Claiming Sovereignty
Theological Perspectives

Jointly organised by the University of Divinity, Whitley College, the Centre for Theology and Ministry, and the Commission for Mission of the UCA.

Whitley College, 22nd – 24th August, 2014

Conference Program
### Friday 22nd August

**7:00 – 8:30 pm**  
Keynote Lecture, R.S. Sugirtharajah, “Postcolonial biblical Criticism: Current Status and Future Possibilities”

**8:30 pm**  
Supper

### Saturday 23rd August

**9:00 – 10:10 am**  
Djiniyini Gondarra and Graham Paulson,  
“Indigenous Sovereignty and Christian Theology”

**10:10 – 10:30 am**  
Morning Tea

**10:30 – 11:30 am**  
Joanna Cruickshank  
“White Humanitarianism, Indigenous rights and the Problem of Sovereignty: The case of the Coranderrk Inquiry, 1881”

**11:30 – 12:30 pm**  
Robyn Sampson  
“Sovereignty without Limits? Refugee Rights in an Age of Border Control”

**12:30 – 1:30 pm**  
Lunch

**1:30 – 3:30 pm**  
Concurrent sessions  
**First Peoples**  
**Modern State Sovereignties**

**3:30 – 4:00 pm**  
Afternoon Tea

**4:00 – 6:00 pm**  
Concurrent sessions  
**Biblical Sovereignties**  
**Cultural Studies**

### Sunday 24 August

**2:00 – 4:00 pm**  
Discussion with Panel – R.S. Sugirtharajah, Graham Paulson, Robyn Sampson, Joanna Cruickshank and others.  
Responses from West Papua and West Timor.  
Future Directions

**4:00 – 4:30 pm**  
Afternoon Tea.
Claiming Sovereignty: Theological Perspectives
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Saturday 1:30 – 3:30 pm Concurrent sessions

First Peoples

Rangi Nicholson
Ko te mea nui ko te aroha: Theological Perspectives on the Challenge of Maori Tino Rangatiratanga/Sovereignty Claims to the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand

Naomi Wolfe; Robert Hoskin; Aunt Janet Turpie-Johnstone
Borderlands and the Third Space

Peter Lewis
Contesting Sovereignties: The theological implications of the recognition of the rights of the First Peoples of Australia in invaded space

Jione Havea
Changing the subject: Babel, Natives, First Peoples

Modern State Sovereignties

Peter Alsen
Sovereignty in the Australian political consciousness

Derek McDougall
The Globalization of the Nation State

Jim Barr
Resistance, Revival and Referenda: The Struggle for Welsh Sovereignty over 700 Years

Peter Sherlock
Anglican justifications of British sovereignty in colonial Melbourne
Claiming Sovereignty: Theological Perspectives
Whitley College, 23rd August, 2014

Saturday 4:00 – 6:00 pm    Concurrent sessions

**Biblical Sovereignties**

Anthony Rees
*Operation Sovereign Borders: A Moabite Approach*

Carolyn Alsen
*Slippery Borders in Canaan*

Mark Brett
*Desiring Sovereignty: The Invention of Israel’s Monarchy*

Keith Dyer
*Basileia or imperium? The Language of Sovereignty and Power in the First Century*

**Cultural Studies**

Yahu Vinayaraj
*Agamben, Liturgy, and Politics*

Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon
*Mathew 2: 13-23 – A “Migrant” Reading*

Xiaoli Yang
*Home Beyond Borders – A Cross-cultural Dialogue between Haizi and the Gospels*

Darren Cronshaw
*Claiming Sovereignty in Science Fiction: Lessons from Hunger Games and Divergent for Raising the Discourse of Politically Unpopular Justice Themes among Young Adults*
Abstracts

Plenary Sessions

R. S. Sugirtharajah
University of Birmingham, UK
Postcolonial biblical criticism: Current status and future possibilities

The lecture will recall post colonialism’s major thrusts, its enduring achievements and its woeful failures. It will also ask whether post colonialism has any future or will just fade away like other critical practices.

Djiniyini Gondarra and Graham Paulson
Indigenous Sovereignty and Christian Theology

The presentation will introduce conceptions of Indigenous sovereignty, the doctrine of discovery, and the tensions experienced by Aboriginal Christians between Indigenous and divine sovereignties.

Joanna Cruickshank
Alfred Deakin Research Institute, Deakin University
White humanitarianism, Indigenous rights and the problem of sovereignty: The case of the Coranderrk Inquiry, 1881

This paper will focus on the 1881 Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Coranderrk Aboriginal reserve, drawing on my research as part of the Minutes of Evidence project (www.minutesofevidence.com.au). At the Inquiry, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal witnesses testified, demonstrating very different approaches to questions of race, land, history and belonging. Threaded through these disagreements were theological claims and assumptions. These nineteenth-century voices provide historical context for contemporary debates about sovereignty in Australia as well as suggesting possibilities for constructive ways forward.

Robyn Sampson
University of Swinburne, Melbourne
Sovereignty without limits? Refugee rights in an age of border control

Sovereign authority is traditionally limited by the borders of territory and by human rights. International norms limit the ability of governments to exercise power beyond their territory, while human rights laws privilege certain individual rights over and above the rights of states. Both of these limits have been exceeded by the Australian government when responding to the arrival of asylum seekers by boat. In this paper, I explore the ways Australia’s anxious pursuit of border control has eroded these limits on sovereign authority and enabled the government to persist with policies that cause tremendous harm and suffering. I then reflect on the ways the Christian tradition, including a theology of hospitality, can lead us in a faithful response to this contentious political issue.
Concurrent Sessions

First Peoples (1:30 – 3:30 pm)

Rangi Nicholson
Te Wananga Mihingare ki Te Manawa o Te Wheke
Te Manawa o Te Wheke Maori Anglican Ministry Centre

Ko te mea nui ko te aroha: Theological Perspectives on the Challenge of Maori Tino Rangatiratanga/Sovereignty Claims to the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand

Representatives of the British Crown and nearly 500 Maori chiefs signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) in 1840. Anglican missionaries also promoted this document and persuaded Maori chiefs to sign it. Without missionary encouragement it is highly unlikely that Te Tiriti would have gained any real attraction with these chiefs. The overwhelming majority of the chiefs signed the Maori language version. There is a debate around whether the chiefs understood that they were ceding sovereignty to the Crown. Within thirty years of the signing the balance of power had shifted to the rapidly increased number of Pakeha immigrants who advanced the development of a Pakeha settler state and the cause of colonisation. Colonial governments, the judiciary and other key stakeholders such as the Anglican Church, consigned the Treaty relationship and its obligations to the position of historic artifact. Since the mid 1970s the Anglican Church and the Crown have belatedly recognised that injustices have occurred as a result of such a position. In 1984 the Bi-cultural Commission of the Anglican Church on the Treaty of Waitangi in its discussion paper asserted that Article One of Te Tiriti cedes governorship and Article Three in exchange guarantees protection and the rights and privileges of being a British subject while Article Two confirms the position of Maori in terms of full chieftainship or tino rangatiratanga regarding lands, villages and possessions. The Anglican Church incorporated aspects of Te Tiriti into its new Constitution of 1992. Since the 1990s it can be argued that the Anglican Church has remarginalised Te Tiriti. This paper focuses on the position of the Anglican Church on tino rangatiratanga/sovereignty since 1840. It reviews this position through Maori theological perspectives on aroha (love).

Naomi Wolfe; Robert Hoskin; Aunt Janet Turpie-Johnstone
Australian Catholic University

Borderlands and the Third Space

It is tempting to think in terms of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. We have issues with this way of thinking for it encourages a time driven approach to trans-cultural relating which suggests that we are now in a post-colonial period. This is certainly not the experience for many or most Aboriginal people. We advocate a different approach under concepts of ‘Borderlands’ (Gloria Anzaldua) and ‘Third space’ (Homi Bhabha). Such concepts allow for contradictions in our contemporary, political, social, and spiritual milieu. For example, the concept of borderlands encompasses tension, anger and contradiction in diverse ways which we have experienced our personal lives, and wider cross-cultural relations in Australia. Such borderlands exist in rural and outback areas of Australia and in the cities. We present conversations from the Third Space, that trans-cultural relating that takes place in traditional Aboriginal lands, and in the city when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal share a common space/place. We present conversations from the Kimberley as
people from the Mowanjum community engage with a non-Indigenous people from Perth. In contrast, we present trans-cultural relating within the city, noting similarities and dissimilarities. Such conversations affirm the importance of deep listening, of artistic and other means of reflection than the dominant word based approach to academic studies. We review these conversations in the light of significant Biblical stories, our “praxis”. We do this because such stories also describe borderlands, where dominant cultures sought to control and manipulate others less dominant. Such borderlands included the meeting of various peoples, whether Romans, Greeks, Jews and Samaritans. Thus we extend our Third Space conversation to include these stories from another time. Such stories provide hints of how we might approach our contemporary trans-cultural borderlands. Yet equally, we give a contemporary interpretation of Biblical accounts.

Peter Lewis
Oxfam

Contesting Sovereignties: The theological implications of the recognition of the rights of the First Peoples of Australia in invaded space.

This paper will focus on a theological understanding of the contesting claims to sovereignty by Australia's First Peoples in the context of Invaded Australia. The notion of sovereignty will be explored from the framework of the Jubilee prophetic tradition as embodied in the ministry of Jesus. Building on the work of Ched Myers, Wesley Howard-Brooks and the radical discipleship tradition, this paper will explore the internal Biblical dialogue concerning the conceptualisation of the temple as either product of faithfulness or symptom of faithlessness. The Christian conceptualisation of the role of the temple leads to a critique of ‘kingdoms’ and ‘empire’ as the fallen work of human hands in contrast to Jubilee/Sabbath economics. In particular the paper will explore the efficacy of notions of the ‘religion of creation’ and the ‘religion of empire’ as recently posited by Howard-Brooks. From this theological perspective the paper will explore both Indigenous claims to sovereignty in relation to the lands and waters of Australia as essentially an embodiment of faithfulness to the creator spirits and how the imposed sovereignty of ‘modern Australia’ can only have ethical legitimacy once recognition of the rights and status of the First Peoples becomes the foundation for Australian nationhood.

Jione Havea
Charles Sturt University

Changing the subject: Babel, Natives, First Peoples

This presentation (in talanoa style) seeks to "change the subject" in response to the agency and wisdom of Pasifika Natives and Australia's First Peoples. Drawing on a reading of the story of Babel (Gen 11) and on affect theory, I will challenge the "Pacific Solution" of the Australian government, which presumes that Manus and Nauru Islands are "trash heaps" for Australia, then reflect on the way statements and talks about "reconciliation" and "apology" present Australia's First Peoples as victims. What might happen if we change the subject of Pasifika and Indigenous hermeneutics and theologies? For one thing, this requires coming to terms with orientalist views used to name and limit Natives and First
People. Change to what? That's why we need to consult (and not just listen to) Natives and First Peoples!

**Modern State Sovereignties (1:30 – 3:30 pm)**

**Peter Alsen**  
Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Research Assistant, MA (Political Science)

**Sovereignty in the Australian political consciousness**

Sovereignty is generally defined as the supreme authority over domestic and international affairs of a country, acknowledged by other countries. The Stanford scholar Stephen D. Krasner refers to these two main characteristics of sovereignty: international and domestic. The former is authority in international affairs, the mutual recognition between independent territories, and the power to exclude external actors. Sovereignty in domestic affairs gives authority to establish a formal organisation within its territory, to exercise effective control, and to regulate processes across its borders such as migration, financial transactions, information transfers etc. *(Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 3-4). This paper consists of three parts. Part one will analyse the history of the concept of sovereignty in philosophy, theology and legal and political theory. Then it will propose a design for a basic structure to transform the term supreme authority into different models of governance. The case study discussed in the second part refers to the Australian context and concepts of governance from early stages to the current model. The case study – Indigenous people in the Australian consciousness – is an example of the British exercise of supreme authority in international affairs in the colonial era. This includes the occupation of no one’s land (terra nullius) to acquire sovereignty. This approach, which justified extending sovereignty by occupation from 1788 until today, will be examined and contrasted with Francisco de Vitoria’s critique of Spanish colonisation in South America. Part three is concerned with the result of the application of the concept of terra nullius in Australia, revealing legal and social injustice, defined by Johan Galtung as “structural violence” (“Violence, Peace, and Peace Research”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-191). This political consciousness will be examined by text analyses of government documents with an exploration of constitutional or treaty resolutions.

**Derek McDougall**  
School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne

**The Globalization of the Nation-State**

This paper asks the question: how did the ‘nation-state’ become the dominant form of political organization in the contemporary world? Particular attention is given to the philosophical and theological assumptions underlying the division of the world into nation-states. A starting point is to review the forms of political organization prevalent in the ancient and mediaeval worlds. What were the circumstances in seventeenth century Europe that led to the emergence of the Westphalian system with its focus on the sovereignty of states? And what brought about the situation whereby the legitimacy of states involved their claim to be based on ‘nations’? Then there is the question of how this system that developed mainly in the context of western Europe then extended throughout the whole world. What have been the costs entailed in
this process, and is this system now under significant challenge? The underlying argument of this paper is that there is nothing in the Western tradition that necessarily gives primacy to the nation-state. Forms of political organization have to be judged by their impact on human wellbeing. From this perspective there is much to be said for a more pluralistic perspective that takes account of the strengths of the nation-state approach, while also being open to ways in which its limitations might be transcended.

Jim Barr
Melbourne Welsh Church

Resistance, Revival and Referenda: The struggle for Welsh Sovereignty over 700 years

This paper explores issues in the struggle for identity and culture in Wales, from the time of Edward I. Both Scotland and Wales were subject to wars of conquest by Edward I in the late 13th century. In Wales there was a significant influx of English people and nobles, together with the building of fortresses to secure the unruly nation. The political and military domination of Wales continued until the Laws in Wales Acts of 1535-42 which made it complete. The resistance of the Welsh to this domination has been expressed militarily, politically and culturally - not least through the forms and vitality of Welsh religion. The translation of the Bible into Welsh has been credited as a major force in the preservation of the language, and the Revivals that marked Welsh evangelical religion from 1735 to 1904 can also be seen as a powerful form of cultural expression and resistance.

After 700 years of English domination, and several centuries of "union" in Great Britain both Wales and Scotland now enjoy a measure of devolved authority. On the eve of a referendum for Scottish independence (18th September 2014) this paper explores how religious faith in Wales has been intertwined in the struggle for sovereignty, the ambivalence and hesitation of a dominated people when given the opportunity for freedom, and how gaining a measure of linguistic and cultural independence has been accompanied by an astonishing decline in religious adherence and observance. An interesting twist in the story comes when a 'settled' people like the Welsh become 'settlers' themselves in North America, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Patagonia.

Peter Sherlock
University of Divinity

Anglican justifications of British sovereignty in colonial Melbourne

In the 1850s the Church of England debated the plight of Aboriginal people in Victoria in a variety of forums: the new Church of England Assembly, the Aboriginal Mission Society, and in letters in newspapers. These debates, while often focussed on charitable purposes and missional hopes, revealed complex attitudes towards British sovereignty in the colony of Victoria. Clergy such as H. B. Macartney recognised that British settlement in Victoria constituted displacement, if not dispossession, of the indigenous inhabitants. They were articulate both about their theological and ideological justifications for that displacement and the consequences of those justifications for British society in Victoria in terms of its responsibilities towards Aboriginal people. Yet they struggled to convince their fellow
colonists of their responsibilities. This paper explores the contradictions and challenges faced by Anglican leaders as a result.

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**Biblical Sovereignties (4:00 – 6:00 pm)**

**Anthony Rees**  
Charles Sturt University

**Operation Sovereign Borders: A Moabite Approach**

Australia's 'Operation Sovereign Borders' has been one of the most controversial political operations in recent memory. Concerned with the wave of migrants reaching our shore, the federal government's policy invokes the language of sovereignty, of nationalism, of parochialism. This paper explores a similar situation: the 'vast horde' of Israelites who surrounded the land of Moab, much to the fear of King Balak. (Numbers 22) Balak's concerns were not too different to those routinely expressed in the contemporary public discourse. His policy response though, was of an altogether different order as he engaged his own 'Operation Sovereign Borders.'

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**Carolyn Alsen**  
Whitley College, University of Divinity

**Slippery Borders in Canaan**

In the ancestral narratives of Genesis, the character of non-Israelites has been difficult to ascertain not least because they are often voiceless. Therefore, this study reads the nature of space, ethnic categories such as Canaanite, and marginalized characters like Hagar through the visual trope of cartography. Surveying is a human tendency, but cartographic seeing is a kind of colonial surveying as it seeks to set up a centre/margins dichotomy for itself. This can be reassessed by illustrating ambiguous and competing narrative maps. Although traditionally understood as a colonial visual project, map making or counter-mapping can create a visual way to read the narrative space. Essentially, the use of geography and critical spatiality can be a way of reading politics in biblical narrative.

Space and place in the narratives of Genesis 12 and 15-17 are constantly shifted and redefined in border and centre descriptions. The use of the *leitwort* “place” (Mwqm) is a subject characterisation in and of itself. Building on this shared memory of place, the frame of the textual map also contains the ethnic terminology of “the Canaanites,” a fleeting presence in 12:6 that breaks cartographic frame to be visible. Furthermore, Hagar, as a liminal character, embodies the idea of margins within and without her body. She is the contested space in the intimate space of the camp, the political space of the tribe and the cosmic space of the wilderness. Hagar remains liminal, although being located within the boundaries of the covenantal map in Gen 15.18-21. The binaries of barren/fecund, centre/margins, Sarah/Hagar and foreign/Israelite are therefore problematised through this visual project.
Mark Brett
Whitley College, University of Divinity

Desiring Sovereignty: The Invention of Israel's Monarchy

Michael Walzer has recently suggested that there is surprisingly little political material in the Hebrew Bible if we define “politics” as necessarily including public deliberation, disagreement, negotiation and compromise (In God’s Shadow, 2012). One might expect the authority of tribal elders to be exhibited in these ways, but the tribal elders in Israel play a largely insignificant role in the eyes of biblical narrators; divine initiatives seem to overwhelm merely human deliberation. This paper re-examines the arrival of the monarchy in Israel – a key example of politics in this narrow sense, where we find a renegotiation of divine sovereignty with no reference to the Mosaic law of kingship. Instead, in the books of Samuel we find the creation of a social contract that differs in some significant respects from the ideal of a limited (anti-imperial) state as found in Deuteronomy.

Keith Dyer
Whitley College, University of Divinity

Basileia or imperium? The Language of Sovereignty and Power in the First Century

The relationship between NT texts and the Roman imperium has been shaped in recent scholarship by the assumption that the basileia tou Theou (usually translated ‘Kingdom of God’) refers directly to, and confronts, the imperium Romanum. I argue that since the basileia word group is seldom used of Rome in first century texts — and never as a self-reference by Romans — our hermeneutics require more careful nuancing if we are to understand the complex relationships between the earliest followers of Jesus and the Roman Empire. Understanding the vocabulary of sovereignty and power actually used in different texts and inscriptions of the first century enables us to appreciate the complexities of imperial ‘negotiation’, negation, and avoidance. Confrontations there certainly are, in places, but also compliance, mimicry, and catachresis. Appreciating which terminology is — and is not — used in these texts and their wider context is the first step in naming, avoiding and transforming the powers.

Cultural Studies (4:00 – 6:00 pm)

Yahu Vinayaraj
Dharma Jyothi Vidya Peeth, Faridabad, New Delhi, India

Agamben, Liturgy, and Politics

What does political theory have to do with liturgy and theology? It was Giorgio Agamben, the well-known Italian political thinker who emphatically exposed the ‘mysterious’ (in Latin sacramentum) relationship between liturgy, politics, and theology in Western tradition. According to Agamben, there is a genealogical conviviality between liturgy and politics in Christian theology. Taking a cue from Carl Schmitt, Agamben argues that in Western
tradition, understandings of political sovereignty correlate with understandings of divine sovereignty. Analyzing the emergence of the doctrine of Trinity (economic Trinity) in the early Christian tradition, Agamben contends that Christian theology, through its liturgical practices, legitimizes the notion of sovereign power and its governmentality. For Agamben, liturgy remains as a political activity of the church through which it legitimizes the ecclesiastical hierarchy and power. Critiquing the modern political theologies for being inadequate to recognize the inherent political content of Christian theology, Agamben offers resources for a radical political theology which affirms the political becoming of subjectivities and rejects the liturgical legitimization of the sovereign God. This paper tries to interact with Agamben’s’ political thought that exposes the inherent political content of liturgy and theology in order to envisage a radical political theology of immanence in the contemporary context of necropolitics-the politics of death (Achille Mbembe).

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Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon
United Faculty of Theology, University of Divinity

**Mathew 2: 13-23 – A “Migrant” Reading**

The contested realities of migration, of refugees and asylum seekers in today’s world raise many complex issues polarising communities. In Matthew chapter 2, one encounters various kinds of imperial forces at work - religious, political, military - who in Arendt’s terminology represent the ‘banality of evil’, those who act with thoughtlessness or without critical thinking. These forces force the flight to Egypt. This paper seeks to revisit the Matthew 2 narrative with socio-political and empire sensitivity and will use vulnerability and power (of migrants and of the oppressor) as lenses in the context of domestic terror created by conflict and tension between national security and human insecurity, sovereign rights and human rights, civil law and natural law, and citizenship and discipleship in order to derive a reading that is liberative for those seeking refuge and asylum.

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Xiaoli Yang
Whitley College, University of Divinity

**Home Beyond Borders – A Cross-cultural Dialogue between Haizi and the Gospels**

Contemporary Chinese poetry is born out of a culture of fast change, where the ancient meets the modern, the traditional meets the contemporary, and the East meets the West. In the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of the 1980s, the disappearance of traditional understandings of home has caused Haizi (1964–1989) and his generation to search for a home beyond borders. With simple language and metaphor, Haizi portrays a poetic kingdom that unites homeless humanity and provides a cultural and existential location beyond physical boundaries. This paper applies the method of comparative study and aims to create a dialogue between Haizi’s poetic creation of a home and Jesus’ expression of a home in the Gospels. Some challenges of intercultural exchange will be brought into focus and marked with poetic colours through the understanding of cultural riches.
Claiming Sovereignty in Science Fiction: Lessons from *Hunger Games* and *Divergent* for Raising the Discourse of Politically Unpopular Justice Themes among Young Adults

*Hunger Games* and *Divergent* are recent popular young adult fiction, both of which address issues of settler colonialism, indigenous claims, asylum seekers and global justice and inequity that have captured the imagination of young adult readers and movie-goers. *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (Scholastic 2008), and sequels *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010), depict an unjust world where the Capitol keeps everyone in their districts. It forces an annual lottery-based fight to the death between 24 teenagers, until 16 year-old “Katniss” subverts the system. *Divergent*, by Veronica Roth (Harper Collins 2012), and sequels *Insurgent* (2012) and *Allegiant* (2013), is a dystopian thriller that describes a segregated world divided into 5 factions, and the initiation (and rebellion against the status quo) of “Tris” and her friends. Both series are thrilling entertainment and have become movies; *Hunger Games* is approaching *Harry Potter* in its popularity, and *Divergent* is following the trend. But they also engage with claims of sovereignty and subversively explore issues of Empire, border control, politics of fear, marginalisation and exploitation, and immigration and refugees. Other science fiction movies such as *Upside Down* (2012) and *Elysium* (2013) similarly explore subversive anti-Empire boundary crossing. Why are they so popular, dealing as they do with politically unpopular themes? As works of young adult fiction, they are not the usual discourse of academia, media or political debate, but are nevertheless a source of post-colonial and post-feminist discourse around these themes of sovereignty that are widely read and discussed by young adults in the Australian context. This paper will offer a literary analysis of *Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, discuss their treatment of sovereignty and justice themes, evaluate their popularity among young adult readers, and propose implications for inviting the voice of young adults into the broader discussion and debate.