THE IMPLIED ETHICS
OF POSTCOLONIALISM

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It is not the place of an Australian to pontificate on the significance of July 1997 in the history of Hong Kong. Yet both the citizens of Hong Kong and the citizens of Australia have an important stake in discussions about the meaning of postcolonialism as we struggle to assess the heterogeneous influences that the British empire has visited upon us. We have a common need to reflect on the significance of hybrid identities, neo-colonialism, aboriginality and ethnic minorities. Both in Hong Kong and in Australia, we need to foster forms of political ethics that give appropriate recognition to complexities of culture. And there is no persuasive reason why biblical scholars should be excused from these tasks, even if the contribution of our discipline is only indirect.

It might be tempting to suppose that postcolonial criticism trades in theoretical concepts, or evaluative perspectives, which would be anachronistic in studies of the ancient world. But Elleke Boehmer has set us on the fruitful path of defining postcolonial study as the critical

scrutinization of colonial relationships.[1] As in feminist criticism, there may be an historical dimension to this style of research, but there is also a *critique of ideology* (which, by definition, may not be intelligible within the cultural frameworks inhabited by the historical actors). A comprehensive ethic of interpretation would demand that biblical scholars should scrutinize the ideologies of those ancient colonial relationships within which the bulk of biblical material was produced — whether the coloniser was Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic or Roman. We should also confess that much biblical interpretation, ancient and modern, has been enabled or constrained by imperialist social systems. A forthcoming volume of *Semeia*,[2] among other recent biblical studies,[3] should be evidence enough that biblical scholars need to participate in this wider movement of literary criticism.

What intrigues me most about postcolonial criticism is its ethics of interpretation, or rather, its implied ethics. As with many versions of ideological criticism, postcolonialism seems to be clearer about what it is against, rather than what it is for. One should note that there is a tradition of European philosophy which insists on a perpetual "negative dialectic,"[4] but it is still worth reflecting on the possible shape of political ethics that seek to eradicate the effects of colonialism in all its forms.

Laura Donaldson's study of William Apess — a nineteenth century Pequot Indian — illuminates one of the complexities of this question, since Apess both absorbed and contested the values of the colonising culture. He engaged with a reading of the Bible, articulated especially by Daniel Webster, which made the Bible a source of civil liberty,

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[1] E. Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[2] An earlier version of this paper was read in New Orleans at the annual meeting of the SBL, 1996, within the Ideological Criticism Group. This and other papers from the session are forthcoming in an issue of *Semeia*, "Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading," edited by Laura Donaldson.

[3] R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Orientalism, Ethnonationalism and Transnationalism," in Mark G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 413-29; K. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London: Routledge, 1996); P. Chia, "On Naming the Subject," *Jian Dao* 7 (1997), 17-36.

[4] Before the advent of deconstruction, see the early work of the Frankfurt School, discussed in an introductory way by Martin Jay, *Adorno* (London: Fontana, 1984).

individual responsibility, human dignity and equality.[5] This framework of political values was actually fabricated more by Enlightenment philosophers than by the Bible, but it was grafted by Webster on to early American nationalism. Apess apparently responded to this intertextual alchemy by creating a counter-nationalism for native Americans and a more radical, colour-inclusive egalitarianism inspired by the Methodists. In short, Apess reinscribed his particular concern for Indian dignity precisely *within* the sphere of the colonising discourse that had excluded it.

The critique of Apess formulated by Randall Moon is one which has been deployed, in different ways, in many contestations of aboriginal identity: Apess writes, we are told, "too much like a white person and is too christianized to be recognized as an 'authentic' representative of native America."[6] This replays what Gareth Griffiths has called the "myth of authenticity,"[7] a myth much loved in the white Australian media and used to create a hierarchy of aboriginal voices which separates the "authentic, traditional pure-bloods" from urban aboriginal activists who have learned enough Latin to know that *terra nullius* was a British legal fiction.[8] The myth of authenticity is a kind of neo-foundationalism, riven with moral ambiguity since it proclaims a concern for the subaltern voice while at the same time effectively silencing it. The discourse of authenticity suspects even the resisting voice insofar as that voice adopts the language of the coloniser; according to this nostalgic version of authenticity, if the subaltern speaks a creole, the subaltern does not speak.

Laura Donaldson's defence of Apess convincingly places him in a frontier zone between complicit and oppositional postcolonialism. There is a wealth of critical concepts which could be used to explicate this

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[5] L. Donaldson, "Son of the Forest, Child of God: William Apess and the Scene of Postcolonial Nativity." Paper read at the annual SBL meeting, New Orleans, November 1996. Forthcoming in a volume to be published by the University of Illinois, *Postcolonialism and American Culture.*

[6] R. Moon, "William Apess and Writing White," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5 (1993), 52.

[7] G. Griffiths, "The Myth of Authenticity," in C.Tiffin and A.Lawson, eds, *DeScribing Empire* (London: Routledge, 1994), 70-85.

[8] Cf. Whitelam's account (*Invention of Ancient Israel*, 43-45) of modern biblical historians who have also adopted the rhetoric of an "empty land," seeing ancient Palestine as empty of a population capable of political organization.

dynamic: mimicry, mimetic circulation, iteration, and double-voiced revision, all of which can be understood as hybrid forms of cultural resistance. The notion of hybridity has contributed to a revision of an older theory which suggested that postcolonial societies necessarily pass through a phase of nativist nationalism.[9] Homi Bhaba, among others, has argued for the necessity of hybridized identities and stressed the futility of a concept of culture conceived as stable and unitary. Accordingly, in contrast to a nostalgic Romanticism, Laura Donaldson's argument suggests that postcolonial ethics will need to work with the notion of hybrid cultures.

The irony in this situation has been well articulated by Marshall Sahlins, who has recently pointed out that the self-conscious defence of "culture" has reached new political heights just when the very notion of culture is "condemned for its excessive coherence and systematicity, for its sense of boundedness and totality. Just when so many people are announcing the existence of their culture, advanced anthropologists are denying it."[10] According to Sahlins' account, the self-conscious use of "culture" as an anti-colonial strategy originated in Germany in the late 18th century, in defiance of the global pretensions of English and French models of "civilization."[11] The strategy was conceived in a Romanticist climate in which cultures were seen to have essential, if ineffable, unity. Yet, in the present context, fidelity to culture is a moral principle now advocated by Indians, Maoris, Kashmiris, Aborigines, and so on, in a postmodern context which undermines all essential unities. Thus, the ethical issues need to be formulated more precisely: is it possible to separate fidelity to a *culture* from fidelity to a *people group* whose solidarity is always mediated by culture? Or to formulate the question as an outsider: is it possible to separate *respect* for a culture from *respect* for a people group?

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[9] See, e.g., A. Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'," *Social Text* 17 (1987), 3-25; C. Amuta, *The Theory of African Literature* (London: Zed, 1989); H. Bhaba, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990); M. G. Brett, "Nationalism and the Hebrew Bible," in J. W. Rogerson, M. Davies and M. D. Carroll R., eds, *The Bible in Ethics* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1995), 136-63.

[10] M. Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think About Captain Cook, for Example* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 13.

[11] Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think*, 11; following I. Berlin, *Vico and Herder* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976). See Herder's comment, quoted by Sahlins on P.12: "Only a real misanthrope could regard European culture as the universal condition of our species."

The answer is yes and no. The terms of this partial separation between culture and people group were set out in Fredrik Barth's classic essay in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. There Barth made the important claim that "cultural" contents can vary

> without any critical relation to the boundary maintenance of the ethnic group. So when one traces the history of an ethnic group through time, one is not simultaneously, in the same sense, tracing the history of "a culture": the elements of the present culture of that ethnic group have not sprung from the particular set that constituted the group's culture at a previous time, whereas the group has a continual organizational existence with boundaries (criteria of membership) that despite modifications have marked off a continuing unit.[12]

This thesis can be well illustrated by the Hebrew Bible, where we find the literary expressions of a people who have been clearly influenced by a range of ancient cultures. Yet we also find attempts to construct a continuity of peoplehood, even through the disjunctures of history. Whatever the discontinuities and contestations, Barth's main argument still stands: any unity an ethnic identity achieves is not simply to be equated with the continuity of a "culture".

If Barth and Donaldson are correct, as I think they are, then there are implications for the formulation of any ethic of postcolonial study: attempts to preserve a "culture" do not, *ipso facto*, preserve the identity or dignity of an ethnic group. Clearly, the dignity of social groups is usually entwined with wider issues of economics and politics (to which we shall return), but it is also important to recognize ethnic identity can still be preserved in spite of cultural changes and influences. In short, people groups are *culturally permeable*, and it is the people rather than the culture who are the moral agents. While the identity of a people group is always mediated by culture, that culture may be hybrid and unstable.

Etienne Balibar has noted that many anthropologists who have been involved in the struggle to preserve minority or dominated cultures have taken the view that the mixing of cultures is a contravention of nature — every culture is seen to be equally valuable and has a natural right to separate existence.[13] The unintended consequence of this view

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[12] F. Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), 38.

[13] E. Balibar, "Is there a 'Neo-Racism'?" in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, eds., *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 21-23.

is the expectation that inter-ethnic exchanges will inevitably be characterized by defensiveness and aggression. What was originally an anti-imperialist strategy has ironically been turned by recent right-wing movements in Europe into xenophobia: since every culture has a right to separate existence, so this response goes, people of other cultures should keep their distance. There is an obvious parallel here between the resurgence of right-wing movements in Balibar's France and the old apartheid system in South Africa.

Building on the work of Balibar, Daniel Boyarin has distinguished between rightist racism and liberal racism: the political goals of rightist racism entail the subjugation or the expulsion of other "races"; liberal racism, on the other hand, tends to advocate the construction of new states within which the ethnic-nationalist aspirations for sovereignty may be fulfilled. Both options contain a basic intolerance towards difference.[14] Yet it is impossible to do without the social solidarity of ethnic identity, and "universalist" attempts to do so usually entail covert forms of oppression. Against *both* racism *and* "the politics of universalism"[15], Boyarin advocates a postmodern, diasporic politics of identity. This model of ethnic solidarity renounces the machinery of state (the monopoly of force), and confesses both to "polyphonic" identity and to a measure of ethnocentrism. Although Boyarin has no detailed discussion of Fredrik Barth, it is clear that this approach would make no sense unless one presumed something like Barth's account of how culture and ethnicity overlap, yet are distinct phenomena — ethnic identity *with* cultural permeability.[16] But in addition, Boyarin has added the crucial factor of power: he argues that there is nothing wrong with ethnocentricity when it is a strategy of survival amongst subordinate groups, i.e., ethnocentrism is only malign when it is combined with homogenizing political power. Ethnocentrism cannot be treated in modernist fashion as a universalizable vice; on the contrary, it can be justifiable in contextual terms and therefore may require reframing in terms of a postmodern ethic of difference.

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[14] D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 247-50.

[15] This phrase comes from Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in A. Gutman, ed., *Multiculturalism and the "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 25-73.

[16] See further, M. G. Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics," in Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible*, 3-22.

Boyarin's work allows us to focus the ethical questions in the relationship between postmodernism and postcolonialism. Clearly, the two movements have conspired together to recover marginal discourses. Yet, as Sahlins has suggested, there are some forms of postmodernism in which the thorough-going deconstruction of any attempt at representation would destroy the possibility of postcolonial identity. Some analyses of colonial discourse might lead one to the ethical conclusion that the practice of representing *others* ought to be, as much as possible, avoided.[17] However, Dwight Furrow goes further to argue that even within a particular tradition there are many rival histories, and any one account of a tradition renders invisible the people and events that do not fit the patterns prescribed by the chosen account. His critique is directed even against "*self*-representation":

> The self, whether we understand it individually or collectively, is a topography of lost and missing pieces cobbled together by a systematically distorted narrative of the remains. The quest for social identity is just one more vain search for the solace of origins, perpetually contested and itself the source of injustice.[18]

In this strand of postmodernism, no ethic can rely on the representation of social or cultural identities.

On the other hand, several literary critics have found an intersection of postmodernism and postcolonialism in the literary genre of "magic realism," or "marvellous realism," within which the myths and legends of a particular cultural tradition are recovered in responses to oppression.[19] This version of postmodernism has given license for "re-mythologization," a community-forming, hybrid discourse which lays no claim to homogenous epistemological foundations, transparent identities, or stable collectivities. It suggests a mode of representation, and even of resistance, which juxtaposes marginal elements of tradition in dialogue with the voices of contemporary experience. While some may doubt whether this project should still be called "representation", it does at least indicate (*contra* Furrow) that there may still be life in a

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[17] This is rigorously argued by T. May, *The Moral Theory of Poststructuralism* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

[18] D. Furrow, *Against Theory: Continental and Analytic Challenges in Moral Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1995), 192, cf. 65.

[19] M. J. Dash, "Marvellous Realism: The Way out of Négritude," *Caribbean Studies* 13 (1974), 57-70; L. Hutcheon, "Circling the Downspout of Empire: Post-colonialism and Postmodernism," *Ariel* 20 (1989), 149-75.

concept of cultural identity understood as permeable pastiche; culture and identity need not be entirely irrelevant to the quest for postcolonial ethics.

Given that postcolonialism and postmodernism can be read, at their intersections, as committed to dialogical identities and to the recuperation of subjugated discourses, we may now ask the specifically ethical question of how inclusive this dialogue should be. If we say that the dialogue should ideally be *completely* inclusive, then the model of ethics presupposed might ironically be something like the reconstructed modernism of Habermas's discourse ethics.[20] Followers of Habermas argue that openness to the particularity of the other requires that one "first defends the universalist idea that every subject in his or her individuality should get the chance of an unconstrained articulation of his or her claims."[21] Thus, the recuperation of subjugated discourses would be driven by principles of equal treatment and procedural justice.

On the other hand, postmodern ethicists have been suspicious of the project of universal commensurability and have argued for a politics of difference.[22] They would suggest that dialogue can and should proceed without the global pretensions of universalizability. Similarly, Jacques Derrida has recently suggested that there are basically two different types of moral concern and that they are fundamentally in conflict. The first type is indeed the solidarity of justice which aims to treat everyone equally. The second type is an infinite care for the irreducibly particular other. The conflict between the two versions of moral concern is revealed by the fact that a form of care which is boundless would be compromised if it were constrained by the principle of equal treatment.[23]

Postmodern perspectivism confesses that we are always embedded in our own location — family, people group, traditions and contextual

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[20] See, e.g., J. Habermas, *Moralbewusstsein und Kommunikatives Handeln* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983); ET: *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action,* trans. C. Lenhardt and S.W. Nicholsen (Oxford: Polity, 1990); J. Habermas., *Erläuterungen zur Diskursethik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981); ET: *Justification and Application,* trans. C. Cronin (Oxford: Polity, 1993); J. W. Rogerson, "Discourse Ethics and Biblical Ethics," in *The Bible in Ethics*, 17-26.

[21] A. Honneth, "The other of justice: Habermas and the ethical challenge of postmodernism." in S. K. White, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 307.

[22] E.g., Z. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

[23] J. Derrida, "Force of Law," *Cardoza Law Review* 11 (1990), 919-1045.

dialogues — and there is an inevitable sacrifice of others. Thus, Derrida can write:

> By preferring my work, simply by giving it my time and attention, by preferring my activity as a citizen or as a professorial and professional philosopher, writing and speaking here in a public language, French in my case, I am perhaps fulfilling my duty. But I am sacrificing and betraying at every moment all my other obligations: my obligations to the other others whom I know or don't know, the billions of my fellows...who are dying of starvation or sickness...every one being sacrificed to every one else in this land of Moriah that is our habitat every second of every day. [24]

This suggests an inevitable conflict between the universalist pretensions of modernist ethics and the ethnocentric modesty of postmodernism. Boyarin's work adds an important qualification to this dilemma, however, since he only defends (polyphonic) ethnocentrism as a form of resistance, i.e., when it does not possess the machinery of state. Unless every people group is to have its own government, a scenario Boyarin rightly rejects, we are committed to multicultural states. And states, unless they are to replicate the imperialist structure of centre and periphery, require a principle of equal treatment. The implied ethics of postcolonial studies cannot therefore do without modernism, it would seem, even if the ethics of resistance are postmodern.

One final caveat should be added: it is not clear to me that Habermas' particular version of modernist ethics has the potential to deliver decolonizing effects for multicultural states. While it does contain a principle of equal treatment, and it does promote actual conversation amongst all those affected by political decisions, it does so in a manner that seeks to bracket the particularities of cultural identity. Habermas attempts to distinguish on the one hand between universalizable norms, rules and justice (what he calls "moral-practical" discourses), and values or ends shaped by particular cultural identities (in his technical vocabulary, "ethical-existential" discourses). In his most recent work, for example, he writes:

> Moral-practical discourses, by contrast, require a break with all of the unquestioned truths of an established, concrete ethical life, in addition to distancing oneself from the contexts of life with which one's identity is inextricably interwoven. [25]

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[24] J. Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 69.

[25] Habermas, *Justification and Application*, 12.

The assumption here is that a concrete ethical life, embedded as it is in a particular cultural identity, is not sufficiently rational, i.e., it is not receptive to the universalizing discourse of political morality advocated by Habermas.

It might be argued that Habermas' discourse ethic reflects the moral consequences of separating "culture" from "people group", as I advocated in the discussion of Fredrik Barth. But while it is clear that people groups are culturally permeable, and it is the people rather than the culture who are the moral agents, the identity of a people cannot be grasped independently of culture. More importantly, many of the most vexed questions of public justice turn precisely on the question of how particular people can achieve recognition *as a culturally defined group.*[26] Accordingly, it is not clear to me how Habermas' account of discourse ethics can deliver public justice on these questions when it excludes precisely the identities that are at issue.

Lest it be thought that these questions have strayed too far from biblical studies, one need only refer to Keith Whitelam's disturbing account of how "biblical archaeology" has consistently "imagined"[27] Israel in ways which — wittingly or unwittingly — contribute to the displacement of Palestinian identity within the modern state of Israel. Whitelam reveals, in quotation after quotation, how competing archaeological explanations of the "Israelite settlement" have actually been united in their failure to recognize the problem of indigenous rights. The most recent accounts, which see the proliferation of highland settlements in the early Iron Age as largely "indigenous", still use the vocabulary of "Israel" and refuse to speak of a "Palestinian" population. Even Mendenhall and Gottwald's theories of an internal revolt are faulted for thinking that the indigenous system was corrupt and could "only be

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[26] Cf. Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," and D. T. Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[27] Whitelam cites Benedict Anderson's well-known definition of nationhood as "imagined political community" and argues that the discourse of biblical studies has been monopolized by a nationalist imagination which silences Palestinian history (*Invention of Ancient Israel*, 22). On the same page he footnotes approvingly Ernest Gellner's argument that nationalism "*invents* nations where they do not exist." Unfortunately, Whitelam has clouded his argument by failing to notice Anderson's critique of Gellner: by conflating imagination, invention and falsity, Gellner implies that there have been "true" communities which are somehow natural.

See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 6, citing E. Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), 169.

transformed by Israel and its religious and political ideology which comes from *outside.*"[28]

Whitelam's book is clearly driven by an *ethical* motive, emphasizing indigenous rights. One might even venture to say that his ethics are postmodern insofar as he doubts the commensurability of competing ethical claims about Palestine. Thus, against Philip Davies' claim to neutrality,[29] he agrees with Edward Said that "there is no neutrality; there can be no neutrality or objectivity about Palestine."[30] On the other hand, Whitelam's case seems more Romantic than postmodern insofar as he fails to consider the problems of cultural permeability and instability, theorized especially in postcolonial criticism. If his concern on what he calls the "population" of ancient Palestine,[31] then that population was surely free, as William Apess was, to engage with contiguous cultures; cultural hybridity is potentially a feature of all ethnic groups. Unless one is to fall back on to the nostalgic "myth of authenticity", there is no reason to assume that ancient Palestinian culture was incorrigible.

Whitelam might reply to this critique by arguing that the population of ancient Palestine has had an ethnic label *imposed* upon it by "biblical historians", a label which the historical actors would not recognize.[32] Such an argument would be analogous to the postcolonial studies which criticize the use of force in the imposition of colonisers' discourse (ethnic labels, personal names, cultural categories, and the like).[33] But even if it is true that "biblical archaeology" has unwittingly conspired with modern Israeli politics to displace Palestinian identity, Whitelam

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[28] Whitelam, *Invention of Ancient Israel,* 113. For a review of the ethnological issues in the study of this period, see D. Edelman, "Ethnicity and Early Israel," in Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible,* 25-55.

[29] Whitelam, *Invention of Ancient Israel,* 246, citing P. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 23.

[30] E. Said, "The Burdens of Interpretation and the Question of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 61 (1986), 30.

[31] See Whitelam, *Invention of Ancient Israel*, 36, 247 n.11 and n.20.

[32] E.g., on 197, he criticizes Israel Finkelstein for identifying twelfth-century Giloh as "Israelite" when Finkelstein expressly doubts that the inhabitants of the period would have described themselves as "Israelite." At this point in his argument, Whitelam's concern is for emic description, i.e., the self-understanding of the historical actors, and he is accusing biblical scholars of colonialist attitudes.

[33] See, e.g., P. Chia, "On Naming the Subject," 34.

has not considered the possibility that ancient Palestinians actively participated, in some way, in the appropriation of the label "Israelite". One of the contributions of postcolonial studies has been precisely to point out that cultural hybridity is not always simply imposed by a dominant culture; it may be ambivalently embraced in the complex processes of resistance and cultural reconstruction.[34]

In spite of the lack of clarity in his ethical stance, Whitelam has articulated for us an extremely important set of questions about the politics of naming. The jars and shards of archaeology are neither "Palestinian" nor "Israelite" until they are placed by hermeneutical imagination within larger narratives. And those narratives do indeed provide legitimating structures which underlie the competing national imaginations of Palestine and Israel. The emerging realization that "early Israelites" *were* "Palestinians" only serves to illustrate Homi Bhaba's point that "hybridity is never simply a question of the admixture of pre-given identities or essences:"[35] neither Israelis nor Palestinians can lay essentialist claims to pure identities in hoary antiquity. It does not follow, however, that hybridized identities need to be excluded from the business of ethics (a conclusion, ironically, upon which both Habermas and Furrow converge). At least at the level of state politics, postcolonial ethics would combine a principle of equal treatment with a recognition of cultural particularities.

There are several questions arising here for biblical scholars who are located in the former British colonies of Hong Kong and Australia. What role can we take in the discussion of aboriginal rights?[36] How can biblical studies of cultural hybridity illuminate the politics of identity? In what respects can principles of "equal treatment" be combined with sensitivities to complex cultural differences? Are there forms of citizenship which disadvantage ethnic minorities? I will not presume to

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[34] Thus, e.g., the indigenous people of New Caledonia describe themselves as kanaks, a unifying label derived from the French 'canaque' but appropriated in a way which consciously rejects the perjorative connotations of the colonisers' usage. See P. Wete, *Agis ou meurs – L'Eglise Evangélique: Calédonie vers Kanaky* (Suva: Lotu Pacifika, 1991); cf. the discussion of double-voiced revision in H.L. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[35] H. Bhaba, "DissemiNation," in *Nation and Narration*, 314.

[36] See, e.g., L. Hume, "The Rainbow Serpent, the Cross, and the Fax machine: Australian Aboriginal Responses to the Bible," in Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible,* 359-79; N. Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

speak on the specificities of Taiwan, Tibet, Muslim enclaves, or the many ethnic minorities within China. But there is one point worth stressing: Hong Kong has been marked by the democratic ideology of her coloniser, and while this ideology is more British than it is Chinese, it need not be discarded in some attempt to a reclaim a pristine Chinese identity. It is up to the people of Hong Kong to re-locate this element of their local culture as they will, within the new configurations of hybrid culture in this Special Administrative Region of the PRC.

ABSTRACT

This article illustrates the connection between anthropological studies of "cultural permeability" and postcolonial studies of "hybridity," arguing that Romantic quests for the preservation of individual cultures are mistaken. Examples are discussed from ancient Israel and contemporary indigenous politics. However, given a distinction between culture and ethnicity, it is still possible to defend a limited ethnocentrism for minority groups who lack political power. This form of ethnocentrism requires a non-universalizable, postmodern ethic. On the other hand, unless governments are to replicate the imperialist structure of centre and periphery, political power requires a principle of equal treatment. At the level of government, postcolonial ethics cannot do without modernism, even if an ethic of resistance is postmodern.

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本文透過分析人類學有關「文化滲透」的研究，及後殖民「含混性」研究之間的關聯，指出企求保存單一文化的舉動是錯誤的；並以古以色列及現代本色化政治為例說明。但是，因為文化及族群之間存在著差異，所以，對一些缺乏政治力量的少數族群而言，族群中心主義仍是可以接受的。這種形式的族群中心主義需要在一種非普遍化及後現代式的倫理下運作。但另一方面，除非政府採用帝國主義式的不公平政治架構，否則政治力量須在公平原則下運作，因此，在政府層面而言，實踐後殖民倫理並不能摒除現代主義，即或抵抗式倫理是後現代的產物。