grounds—Yued and now French—from which to question their European missionary entrappers: If the Europeans had found a way to oppress the Yued in a country where they didn't belong, then why could not they quell the insurrection here, too? "Divested of their people's traditions those [removed children] that lived were destined to become unclaimant heirs to their homelands." She argues that "some sought to countermand their disempowerment by learning European literacy." Conor's article takes us to the functionality of imperial networks' entwined textual and corporeal, inky, leaky, nitty gritty workings, as they were. By unravelling the ideologies and practices of the missionaries, and especially of Salvado's particular relationship to print and to settler and imperial possession, she reads these records about conversations on the balcony as not just evidence of unexpected Indigenous presence, but as evidence of the Yued's autonomous demands for sovereignty. She "surmises that the Yued believed text-based literacy might be a means to not only express their sovereignty but demand it be recognized, that is, their aspirations [for literacy] were likely to have been quite different." Within the diverse global contexts and far-flung literacies in which these meanings were melded into copper and crosshatched, the vulnerability of children is revealed, caught up in these circuits of evangelizing and civilizing and the net-workings of literacy and print that served as both their expression and their pathway.

In the second section, we move to the theme of emplacement, where we chart the strategic arrival and occupation of places. As sites imbued with meaning, moving out of one's place in the racial and/or colonial order of things, sites, and routes is an act that can and has been profoundly upsetting for colonial regimes, and settler ones especially. Within studies of imperial networks, a rich literature exists on mobility, but a still emerging one pays fine-tuned attention to the role and power of place, so that emplacement is an often overlooked dimension in the making of networks.[26]

From Yued country to Paris we travel back east to a Pacific-facing corner of the Antipodes, entangled, as it was, with Indian Ocean networks. In her article about Indian

political networks in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Melbourne, Rhook determinedly focuses on the political life of urban sites, in a story of Indian mobilisation against the White Australia Policy that directs our attention to the apparently mundane and stationary stuff of networks. Massage benches and shop counters were islands where White men and women of influence in the burgeoning colonial city of Melbourne submitted to the healing hands of the city's Indian residents, becoming in the process incorporated into expanding networks of influence being built by Indian settlers. Rhook explores the affective nature of counter circuits of empire; the establishment of political and affective networks and their impact on the White Australia Policy, bringing about its effective failure. Indian British subjects, she shows, were conversing across and subverting Melbourne's real and imagined colour line, all the while drawing settlers into relations of dependency and sympathy. These were networks that ran counter to imperial ones, and along which currents of protest, resistance and dis-affection travelled.

Khooda Buksh's (or Bux's) shop was not just a space of trade, but a political centre—a "head-quarters." Settlers' intermittent attentions to Bux's shop offer "clue[s] to the vibrancy of the transnational Indian trade networks that radiated from Exhibition Street." Rhook's article maps "how affect fermented" in early twentieth-century Melbourne "at 'clustering objects' in ways that produced political associations, some of which were informal and others that promoted their connections as Associations with a capital A." She observes how, in the cosmopolitan city of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Melbourne, Indian British subjects, and Teepoo Hall most spectacularly, were "mobilizing place," to use a Cresswellian phrase—not least the imperial capital vested in the prestigious Collins Street—for political ends.[27] As well as understanding counter networks as bound up with the mobility of marginal people, she described them as fundamentally relational. "To counter is to push against a dominant force, and as such to be in a relation with it. A 'counter network', then, might be conceived as a constellation of connections between people, formed to oppose the interests of an other, dominating network." Hall had literally and figuratively been kneading his way into the White political centres of Melbourne, the national capital-to-be. In working in the Victoria Buildings, then, Hall at once attracted White elite customers and distanced himself from White middle class fears of the streets designated "slums." Unlike hawkers, whom Rhook describes as "phobic objects" (Ahmed)

marked for expulsion from the nation, and as such deferred status as "settlers," Hall "circulated round Melbourne's halls, hospitals and club rooms" and it was his "prolific presence in such centres of respectability [that] saw him build an upward spiral of social and economic affluence."

Hall was connected to both local settler colonial and much more extensive flows of affect. During a time when affect importantly fuelled network formation, "clustering objects" were core materials for Hall and Bux's bi-nodal, urban strategies of resisting settler racism. The massage benches and shop counters were "clustering objects" that functioned as "privileged sites because they were sites of information and idea exchange, of network formation." By supporting the transfer of affect, so did they enable the formation of "interpersonal bonds that saw Bux's shop and Hall's massage bench became unofficial political centres." As such, benches and counters were "sites that enabled Indians in Melbourne to activate for their own commercial, imperial, interests." But a focus on locality is not to distract from the larger networks at play, but to a view "of these Indian political networks as vitally conditioned by local transfers of affect at a constellation of connected clustering objects."[28]

From Melbourne we move north to pubs of the interior of Australia. While Rhook orients us to the micro politics of affect, Ellinghaus and Stevens show how micro mobility has been a powerful counter net-working activity—a hidden counter network of Indigenous civil rights activism in the Northern Territory. The mobility of Aboriginal people in town and between buildings had symbolic and legal meanings that far exceed the meters or kilometres of space between homes, schools and pubs. The authors take as their focus the 1951 protest against the Aboriginal Ordinance, "a minor though significant event" that forced governmental officials to confront the contradictions and inequalities that the Ordinance effected and constituted. As such, they argue, "[t]he Gap community's action… [was] a significant milestone in the fight for civil rights in the Northern Territory. Indigenous people fought to defend their physical and social mobility, defying the constraints of the exemption system." The interrelated acts of deliberate arrival, space-occupation and place-making were powerful. They were so, vitally, because in settler colonial context Indigenous bodies and land situated together—and with intent—moves us to the shaky, illegal foundations of sovereignty.

Stevens and Ellinghaus's article highlights the local sites of "shadow networks," that is the occupied "emplaced" sites of sovereignty that coalesced out of these "shadows of imperial networks." These Aboriginal networks were hidden from White settlers' views. "As part of their activism," they tell, "Indigenous people worked to maintain control of particular spaces—not just their ability to move into and out of them, but as places that were central to the generation and maintenance of counter networks." Ellinghaus and Stevens interrogate the way that spatial segregation played out in the pubs of the interior of Australia. Overnight, the passing of the 1951 Exemption Act meant that Aboriginal people were guilty of an offence just by being in town. The movement of Aboriginal people in town and between buildings had symbolic, social and legal meanings that far exceeded the immediate impact of the movement itself. In this context, micro mobility constituted a counter net-working activity that enabled the circulation of knowledge about settlers' stringent and shifting regimes of spatial control, and ways to oppose it.

As Rhook's and Ellinghaus and Stevens' papers differently highlight, the politics of small movements and of small clustering things were of big political consequence in network-making. Emplacement thus emerges as a deeply powerful mode of resistance in these settler colonial contexts where, as Patrick Wolfe has put it, "[r]ace and place are inextricably connected," so much so that "the remedy for being out of place is, after all, ethnic cleansing." Indigenous and non-White bodies were marked out of place, but differently. Indigenous people in Alice Springs were deemed out of place living on their own land, and people of colour in fin-de-siècle Melbourne were marked for return to where they came from. The flipside of this was that Aboriginal and racialised people were able to engage with the settler state through the sacred and soft technology of the body, by moving into, occupying, and refusing to move from new places.

Staying in place—and returning to place—enabled people to mobilise, generate and regenerate connections. In this story we can observe a range of micro-strategies performed through a dynamic of micro mobility and stasis—staying in place, but also entering into, returning to, associating oneself with, and refusing to move from place. "The Gap community's action forced administrators to address the inequities of the

Aboriginals Ordinance, and constituted a significant milestone in the fight for civil rights in the Northern Territory. Indigenous people fought to defend their physical and social mobility, defying the constraints of the exemption system." The authors read the actions to reveal a hidden counter network of Indigenous civil rights activism in the Northern Territory. They do so through records that were produced for purposes of state surveillance, and implicitly take on Edmonds call to de-center European networks as if they were either the only, or the most powerful ones. The interactions between police and Indigenous people may be the most obvious and visible in records, but such moments of protest "explosion" reveal the susceptibility to be caught by surprise, and hence their inability to control the formation of Aboriginal networks across countries. This article takes us to the crux of the methodology of searching for unexpected moments, for the Gap protest "is an example of 'the tip of a vast iceberg of social and political interaction hidden from contemporary European colonists and modern researchers alike'" (Tom Arne Midtrød).[29] In this case, staying out of settlers' sight and minds enabled Aboriginal networks to build uninterrupted. Aboriginal people thereby harnessed the power of surprise, and literally and figuratively caught the state off guard.

Counter networks, then, are often partially or temporarily hidden from, and inaudible to, those engaged in imperial and colonising ones. All of the Indigenous and subaltern networks described above can be thought of as "counter networks of empire," in the sense that Indigenous and subaltern people formed bonds and projects against dominant forces, and in particular, against the interests of settler colonists and imperialism. But, the authors show, not all counter networks were Indigenous ones. What the networks retraced here have in common is that they were always reliant on contingent forms of mobility and place-making, thoroughly relational, and often heterogeneous; the interests of colonists and missionaries, doctors, and traders, contingently converged with and diverged from the political interests of colonised people, and Indigenous and subaltern people recognised how to convert the net-workings of empire for their own ends. With various degrees of autonomy, Indigenous and subaltern people pulled settlers into their orbits, routes and projects—even to work on their ideas of sovereignty. Since counter networks of empire have been ongoing processes, involving shifting constellations of places and actors, we cannot assume either their racial composition, nor their outcomes.

And so, at risk of optimism, the historical existence and operation of counter networks might offer hope. The "shadow networks" of which Banivanua Mar has written were routes of Indigenous and subaltern power. Not always simple, assumed or oppressive power, but power, vitally underscored by communicative and connective potential. Like empires, these forms of Indigenous and subaltern power spread far beyond their sites of "bodily density" and originary connection, and could and did span generations. The very same forces that brought previously geographically and politically disparate people together—state agents, colonists, missionaries, police, etc.—were converted and diverted into projects that defied, disputed and opposed imperial investments, even if sometimes colonists and Indigenous and subaltern people continued to move along similar or same physical routes. Taken together, the articles in this special collection demonstrate that we should not presume the upshots and outcomes of imperial networks. They were sources of power, transformation and even prestige for Indigenous and subaltern people, since the routes and lives of colonists were entangled with those people they sought to colonize and racialize. The authors vigilantly seek ways of narrating power that can "hold in tension" the power imbalances between colonisers and subaltern Indigenous people, as well as the intergenerational connectivities between Indigenous and subaltern peoples who have selectively and forcibly engaged with empire. They ask us to look harder in archives and actions for the unexpected, and to remain vigilant against assumptions about the ways power works through networks, and their political potentialities. The political outcomes of counter networks of empire are at once contingent on, and surpass, the lives of those people who work over generations to sustain them. The diverse, localized Indigenous political organizations of the '60s and '70s, which spread from Australia and across the Pacific, were newly articulated, and read, by outsiders, as revelations. Viewed against the long histories of networks formed to counter imperial power, the clarity and strength of their articulations is no longer surprising.

Postscript

This collection was inspired by a 2015 La Trobe University symposium, convened by Tracey Banivanua Mar and myself, and mediated by Samia Khatun. As well as myself and Tracey, speakers included Tony Birch, Keith Camacho, Liz Conor, Penny Edmonds, Damon Salesa and Sophie Loy-Wilson, with a keynote from Alan Lester. During the symposium, in a proudly all-Indigenous panel, Tracey spoke about the decolonial networks of Indigenous people that stretched across Australia and the Pacific, and drew attention to the exclusion of Indigenous women from media and historical representations of activism. The epic three-part story she told that day, part of her 2017 published book *Decolonisation and the Pacific*, was infused with humour, suspense and surprise. She was delighted that Patsy Corowa, whose transnational activism she spoke about in the paper, was present in the audience. This collection is the product of the collective thinking of that day, and of Tracey's creative and inspiring intellectual praxis, her determination and success at continuing to seek and write perspective-shifting, liberatory narratives, even in the midst of a difficult illness.

Tracey wrote the first draft of the first section to this introduction on Kulin country, and then I finished it in Perth, on Whadjuk Noongar country. I write in the space of Tracey's passing, and of Noongar sovereignty, and between the intellectual and political networks that are flowering in Melbourne, where Tracey and I worked on this edition, and those flowering here. I am grateful and indebted to the networks of scholars and thinkers who have enabled me to take the ideas that Tracey first asked us to work through, and have written with heart and persistence to bring this edition to fruition. I would like to acknowledge my fraught position as a White settler woman writing about marginal histories, benefiting from Indigenous dispossession and the enduring operation of White supremacy in the academy. This collection is humbly dedicated to Tracey, and her steadfast determination to seek out difficult truths. May she rest in mana.

Notes

[1] Tracey Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous globalisation and the ends of empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 12; Helen Gardner and Christopher Waters, "Decolonisation in Melanesia," *The Journal of Pacific History* 48/2 (2011): 113–21.

[2] Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific,* 211, 212; Gary Foley, Andrew Schaap and Edwina Howell, eds., *The Aboriginal Tent Embassy: Sovereignty, Black Power, land rights and the state* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004). For a narrative of more contemporary Aboriginal counter network and protest see Tony Birch, "Rise From This Grave," *Overland Journal*, Autumn 2018, https://overland.org.au/previous-issues/issue-230/essay-tony-birch/.

[3] Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific,* 69.

[4] Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds, eds., *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on race, place and identity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); see also Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

[5] Denis Byrne, "Nervous Landscapes: Race and space in Australia," in *Making Settler Colonial Space*, edited by Banivanua Mar and Edmonds, 103.

[6] Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*, 12.

[7] See Alan Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire," *History Compass* 4/1 (2006): 124–42; Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections 1815–45: Patronage, the information revolution and colonial government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds. *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking colonial encounters in world history* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Tony Ballantyne, "Mobility, Empire, Colonisation," *History Australia* 11/2 (2014): 7–37; Tracey Banivanua Mar, "Shadowing Imperial Networks: Indigenous mobility and Australia's Pacific past," *Australian Historical Studies* 46/3 (2015): 340–55.

[8] Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary structures of race* (London: Verso, 2015).

[9] Kate Fullagar, ed., *The Atlantic World in a Pacific Field: Effects and transformations since the eighteenth century* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012); Rachel Standfield, *Race and Identity in the Tasman World, 1769–1840,* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012); Lynette Russell, *Roving*

Mariners: Australian Aboriginal whalers and sealers in the southern oceans, 1790–1870 (New York: SUNY Press, 2012).

[10] Jane Carey and Jane Lydon, *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, connections and exchange* (London: Routledge, 2014); Lucy Davies, "Indigenous Mobility and Colonial Boundaries of Rule: The travels of Papuan and New Guinean labourers during Australia's administration of the territories' (PhD diss., to be submitted, La Trobe University, 2018); Ravi de Costa, "Identity, Authority and the Moral Worlds of Indigenous Petitions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48/3 (2006): 669–98.

[11] Nandini Chatterjee and Lakshmi Subramanian, "Law and the Spaces of Empire," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* Special Edition, 15/1 (2014).

[12] See Shino Konishi, Maria Nugent and Tiffany Shellam, *Indigenous Intermediaries: New perspectives on exploration archives* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015); Frances Steel, "Maritime Mobilities in Pacific History: Towards a scholarship of betweeness," in *Mobility in History: Themes in transport: T2M yearbook 2011*, edited by G. Mom, P. Norton, G.W. Clarsen and G. Pirie (Neuchâtel: Editions Alphil, 2010), 199–204; Russell, *Roving Mariners*; Adrian Muckle, Colin Newbury, Tony Ballantyne, Rob Borofsky, David Armitage and Alison Bashford, "Pacific Histories: ocean, land, people," *The Journal of Pacific History* 50/2 (2015): 229–40; Damon Salesa, "The World From Oceania," in *A Companion to World History*, edited by D.T. Northrop (Oxford: Wiley Black, 2012), 392–404.

[13] Martin Muller, "Assemblages and Actor-networks: Rethinking socio- material power, politics and space," *Geography Compass* 9/1 (2015): 4.

[14] Chatterjee and Subramanian, "Law and the Spaces of Empire."

[15] Chatterjee and Subramanian, 1.

[16] Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," in his *We Are the Ocean: Selected works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 27–40; for an Asia-Pacific centered account of the currents of European and Japanese imperialism see Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho, eds., *Militarized Currents: Toward a decolonized future in Asia and the Pacific* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[17] Rachel Stanfield, "Moving Across, Looking Beyond," in *Indigenous Mobilities: Across and beyond the Antipodes* (Canberra: ANU Press and Aboriginal History Inc., 2018), 3.

[18] For instance see Om Prakash, "Europeans, India and the Indian Ocean in the Early

Modern Period," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 19/1 (1996): 15; Eivind Heldaas Seland, "Networks and Social Cohesion in Ancient Indian Ocean Trade: Geography, ethnicity, religion," *Journal of Global History* 8/3 (2013): 373–90; Pedro Machado, "Cloths of a New Fashion: Networks of exchange, African consumerism and cloth zones of contact in India and the Indian Ocean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," in *How India Clothed the World: The world of South Asian textiles, 1500–1850*, edited by G. Riello and T. Roy (Brill, Leiden, 2008), 53–84.

[19]Anderson's "subaltern lives" illustrates how during the early to mid-nineteenth century subaltern people were enmeshed in key events in the abolition of slavery. Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of colonialism in the Indian Ocean world, 1790–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[20] Crystal McKinnon, "Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance," in *Making Settler Colonial Space*, edited by Banivanua Mar and Edmonds, 266–68.

[21] John Maynard, "Marching to a Different Beat," in *Indigenous Networks*, edited by Carey and Lydon, 263.

[22] Alan Lester, "Indigenous Engagements," in *Indigenous Networks*, edited by Carey and Lydon, 53. Rhook has further argued that the privileging of mobility over stasis has broader implications for understanding colonial power, since colonial spaces were made not only through movement, but also when people suspended their movement to negotiate power face-to-face. Nadia Rhook, "Speech, Sex, and Mobility: Norwegians in an 'English-speaking' settler colony," *Journal of Women's History* 28/2 (2016): 59–60.

[23] This is not to say that space is any less important. For more work on the importance of Indigenous space see Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, resistance, and reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).

[24] See Shino Konishi, "Crossing Boundaries: Tracing Indigenous mobility and territory in the exploration of South- Eastern Australia," in *Indigenous Mobilities*, edited by Stanfield, 35; John Maynard, "Garvey in Oz: The international Black influence on Australian Aboriginal political activism," in *Anywhere But Here: Black intellectuals in the Atlantic world and beyond*, edited by Kendahl Radcliffe, Jennifer Scott and Anja Werner (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 99–116; Russell, *Roving Mariners*; Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*. See also Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections 1815–45: Patronage, the information*

revolution and colonial government (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

[25] The "Pacific Antipodes" is Banivanua Mar's term.

[26] For discussion of place in this context see also Lachy Paterson's essay on "P.ora Tūhaere's Voyage To Rarotonga" in *Indigenous Mobilities*, edited by Stanfield, 235–36.

[27] Tim Cresswell, "Introduction: Theorizing place," in *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility: The politics of representation in a globalized world*, edited by Ginette Verstraete and Tim Cresswell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2016), 14.

[28] Leela Gandhi's *Affective Communities: Anticolonial thought, fin-de-siècle radicalism, and the politics of friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). [29]

Tom Arne Midtrød, "Strange and Disturbing Events: Rumor and diplomacy in the Colonial Hudson Valley," *Ethnohistory* 58/1 (Winter 2011): 98.