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TITLE: Refugee Education in Postcolonial Times

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The postcolonialisation of sociology, politics and cultural studies, and the rise of sub-disciplines such as transnational studies, diaspora studies and subaltern studies can be recognised as adopting the 'consciousness of the era' (Young 2012). Postcolonial theory exposes the deep contradictions of Indigenous struggle in Australia where resistance to colonial rule produced new forms of Indigenous emancipation, oppression and dispossession, and where Indigenous education is a decolonising project which refuses to forget the past and the knowledge that has long sustained Indigenous community (MacGill et al. 2012). Postcolonialism is thus a political project concerned with reconstructing and reorientating Western knowledge, ethics and power structures (Young 2012). It is not a singular theoretical formation but a broad set of perspectives, concepts and practices developed in resistance to colonialism. The relevance of postcolonial studies and postcolonial theory is not limited to studies of low-income nations, or countries that have cast off the formal shackles of colonialism.

Postcolonialism is relevant to theorising the education of refugees because interrelated histories of violence, domination, inequality and injustice remain as remnant after effects of settler-colonialism. The education systems of Western industrialised nations such as Australia are postcolonial in that their economic, political and cultural systems sustain the 'residues, living remains and lingering legacies' of colonialism (Young 2012, 21). These residues mutate and proliferate in neo-colonial formations.

The figure of 'The Refugee' constitutes a new subaltern; a figure that haunts the 'global borderlands' and spaces between nation-state; a figure that transgresses while at the same time constitutes the nation-state imaginary. Feared and maligned, hailed and interpollated, discursively positioned and produced, refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, asylum seekers, "illegal" migrants or just plain 'illegal', can be regarded as transgressively mobile, transnational subalterns (Perera 2013; Young 2012).

This paper argues that understanding the role of the 'Refugee' in the nation-state imaginary; making visible the often disregarded political and historical trajectory of refugee struggles before, and after settlement, provides an important purpose for refugee education.